

Will be replaced by new building

By Roger Swanson

When it was constructed in 1923, the clubhouse at the Highland Park Recreation Center was the largest wood frame structure in the Highland Park-Mt. Washington area, a distinction it retains today, just weeks before it is to be demolished.

The deterioration of 59 years and changing recreational needs of the community have served to write the building's death notice.

The \$35,000 clubhouse of 1923 was said to be one of the finest playground facilities on the west coast, serving also as a social headquarters of the community which, 60 years ago, came together for dances and meetings.

A historic resources survey of Highland Park and Mt. Washington prepared by the Community Research Group of Los Angeles says of the building: "It is virtually unaltered and has retained its architectural integrity. In addition, it is significant for its long and continued use."

"The recreation center was built by the architect

partnership of Sumner Hunt and Silas Burns. Their partnership was formed in 1908 and continued for 20 years. Other notable buildings by these architects include the Southwest Museum, the headquarters of the Los Angeles Automobile Club of Southern California, the Wilshire Ebell Club, the Los Angeles Country Club as well as buildings for Virgil Avenue School, David Starr Junior High and Scripps College.

Dedication of the building in February of 1923 was a community celebration, attracting more than one thousand people. According to an account of the ceremony in the Highland Park Herald, hundreds were turned away.

Rev. Alden Lee Hill, later to be known as the "marrying preacher" for the extraordinary number of couples he joined in wedlock, gave a welcoming address, stirring his audience with the importance of home and community and thanking the city council for its foresight in presenting such a fine building to the citizenry.

While the exterior was to remain unchanged, except for the addition of an entrance ramp, the interior was remodeled many times. The ground floor originally contained a nursery for the care of small children, locker rooms and showers, two bowling alleys a pool room and a women's lounge room. Extensive

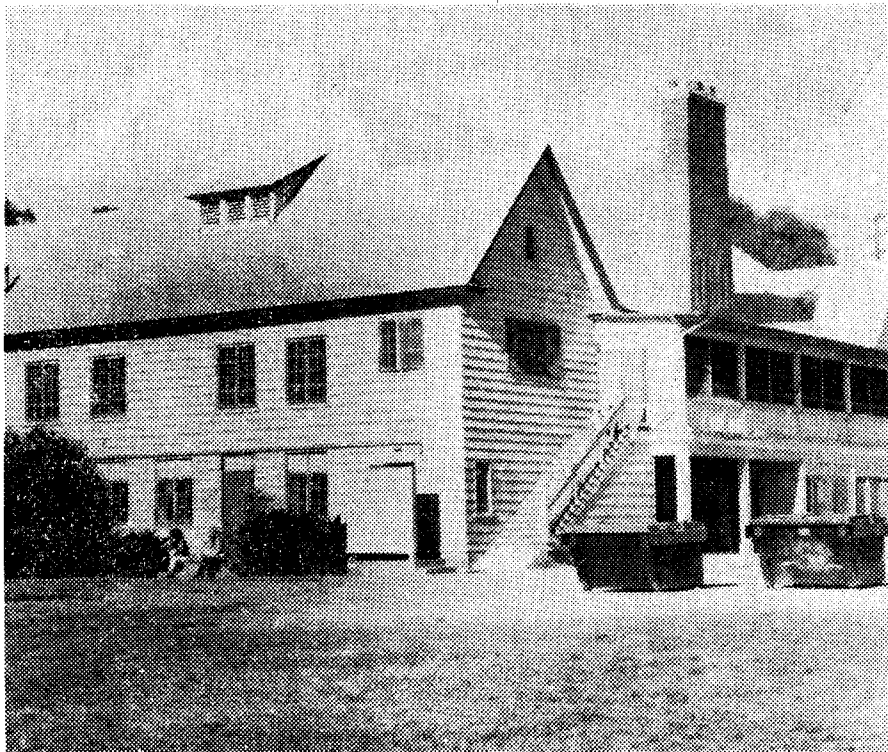
remodeling over the years changed the focus of the building's purchase and today there is no evidence of the bowling alleys. The current director, Dorothy Thompson, was unaware that the building once contained bowling alleys.

The second floor contains a gymnasium-auditorium, a stage with dressing rooms and small club rooms separated by folding doors that can be opened to create larger spaces.

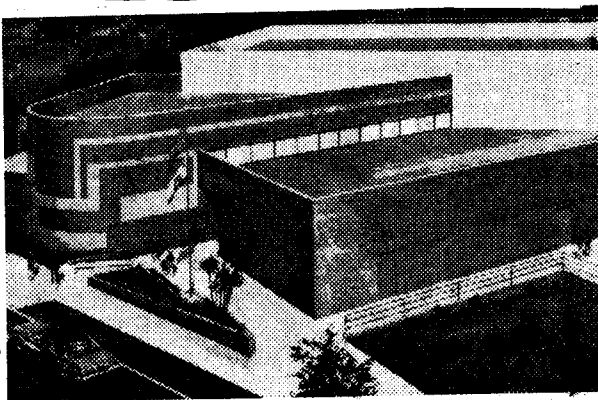
Later additions included a pool and bathhouse which will be undisturbed, according to Thompson. She said the new center will be built on the site of the old building but will extend nearly to the sidewalk on Piedmont Avenue.

The 12,000 square foot-tri-level building will be somewhat larger than the existing facility and will contain a high school size gymnasium, Thompson said. An off-street parking lot will also be constructed adjacent to the new building.

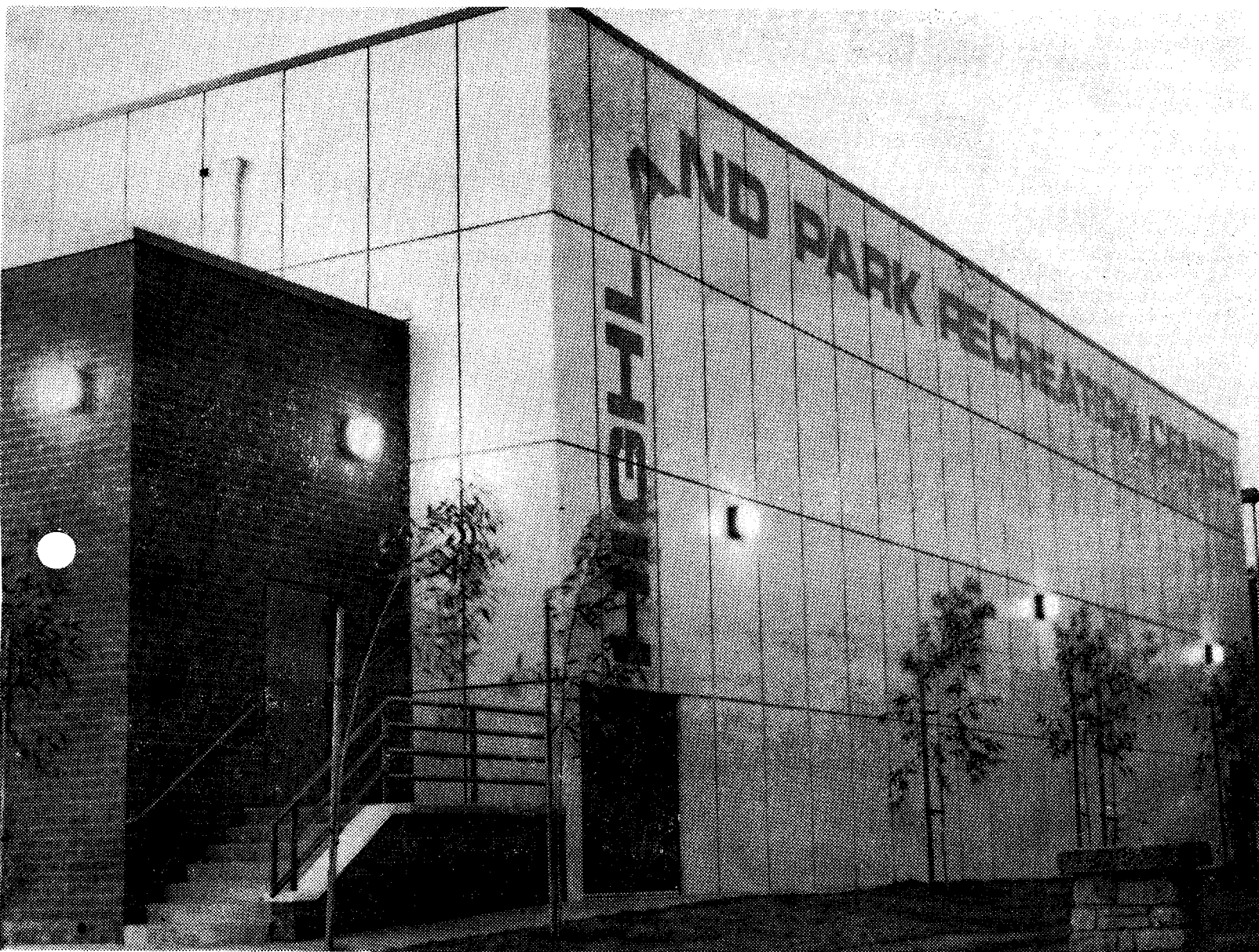
Construction bids will be received by the department of parks and recreation until Jan. 19 and a contract is expected to be awarded within a few weeks after that date. Construction could begin by the spring. Completion is forecast for early 1983.



DEMOLITION DUE — The 59 year old community building at Highland Park Recreation Center will be demolished early next year to be replaced by a new facility. The two-story structure was built in 1923 at a cost of \$35,000.



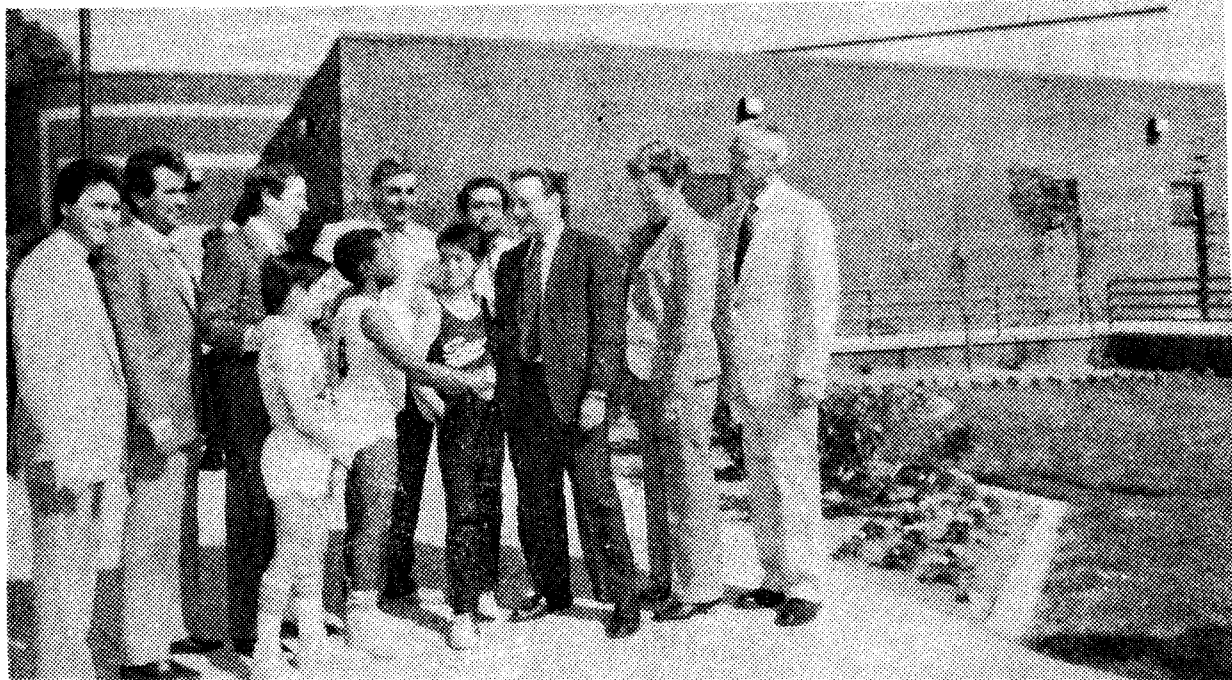
PROPOSED — An artist's rendering shows the \$1.2 million community center and gymnasium proposed for the Highland Park Recreation Center. The building would have three community rooms, a kitchen, gym, stage and dressing rooms.



Long-awaited dedication today

The Highland Park Recreation Center main building, under construction for the past three years, will be dedicated and opened to the public in ceremonies at 2 p.m. today at the playground. Council members Joel Wachs and Peggy Stevenson will be in attendance, as will recreation and parks general manager James Hadaway, who will be master of ceremonies.

The \$1.24 million building was constructed by Chadco Development Company, and completed by the bondholder Covenant Mutual Insurance Company. The 10,000 square foot structure includes basketball and volleyball courts, three community club rooms, new office space, kitchen, restrooms, stage and dressing rooms.



It's official

The long awaited dedication of the new Highland Park Recreation Center, 6150 Piedmont Ave., was attended by several local residents and community officials on Saturday. Greeting three of the many young athletes who will be using the center's facilities are (from left) Art Gastellum, from Mayor Tom Bradley's office; Assemblyman Richard Alatorre; Dennis Luna, vice president Board of Recreation and Parks Commissioners; Tony Troncale, director; Joe Clark, vice president of the Highland Park Sports Association; Councilman Joel Wachs, Wanda Hatler, president, Highland Park Chamber of Commerce and James E. Hadaway, general manager, Department of Recreation and Parks. The three athletes are (from left) Greg Buchanan, Louis McMillan and Arturo Urena.