

## Clubs launched programs

"The Woman's Club of Evanston and other woman's clubs were really able to address things that the government at the time seemed to be unable or unwilling to address," said Brendan Cunningham, a Loyola University graduate student who put together the club's application to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"The woman's club and clubs like them — just regular people — were able to start grass-roots movements and put into motion programs that we still (benefit from) today," Cunningham said.

The club seeks national historic status based on the social significance of the group's work as part of the progressive reform movement.

## Fund-raising campaign

Past president Wendy Irwin said the historic designation seemed to fit well with the organization's five-year campaign to raise \$1 million for needed repairs and restoration of the gracious building at Church Street and Chicago Avenue that has been the group's home since 1912.

"We realized that when we go out to the community, people who would be so inclined to give to this process would be more (inclined) if this were on the na-

"We are no longer ladies who lunch; we are doers," says Wendy Irwin (left), past president of the Woman's Club of Evanston. "As we were from the beginning," adds President Patty Shaw Sprague, shown with the portrait of founder Elizabeth Boynton Harbert that graces the members' room. — Buzz Orr/Staff Photographer

tional register," said Irwin, who sowed the idea during her tenure. Irwin also views the process as a way to highlight the group's work and correct misperceptions about the organization.

"The elegance of the building really belies the seriousness of the work we do here," Irwin said.

The Evanston City Council lent its support to the nomination July 24, affirming the findings of the Evanston Preservation Commission.

As part of the restoration effort, the Woman's Club recently replaced the slate roof at a cost of about \$200,000. The group hopes to have other replacements and restorations completed before the building's centennial in 2012.

The club formed in 1889 when Elizabeth Boynton Harbert, a headstrong wife with a doctoral degree, invited 20 friends to tea at her home, at 1412 Judson Ave. — then exhorted them on civic responsibility. Harbert was astute enough to know that the work needed to complement rather than supplant a woman's primary role as wife and mother.

"Let the women be not afraid; let the men be not antagonized," Harbert was quoted as saying.



The Woman's Club of Evanston building, at 1702 Chicago Ave., has been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places based on the social significance of the group's reform work. — Buzz Orr/Staff Photographer

Two years after the club's formation, typhoid fever appeared in Evanston and elsewhere. The nearest medical facility, Cook County Hospital, was a 24-mile trek away by horse-drawn buggy on rough roads. The club responded by renting and equipping a house on Emerson Street to care for typhoid victims.

After meeting for a time at the YMCA and various churches, the nomadic group was persuaded to construct its present home in the Dutch Colonial Revival style, at 1702 Chicago Ave., next to Frances Willard's Rest Cottage and the home of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. The location was fitting

since Willard, a leader in the suffragette movement, was a founding member of the Woman's Club.

During World War I, the club raised \$1,000 to send an ambulance to France. When Evanston residents were urged to plant vegetable gardens to conserve

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