

A Neighbor Among Neighbors

Erie Neighborhood House
150 Years as a Home with No Borders



Maureen Hellwig

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Maureen Hellwig, Ph.D (University of Illinois at Chicago) is a lifelong Chicagoan. She is the great-great-granddaughter of Irish and German immigrants. While she is quite a few generations removed from her origins, she has kept her roots in mind while working with more recent immigrants during her time spent as both a volunteer and an employee at Erie Neighborhood House. It was that rich experience that inspired her to write this history, as this settlement house celebrates its 150th year of service to five generations of immigrants from Europe and Latin America.

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This masterful work tells how enduring values have allowed a settlement house to be an open door and a community voice to a succession of immigrant groups for 150 years - and counting. What is particularly valuable and unusual is that the analysis is equally insightful for every period, including the present.

-- Gary Johnson, CEO, Chicago History Museum

Born in Chicago's 33rd year as a city, Erie Neighborhood House has witnessed its home town prosper through the contributions of five generations of immigrants who came here seeking a better life. Few institutions have had such a view from the same address for 150 years. But it was not just a passive witness. When neighbors were tired and hungry, Erie House fed them, but not just with food—with knowledge. Through education Erie House empowered their neighbors to become citizens who take that privilege seriously. Numerous volunteers from Presbyterian churches throughout Chicagoland, motivated by the social gospel, came to Erie House to give and were constantly amazed at how much they received, because a settlement house fosters reciprocity.

Dutch, Norwegian, German, Polish, Italian, African American, Puerto Rican, or Mexican—you were welcome at Erie House. From pre-schooler to elder, you had a second home there. How Erie House and so many immigrants and migrants struggled and prospered together is the story that unfolds in *A Neighbor Among Neighbors*, marking Erie's 150 years as a "home with no borders."

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