

Push Plan For Negro Center

Peoria Building Third, Spencer

Acquire Building At Third, Spencer

With acquisition of a building and organization of campaign committees, plans are moving forward rapidly for the establishment of a Negro community center in Peoria.

The new center, which it is hoped will be in full operation early in 1944, will be located at Third and Spencer sts. in the brick building which formerly housed the maintenance division of the Illinois Bell Telephone company.

A citizens' committee already has obtained more than half of the quota it has set in advance gifts and the general campaign group, which will contact Peorians other than the approximately 600 already solicited by the citizens' committee, will hold a "kickoff" dinner meeting at 7 o'clock tomorrow night in the Y.W.C.A. Attending will be the general campaign personnel.

Seek \$40,000

Ultimate goal of the combined campaigns is \$40,000. Cost of the building is \$25,000 and from \$10,000 to \$15,000 additional will be required for remodeling and properly equipping the center. A part of this work will be done immediately and the job will be completed following the war. The complete amount needed will be raised now and the balance of the funds will be held in trust for the Negro community center by the Commercial Merchants National Bank & Trust Co.

The general campaign committee has set \$15,000 as its quota toward the total and officials hope to raise this amount within a week through the public solicitation.

Taking a leading part at tomorrow night's dinner session will be Ernest T. Attwell, director of the bureau of colored work of the National Recreation association, New York City. Mr. Attwell, who will remain in the city two weeks to assist in the campaign and to help in setting up the entire program, came to the National Recreation association after successful experience in the South as a member of the administrative staff of Tuskegee Institute serving with both Booker T. Washington, the founder, and Robert R. Moton, the late principal.

To Select Name

Decision has been reached by the board of the Peoria Negro community center to name the new center either the George Washington Carver center, or Carver center, honoring the great Negro scientist. Coincidental with the meeting tomorrow night in behalf of the new center here Rackham Holt, writer of the sensational best-seller biography, "George Washington Carver," will be in Peoria to participate in the Books for Bond rally tomorrow night at the Rialto theater. Members of the citizens' committee which has

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groups beginning tomorrow a continuing for a week or 10 days.

Free-will offerings will be gladly accepted and anyone wishing contribute toward the Negro community center project is asked make his check payable to the Commercial Merchants National Bank and Trust Co., trustee of the Negro Community center Peoria.

James A. Madison, assistant Mr. Attwell has been in Peoria for some time helping in plans for organization of the general campaign and otherwise assisting in completing details preparatory to actual operation of the center.

Selection of a general secretary or director for the new center is expected to be announced within 30 days. Several possible candidates already have been contacted through the Bureau of Colored Work of the National Recreation association. Until such time as the new center is ready to begin operation the present center, a residence structure at 1010 Sanford st., will continue with its full activities.

The present center developed from the original Colored Women's Aid club which was located in the 100 block South Globe st. In 1937 the club was moved to the Sanford st. address, owned by the Colored Women's Aid club, and the name changed to the Peoria Negro Community center. When the new center at Third and Spencer sts., becomes a reality the structure on Sanford st. will revert back to its owners, the Colored Women's Aid club.

Plan Follows Survey

Plans for the new Negro center for Peoria developed following a survey made last spring by the Peoria Community Fund and Council. This survey showed that the present site at 1010 Sanford st. was woefully inadequate to serve the areas of Negro concentration in the city. Physical properties of the present site also were seen to be inadequate.

The citizens committee on the new building center points out that the Negro population of Peoria in the spring of 1943 consisted of approximately 4,000 persons, roughly three per cent of the city's entire population.

approximate geographical center of an area in the city which has 75 per cent of the colored population residing within it. The building has been carefully checked as to the purchase price, location, whether or not it will adequately meet the needs of the Negro people.

Fund To Co-operate

The Peoria Community Fund is restricted by its by-laws from raising funds for capital expenditures of agencies, one of which is the Negro community center. That is why the citizens committee was organized to assist in the project. The Community Fund, however, will co-operate by providing the operating budget to conduct a satisfactory program in the new building.

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The Commercial Merchants National bank trust department has been designed by action of the Negro community center board as trustee for that organization to receive the funds raised in the campaign; to take and hold title to the property at Third and Spencer sts. until the full payment for the property has been made, and until certain needed renovations are made and paid for. At that point, the title to the property will be put in the control of a board of trustees appointed by the Community Fund. This board of trustees will hold title to the property. The Negro community center by-laws will be revised to provide for a smaller board of directors, part of whom will be appointed by the Community Fund and Council.

The general campaign committee has been appointed by the Negro community center to raise a substantial part of the total goal.

Two-Story Building

The site of the new center is a partially two-story brick building in fine physical repair and it has been the consensus of business and real estate authorities in the city that even if it were possible to construct a brand new building at the present time the cost would be double the amount which the building at Third and Spencer sts. entails. There are hardwood floors in the main structure, and heating facilities are said to be excellent. Officials of the Negro community center board have expressed full satisfaction with the building and anticipate it will answer the needs of the city's Negro community for many years.

The part of the building which will be used most, until the garage part is converted into a gymnasium, is about 45x100 feet and the front part is two stories high. The second story is about 45x50, most of which is floor space. Main part of the building, on the ground floor, is about 45 by 100, as is the garage. The garage has a concrete floor and the possibility is that even before the center actually begins to operate fully dances may be held in this section of the building.

It is the plan to make the new center everything that comprises a modern community building. It will be available for all types of meetings, social gatherings, etc. Classes will be held in handicrafts, sewing, children's play instruction, nutrition, athletics and the like, and it is pointed out also that the new center can serve a long-felt need as a "teen-age hangout" for