

Walker Home for Missionary Children (1869)
Walker Missionary Homes, Inc. (1929)
The Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange (1989)

Timeline

13 Oct 1826 Eliza Mercy Harding was born in Waltham, Massachusetts to Rev. Sewall and Eliza (Wheeler) Harding.

13 Oct 1852 Eliza Mercy Harding married Rev. Augustus Walker in East Medway Massachusetts. He was ordained on the same day.



circa 1852 Mr. Augustus Walker and Eliza Harding Walker

1853 On January 7, 1853 Eliza and Augustus sailed for the near East and eventually arrived at Diarbekir, located on the Tigris River in Eastern Turkey. The Walkers endured thirteen years of grueling labor, broken by furloughs back to America. They had six children, two of whom died in Turkey. Only one, Harriet, was born in America during one of their furloughs.

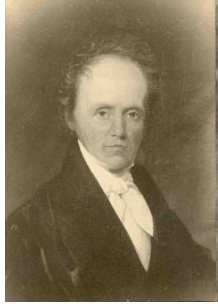
1866 Rev. Augustus Walker died in Turkey in a cholera epidemic.



Circa 1870's Mrs. Eliza Harding Walker



The Walker Children circa 1870's



Portrait of Rev. Sewall Harding, unknown date

1867 Eliza Walker returned to America with four children and initially, lived with her parents at 144 Hancock Street. Four lively children were too much for Mrs. Harding, so Rev. Harding built them a house at 105 Hancock Street (at the corner of Fern Street). Not wishing to be a financial burden on her father, Eliza supplemented her widow's pension by taking in boarders at 105 Hancock St.



The house at 105 Hancock Street, circa 1880's

1868 In the fall of 1868, Mrs. Walker attended the 59th annual meeting of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (hereafter referred to as "the American Board" or the "ABCFM"). There she met Mrs. Snow, who needed help with housing for her children so she could return to the Micronesian Mission. The Prudential Committee of the Board assigned Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Ely with the task of investigating the needs of missionary families and assisting with the care of the children of missionaries left in this country.

1868-1869 During the winter of 1868-69, further conversations were held with Mr. and Mrs. Snow about the needs of their children.

1870 In the fall of 1870, Carrie and Fred Snow joined the Walker family at 105 Hancock Street as the first children for whom Mrs. Walker provided housing. "Thus the doors of the Walker Home for Missionary Children were opened. During all the years since, in spite of depressions, wars and calamities of all kinds, which have shaken the American Board and the world, they have never been closed." (Field, p. 11).



Mrs. Pritchett, first staff member to assist Mrs. Walker

1871 Mrs. Pritchett became the home companion (first staff member) to Mrs. Walker, serving from 1871-1881. "For ten years Mrs. Walker had the capable help of Mrs. Pritchett, an Englishwoman, who was a good cook and a deft seamstress. She loved children and helped in many ways." (Fields, p. 14).

1873 The number of children grew so fast that Mrs. Walker gave up her adult boarders so she could focus solely on the children. By 1878 she had twenty-four!

1877 Money concerns were pressing and Mrs. Walker had to continuously seek financial support. By 1877 the Prudential Committee had raised the annual allowance per child five times, now paying \$500 annually per child. But Mrs. Walker had to supplement this funding with aid from friends of the missionaries, an effort that proved to be exhausting and never ending.

Again and again during the first ten years Mrs. Walker expanded the 105 Hancock Street house, adding wings on all four sides of her house as well as dormer windows, porches, and balconies to accommodate the growing numbers of children.

1876-1877 In 1876 Sewall Harding died, followed by his wife Eliza in 1877, leaving Mrs. Walker and her two brothers heirs to the larger house at 144 Hancock St. To relieve the crowded situation at 105 Hancock Street, Mrs. Walker immediately transferred the older children to 144 Hancock Street and she hired staff to supervise them.



The original Italianate-style house at 144 Hancock Street, built by Rev. Sewall Harding in around 1860.

1877-1879 Mrs. Walker was under great strain, now having two houses to manage and fund. The family totaled thirty-two, twenty-four of whom were children, including her own four children.

1879 Mrs. Walker made new appeals to the American Board for financial support. But the Board thought greater effort should be made to place the children in other private homes and Mrs. Walker had to lobby for the idea of the Walker Home. The Board was always lukewarm to her vision.

1879 Disappointed in the American Board's lack of support, Mrs. Walker developed a plan to forge ahead anyway by buying out her brothers' shares and enlarging the 144 Hancock Street house. She began construction with no money in hand, and her builder believed in her and trusted that she would find the funds. She mortgaged the property, and began appealing to individuals for money, and got a steady enough response to keep paying her bills as they came due.

1880 On May 5, 1880 the dedication and formal opening of the expanded 144 Hancock Street home was held.

1881 On July 11, 1881 Mrs. Walker established the "Fund for Missionary Children" to create a permanent endowment large enough to provide an income to finance the work of caring for the children. Trustees were appointed for the "Fund for Missionary Children," who were responsible for accounting annually to the Prudential Committee of the American Board.

1881 In December of 1881, the Trustees make the first public appeal for the endowment fund—the target was \$50,000. The response was slow and Mrs. Walker’s correspondence in 1881-1883 showed the strains of overwork.

1885 During the summer of 1885, an exhausted Mrs. Walker rested and hired others to run Walker for the first time. She went back to 105 Hancock St. to live, and continued to handle the financial affairs and general oversight of the Walker Homes, but not the day-to-day operations.

1886-1897 Mrs. Marshall D. Sanders was appointed the first Superintendent of the Walker Home for Missionary Children.

1886 By November, 1886, the Endowment Fund had reached only \$12,000 and \$15,560 had been contributed toward the \$20,000 debt on the house mortgage. The Prudential Committee renewed their efforts to raise the remainder.

1887 In November 1887, the ABCFM reimbursed Mrs. Walker for operating expenses and to pay off the mortgage and the Walker Home for Missionary Children was deeded to the Prudential Committee of the ABCFM. They assumed no responsibility for management, and the Homes were to be administered by the Trustees of the Fund. This laid the permanent foundation for the Walker Home. The Endowment Fund had reached approximately \$15,000 by 1887. Already the Trustees were thinking in terms of needing \$100,000, not the \$50,000 that had been the initial goal.

1891 This was the last year Mrs. Walker received an annual grant of \$500 from the American Board for her work, officially marking the end of the appointment given to Mrs. Walker at the annual meeting in 1868.

1891-1893 Mrs. Etta D. Marden was appointed Assistant Superintendent, or Housekeeper.

1893 Mrs. Walker raised funds and on April 13, 1893, purchased the Charles T. Haskell estate at 138 Hancock Street (house and lot) next door to 144 Hancock. This was to be called “The Annex” or “The Cottage,” (later called “The Walker Cottage”, and later still, “Barton House”) and it was be used for family living. The Cottage remained under Mrs. Walker’s supervision as long as she lived.



The original Cottage (now Barton House). The Rev. Sewall Harding built this house around 1860 and sold it to Captain Charles T. Haskell in 1861.

At the same time as the purchase of “The Cottage,” a small house was built for the janitor, using the Haskell barn as the framework. It was moved to the back of the lot, turned into a comfortable home for a small family, and named “The Lodge.”



The Lodge circa 1930

A beautiful garden was developed between the Lodge and the Cottage.

1897-1904 Miss Margaret Adams served as Superintendent.

1902 The endowment goal had still not been attained, despite Mrs. Walker's unflagging efforts to reach out to friends and former supporters.



Mrs. Stanford

1904-1907 Mr. and Mrs. Stanford became the first couple who were named as Superintendents. Mrs. Stanford took the lead role.

1905 On January 10, 1905 the Board of Managers, replacing the Official Visitors, was appointed by the ABCFM to take a more active role in day-to-day operations, supplementing and supporting the efforts of the live-in superintendents. At this time the Walker Homes were comprised of the main house at 144 Hancock St., the Annex or Cottage at 138 Hancock Street, the janitor's Lodge, two acres of land, and the endowment, now valued at \$40,000.

1905 In April 1905, efforts were made to prioritize repairs and furnishings. There was great progress on raising small amounts of money to fund these efforts. The Board of Managers worked tirelessly, never satisfied and always dreaming of the next project.



Harding Family Monument, Prospect Hill Cemetery, Millis Massachusetts, April 2012

1906 Mrs. Walker died on January 15, 1906. She is buried in East Medway (now Millis) in Prospect Hill Cemetery in a family plot along with her parents and two of her children.

1906 Following Mrs. Walker's death, Miss Harriet Walker, her eldest daughter, requested that the Annex (the Cottage, later Barton) be taken over by the Board of Managers. It was renamed The Walker Cottage.

1906 The first booklet describing the Home was issued.

1906 Conditions of admission: "When the home is not fully occupied by missionaries or their children, other persons might be received under the condition that they must leave whenever the rooms are need for missionaries or their children, and the terms must be from \$6 -\$y a week instead of \$5. Persons receiving a salary from outside the Missionary Boards and residing at the Home should, according to the discretion of the Board of Managers, pay an extra price for board. The rent of Walker Cottage was to be \$25 a month. A family renting the cottage should leave it in as good condition as they found it, replacing things broken or injured. Transients should pay 75 cents a day."

1906 The endowment was valued at \$35,000.

1907-1908 Miss Marcia Gray was Superintendent.



Miss Lucille Foreman

1908-1909 Miss Lucille Foreman was Superintendent.

1908 Miss Harriet Walker was invited to make free use of the Home as long as she lived. The Walker house at 105 Hancock had passed into the hands of her brother, Dean Walker and when he died in 1914, his wife continued to live in that house until her death in 1952. A second lot next door passed to Harriet Walker and her other siblings Frederick and Helen, but was later sold.

1909-1910 Mrs. Reid was Superintendent.

1910 The ABCFM began to see the need for accommodations for retired missionaries.

1910-1914 Mrs. Guinniefred Bates was Superintendent.

1911 In January, 500 copies of an attractive booklet were prepared and sent to donors.

1911 In April, the World in Boston missionary exhibit was held at the Mechanics Building in Boston—it was organized in part by the missionaries living at the Walker Home.

1911 There was major remodeling to the main Walker House and to the Cottage. This included a new kitchen, dining room, and extensive repairs.



1912 The day after the fire

1912 On March 16, 1912, fire destroyed the main Walker House at 144 Hancock Street. At first the hope was to repair the original building, but it was not feasible and instead plans were made for a new structure. The appeal for funds received a generous response. This, coupled with insurance funds, raised all of the \$50,000 needed to build the new Walker main building.



1913 The new Walker House

1913 On October 16, 1913, a dedication was held for the rebuilt main Walker House.

1914 Another attractive booklet was prepared and sent to donors and interested friends.

1914-1915 In July of 1914, the Rev. and Mrs. Charles L. (Alice) Skinner became Superintendents, a post they until September 1915.

1914-1915 Extensive repairs and remodeling were undertaken at the Walker Cottage. The roof was raised and extended over the rear portion of the former building and a sun room and screened porches were added at the sides. The house could now accommodate 18 people. Over \$12,000 was raised for repairs and furnishings.



1914 The Cottage under renovation

1915 A new brochure "A Good Task Well Done" announced that the "Walker Cottage Home" for retired missionaries without children was now ready for occupancy.

1915-1925 Dr. and Mrs. Thomas B. Scott served as the Superintendents.

1917 The overall property now consisted of the main Walker Home, the Walker Cottage, and the Lodge, worth \$50,000. The property was completely free from debt. An Endowment Fund of over \$100,000 was now secured.

1918 50th Anniversary. Because this event fell in the midst of World War I, it was marked only by a letter of appeal for the Endowment Fund and there was no ceremony.

1922 The Home was in serious financial condition again—The Prudential Committee agreed to assume the salary of the Superintendents and made an annual grant toward the salaries of the superintendents.

1923 Miss Harriet Walker moved into Walker Cottage on a permanent basis.

1925 Bancroft Hall at 161-163 Grove Street (originally Rev. Sewall Harding's house), part of Lasell Seminary, was offered for sale. No funds were available, but the American Board secured a three-month option on the property. An appeal for funds was made in the *Missionary Herald*. They went ahead without all the funding in hand and in early 1926 the property was purchased and remodeled into a duplex for family living, called Harding East and Harding West.

1926 Miss D.A. Butterfield was Superintendent briefly.

1926-1937 Rev. and Mrs. Albert E. LeRoy were Superintendents.

1927 A dedication and house warming for Harding East and West was held on February 5, 1927.

1927 The carriage barn, part of the Lasell property and dubbed the "Barnacle", was remodeled into Hume house, thanks to contributions made by friends of Dr. Robert Allen Hume. A prominent missionary, Dr. Hume was coming home after fifty years of service in India and wanted to live at the Walker Homes. The Barnacle was converted into an attractive seven-room cottage with an enclosed porch connecting it to Harding West.



1921 Walker kids on the teeter that belonged to Lasell Seminary. The barn behind is "the Barnacle" before it was renovated into Hume House.



1930 Hume (to the left) and Harding House (to the right)

1927 In October, 1927 The Prudential Committee of the ABCFM granted permission to erect another house to be used for missionaries if entirely new funding could be obtained. Mrs. Granby Bridges and Miss Ethel Howard of Worcester donated the money as a memorial to their mother. The Ruth L. Howard House, six rooms, the first all-new building on the compound, was built and completely furnished with their donation.



1927 Howard House

1927 A three-car garage was also built—paid for by a loan without interest from one of the Board of Managers.

1927 In 1927, the Prudential Committee realized they were becoming too involved in the financing, legal, and care of legacies received. Ultimately after some study, this led to incorporation of the Board of Trustees in 1929.

1928 The City of Newton took by eminent domain a large portion of the Harding East/West lot on Grove Street recently purchased from Lasell Seminary, to enlarge the Williams School yard. The Walker Home was paid \$4,500 in compensation and the City agreed to restore the Walker tennis court to usable condition.

1929 On April 13, 1929 the “Walker Home for Missionary Children,” became, under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, “The Walker Missionary Homes, Inc.” The “Fund for Missionary Children” started in 1881 by Eliza Walker, became the “Endowment Fund.” The Trustees and Board of Managers resigned to be elected to the new boards.

The agreement recognized: 1) The American Board as legal owner of property with power to appoint Managers and Trustees and to hold and administer funds for the purchase of new property; 2) Trustees as holders and administrators of permanent funds with power to pay over part of the income from said funds to the Managers, and to have charge of the premises; 3) Board of Managers as caretakers of the internal affairs, such as staff, rates, rules, discipline and raising money for the ongoing work. From this time, the minutes of the Prudential Committee record, regarding Walker Homes, only the appointment of new trustees and in their budget a yearly grant toward the Superintendent’s salary.

1930 Another fundraising campaign was undertaken to increase the endowment, and another attractive brochure was published.

1930’s The Depression years were a difficult time for the Walker Homes, as donations from the churches to Missions fell off and work in the field had to be sharply curtailed. Before the confusion caused by the Depression was over, the Japanese had invaded China and there was much upheaval in the missionary communities in China and much coming and going to and from Walker House.

1933 The Walker Missionary Homes received a \$15,000 bequest that could only be used for new building. This resulted in discussions about tearing down the Walker Cottage and building a new structure. Ultimately the decision was made to build an addition to the Walker Cottage instead.

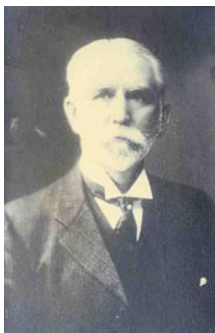
1934 By 1934, enough funding had been obtained to proceed with construction. The old Lodge was torn down in preparation for the work on the Cottage.

1934-5 The Cottage was remodeled (7 single rooms plus 3rd floor, expansion of dining room); and addition of four suites (8 rooms plus baths)—at a final cost of \$30,500. Rates were \$7 a week for a single room; \$8.25 per person in suites. Mrs. Flora Barton coordinated the building efforts.



1934 The Walker Cottage with new brick addition at rear

1935 On May 13, 1935 the dedication of the new building was held, named Barton House in honor of Mrs. Barton's forty-plus years as chairman of the Board of Managers, and Dr. Barton's more than forty years of service as a President of the Board of Trustees.



The Bartons



1935 Mrs. Rachel Felt, a former staff member, returned to Walker after conclusion of her missionary work in India to become the first hostess of the new Barton House.

1935 This year was the first time in 50 years that Walker Homes had no students in Newton High School. More private schools welcomed missionary children at board allowance rates so there was diminished demand for housing for children at the Walker Homes. "...It began to look as if Walker would become a home for transients and an overflow for Barton House aged." There had been a growing disconnect between the management style of the older, retirement-age LeRoys and the young adults in residence, and growing challenges regarding the behavior of the younger residents.

1935 A year of study was undertaken to determine future directions. The Trustees knew the LeRoys were going to resign, and appointed Mr. and Mrs. Walter Fitch to a one year interim appointment as Superintendents. One of their charges was to study the role of Superintendent and make recommendations for changes.

1937 Three more garages were added at the rear of the main Walker House.

1937-1949 Mr. and Mrs. Arthur G. Robinson, missionaries in China, served as the Superintendents. They were affectionately referred to as "The Robbies."

1938 A dietician housekeeper was added to staff. The Committee on Finance and Publicity was formed by Board of Managers. A Grounds Committee was established.

1938 Both the Trustees and the Board of Managers took steps to develop new friends and financial supporters. New brochures were printed to aid in this effort.

1938 The grounds, neglected and full of demolition rubble, were rehabilitated by Mr. Robinson and the young people living at Walker. Mr. Herbert Kelleway, a noted landscape architect who had made the original landscaping plan when Walker House was rebuilt in 1912, volunteered his time to develop a set of recommendations to improve the beauty and usefulness of the grounds. The work got off to an enthusiastic start when the Hurricane of 1938 hit, causing much damage to trees and shrubs. Within the year, all was cleaned up, and several Trustees made personal gifts for new trees and shrubs.

1939 The elevator was installed in Barton House to increase access to the upper floors for the elderly Barton residents.



1939 70th Anniversary Pageant



1939 The 70th Anniversary of the Walker Missionary Homes was celebrated on May 27, 1939. Mrs. Robinson, worried about an increasingly chaotic world overseas and the looming threat of war, persuaded the Board of Managers to hold a 70^h Anniversary celebration and not wait for the 75th Anniversary. An elaborate pageant was held.

Mrs. Robinson was a genius at writing letters to bond the extended Walker family together. She captured the life and vibrance of Walker in countless articles, presentations, and letters. All of her outreach resulted in successful fundraising, and Mrs. Robinson made a notable contribution to a new phase of financing the home. Mrs. Walker, and then Mrs. Barton, had struggled singlehandedly to secure gifts from people of wealth. Depression and war redistributed wealth and the Walker Missionary Homes became more dependent on more modest contributions from a wider array of people from the churches. The Robinsons helped to establish a valuable link with these churches which was maintained by successive Superintendents and Administrators for more than forty years.

1940 Many war-evacuated mission families came to stay at the Home. The War era called for creative management by the Robinsons and the Board of Managers, as there was rationing of food, household, and building supplies.

1940's The American Board saw the need to bring national leaders from around the world to the United States to attend conferences and to address churches and other assemblies. Walker began to provide short-term housing for these visitors.

1942 The residents of Barton House were reaching old age. The Trustees studied the need for nursing care and voted not to provide these services.

1945 The dining room porch at Walker House was glassed in.

1945 The Walker Missionary Homes became a project of the Women of Massachusetts Conference; District chairmen were appointed. This aided greatly in the fund raising effort. There were many church groups paying visits to Walker to socialize with the residents.

1946 All heating on campus was converted to oil or gas.

1947 The ABCFM made a grant of \$4,500 for repairs and painting.

1948 A marked decrease in children and young people without parents occurred. They averaged only two or three per year after this.

1949 The Trustees began plans to add another house on the Grove Street side of the property. However, plans were halted when the City of Newton took by eminent domain a second sizeable portion (26,627 square feet) of land fronting Grove Street on the east side of the property for the Williams School. The City proposed paying \$4,287 in compensation, but Walker negotiated for damages and was ultimately paid \$6,325 in compensation. This taking left very little land to the east of Harding House, barely enough for a driveway.

1949-1952 Rev. and Mrs. Alfred Dixon Heininger, former Chinese missionaries, served as the Superintendents. Mr. Heininger was a capable administrator, and together they were able to build on the success of "The Robbies." There was a continuing problem finding help, and the Heiningers began working with the Displaced Persons Center operated by the Lutherans in Avon, Massachusetts. They successfully found household help in Mrs. Maria Parma and her sister Ellen Rass, refugees from Estonia. Both were to become long-term, beloved residents and workers at Walker.

1951 315 people were accommodated during the year, either as residents or for short term stays; they were new missionaries, furlough missionaries and families, former missionaries, friends of missionaries and national church leaders from around the world.

1951 Mr. Heininger led a steady drive to put the property in better condition. This included painting outside and in, cleaning and servicing of all furnaces, plumbing and electrical repairs, furniture repairs, constant care of the grounds, purchase of new equipment, washing machine, water heater, new kitchen and office machines, new beds, mattresses, and bed linens. Outreach efforts also continued—21 church groups visited the Home during the year and Mr. and Mrs. Heininger spoke nearly 100 times to church schools, women's and men's groups, associations, districts, and state conference.

1951 A fire alarm system, additional fire extinguishers, an emergency lighting system and fire escapes were installed in Barton House.

1952-1953 Dr. and Mrs. Harold Matthews, also former China missionaries, served as the Superintendents. There were many children in residence during these years, but only one who fit the old model of living at Walker and attending Newton High School while his parents were abroad. More groups of church women than could be accommodated wished to visit the Homes for luncheons, desserts and

teas, and to socialize with the resident missionaries and hear them speak about their experiences as missionaries.

1953 Upon the Matthews' retirement on May 1, 1953, Miss Gladys Williams became Acting Superintendent, assisted by Mrs. Walter Tong, Chairman of the Board of Managers and Mrs. Walter Hume.



Mr. and Mrs. Raymond (Abbie) Olds

1953-1963 Mr. and Mrs. Raymond Olds served as the Superintendents. They were the first hired to have not been part of the American Board family of missionaries.



1950's In wheelchairs, Michael (with baseball bat) and Beryl Masters

1955-56 Eddy House was built at 169 Grove Street, adapted for paraplegic living. The first residents were the Masters family, who had first come to Walker in 1952 and lived in Harding East. Mrs. Beryl Masters and one of her sons were polio victims and, as wheelchair users, Harding was unsuitable for their needs. The new house was named for Mrs. Josephine Russell Eddy, a long-time member of the Board of Managers and for many years, the Assistant Treasurer of the Board of Trustees.

1957 Walker bought a station wagon to aid in transporting residents.

1962 The United Church Board for World Ministries (UCBWM), the successor to the ABCFM, moved to New York.

1963-1965 Mr. and Mrs. Maurice W. Belair were the Superintendents.

1965 The Trustees again studied the idea of providing nursing home services for its aging residents, and again decided against this approach.

1967 In a major reorganization, the separate Board of Managers and Board of Trustees were united in a single Board of Trustees with 30 members. Committee chairmen and officers formed the Executive Committee. New by-laws placed more managerial leadership on the Superintendent.

1966-1967 Mrs. Madge Bergsman served as Superintendent.

1967-1969 The Rev. and Mrs. Harold Leland served as Superintendents.

1969-1976 The Revs. Sam and Reka Kaetzel were the Administrators. They were the first to be called Administrators. They originally lived in the superintendents' suite in what is now the office suite at Walker House, but moved into Hume House in 1971.

1969-70 There was a sizeable renovation to Walker House, changing the dormitory style of the upstairs rooms into suites, adding several living suites on the ground floor, adding an elevator, and building the connecting ramp between Walker and Barton. With the new ramp, Barton residents joined the main house for lunch and dinner. The dining room was also carpeted. There were some individual gifts for these projects, including a separate elevator campaign, but most of the cost was borne by a \$100,000 mortgage secured from the United Church Board for World Ministries.

1970 In 1970, there were 23 missionaries in residence; by 1973 this number had dwindled to 13. The admission policy of the early 70's gave preference to missionaries under the sponsorship of the United Church of Christ, retired UCC missionaries and their children, nationals from related mission field churches, and transients staying for short periods.

1974 The Board of Trustees opened admissions to personnel of any church group with which the Walker Homes cooperated in any ecumenical relationship, with preference given to UCC or continuing Congregationalists.

1976-1980 The Rev. and Mrs. Raymond (Lorene) Gray were the Administrators.

1980 The Rev. and Mrs. Walter (Lorraine) Holcomb were the interim Administrators.



The Rev. Malcolm Washburn

1980-1990 The Rev. Malcolm Washburn served as the Administrator. He lived in Harding East (now Yeo House) during his tenancy.

1980's During the 1980's, the housing pattern continued to shift away from mission and church professionals toward lay people. By 1990 there were only eleven permanent residents, and only three of them came from the mission tradition.

1981 The dining room in Walker House was redone with a gift from the Leyden Church in Brookline, which had closed.

1982 A sidewalk was laid on Grove Street. Margaret Hale, a Walker resident, helped raise the matching money needed for the project. On September 1, 1982, the new sidewalk was dedicated.

1983 With only 25% of the resident population now representing the mission constituency, the Trustees appointed a Long Range Planning Committee to explore the future of the institution. Discussion of this report laid the basis for the major programmatic shift a few years later from Walker Missionary Homes to the Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange.

1987-1991 The Rev. Gordon Shultz served as the first Executive Director of the Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange. Rev. Washburn continued to serve as the Administrator.

1989 The Walker Missionary Homes, Inc. was officially renamed the Walker Center for Ecumenical Exchange and a new statement of purpose was written. Corporate changes were made official with the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office. The new Exchange had several purposes: to create an international, ecumenical study center; to provide educational resources on global issues from Christian perspectives, and to create an exchange and communication network between individuals, groups and institutions around the world.

1989 Ties to the United Church Board for World Ministries were formally dissolved. The Walker Center, for the first time, no longer had any formal ties to specific religious bodies.

1989 The major effort of the new Walker Center program was to respond in 1989 to the events in Tianamen Square China. The Walker Center became a major communications center for Chinese students in New England to disseminate information back into China and to keep the American public informed. Ultimately the Democracy for China Fund remained at Walker for several years, while the Chinese Information Center moved out. A Tibetan Refugee Resettlement Program and Biblical Literacy Program for Indo-Chinese Christians in New England were also begun.

1990 Rev. Shultz developed a new program called Creating and Renewing Democratic Values, with attention on Eastern Europe. This began a period of serious decline for the Walker Center. Unfortunately, this and other new ventures of the Walker Center failed to produce enough revenue to carry their way and various grant applications written to support these efforts failed to obtain funding. Attempts to develop partnerships with local churches failed as their interest in international programs was minimal. The change in direction for the Walker Center also created ill-will with Congregationalists who had long supported the traditional purposes of the Walker Missionary Homes. Finally, the residential part of the Walker program was in trouble due to an increasing number of vacancies. Several hundred thousand dollars in endowment was used during this troubled era to keep the institution afloat.

1990 The Trustees formed a task force to reexamine the institution's mission in light of the deepening financial crisis. In 1990 Malcolm Washburn resigned and Rev. Richard (Dick) Yeo was brought in as the Interim Administrator. By 1991 Gordon Schultz also resigned. Rev. Yeo's immediate challenge was to stabilize the institution and increase revenue. After a year, he was asked to stay as the Administrator, a role he played until 1998. The Yeos lived in Eddy House.

1990's In the early 1990's, Harding East was upgraded to be used for multiple tenancy. Two new bathrooms were added, floors sanded, kitchen upgraded, ceilings replastered and all rooms painted.

1991 The Trustee's reexamination of the mission resulted in a new mission statement intended to give a focus for the Center's redevelopment: *"Walker Center is an ecumenical residential and conference center which works in partnership with religious communities and promotes an understanding of contemporary international mission."*

1990-1998 During the Yeo era, the number of residents was increased to between 45-55, and a new relationship was developed with the BU School of Theology. By this point there were only a handful of retired missionaries still living at Walker and many of the residents were international seminary students.

1992 The Trustees first began to offer Walker as a conference center for church and non-profit agencies. A busy schedule evolved over the years. Through ads in various religious publications such as *Christian*

Century, Walker also began to manage a bed-and-breakfast business, mostly to pastors and families coming on holiday or to put offspring in college.



1995 *The new sign*

1995 The Yeo's worked to develop several gardens on the campus, including a Missionary Memorial Garden between Walker and Barton, aided by small contributions and the gift of rocks from around the country; the Cochran Rose Garden, established by gifts from Mary Cochran (former Trustee and missionary) and others, located behind Barton and Howard Houses; a perennial garden in front of Hume and Harding West; a parking lot entrance garden, gift of Elinor Yeo and her sisters memorializing their grandparents' ministry in China; and a new entrance sign as a memorial to Harry Hohman and Bob Bewick, former Barton residents.

1998 The Board wished to give additional focus to the mission of being a center of hospitality for the world church. The categories for inclusion in the Walker community were sharpened to include: existing senior members; graduate theological students for the term of their degree program, with a particular emphasis upon people who come from the world church; clergy and church scholars needing short stays of varying duration; short term (up to six months) stays for people referred by a church or pastor for pastoral reasons; residents of current Walker-sponsored programs. Several residents were asked to leave because they did not fit within these parameters.

Under Rev. Yeo's watch, much was done to revitalize the physical facilities. The Patrick and Anna Cudahy Fund helped with a redesign of the living room into an enclosed, air-conditioned conference facility; there was an addition of a handicapped accessible bathroom; and rewiring, carpeting and new service areas for the dining room. The Cudahy Fund and Trustee gifts helped with a redesign of the parking lot to handle growing parking needs and built a new entrance portico to protect residents and guests during the winter. In a separate and specialized fund raising effort, many contributors gave small gifts to name ants in a creative campaign to help rebuild the Walker porch covering, which had been ravaged by carpenter ants.

1998 Although the specifics are not reflected in Board minutes, in 1998, Harding East was renamed Yeo House in recognition of the tremendous contributions of Rev. Richard Yeo and his wife Elinor.



The Rev. William and Susan Briggs

1998-2004 Rev. William and Susan Briggs served as the Administrators, arriving in September 1998. The Briggs' brought with them a keen interest and much experience in leading foreign mission work and infused the Walker Center with a truly global perspective. They were responsible for creating a Global Mission Resource Center, the Mission Trader's Gift Shop, an annual International Fair, and several mission trips to Honduras and Costa Rica. The China Scholars Program was also established during their tenure. In addition, for the first time, the Walker Center expanded from merely hosting other groups using its facilities to developing and presenting workshops, training, and conferences. The Walker Center was a very busy place during the Briggs era.

2003 After several years of planning, the Walker Center launched a capital campaign with a goal of \$500,000. Walker received \$120,000 from the Central Congregational Church in Newton, which closed. By January 2004 they had raised \$235,000. There is no further mention of campaign activity in the Board minutes after January 2004.

2004 John (Jack) and Susan Amick were the Administrators from September 2004 until March 2005. Their brief tenure was tumultuous. They had ambitious plans to develop the graduate student housing and conference businesses, and wanted to spend a sizable portion of the endowment on upgrading the facilities. And they had Board support to find ways to make Walker fiscally stable. But a critical situation emerged due to the abrupt, undiscussed imposition on the international students of changes in their housing contracts and use of Barton House. In hindsight, the Amicks were too aggressive about implementing changes too quickly, with no input from the residents, and too business-like and bottom-line motivated. This resulted in a fractured relationship with the theology students. The Trustees acknowledged with appreciation the ways the Amicks had redesigned many systems, including staffing, addressing cleanup and safety issues, building repairs and upgrades, and providing computer access for the students. The Board was distressed, however, by their management style. Ultimately the Amicks were asked to resign.

2005 Effective March 28, 2005, Rev. Richard Yeo returned as the Interim Administrator, once again patching things back together in a time of great turmoil. His main focus was to work on getting costs under control, increase income from hospitality offerings, reestablish neighborhood UCC church connections, raise additional capital funds for specific repair projects, and gain a realistic understanding of the financial and physical condition of the Walker Center. He only stayed until the end of January 2006, but during that time also helped the Trustees to research and foster serious discussions among the trustees about future directions for the Walker Center.

2005 At the December 2005 Board meeting, a vote was taken to cease operations on June 13, 2006 and find a buyer for the property. The vote failed to pass and the Board voted to retain an external consultant to help consider the future of the Walker Center, with a focus on mission and financial viability.

2006 The Trustees appointed a "receivership Board" to help manage the Walker Center during the time of transition while future directions were being considered. There was no Executive Director or Administrator during this period, and Walter Suckau, the Operations Director, provided management and oversight, under close supervision by the Board. The Board hired a consultant, Francine Crystal, to help them deal with questions of leadership, mission, and future directions.

2008 In January of 2008 the Board held a two-day retreat to consider a new mission statement, review financial statements, review staffing and an organizational management proposal, review staff housing options, and review existing and new programs. At this retreat the Board considered and approved a proposal from Holly Carter that she step down as Chair of the Board of Trustees to become a part-time Interim Executive Director.

2008 Effective October 31, 2008, Holly Carter resigned as Interim Executive Director. During her months in that role she worked to realign operations management responsibilities, expanded the conference and B&B occupancy, achieved a more effective management and organizational structure, retained a stable content international student resident group, and implemented major capital improvements and extensive renovations. However, staffing decisions and plans for expensive new programs again put the Walker's budget in jeopardy. Dr. Carter's tenure was extended to December 31, 2008.

2008 At the December 11, 2008 Board meeting, the Trustees voted to appoint Robert Moore, a former board member, as part time Interim Operations Manager for a period not to exceed 3½ months. There was no Executive Director during this period.

2009 The Trustees created a search committee to review the position description and mount a search for a new permanent Operations Manager, and began the process of searching for a new Executive Director. By March 2009 they decided to suspend the hiring of an Executive Director in order to save money and deal with other staffing issues. They decided to keep Robert Moore on as Interim Operations Director for a minimum of 8 months. They also decided to hire a full-time Administrative Coordinator, who would report to Mr. Moore.

2009 In May 2009, Susan Smith began as the Administrative Coordinator at The Walker Center, a position she held until October 2011.

2009 In May 2009, the Walker kitchen was closed for major renovations.

2010 In May 2010 the Board voted to take out a \$200,000 bank loan to pay for deleading in Barton House. This involved moving all of the students out of Barton for the summer. Also in the spring of 2010, Operations Manager Robert Moore departed and Bill Tanguay was hired as a full time maintenance coordinator.

2011 On October 21, 2011 Carolyn Montalto began as Interim Executive Director.