

## Children's Home Society of Minnesota

The Children's Home Society of Minnesota was founded as the Children's Aid Society of Minnesota in 1889 by Reverend Edward P. Savage. Savage had heard a speech in Iowa by Martin Van Buren Arnsdale about the trend to place orphaned children in private homes rather than institutions. He returned to Minnesota inspired and motivated to provide similar assistance to Minnesota children and families. Savage assembled a board of directors. Cyrus Northrop of the University of Minnesota agreed to serve as board president. Clergyman J.P. Dysart served as financial secretary. Kate Snoad Savage, wife of Edward Savage, devoted much of her attention to fund-raising for the new agency. Savage's work with children included outreach to northern Wisconsin and the Dakotas. The organization changed its name to the Children's Home Society of Minnesota at the annual meeting in May 1896. [1989 history]

The Society advocated the regulation of adoption procedures. Savage's first legislative endeavor was to help enact a Minnesota law to give legal status to societies with the purpose of securing homes for orphans. Later, in a 1907 speech, Savage advocated for legislation to increase the adoption age from 10 to 14 years and to repeal the requirement that birth parents must appear in court to finalize an adoption. Savage created a legacy of legislative advocacy that continued through the decades. [p. 22 of 1989 history] Under the leadership of superintendents Samuel Dickinson and Charles Dow, scientific methods and professional casework were promoted. During this period a baby nurse's training program was launched; regular physical and psychological examinations were conducted on children; and more thorough intake, placement, follow-up and record-keeping procedures were instituted.

The early leaders of the Society, including Savage, Dickinson, and Dow, spent considerable time seeking out adequate facilities for the organization's work, as emphasis shifted from long-term care of infants and children to short-term foster homes and legal adoption.

Under Charles Olds, who brought previous experience at a social service agency and formal social work training to the organization, the Society advanced in professionalization and standardization. Before Olds joined the organization in 1947, few staff members had professional training in social work. By 1952, all staff members had work in a graduate school. Olds also launched a standardization of personnel policies and salaries. [Olds report, 1952] These changes reflected similar trends in the development of the social work profession.

In 1948, Olds closed all the Society's nurseries, reflecting a belief that foster or boarding homes were better for child development. Closing the nurseries also reflected an evolving belief that a baby and adoptive parents should be brought together as soon as possible. In the past, waiting periods, some as long as two years, were advocated so that the child could be observed for abnormalities. As the field of

psychological testing evolved, however, it was realized that most standardized personality tests were not useful on infants. It was recognized that earlier placement and adoption presented a greater risk to adopting parents, however, since they would not have the information that longer term observation of the infant might provide.

For the first 80 years of its existence, the Children's Home Society did not stray far from the mission to "seek out homeless and grossly neglected children, to place the same in good homes by adoption or otherwise, and to maintain, until such children reach their majority, an inspection over them and their surroundings..." [Dickinson history, p. 1]

In the 1950's, the organization added a "Baby from Abroad" program, finding homes for infants at first primarily from Germany. In 1967, it arranged its first Korean adoption. Its Korean adoption program soon grew to be the largest in the United States, operating in conjunction with Eastern Child Welfare, a Korean agency involved in the placement of Korean children in the majority of Children's Home Society of Minnesota's international adoptions.

Other adoption-related services were added in the 1950's and 1960's as well. For instance, services were extended to single parents, post-adoption services were added, and discussion groups were organized to provide support to individuals with specialized concerns, such as parents adopting older children. In addition, a group home for single mothers was approved by the board in 1967 and the Negro Adoption Project was launched.

In 1968, Executive Director Harriet L. King described the goal of the agency as: "to give the best possible service to children needing homes regardless of race or creed; to adoptive families wanting children and to unmarried parents, making sure that the best counseling for emotional problems, medical care and physical problems is provided to those needing it." [Report of the Executive, Harriet L. King, May 1968]

When Roger W. Toogood joined the organization in 1969, he brought with him a commitment to expanding the Children's Home Society's services beyond adoption. To that end, he established evaluation and planning processes for both the board and staff. Under Toogood's leadership, a variety of services were added to support not just adoptive, but all families with specific needs: post-legal adoption; day care centers; battered persons programs, school-age day shelter, unplanned pregnancy services, teen pregnancy prevention, crisis nurseries, and family life education. By 1996, when Roger Toogood retired, the Society's mission statement had evolved to express the organization's expanded scope: "Children's Home Society of Minnesota is committed to helping children thrive; to building and sustaining safe, loving families; and to providing opportunities for individual growth." [from 1996 Executive Team Planning Session] In support of this expanded mission Family Service Inc. merged with the Children's Home Society of Minnesota to form Children's Home and Family Service in 2004.

The changes in practices for finding homes for children and in the provision of services to its constituents also can be seen in the efforts of the Children's Home Society of Minnesota to build the right facilities to meet the needs of those it served. The organization owned the following facilities over the years:

1. • 1903: The Jean Martin Brown Receiving Home was built to provide a place where children could stay until they were adopted. The property was developed through a donation of land from Joseph L. Elsinger and financial support from Captain John Martin.
2. • 1926: An addition was added to the Jean Martin Brown Receiving Home, named the Humphrey Memorial Building. Initially intended to be a clinic, it came to be used as a permanent boarding house for children. When Charles Dow became director, Humphrey Memorial was used as a temporary dormitory facility for children and for nursemaid trainees, reflecting the shift in the organization's work towards legal adoption.
3. • 1945: The Jean Martin Brown Receiving Home was leased to the Public Welfare Department. CHSM made the decision to accept only young, adoptable children, leaving older children in the care of the state.
4. • 1949: Superintendent Charles B. Olds closed the nursery in Humphrey Memorial and placed all children in temporary homes. This change reflected the idea that foster or boarding homes were better for child development. Closing the nurseries also reflected an evolving belief that a baby and adoptive parents should be brought together as soon as possible.
5. • 1959: CHSM sold their current properties and built a new facility at 2230 Como Avenue in St Paul.
6. • 1968-1982: Lincoln House operated at 1887 Lincoln Ave in St. Paul. It first served as a maternity shelter, then as a residential treatment facility for high risk teenage mothers and their children.
7. • 1977-1987: Lincoln House West served as a second a residential treatment facility for high risk teenage mothers and their children.
8. • 1972: CHSM opens their first day care in Roseville. By 1989, the organization operated 11 day care centers.
9. • 1978: An addition to 2230 Como Avenue was completed.
10. • 1986-1987: The Park Bank building next door to 2230 Como Avenue and the Group Health Building at 1605 Eustis were purchased and renovated for additional service and administrative space.
11. • 2001: A new facility was built at 1605 Eustis Street. 2230 Como Avenue was retained and renamed the Toogood Building.

### Superintendents/Executive Directors of CHSM (Marj Meyer history)

1. Reverend. Edward P Savage, Superintendent, Sept. 11, 1889 – December 31, 1908
2. Reverend. Samuel W. Dickinson, Superintendent, January 1, 1909-February 1927
3. Charles E. Dow, Superintendent/Executive Director, March 1927-May 31, 1947
4. Charles B. Olds, Superintendent/Executive Director, May 26, 1947-July 1, 1967
5. Harriet L. King, Superintendent/Executive Director, July 1967-May 22, 1969
6. Mrs. Valborg Keuffler, Acting Executive Director, May 19, 1969-July 1969
7. Roger W. Toogood, Executive Director, July 1969 - 1996
8. Madonna W. King, President & CEO, 1996 –

#### Sources:

University of Minnesota archives:

<http://archives.lib.umn.edu/repositories/11/resources/779>

Children's Home Society of Minnesota and Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota:

<https://chlss.org/>