

Co-op Housing: A Look Back

How did all of this evolve? How old is the movement here? How firmly is it entrenched? Read on to find out!

More than 50 years ago ---1933 for women, 1935 for men, the Purdue cooperative housing concept was born. Now we pause to honor the dreamers and realists who parented it --- this fellowship in shelter-keeping. The cooperative idea was not new 50 years ago as some of the names of houses indicate --- Rochdale, Ann Tweedale, Dover, Maclure, Luma, Antiqua, and Owen. People in England, Sweden, the West Indies, and even Indiana (at New Harmony) had practiced cooperative living long before.

At Purdue University, financial necessity prompted women in the School of Home Economics to band together as the Women's Cooperative House in 1933. Ten men did the same in 1935, founding Wesley's Boys' House in rooms above the Wesley Foundation, with the blessing and help of Rev. and Mrs. William McFadden. Mrs. McFadden scoured the secondhand stores and the attics of friends for furnishings; and her husband, with the 10 men, supplied the manual labor.

Sparse, indeed, were the accommodations; so much that one of the residents tells of supporting the bedsprings on tin cans after a fragile bedstead had fallen to splinters under the scuffle of the lads. Another tells of meeting his bedfellow only after they shared a good night's rest under common covers.

Co-op Housing: A Sharing Experience

The necessity to share responsibilities in a co-op contributes to the fundamental philosophy of all student housing at Purdue --- Purdue has for its students residences, not just boarding houses with sleeping quarters. The co-ops are homes managed by students and shared with their friends.

Two brothers, farm boys, in the 1930s lived on campus in one room; ate canned beans, meat, and fruit brought some hundred miles from home every month; knew few other students; graduated; and went back home to the farm, lived, and died with no personal contacts garnered from college life. In contrast, one of the letters from a Tippecanoe County farm boy who lived in Wesley Boys House said:

Living closely with 10 young men, in the co-op, with different backgrounds, cultures, and the life-styles exposed me to a variety of new perspectives. Without co-op living, I would have lived at home and could not have established the relationships and fellowships that I have. I would have merely skimmed the top of university life, both academic and social. Friendships made during these years continue to benefit, enrich, and endure, making me grateful to have chosen co-operative college living.

The sharing of experiences in co-ops is one of the system's strongest assets. In the 1940s, a variety of such activities developed: trade dinners, camp-outs, hog roasts, caroling, picnics, etc. In 1940, the Student Cooperative Association sponsored its first dance in the Purdue Memorial Union. It underwrote movies and lectures and developed the Student Credit Union and Co-op Book Store.

A Variety of Skills

Each brought his experience to the aid of the others. One knowledgeable in firing furnaces took on that task and, being too generous with fuel, melted the water pipes embedded in the coals. His reputation as an expert fireman was short-lived. The purchasing agent had a part-time job with a local grocer, and a local farm boy raided his mother's larder and garden for supplies.

From these two humble beginnings was born on Purdue's campus a housing movement that has grown to 14 houses with an investment of more than \$1.5 million.

At the very outset, one of the great advantages of cooperative living manifested itself --- that of solving problems relative to the satisfactory operation and maintenance of living quarters. To have attended classes for four years, passed the examinations, and had contacts satisfactory for social development hardly prepares one for the nitty-gritty of electric repairs, heating problems, marketing, budgeting, and a myriad of other mundane activities of everyday living. Co-op houses offer such disciplines.

'A Better Taste'

"Students tend to live at the level where they can support themselves. I'd like all to have a little better condition than they have had --- give them a taste, a better taste," R.B. Stewart said at a conference of the National Association of College and University Housing Officers.

That "better taste" is still the essence of Purdue's cooperative housing system. PSHC provides the financial know-how to keep improving the physical facilities of co-op houses at Purdue. The University provides the leadership in academics with adequate opportunity for mental growth. The competition in various sports among the houses is physically stimulating and interaction mellows and refines social graces.

And so more than 50 years have passed! Now an industrial, urban, multicultural society calls for time-consuming experiences. The hard work one can put into renovating properties is time-consuming, too. Born of grave financial need, which for some still exists, the co-op system produced citizens prepared to cope with society's reorganization after World War II.

Living in Older Homes

Finally interest were the priorities in the budget for the rent moneys. By placing them in that order, this plan trained future citizens to support the government by paying taxed; to protect their own and the investors' funds from the ravages of fires, wind, or whatever; and to maintain the properties in equal or better conditions than when rented.

To do this with so little cash necessitated that students living in a given house undertake the repairs and improvements. The University provided materials at cost and allowed workers from Purdue's Physical Plant to supervise the renovations. Within that philosophy of shared responsibility lies one of the greatest pluses of the co-ops.

Interest rates in the 1930s were only five percent; thus, the students often were able to whittle away at their mortgages as well as meet the insurance payments. The pooling of assets of the houses made PSHC stronger than any one of its component units could have been.

Criticisms were --- and still are --- leveled at the Purdue Student Housing Corporation for its buying old properties whose physical facilities did little to show the possibilities of sophisticated living. PSHC had dreams of building new houses west of campus on State Street. But when federal funds of the Works Progress Administration were cut off in the mid 1940s, the corporation had to do the next best thing --- buy existing properties as they came on the market. In the long run, who is to say less or more was learned by the occupants?

World War II reduced Purdue's enrollment and the need for more housing but the post-war's escalating enrollment renewed the demand for housing; therefore the movement renewed its energy. Competition among the houses flourished. Each proudly claimed its particular win, be it in basketball, golf, baseball, soccer, or the Grand Prix.

In the 1960s, a scholarship award system with a traveling trophy was implemented. Purdue's Student Cooperative Association played host to the National Co-op Convention with representatives from Nebraska, Oregon, and Texas. Current topics were nationalizing co-op housing, seeking additional financing, and increasing membership.

The 'Staying' Influence

The founders reasoned that men and women, freed from the restraints parents had put on them, function more efficiently with a gradual release. The housemother provided that staying influence, that hub around which the young people as spokes supported the turning rim --- a functional household. The housemothers came from the same cultural backgrounds as did the youth and grew with them in the appreciation of ethnic and geographic differences. These fine women were teammates, yet stabilizers. One correspondent tells how the house-mother's presence at the dinner table brought physical safety:

No one was to sit down to the evening meal until she appeared; the amenities of good table manners followed. For some reason, one night, in her absence, unthinkingly one lad said "Throw me the applesauce!" Literally his friend did and across the table.

Housemothers applied for the positions, were interviewed and voted upon by the members, and attended training sessions provided by the University. Now two of the men's co-op houses have house-mothers; one of the women's houses has a graduate counselor.

Yearbook Quote

In one *Debris*, the co-ops' caption says, "Co-ops are economical but not cheap." The "sharing" ideal extends to the sharing of one's time and help. Community enterprises, such as mental health clinics, blood drives, curb cuts for the handicapped, Christmas parties for underprivileged children, and chores for weakened senior citizens, feel the enthusiasm and help of the co-ops.



History of Cooperative Houses

Ann Tweedale: Formed in 1937 when the first women's cooperative house, Wesley Girls, divided. Ann Tweedale is named after the woman who started the first cooperative store in Rochdale, England.

Chauncey: Formed in 1937.

Circle Pines: Founded in 1939 by four members of the Luma cooperative house.

Devonshire: Established in 1997.

Fairway: Founded in 1957.

Gemini: Formed in 1972 by the merger of two cooperative houses, State House & Club 25.

Glenwood: Founded in 1939 and named after Glenora McFadden, who along with her husband founded the Student Cooperative System at Purdue.

Maclure: Founded in 1966, and was named after William Maclure, one of the originators of cooperative housing.

Marwood: Founded in 1936.

Shoemaker: Founded in 1938, but known as Twin Pines until Dean Carolyn Shoemaker willed them money in 1940, which resulted in the changing of the house's name to Shoemaker.

Stewart: Established in 1986 by Robert Stewart.

Twin Pines: First organized in 1953 by State Home Demonstration Club members.

Dover: Established in 1939 by William McFadden as one of the first co-op houses. Closed in 1991.

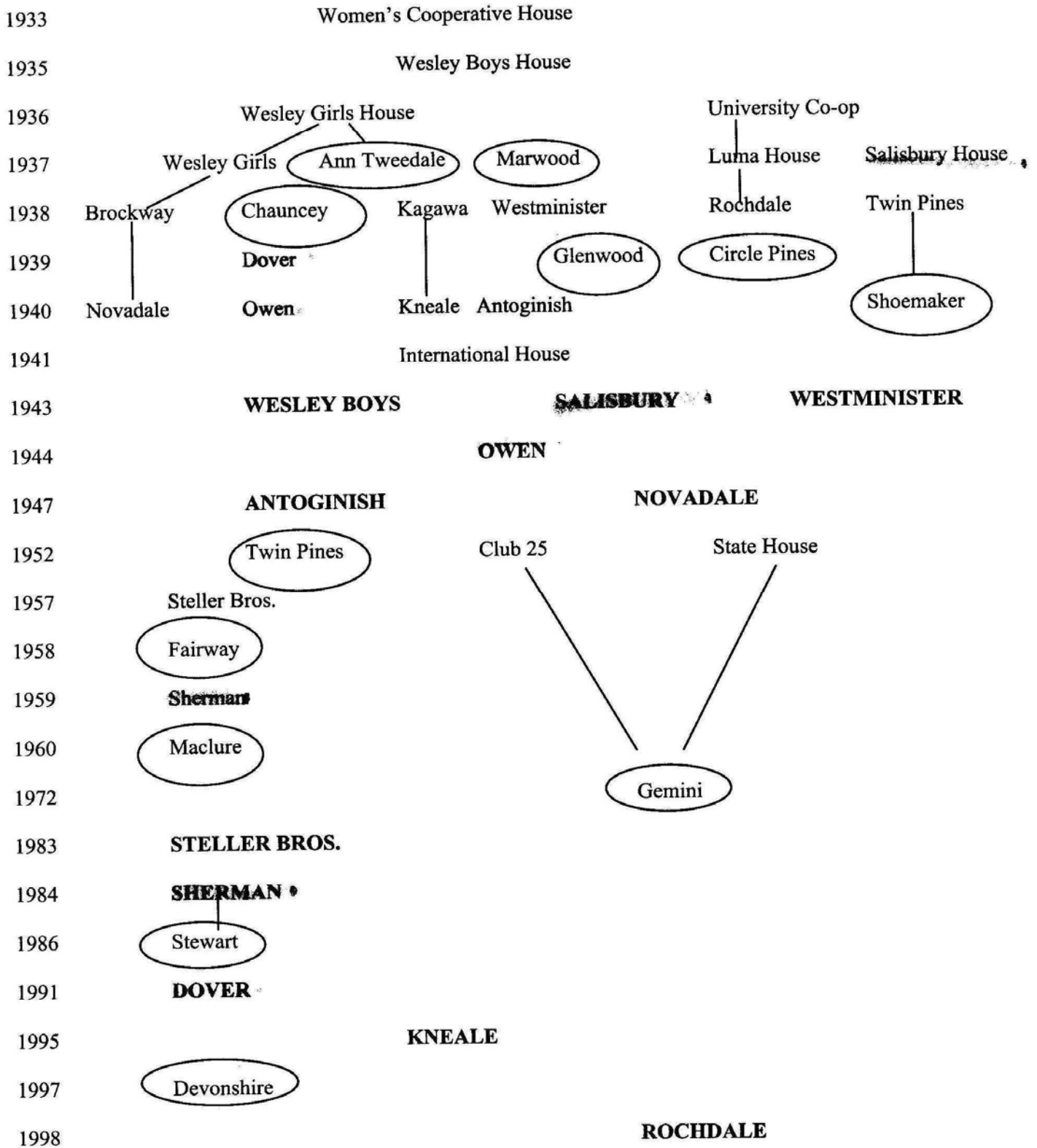
Kneale: Established in 1940 and closed in 1995.

Rochdale: Founded in 1936 and named after Rochdale, England where the cooperative movement started. Closed in 1998.

Sherman: Founded in 1964 and closed in 1984.

Stellar Brothers: Founded in 1957 and closed in 1983.

HISTORY OF COOPERATIVE HOUSING AT PURDUE



Existing Houses

Houses in BOLD indicate year of closing.

WOMEN'S COOPERATIVE HOUSES NO LONGER ACTIVE

NAME	DATE EST. DEMISE	NEW NAME	ADDRESS	SPONSOR
Antigonish House	1940-1947		17 University Street	
Brockway House	1940-1940		1 University Street	
Chauncey House	1949-			
Novadale	1940-1947			
Wesley Girls	1936-1937		12 1/2 Russell Street	
Women's Cooperative House	1933-1935		500 University Street	School of Home Economics

MEN'S COOPERATIVE HOUSES NO LONGER ACTIVE

NAME	DATE EST DEMISE	NEW NAME	ADDRESS	SPONSOR
Cary Hall Annex	1937-			
Club 25	1952-1972	Gemini	State Street	Cary Hall
International House	1941-1941		1 University Street	
Kagawa	1938-1939	Kneale	317 Vine Street 359 Vine Street	In memory of Ellen Ross Kneale
Luma	1937-1957	Rochdale	405 State Street 103 Andrew Place	
Marstellar	1937-1937	Marwood	204 Marstellar Street	
Oliver Perkins Terry House	1938-			Named for Oliver Perkins Terry
Owen	1941-1944		421 University Street	
Salisbury House	1937-1938		414 North Salisbury Street	
State House	1952-1972	Gemini	State Street	
Stellar Brothers	1957-1984		214 Marstellar Street	Church of the Brethren
University Cooperative	1936-1937	Luma Rochdale	405 State Street 1 University Street	
Wesley Boys House	1935-1943		467 Vine Street	
Westminister	1938-1943		318 North Grant Street	

Purdue Cooperative Housing Association (PCHA)

Purdue Cooperative Housing Association (PCHA) is the Purdue recognized student organization to which all the cooperatives belong. The student office is located in Stewart Center 20B. The PCHA board is composed of one student representative from each house and four faculty advisors from Purdue Research Foundation, the Office of the Dean of Students, and Physical Facilities. There are five members of the executive board within the full board: President, Vice President of Membership/Marketing, Vice President of Maintenance, Secretary, and Treasurer. Each executive member serves as chairperson for one of the following committees: Membership, Maintenance, Finance, and Student Issues. The PCHA board meets every other week to discuss issues within the cooperative system. PCHA also annually elects a student senator who represents the cooperative system in Purdue Student Government. This student attends PCHA meetings and reports on PSG activities and legislation. This board helps advise the houses on decisions concerning their finances, maintenance, and membership.

Purdue Student Housing Corporation (PSHC)

The growth of the cooperative movement at Purdue has been phenomenal, which reflects its appeal. This growth has been augmented both by endowments, and most importantly, by the establishment in 1938 of the Purdue Student Housing Corporation (PSHC) under the leadership of Robert Bruce Stewart, then treasurer of Purdue University.

Of the establishment of the PSHC, he wrote:

The reason for PSHC was evident during the Great Depression of the early thirties. At that time, most of us had little or no money at all, and students were indeed hard-pressed to find ways and means of sustaining themselves while going to school. Some efforts at cooperative living were under way at the University, but there seemed no source of strength or no plan of action by which a long-range program of low-cost housing could be provided. This, of course, was one of the first concerns of my office, and we worked with Mr. David Ross, chairman of the Board of Trustees, in trying to develop some basis for a continuing operation in the low-cost housing area. After receiving a gift of a modest amount to help worthy poor boys at Purdue, we finally decided that perhaps the best thing that we could do would be to use such gifts to establish a program to help students help themselves.

The Board of Trustees approved the use of some small gifts and trusts as an investment in property to be leased, used, improved, and ultimately owned by students. The normal turnover of students necessitated incorporation (as a nonprofit corporation) for negotiating ongoing contracts. A membership corporation rather than a stock one, PSHC had a board of directors with its elected officers to direct the corporation's affairs.

Rochdale House was the first to incorporate, followed by Shoemaker and then Kneale House. Once organized, the PSHC board could enter into lease agreements and contracts. In general, the University or the Purdue Research Foundation, a nonprofit organization, had been the former owners of the houses PSHC purchased.

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STUDENT COOPERATIVE HOUSING ASSOCIATION ORGANIZATION

