



WORKING TOGETHER—Over fifty Norwich families have recently become members of the new Root District Community Club, and organization of Goodrich Four Corners-area neighbors which formed six weeks ago in an

effort to keep the old Root District Schoolhouse for community use. Pictured above are [back row] Sidney Cook, Irma Cook, Robert Ladd. In front: Ruth Cook, Jean Lawe, Barbara [Mrs. Robert] Ladd, Fred Ladd. Sidney Cook and Robert Ladd are Co-Presidents of the new Club.

Goodrich schoolhouse project restoring neighborliness, too

BY DAN FERM

Thanks to an eleventh-hour effort by a few neighbors to save what was once their community school, Norwich's Goodrich Four Corners area is experiencing a kind of social renaissance.

Long-time residents and 'newcomers' have banded together during the last two months to form a new 'Root District Community Club', and to keep the old Root District Schoolhouse on the Main Village Road from reverting back to Norwich School District ownership.

Since the call went out in early December, 52 families have paid the \$4.00 membership fee, and the Community Club's officers are looking forward to a full and varied schedule of social events in 1975.

"We're hoping to have some good times," says Club co-president Sidney Cook, "and get to know our neighbors a little better."

Once the schoolhouse's sagging foundation is shored up in the spring, says Cook the 38-year-old building can be the scene for any number of neighborhood activities, including suppers, square dances, birthday, and anniversary and holiday parties, 4-H Club and Scouts meetings, and even roller skating.

With over \$200 in the bank already, and with several raffles planned for later this winter, Cook and his fellow Club officers have high hopes of raising

the \$2,000 they figure will be needed to get the building ready.

Less than six weeks ago, no Root District Community club existed. Its genesis is still something of a surprise to the handful of Goodrich Four Corners families who initiated the last-minute appeal.

It all began, explains Club secretary Jean Lawe, when Rose Cook, treasurer of the dormant Root District Game Club, told building trustee Fred Ladd that the Game Club's meager funds were insufficient to cover the cost of renewing the building's fire insurance policy.

Under the October, 1952 deed by which the schoolhouse was conveyed to the Game Club by the Norwich School Board, the Club was required to insure the building, or turn it back over to the School District.

The Game Club had been active during the 1950's and early 1960's. Though the Club had been used rarely since 1962, the insurance policy had been kept up until this year.

Recalling the fate of the old Turnpike Schoolhouse, which was sold and burned, Fred Ladd, his brother Robert, and Cook called a meeting of families in the Goodrich Four Corners neighborhood.

Over 30 people turned out for the meeting, which was held, according to Lawe, under oil lamps in the unheated schoolhouse on Dec. 4. Officers were

elected at the meeting, and the newly-founded Community Club voted

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Schoolhouse--

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to pay dues to cover insurance and electricity expenses for its new headquarters.

Sidney Cook and Robert Ladd were elected co-presidents; Ralph Aulis was named treasurer; Charles Oliver became social chairman; and Lawe was made secretary of the Community Club.

A second meeting—under electric lights—was held Jan. 5, and a third is scheduled for next Wednesday night.

The main priority for the Club this winter, says Cook, is fund-raising for the restoration. A building fund has been set up, and to give it a boost, the Club is seeking ten dollar contributions from its member families. Any Norwich resident may become a member of the Root District Community Club, he emphasizes.

The building fund will also be helped, they hope, by upcoming raffles of cut hardwood and, possibly, a woodstove. Though heavy use must await the work on the foundation, Robert Ladd notes that ten members held a "practice" square dance in the schoolhouse last Saturday night.

The building's interior is in good shape. Large pictures of Lincoln and Washington, and two blackboards evoke the not-so-distant days when neighborhood children—including Sid Cook's younger sister, Irma—went to school in it.

The Game Club's peak years are recalled, too, in a kitchenette built into a corner of the old schoolhouse, and in a piano on what served as the school's "stage".

"We think it's kind of beneficial to the community," says Robert Ladd, "to keep a place which can be used for a variety of purposes."

Ladd says he was as surprised as anyone else at the response to the save-the-schoolhouse appeal. "It's not all old people, either," he notes. "When I say 'old people', I mean one's who've lived around here a long time. There's one doctor who's a member, for instance, and he's very interested."

Ladd says he's not quite sure how to explain the enthusiastic response to the new Community Club.

"Years ago, people used to use their community churches and schoolhouses," he says, "and maybe they're coming back to it. Maybe people are more interested in staying closer to home."

"Maybe things go in cycles."