

SPOTLIGHT

Thursday, February 24, 1977

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Sandra Perkins of Bloomfield Hills modeled a replica of Grace Coolidge's garnet velvet inaugural gown for the 60th anniversary fashion show.



Ann Perkins, in a gown of lustrous pale green satin with draped panels, portrayed Lou Hoover, the wife of the Depression era president.



Joni Culham, Farmington resident and executive secretary to David Ball, present director of Methodist Children's Village, represented the mini-skirt era, a time of rapid growth for the children's home.

A home for children turns 60

By MARGARET MILLER

Once at the White House, according to a tale recounted for those attending a most unusual fashion show at Bedford Inn, President and Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt entertained the king and queen of England and they ate "an al fresco luncheon of sausages and rolls."

"At the Methodist Children's Village, they called that a picnic with hot dogs," added television newscaster Ray Lane, who was telling the story.

That kind of side-by-side view of happenings in the nation and at the Methodist Children's home was the focus as the institution, now located in Redford Township, celebrated its 60th birthday.

On hand for the luncheon sponsored by the Methodist Children's Home Society were several hundred women and a few men, many of them volunteers who had given years of service to the home.

Those present saw a medley of presidential inaugural gowns and other styles reminiscent of Detroit's past. They heard the work of the home praised by a longtime admirer, Lenore Romney.

"THE FORMER first lady of Michigan, who also had been on hand when the society marked its 50th anniversary, said the institution's programs are helping battle "the breakup of human relationships and their sanctity."

"When women started to do their own thing," she said, "at first that meant music, or art, or writing. But then it came to the idea that you could do anything at all with impunity.

"We don't need the right to be equal to men in promiscuity and profanity."

Mrs. Romney added that the United States achieved its moon landing and exploration because "we put millions of dollars into it, but none of that would have been to any avail had not Galileo and Newton given us the right principles to build on."

"We must give human beings correct principles, too, to solve humanistic and social problems," she added.

"It's exciting to be here with human beings with correct principles."

THE FASHION SHOW portion of the program included replicas from the Seeley-Deer collection of gowns worn by the wives of a dozen presidents whose administrations spanned the 60-year history of the children's home.

Two new additions to the collection were included—the lace-trimmed dress Betty Ford wore for an official photo during her husband's administration, and the dress, designed by Detroit's Dominic Rompolo, that new first lady Rosalynn Carter wore the evening before her husband's inauguration.

It featured a long-sleeved top of black silk jersey and a skirt of white ribbed satin, banded with yellow satin ribbon at the waist and hemline.

Ahead of these paraded replicas of inaugural gowns, white silk with jet beads for Edith Wilson, buff crepe for Florence Harding, deep red velvet for Grace Coolidge, pale green satin for Lou Hoover.

And interspersed along the runway were outfits worn in like times by the women who helped the Methodist Children's home to grow, from the stark checked black and white deaconess dress

to the 1920s garb of a visitor to the home when it was located in Farmington.

Also shown were models of Eleanor Roosevelt's peach satin and pearl-trimmed "Marie pink" dress Mrs. Eisenhower wore, Jack Kennedy's yellow dress and cape and the filmy pink favored by Pat Nixon.

Other models helped the guests remember the "new look" of the days that followed World War II—and the mini-skirt—before winding up the

show with a gaucho outfit, and a sample of the clothing sported by professionals and volunteers who help youngsters in the Children's Village program today.

Models for the show included Marcia Wilshire, Ann Perkins and Sandra Perkins of Bloomfield Hills, Betsy Taylor, June McGregor and Kay Higbie of Birmingham, Ellen Horie and Lena Nichols of Westland and Joni Culham of Farmington.



A new addition to the Seeley-Deer collection of first lady gowns is this cream-colored dress, copied from one worn by Betty Ford and modeled by Pat Polzin. (Staff photos by Harry Mahtke)



Joan Guregian of Redford Township, chairman of the League of Children Friends, greeted speaker Lenore Romney.

...and looks back with pride on an eventful history

The Methodist Children's Village, celebrating 60 years of service to needy children this month, is known



Frances Knight became director of the Methodist children's home in 1922 and remained at its helm until 1942.

to many area residents as the imposing set of Tudor-style buildings on Six Mile between Middle Belt and Inkster in Redford Township.

The village represents, however, some of the most advanced thinking in the field of helping young people with special needs.

As the home and its ever-supporting Methodist Children's Home Society marked the anniversary, the institution's public relations director, Ann Burgess, researched some history of how the place came into being.

Her narrative forms the basis of a two-part series chronicling some of the things that have gone on within those Tudor walls, in the lovely wooded setting.

THE STORY begins during the World War I years, when deaconesses of the Methodist Church in the Detroit area were busy with a great deal of social service work.

In 1,17, one of them came upon two homeless children and took them to the deaconess residence.

Seeing a need to care for homeless kids, the Women's Home Missionary Society purchased a home in Highland Park to house 10 "tweedy and neglected" boys and girls.

By 1922, the number of such children being helped through the home had grown too large for them all to be accommodated, so the denomination purchased 42 acres of land in the outlying city of Farmington and built a house big enough to house 29 youngsters.

Bishop Theodore Henderson, then presiding bishop of the Methodist Church in Michigan, persuaded Frances Knight to become director of the enlarged home. She was previously a social worker in Detroit's Recorder's Court.

The Farmington home was filled with the bustle of children's activity, and its possibilities were increased when, in 1924, the Methodist Children's Home Society became one of the first to receive benefits from the new philanthropic foundation established by Detroit's S.S. Kresge.

BUT FRANCES KNIGHT had a dream of bigger things.

She envisioned a children's village that would provide a life for children as near to normal home life as possible. The village was to consist of separate cottage units, each accommodating seven children and one house-mother.

The village she had in mind would

include medical and dental clinics as well as psychological care for its young residents. She began early steps in that direction by establishing in the Farmington home a child placement program, a medical clinic, a psychological clinic to work with foster-mothers and children, and a child guidance clinic headed by Dr. Nellie Perkins.

It was in 1927 that Kresge began to catch her dream and his foundation set aside \$725,000 toward the projected village.

Gifts from Mr. and Mrs. Edsel Ford, Mr. and Mrs. Richard Webber and other prominent Detroiters followed, the property in Redford Township was purchased and architect J. Ivan Dize was engaged to draw up plans.

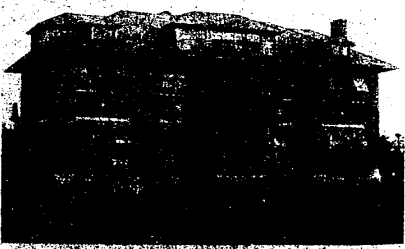
WHEN THE CHILDREN and staff moved and the village was dedicated in June, 1929, it consisted of an administration building and six cottage units carrying the names of Webber, Holcroft, Hanley, Knight and Epworth, which was a double unit.

Its unique facilities were not the only reason Methodist Children's Village began even then attracting nationwide and worldwide attention.

Instead of large groups of children lodged dormitory-style, it placed children in families of eight or nine, including both boys and girls and ranging in age from seven to 16, each with a housemother.

People were to come many miles to see the village and study its dual plan

of having children living both in its cottages and in supervised foster homes. (The history of the Methodist Children's Village will be covered from 1929 to the present in Monday's issue.)



This building, which housed the original Methodist Children's Home from 1929 to 1932, was in Farmington on the north side of Grand River where the White Motor Corp. now is located. The building was destroyed by fire a few years after the home relocated in its present Redford Township spot.