STILL CARING

The Evolution of a St. Louis Orphanage

by

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Forward

In 1990 I began volunteering at General Protestant Children's Home -- calling bingo on activity nights for residents, setting up cookouts, and conducting life skill sessions with the youth of the Home. Six years later I was elected to the board of directors and began participating at a level that affected the evolution of the Home.

But it was late in 2001, during the planning for the 125th anniversary celebration of the Home, that I realized there was no detailed documented history of the Home. Determined to write one, I researched the Home's archives and board meeting minutes, plus interviewed emeritus board members and former residents for their memories. It was very exciting doing the research, piecing together the storied history and actually holding documents of the Home written in the late 1800s. The result is my article, which is titled Still Caring - The Evolution of a St. Louis Orphanage.

I would like to thank Kathy Sindel, the executive director, for allowing me to delve into the dusty archives of the Home and for proofing my article, providing her editorial and grammatical comments. Also, thanks to Norm Moenkhaus, fellow board member, for his comments on my article. And most of all I want to thank my wife Rosanne Sartori, who happily read and reread my article, for all her insightful comments.

Glenn J. Sartori
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Overview

It took life in a rented house near Chouteau and 13th Street -- the German General Protestant Orphan's Home founded by a group of German-Americans to fulfill a need in their community. The year was 1877. Now, more than 125 years later, name changes and location changes have pushed the Home along its evolutionary path, and today, located on Olive Street Road near Mason in Creve Coeur, the Home is now called The YouthBridge Campus. And throughout the evolution, the residents have changed, services have changed and mission have statements changed, but there has been one constant -- the loving care of children.

In mid to late 1800s St. Louis experienced the peak of the great German immigration, a cholera epidemic and the pangs of industrialization. Many of these German immigrant families, as did other St. Louis families, bore the cruel effect of the events -- illness, death and/or abject poverty. The children of many families were saddled with sickness, malnutrition, neglect, and abuse, and in some cases, abandonment. A group of German-American men, determined to help the children in their own community, then founded the German General Protestant Orphans' Association on the thirteenth of February 1877. The detailed purpose of the association as written in the constitution and by-laws was to accept all poor orphaned children so far as possible and lovingly care for them without compensation, and to accept half orphans, when the father of the child or children was a member of the Association. In 1879 their first constitution was documented in German.

The Association, which was comprised of 390 citizens, elected a board of sixteen directors as its first order of business. The board set out to find a suitable location for the Home, searching rural sites around the St. Louis area. On May 2, 1877 they purchased a three-acre plot of
ground on Natural Bridge Road near Newstead. The first significant step toward their goal had been completed.

The building foundation of the German General Protestant Orphan’s Home was laid in the summer of 1877, and the cornerstone was set on September 6, 1877, an unseasonably cold day, in the presence of the cheering, bundled-up German-American community. The Association had ballooned to 630 members. During the construction of the building, the orphans were relocated from the original rented house to another at Montgomery and 20th Street and remained there until their new home was completed. The building construction continued through the summer of 1878 and was dedicated on October 20, 1878, nearly one year from when the corner stone was laid. The address was 4447 Natural Bridge Road, and the Home was ready for residents. In addition to the main building (the orphanage), there was a laundry building, a pergola (a sort of bandstand or pagoda) and an open wagon shed where cows and calves were housed.

The dedication ceremony was set to start at 2:30 p.m. on the 20th of October; however, the crowd, bigger than anticipated, started arriving early, and by 1:00 p.m. the stands that had been erected near the grove north of the building were filled. The grounds were packed, and it seemed that the entire St. Louis German-American community was present for the dedication. Shortly after 1:00 p.m. the Knights of Pythias band began playing for the enthusiastic gathering. Two local German singing societies, the North St. Louis Bundeschor and the West St. Louis Liederkranz, joined the band to the joy of the cheering crowd. By the start of the ceremony, the crowd swelled to nearly four thousand well-wishers, and the mild October day provided the perfect backdrop for this gala event. At about 3:00 p.m. Mr. J. Philip Kreiger, the President of the board of the directors and one of the founders, welcomed the guests and gave a brief history
of the Association. He then introduced the Reverend J. G. Eberhardt who spoke at some length after performing a short dedication service. Edward C. Kehr, who had been the Missouri Congressman from 1875 through 1877, then gave a brief address, praising the crowd for their dedication to this great charitable undertaking and stating that he hoped the German-American citizens would lead the St. Louis community in charitable work. The Reverend J. T. Johannes gave the closing remarks in German. The band continued to play as the crowd milled around; some talked in groups as others toured the building. The evolution of the Home was underway, pushed on by this glorious event.

The first orphans entered the Home on November 11, 1878. Although the name specified it as only an orphan home, several half-orphans were in the original population of twenty children. Then on November 5, 1879 the Chouteau Avenue house closed its doors, and the children were taken into the German General Protestant Orphan’s Home. The Home’s reputation grew to a point that requests for admittance peaked around the turn of the century. The United States Census of June 14, 1900 listed 103 people residing in the Home -- ninety-six children, labeled as inmates on the census, the Superintendent, the Matron (the Superintendent’s wife) and five employees.

Applications for admittance into the Home were typically submitted by the parent
or guardian and reviewed by the Children's Committee of the Association. The committee's recommendations on the acceptance or rejection of the children were presented at the monthly board of directors meeting and were usually accepted by the directors. A few of these applications have been very significant in the evolution of the Home.

One such application was made in 1912. Gertrude Scheible was twenty-one months old and her sister Elsie was only eight months old when their mother died. Their machinist father was unable to care for them, and since there were no other relatives in St. Louis, he placed them in the Home. They then stayed at the Home until their mid-teens when they entered the working world. The Scheible sisters never married but filled their life with volunteering during their professional years and after they retired. Their fond memories of the Home moved them to their devotion to the Women's Auxiliary of the Home, where Elsie was Vice President and Gertrude was Secretary. They worked on many committees, giving their time and love to the children of the Home. Also, Elsie was the leader of the Home's Girl Scouts for many years and was an annual volunteer for Old Newsboy Day. Gertrude also volunteered her time beyond the Home, including a year in a child-care center near Frankfort, Germany. Their entire adult lives were dedicated to helping children.

Another such application was presented at the March 27, 1917 board meeting. The applicant was Mrs. Adelia Moenkhaus of 4210 Shenandoah for her five children -- Alvina 14 years old, Ida 12 years old, August 10 years old, Lenadell 7 years old, and Helen 8 years old. She agreed to leave the children in the Home until of age and to pay twenty-five dollars per month for her children. The board accepted the application. August Moenkhaus became rather successful in business and always had fond memories of his time spent in the Home. He volunteered his services to the Association in May 1946 and was later elected to the board of directors. Following August, his son Norman was elected to the board in 1985, and then his grandson Jeffrey was elected to the board in 2000. The Moenkhaus family has passionately supported the Home through its evolutionary changes with their talents and treasures.

The Home has always been family, not only to resident siblings, but also to board member families. Two such board families were the Stifel family and the Conrades family. Charles G. Stifel was one of the founders of the Home and a member of the first board. His son Otto F. Stifel was elected to the board in
1919. Later Eugene C. Stifel joined the Association and was then elected to the board in 1930. Eugene's father Louis C. Stifel worked for Charles, but the relation of Eugene's branch of the family to the Stifel founder is unknown. Eugene C. Stifel's son, Eugene H., was elected to the board in 1948. When he retired from the board in 1983 his son Perrin took his place on the board. J. H. Conrades was also one of the founders of the Home and was a member of the first board of directors until his death in May 1917. His son, Edwin H. Conrades, (Edwin's wife was the president of the Ladies Aid Society) and then his grandson followed him onto the board. Otto S. Conrades, who was the grandson and a third generation board member, was on the board for thirty-eight years and vice-president for twenty-four years from 1946 until 1970 when he became a director emeritus. The Stifel family and the Conrades family were related as noted in the June 1948 board meeting minutes that E. C. Stifel and Otto Conrades were cousins. The continuity of these two families brought commitment and dedication to the Home, helping it thrive and evolve through the twentieth century.

Those board families were instrumental in helping the Home over a rough spot in the evolutionary road in 1929. On February 9, 1929, the largest condemnation suit ever filed in St. Louis named nearly 14,000 defendants in the projected widening of Natural Bridge Road. The Home was about to lose frontage of approximately forty feet, and the damage compensation offered by the city was considerably less than what the board believed was fair. The board briefly entertained the notion of moving the Home to property on Eager Road near North and South Road, but through diligent efforts by the board, the courts awarded the Home the compensation they requested, which was more than twice what the city proposed.

The next few decades brought minor changes such as in September 1940, a carpenter shop was built in the basement of the laundry building and in 1945 the sewing room on the cramped second floor of the laundry building was completely remodeled. But a major evolutionary change was around the corner. It came in 1959 -- the year the Home was forced to relocate. The Association was notified that it was in violation of a law prohibiting the housing of children in a four-story building. The three-story Home was caught by the law because its basement was only halfway underground. The Association had to again find new property. And they did -- nineteen acres on Olive Street Road near Mason Road in Creve Coeur. The groundbreaking ceremony took place on Saturday, May 6, 1961 at 2:30 p.m. The president of the board of directors, Mr. Walter A. Kamp, was the master of ceremonies and introduced Mayor Beirne of Creve Coeur who welcomed the Home to the community in a brief address. Other county officials, board members, members of the association and staff attended the joyous occasion. Residents from the Home on Natural Bridge, who had been looking forward to moving into their new home, were special guests. Mr. W. A. Kamp announced that the building was to be set 250 feet back from Olive Street Road and have a two-story central administration office section with space for a dining room, kitchen, music room and library. Living quarters for the children were to be
in four one-story wings set at angles to the two-story section, providing daylight for each room. So with plans and dreams set in motion, the Home began its transition to west St. Louis County.

The cornerstone was laid on August 27, 1961 and construction proceeded well, but took longer than expected. It continued into 1962 with only one casualty -- the annual June picnic, which was Home's community builder. The uninterrupted string of eighty-five annual picnics was broken in 1962. But during the first week in July 1962, picnics were on no one's mind as thirty-eight children, twenty boys and eighteen girls, moved into their new Home. The dedication ceremony and open house on September 23, 1962 was an excellent picnic-substitute and a wonderful introduction of the Home to the community. In early 1963 the superintendent commented that there was room for one more child as the residents numbered fifty-nine. The residents and staff loved their new facility, blending well into the area and the community. The boys occupied the two west wings and girls the two east wings. Each wing had six resident bedrooms, a house parent's bedroom, a recreation room and a full kitchen. The living quarters for the superintendent and his wife were on the second floor of the main building. The new facilities served the residents and the staff well, but in 1965, the board authorized the purchase of a home for Superintendent Jerry Palmer and his wife. It was at 1323 Palm Ridge Court in the Timber Run subdivision behind the Home's property, allowing privacy and time away from the Home; however, this house was sold in August of 1971 because the subsequent superintendent chose to reside at the Home.

The beginning of the Home's second century was celebrated on October 30, 1977 at a rededication of the Home's mission. At the celebration, two residents
unveiled a tablet commemorating the event, and Dr. Paul S. McElroy, pastor emeritus of First Congregational Church of St. Louis, was the guest speaker.

Two residents were selected by their peers and the staff to unveil the Home's 100th year anniversary plaque.

The care of children continued with traditional passion, but a change and need to evolve was on the horizon, which came nearly fifteen years later. At the March 1991 board meeting, plans of a major renovation were presented, which included the addition of a gym and a needed face-lift for the front entrance. The board had shepherded this project for nearly a year, working with the architect, neighbors and the St. Louis County zoning commission until the building plan was finalized and all the necessary permits were approved. At the April 1992 board meeting, the board authorized the construction
of the "new Home". The addition of a gym, weight room, computer room, lounge area, library, music room and a hobbies/crafts room plus major renovations to the existing building comprised the "new Home". This huge project was basically completed in October 1993, when the gym was opened to the residents and officially completed a year later. Besides the shifting of residents between wings and displacement of the office personnel, the major fallout of the construction was the cancellation of the 1993 annual brunch, which had replaced the annual picnic in 1980. But the following year's brunch was advertised as an open house, and the attendees were treated to a tour of the impressive "new Home". But even before the "new Home" was officially completed, the evolution of the Home took an unsuspected turn -- a new branch grew on its family tree in September 1992. The Home's board of directors leased two acres of its property for fifty years at one dollar a year to the Good Shepherd School. The School is one of the few fully inclusive early childhood programs in the area, where children of all abilities are integrated in the same classrooms, serving preschool children with disabilities, which certainly complimented the Home's mission. The board of directors could not have seen that this addition would be start of a "campus" on Olive Street Road.

The gradual evolution of the Home was powered from individual internal aspects, each synergistically adding its own flavor to the overall evolutionary brew. For a clearer view of the evolutionary picture, we need to look at each of the following pieces of this ever-changing agency: children and services, name changes, finances, and women volunteers, plus a brief glimpse into the future.
Children and Services of the Home

Since the Home's inception and through 1944, the Children's Committee of the board of directors interviewed all parents or guardians who applied for residential care for their children. The committee presented their recommendation to the board, and the full board approved not only the admittance and but also the discharge of the children. But this was a time-consuming and challenging task for the committee as was noted in several board-meeting minutes. At the February 1945 board meeting, the directors decided that the matron, acting as the Superintendent of the Home, would interview those families seeking residency for their children and forward the applications to the board for approval. And that responsibility has transitioned to the executive director (formerly known as the superintendent) and the assistant director who accept applications for admission into the Home. Admission to residency is currently based primarily upon financial need, lack of available parental care and the physical and mental conditions of the applicant as determined by professional staff. Any child who cannot be cared for properly with the available facilities and full time personnel is not admitted to residency.

Included in the Home's mission has always been to lovingly supply the necessary services to care for all the children's needs, but in the early 1900s the Home and the board of directors took additional steps to help those orphans who had no one outside of the Home. A cemetery lot was purchased at the New Picker Cemetery, presently known as Gatewood Gardens, which accommodated twelve burial sites and was used for some orphans. At the board meeting in March 1941, the minutes reflected that some children of the Home were buried on one side of the lot and a "Haus" Father and his wife were buried on the other half of the lot. Also noted in the minutes was that the board agreed to pay $100 to the New Picker Cemetery Association for perpetual care of the lot. With the help of the St. Louis Development Corporation, lot records were obtained, which indicated that six children, ages ranging from 11 months to 14 years, were buried there during the early decades of the 1900s. In addition, the first Superintendent of the Home was buried there on December 2, 1904.

As the Home evolved through the twentieth century the source of children has changed -- from single parents, divorced parents and guardians to the juvenile courts and the state's Division of Family Services (DFS). In the early years, the Home enjoyed a near capacity census, but a decline began in the 1940s and after the Second World War the number of residents dipped into the thirties because family units had stabilized and unemployment was down. In the April 1944 board minutes, there first appeared a reference that two boys had come to the Home from the juvenile courts. The evolution from orphans to non-orphans had begun. In the early years at the Creve Coeur location, the census hovered around the sixty-resident capacity, but by November 1972 the census had dwindled to twenty-five, and private placements were at an all time low. This forced the Home to actively pursue the state's DFS and the juvenile courts for
children and to abandon their policy of not admitting teenagers unless a brother or sister was a resident. In its drive to increase the census, the Home took legal custody of three siblings from the St. Charles Court of Domestic Relations in 1971. This proved to be a mistake because five years later one of the siblings ran away but was located at her mother’s house. This resulted in a long, frustrating court struggle to return custody to the mother, and a path that the Home would never again venture down. As the children flowed into the Home from DFS, the population buoyed into the thirties and forties, pushing the Home to rely on the state of Missouri as its main source of children as it had through the twentieth century. With the state as the source of children, other characteristics of the residents changed -- groups of siblings, which was typical in the years of the orphan resident, decreased, the all-white population changed to multiracial, and the number of children from abusive situations increased, which yielded children with unique emotional needs.

The length-of-stay of the residents also changed -- it decreased. In the mid-1900s the Home had prided itself in nurturing their children for years, seeing them to college and into careers and married life. But with the shorter length of stay the board struggled, continually asking the question of how to make a difference in the life of a child who stays at the Home for only weeks or months? Both the board and the staff cared deeply for these abused and neglected children, but since the focus of DFS was reunification with the family or joining a foster family as soon as possible, long term outcomes are difficult to measure. However, reunification was implied in the early years of the Home, too, in that the children were readily returned to their family when stability returned such as remarriage or the means of support improved. So, has the evolutionary path wound back to its beginning? Or is it primed to shoot off in a different direction? Whatever the source of the children and whatever evolves, the board and staff will continue to pour their energies into the loving care of the children.

Medical and dental services have been provided whenever the need arose, and instances of these services were highlighted in monthly reports to the board. Interesting excerpts in reports from the early 1900s are --

- "There has been very little sickness during the month, one case of mumps, a few minor cuts and bruises".
- "Two tonsillectomies were performed at Missouri Baptist Hospital. All services were donated."
- "Vernon and Cletus were running through the halls, and Vernon pushed Cletus through a glass door and was cut on the head and arm. The doctor was called, and the wounds were treated".
- "Eleven children are wearing glasses that are kept in repair without charge".
- "A game of Crack the Whip was started, which we do not permit, and one of the boys flew off the end, rolled into one of new boys, fracturing his leg."
Besides these minor medical instances, the Home survived many medical bumps in the road as in 1937, when a large number of the children contracted scarlet fever, causing the Home to be quarantined until no further cases appeared. This was not atypical for the Home as this and other contagious diseases afflicted children in other residential facilities as well.

With consistent medical services a high priority, the Home continues to rely on one group of doctors for their needs, but with the change in the source of children has come a change in the medical and dental services. The services are still free to the Home, but the doctors bill Medicaid, and surgeries cannot be performed without an approval from DFS. Starting in the 1960s, the Kiwanis Dental Clinic, which was inside of a bookmobile-type vehicle, parked on the Home's back lot and provided good dental services to the children for many years. When the mobile clinic was no longer available, the Home was fortunate to link up with a dental group that still provides services today. A nurse has been on staff since the early 1990s, and a consulting psychiatrist has been used for the children since the late 1990s. As the medical needs of the children changed, the Home responded accordingly.

In addition to the medical services, the residents' schooling has always been a major part of their life at the Home. Board minutes of the 1930s indicated that the children attended Ashland Elementary School, Beaumont High School and Cote Brilliant Opportunity School, which was for "difficult" students. When the Home relocated in Creve Coeur, the children attended schools in the Parkway School District -- first Fern Ridge Elementary then Ross Elementary, Parkway North Middle School and Parkway North Senior High School. During the years at the Natural Bridge location, the children's grades were shared with the board, and as in an extended family, the board was concerned about their education. Hence, the board supported the after school study times, when the staff and volunteers helped the children with their homework and school projects. The first "tutor", Erwin Gerske, was brought into the Home in March 1944. Erwin was a student from Eden Seminary, who came two afternoons a week to help with the children's studies. Following him there has been a cadre of paid and volunteer tutors, providing help in any subject with which a resident may be struggling. Since some children from DFS have possibly been abused, neglected and part of a dysfunctional family, schooling was not always a high priority. Tutoring is now a necessity to help the children become motivated and focused on school studies.

In residential living as in families, structure is very important to a child's well being, and job responsibilities are part of that structure. In the early 1900s the older children were assigned the job of tending the vegetable garden at the Home on Natural Bridge, besides the responsibility for personal cleanliness and for cleaning their bedroom. The modest half-acre garden supplied vegetables for immediate table use and the excess for canning. Every year the children also assisted in making apple butter and jelly. In the fall of 1942, 75 gallons of apple
butter, 20 gallons of grape jelly and 23 gallons of plum jelly were preserved. The fruit was not grown on the property, but donated or purchased by the Home. In addition, both cows and calves were kept on the grounds, since the cow's milk was a necessary ingredient in the meals for the residents. Whether the calves were bred on the grounds or just bought and raised is undocumented; however, the financial reports of the board of directors indicate the sale of livestock. The March 1918 report listed the sale of a cow and a calf for $144.20. In the Creve Coeur facility, gardens and cows were not parts of the Home, but residents still were given jobs such as setting the dining room for meals and cleaning up after the meals. For these jobs and for proper behavior the residents earned points, and the points could be cashed in for privileges such as staying up late or attending a pizza party. In 2001, the Whistle Stop, an incentive store for the residents to spend their points on merchandise, was established. The store is stocked with donated and purchased items and is open every Monday after school. This provides the impetus for the residents to earn points to spend weekly or save for larger purchases.

Along with the physical needs, the Home has continually provided spiritual, emotional, social and recreational needs of the children, always supporting them as a family would. For the spiritual needs of the children, Sunday school was conducted at the Home until 1935, when Miss Eugenia Meers, who started the Sunday school program, resigned for health reasons. But through the generosity of Reverend Ira Gragg, pastor of the Independent Evangelical Church, the children began attending Sunday school at his church. Board minutes reflected a Sunday school contribution to the church was five cents for children twelve or older and one cent for the younger ones. Reverend Gragg also provided the opportunity for the children to receive Confirmation and enjoy other services of the church. And at the October 1952 board meeting, honorary membership was bestowed upon Reverend Gragg for his lengthy and valuable service to the children. This concern for the spiritual well being of the children has evolved to an on-site minister from the Episcopal City Mission at the Creve Coeur location. The minister has provided spiritual guidance not only to the residents, but also to the staff when requested.

On a day-to-day basis, the staff has always worked to fulfill emotional needs of the children, considering themselves as part of resident's family. The board also has considered itself part of the family and has given the children not only love, but also discipline. An example of this is evident from the minutes of the January 1935 board meeting -- "The Children's Committee reported that Eugene was acting very unruly at the Home an has been using bad language. He was called into the board meeting and was given a good lecture on how to behave himself at the Home in the future. The board decided to give him another chance and if he does not behave he will be released from the Home at our next meeting."

This real caring that the board exemplified has been their hallmark throughout the years. To serve the emotional needs of an individual child in a group setting
has always been a challenge. Since the mid 1960s, therapists at the Home have played a major role in providing individual, group and family therapy to help sort out emotional problems and help the child face the day to-day challenges. Social workers have also played a major role in the emotional health of the residents. In fact, both Washington University and St. Louis University thought so highly of the Home's operation, that their graduate students were sent there for fieldwork as part of the Masters Program in the School of Social Work. The role of the therapist and social workers has evolved into family focused programs in the early 2000s, which includes family reunification, and soon to include, family preservation services.

The social and recreational needs of the children have always an integral part of the Home's caring mission. At the Home on Natural Bridge at the turn of the century, two women volunteer groups, the Ladies Aid Society and the Junior Auxiliary, organized activities at the Home and outside the Home. Game nights, special-treat nights, songfests and talent shows were held at the Home on Fridays after the evening meal. In addition, non-organized recreation at the Home consisted of games such as kick ball, tag, jump rope, and hide-and-seek. For these games, each older girl or boy took care of one younger child, and as recalled by a former resident, "When hide and seek was played, the older girls hid the younger ones". Outside the Home, the children were taken to events such as the circus, the movies, the opera and Golden Gloves Tournaments, and the residents were encourage to join scouting programs, which gave a great opportunity to socialize with children outside the Home. An interesting antidote occurred in 1948 when a big problem arose concerning one of the Home's entries into the annual SoapBox Derby. The problem was how to make a car for
a boy who weighed 158 pounds with a 250-pound maximum weight limit of car and driver. Extra care was taken in designing and building the 92-pound car, although when completed, it weighed 106 pounds. The car's body was carefully scrutinized - the rear end was remodeled, pieces were cut off and some bolts and nuts were eliminated. Still it was slightly overweight. Thinking carefully, the car design team addressed the driver -- a slight adjustment in eating brought the boy's weight down to 153 pounds. That weight reduction coupled with a light pair of tennis shoes put the resident and his car in the Derby. He made the cut in the first heat, but not the second heat; however, self-esteem and smiles certainly abounded.

At the Creve Coeur facility, nineteen boys joined the Khoury League baseball program in the summer of 1964, and that coupled with the recreational programs at the local park required a rather dedicated coordination effort from the staff. Later, two evolutionary steps were made -- the first recreational director, Billie Salfen, was hired in 1979, and with the completion of the gym in the early 1990s, the Home could host the basketball games that were played between teams from most of the area residential homes. The recreational director provided the Home with a qualified staff person to organize and run planned activities, but volunteers continued to be the main source of support for the social and recreational needs of the residents. The basketball games were the highlight of the week and competition was healthy among the teams, providing a sense of pride in the residents. But with the residents' shorter length of stay, putting a team together became nearly impossible, so the Home dropped out of league competition in 2001. However, the recreational director and a cast of volunteers still provide the residents with recreational and social outlets as has been done throughout the Home's evolution.
Evolution of the Name

The name **German General Protestant Orphans' Home**, which was incorporated on March 20, 1877, had served the Association's mission very well for the first fifty years. But during the late 1930s the matter of changing the name of the Home elicited lengthy debates at board meetings, always with the same outcome -- leave the name as is. Until at the March 16, 1943 board meeting, a resolution was proposed to have a legal look at the feasibility of using of the name the **General Protestant Orphans' Home** for the purpose of publicity. Subsequent board minutes made no mention of the status of this proposal, but in 1943, the flyer for the 66th annual picnic announced that the General Protestant Orphans' Home was sponsoring the picnic. The word German had been omitted from the name. No records indicate why, but one could surmise that since the Home accepted children from all ethnic backgrounds, the word German was now too restrictive. Then at the March 1949 board meeting, Mr. Charles F. Hamilton, the board secretary, offered the suggestion that the popular name of the Home be changed with the word "children" substituted for the word "orphans". No action was noted, but in 1950 the flyer for the 73rd annual picnic announced that the **General Protestant Children's Home** was sponsoring the picnic. Again no records indicate why, but one could surmise that since the Home accepted all children, orphans and non-orphans alike, the word orphans was too restrictive. And officially, the state approved the name change on July 18, 1971. However, two things were noted in the Home's records -- one, the Home's letterhead was changed to in late 1949 and second at the 1954 annual meeting the board president announced that the Home's new name was the General Protestant Children's Home. A huge concrete sign was erected on the front lawn of Home's Creve Coeur location proclaiming the new name and was affectionately dubbed the "tombstone" by the children of the Home.
The evolution of the name did not stop here. In early 2001, animated board discussions began to again look at a name change. The evolution of the name struggled along over a two-period, but on February 11, 2003, the members of the General Protestant Children's Home Association voted to change the name of to **The YouthBridge Campus.** The board of directors had recommended the change since many thought the word "Protestant" was misleading because the Home is not affiliated with any organized religion, and the board want to clarify that the Home accepted children from all faiths. Secondly, the word "children" now seemed inappropriate because most of residents are in their teens, and it was noted that the residents didn't want to reveal to their peers that they lived at a "children's home". In late 2003 the old "tombstone" sign got a new face, officially recognizing The YouthBridge Campus and signaling a new beginning.

![Sign for YouthBridge Campus](image)

The new name certainly accommodates more than just residential care, especially with the Good Shepherd School for Children housed on the property. And looking back in time, one can see that the evolution of the Home's name tracked the evolution of its residents and the services provided to them.
Financial Evolution

The Home always struggled to make ends meet, the Home's books revealed that early in 1917 the balance was nearly two thousand dollars, but by the year's end there was a deficit of nearly eighty dollars. The source of income varied from month to month but usually included members' dues, interest income and residents' fees, typically five dollars per child per month. Other incomes as reported at the board of directors meetings were from donations, legacies, and proceeds from raffles and the annual picnic.

The first two picnics were at Lindell Park, the first on July 1, 1877, but in 1879 the picnic then moved onto the Home's grounds. The annual picnic was a festive event, eagerly anticipated by the residents and community alike. There were games and races for the children, music and speakers for the adults, and of course, plenty of food and drinks. It was the main fund-raiser that the Home undertook each year, held on the grounds, usually on the second Sunday of June. For the turn-of-the-century picnics, the board set the admission cost at ten cents for adults and five cents for children. Advertisement was coordinated by the board of directors and was originally done by circulars, then by post cards sent to members and friends of the Home. Placards were placed in the front and the rear of the streetcars in the month before the picnic. From board records, it was decided that for these picnics the residents of the Home be given ribbons, so that they could be identified as orphans. Neither the color of ribbons nor the style was described in the Home's records, but in all likelihood it was like the western
string tie, except made of ribbon and pinned to the shirt or blouse of the orphan. Tents were pitched, booths were constructed, and food and drinks were served. The annual picnics were roaring successes, not huge moneymakers, but certainly joyous events for the residents and the friends of the Home. In the board’s meeting minutes, there was mention of a shooting booth and in obvious support of the war, a Hitler face was used a target in the booth at the June 1942 picnic.

The picnics continued every year with the exception of 1962, marking anniversaries -- the 75th annual picnic held in 1952 was labeled the Diamond JubileePicnic, and the 100th year anniversary picnic in 1977, enjoying its tradition in the community. However, the traditional picnic did evolve, in small ways over the years -- different booths, different programs, menu changes, admission charge replaced by charging for dinners.
The picnic was also a time for reunion of sorts for some of the former residents as this group did at the 100th year anniversary picnic.

But it changed in a big way in 1979 --the year of the last picnic. The unpredictable June weather and dwindling picnic crowds moved the board to the difficult decision to modify tradition and replace the picnic with a inside brunch. The first brunch was held on Sunday, June 8, 1980, including a bake sale, arts and crafts sale and a flea market, and the brunches continued through the years -- a new tradition had begun. But the purpose of the brunch was to invite people to an open house event, more than it was to raise funds. It was felt that these two events brought the community into the Home, increasing the awareness of the Home's good works and thus yielding legacies to support the Home's mission.

Through mid to late decades of the 1900s, the Home enjoyed superior financial health through the continual flow of legacy income from members of the Association and friends of the Home and a respectable endowment due to the excellent conservative investment choices by the board of directors over the years. Legacies were usually in the one thousand-dollar range but was occasionally much larger as recorded in the board meeting minutes. At the April 1944 board meeting and as reported in the local newspaper, that the Mackler estate bequeathed in excess of $13,000 in real estate to the Home. And at the February 1945 board meeting, it was announced that the Ruhland estate bequeathed $75,000 to the Home.

Even with this legacy income over the years, balancing the finances was tested as the daily cost of care escalated from $0.62 per child in 1940 to $149.34 per child in 2002. This cost escalation was attributed to many factors, the two major ones being that the children coming to the Home were more troubled with more
unique needs than those in the past, and because of accreditation regulations that set certain staff-to-child ratios. These two requirements caused the hiring of additional and highly trained staff to accommodate the children and accreditation rules, but the Home still kept its financial head above water because of the endowment.

However, two events -- the increasing gap between the cost of care and the payment from the state, and the decline of the Home's endowment due to market corrections -- moved the financial evolution of the Home toward a new direction. The first development director, Yvette Hartsfield, was hired in 1999. The development director was charged with the daunting task of starting a development program from scratch. It was a struggle, not only in marketing the Home to the community, but also in educating the board of directors in fund raising. One huge outcome was the staging of the Home's first major fund-raiser in December 2000 called Winterfest, which was an all day event -- in the afternoon was Lunch with Santa and in the evening, the Gold and Silver Gala, which included a silent and oral auction with all the trimmings. Thanks to the Home's development department and scores of volunteers this event has continued to be an annual event, becoming more successful every year.

In 2002, the Home's development department initiated two significant launches -- a website at the URL of [www.generalprotestant.org] with a secure portal for visitors to contribute on-line to the Home and a study to develop a planned giving program. At an off-site retreat in early 2003, facilitated by Carol Weisman CEO
of Board Builders, the board of directors and key staff personnel looked at alternate uses of the campus in face of the state's moving away from residential care as an option for the children under their care. As the Home's sources of income change, the financial evolution will certainly be required to continue.
Women Volunteers and the Home

In addition to the board of directors, the Ladies Aid Society and the Young Ladies' Junior Auxiliary -- two organizations comprised of women, typically wives, relatives or friends of association members, sponsored fund-raising events for the benefit of the Home and set up after school events for the children. The Ladies Aid Society was formed in 1877 in conjunction with the association, and the Junior Auxiliary was formed by four women in March 1924, which was comprised of younger women, many single. Records indicated that the Ladies Aid Society was less formal, submitting hand-written reports to the board of directors, whereas the Junior Auxiliary presented typed monthly reports, financial statements and meeting minutes. Members of both groups were appointed to work on board-established committees such as special events and child welfare. In addition to their committee work with the board, a tea, a Christmas bazaar and a card party were three annual fund-raising events sponsored by these women. Proceeds from these events supported the Home. The Ladies Aid primarily provided clothing for the children (many items sewn by the women) and the Juniors provided items for the facility such as kitchen stove, clothes washer and drapes.

The teas, sponsored by the Junior Auxiliary, were typically held at the Home on a Saturday afternoon in April, with sandwiches, cookies, coffee and tea being served. Each tea was set up around a theme.

The tea on April 18, 1936 was the "Round The World Tea" and featured exhibits from foreign countries plus the quilt raffle -- a standard for all the teas. Other tea themes included hobbies, arts and crafts and display of dolls. Attendance at the teas was around three hundred people in the early 1900s and had dwindled to less than one hundred people in the 1960s.

The Christmas Bazaar was also joint venture sponsored by both of women's organizations, and typically it was held early in December. In addition to the sale of crafts and other items, there was an afternoon card party for women, followed by a supper served in the early
evening for everyone. The proceeds from these three events allowed the women to provide the children with special gifts beyond the basics supplied by the Home. These proceeds not only provided fun things like toys and games, but also practical things like blankets and slippers.

The card parties jointly sponsored by both women's organizations were held in
October at the German House on 2345 Lafayette Avenue in the early years. From 1938 through 1960 the card party was held at the Alhambra Grotto on Grand Boulevard and Magnolia Avenue. Then starting in 1961, it was held at various locations but finally settled at the Heman Park Community Center. In the Women's Auxiliary files, the last recorded year that a card party was held was 1980.

The women's organizations also paid for the children to attend various summer camps and day trips. Besides sponsoring events, the women also worked directly with the residents, trying to provide a family atmosphere by helping them with school subjects, teaching them skills or providing entertainment, and in particular, the Friday Night Program. This program was staged on the first and third Fridays of each month and included such entertainment as a storyteller, a magician, a motion picture, a songfest or something educational such as Miss Galterman's Nature Program. A special Friday night program that was held once a year was the children's amateur program. According to the minutes of the Junior Auxiliary meetings, it was usually held in the dining room of the Home and both the women and the children worked hard to make it a success. Also every year the women gave each resident a birthday card, Christmas gifts and items for their rooms, in an attempt to make the children feel at home.

At the November 1962 meeting, the Junior Auxiliary officially changed its name to the Women's Auxiliary, revising the by-laws and constitution accordingly. With the new name came new energies. In the mid-1960s, outcomes of this renewal came as financial aid, and two residents were the recipients. Ernest Eaton, the first recipient of the newly established Women's Auxiliary Scholarship Fund, graduated from Culver-Stockten College and moved into the working-world. Lorine Pratt, the second recipient, married Douglas Williams on August 21, 1965. She had her 200-guest reception at the Home, which was paid for by the Women's Auxiliary. The efforts of these women continued with high spirits and renewed energy as if the organization would go on forever. But due to a declining membership and an increasing age of the members, the Women's Auxiliary regretfully disbanded in November 1986, twenty-four years after its name change.

Throughout the years these women's organizations gave so much of themselves to the Home and the children and were recognized for it, but were always subordinate to the male board of directors. In the Women's Auxiliary's meeting minutes the Home's board of directors was referred to as the "men's board". Admitting women onto the board was discussed in 1965 but tabled because it didn't fit the "unique" tradition of the "men's board". But thirty years later it did change, when the first woman, Rosanne Sartori, was elected to the board of directors in 1995 and later served as an officer of the board for two years. She left the board in 2001 but many women have followed in her footsteps, providing the board with more diverse and comprehensive points of view.
The Future

With the child-care winds of evolution building to gale strength in 2003, the Home is being blown out of its comfort zone and onto a new playing field. As their niche market in residential care dwindles to zero, the board of directors has embarked on an urgent course -- looking at all alternative choices to care for children and their families. Options such as merging or affiliating the Home with other agencies thereby expanding the campus concept, using the facility as a home for families whose children are in an extended hospital-stay situation, looking internationally for children and families or selling the property and becoming a foundation are all being considered. Since the tenure of half the board members is less than two years, the new direction will not be clouded with the past boards' leaning to business-as-usual. And as the board struggles with this weighty problem, a reduced staff continues to care for the children at the Home and works diligently with the families toward a goal of permanent reunification.

The YouthBridge Campus is not the only agency in the throes of rethinking their mission in this maelstrom of change that may cause some agencies to close in the future. However, there will always be abused and neglected children and families who need help. Whatever happens, the evolution of The YouthBridge Campus with its more than one hundred and twenty-five years of community service will continue to support children and their families in the years to come, and as always will be still caring.
APPENDIX

Memories of Former Residents

Gertrude Scheible interviewed -- Gertrude and her sister Elsie, who died in September 2003, entered the Home in 1912 and left the Home, returning to their father when Gertrude graduated from high school in June 1927. She was the only girl from the Home going to high school at the time. Elsie didn't go to high school, but worked in the Home's kitchen and laundry, thus allowing her father to only pay for Gertrude.

She had fond memories of the Home even though she said no birthdays were celebrated and no real hugs were given, but she felt the Home took very good care of their physical needs. The meals were good, and each had their own bed. There were twelve beds in each room, girls on one floor, boys on the other. At bedtime everyone stood on the stairs, were counted and told goodnight.

Gertrude recounted that when she and others were quarantined for chicken pox in the sewing room, which was on the second floor on the laundry building, they only had a few toys. But they got more by lowering some string out of the window to which others girls attached paper dolls and small toys. She also got toys for eating other children's food. Some girls didn't like the oatmeal so they gave Gertrude paper dolls for eating it for them, but they were very careful because if caught they would have to stand by their chairs and watch the others eat. She also recalled playing baseball on a very hot day in summer. The boys had a game on their playground and the girls on theirs. The girls were overheated and wanted to quit, but they didn't want the boys to call them quitters. However, they were saved when the cook called for help to clean spinach. All the girls dropped everything and ran to help the cook.

The annual rotary club outing at Forest Park was a summer highlight recalled Gertrude. Rotary club members would pick up the children from many Homes in St. Louis and drive them to the park, where each Home had a tent filled with picnic food and drinks. We all hoped that Mr. Mavrakos, a candy manufacturer, would pick us up because chocolate treats were provided during the ride.

In her teenage years at the Home, Gertrude secretly taught some of the boys to dance. So when the matron, who the children called Tante, which means aunt in German, was in her office, Gertrude knew that Tante could not see some areas of the playroom, and in those areas she taught the boys to dance.

Interviewers' comment: Gertrude is a very sweet, with-it lady and was a joy to visit. She has volunteered at various organizations throughout her entire life, and at ninety-four she is now volunteering as a Sunday school teacher at the Holy Ghost Church in the city, plus writing the church's history.
Ernest Eaton wrote -- It becomes difficult to express in words what one feels in gratitude for all the wonderful acts of kindness the General Protestant Children's Home has extended to me. I'm sure that the Men of the Board didn't expect to see the child who entered the Home in 1958 achieve a college degree. I shall always be grateful for the confidence extended to me in attaining the achievement. There have been some rough spots that I have encountered along the way, but the Board never lost its zeal and words of encouragement; this helped me achieve part of my goal to escape from the environmental situation I was born into.

But I shall be forever indebted to the Home for the years of guidance and development instilled in me the past eleven years. Without the firm Christian moral and value development I have obtained through the Home's influence, a college education would be just a wasted addition. To me, this early development is as valuable as the college degree, if not more.

It is with sincere appreciation that I look back on the Home for the past eleven years of my life. I have been lucky to have been placed in the Home and be given the opportunity to make something of myself. By becoming a leader in the community and business, I hope to reflect back on the institution that really deserves all the credit.

Terry Kasper wrote -- I came to General Protestant in April of 1983. I was 14 years old. The "Home" was much different back then, meaning we didn't have the luxuries of computers and high-tech interactive learning equipment that's available now days. What we did have though was a team of caring and compassionate (and strict!) professional individuals who dedicated their lives in helping young troubled kids. Kathy Sindel was one of them and she is still there. I remember when she was one of the main social workers for the younger kids; now she is the Director. A title she has worked so diligently and tirelessly for over the years through her love for children and endless desire to help them. Over the years she has seen kids come and go like busboys in a restaurant

Here I am now, 34 years old. I have been in the Air Force 12 years and have 8 more years before retirement. I currently work directly for a two-star General in Las Vegas. I have had my ups and downs in my life, learned hard lessons, and certainly made my share of mistakes. But one thing is true when I say that General Protestant helped me become who I am today. They provided me a safe haven away from an abusive environment at home and encouraged and pushed me to grow and be the best I can be. I was given the opportunity to take piano lessons because of my desire and ability to play music. They even enrolled me in a performing arts magnet school and paid for my professional piano lessons at
the St. Louis Conservatory of Music. To this day I still play every chance I get and have done very well with it.

General Protestant provided top-notch school tutoring and wonderful counselors, and had strict structure, guidelines and rules regarding education and personal development. I will always feel personally indebted to General Protestant and will always have a special place in my heart for the "Home".

**Christine Kellogg spoke at the Home's 2002 Winterfest** -- It was 1985 when I came to General Protestant Children's Home. I was eleven years old and stayed there for four years. I have nothing but fond memories of my time at the Home. The staff treated me and all the residents with loving care, built up my self-esteem and provided me with many life skills. I have been lucky to have been a part of this family and given the opportunity to make something of myself. I presently own the Body and Soul Day Spa in north St. Louis County, which is doing well, and I plan to get married next year. The Home has certainly been a big influence in my life, and I never forget my time spent there.

When I was asked by Kathy Sindel to speak, I said yes immediately, but was very nervous after I had thought about it. I didn't prepare a speech, just spoke of my memories, and was deeply moved by the applause I received. I'll always hold General Protestant Children's Home close to my heart.

**Amy La wrote** -- I lived at General Protestant for almost a year during 2002. Through the coaching, counseling, and support I received at the Home, I learned to have confidence in myself and my dad learned parenting skills that allowed me and my brother, who also lived at the Home, to return to my dad's home.

General Protestant offers kids and teenagers the support to face personal and family challenges that helped me and my family grow and learn how to live together.
**Association Founders**

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<th>Nicholas Berg</th>
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<td>G. H. Boeckenkamp</td>
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<td>Ernst Knickmeyer</td>
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<td>Francis H. Krenning</td>
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<td>J. Philip Krieger Sr.</td>
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**Ladies Aid Society Founders**

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<td>Junior Auxiliary Founders</td>
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<td>Marie Hetlage</td>
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<td>Edna Theis</td>
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**Presidents of the Board of Directors**

- 1877 - 1879  J. Philip Kreiger Sr.
- 1879 - 1909  John H. Conrades
- 1909 - 1821  W. H. Priesmeyer
- 1921 - 1928  George Schmieder
- 1928 - 1933  E. H. Conrades
- 1933 - 1970  Walter A. Kamp
- 1970 - 1973  Harold Wiese
- 1984 - 1994  Charles H. Haverstock
- 1994 - 1997  Dice Cowger
- 1997 - 2000  James C. Cullen
- 2000 -      John V. Morse
Superintendents / Matrons of the Home

1878 - 1904  Mr. Charles H. DeBus - superintendent, Mary his wife the matron
1904 - 1915  Mr. Herman Tessmer - superintendent
1915 - 1935  Mrs. Emma Hoppes - matron, president of ladies society for 13 yrs.
1936 - 1938  Mrs. Margaret Matthews - matron
1938 - 1945  Mrs. Amelia Hartwick - matron, assistant matron under Matthews
1945 - 1949  Mrs. Malena B. Harry - matron
1949 - 1951  Mr. J. E. Thomure - superintendent, his wife the asst.
1951 - 1963  Mr. Ogan. N. (George) Cole - superintendent, Lela his wife the asst.
1963 - 1969  Mr. Jerry D. Palmer - superintendent, resigned to become a minister
1970 - 1973  Mr. Wendell Warren - superintendent, house parent for 8 years
1974 - 1993  Mr. Emil Lenz - superintendent