

Parkside Homes and Addition,
Central Heating Plant
Behind 12515 East Warren Avenue
Detroit
Wayne County
Michigan

HABS No. MI-409-B

HABS
MICH
82-DETRO,
63B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Great Lakes Systems Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-2571

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PARKSIDE HOMES AND ADDITION,
Central Heating Plant
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PARKSIDE HOMES AND ADDITION,
Central Heating Plant

Location: Behind 12515 East Warren Avenue,
Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan
Quad: Grosse Pointe, Michigan 1:24,000
UTM: 17.337620.4694910

Dates of
Construction: 1937-1938, 1940-41

Architects: Chandler Park Associates (George D. Mason,
Chief Architect), Parkside Architectural
Associates (Edward A. Schilling, C. William
Palmer, and Clair W. Ditchy)

Builder: John Griffiths & Son Construction Company of
Chicago; O.W. Burke Company of Detroit

Present
Owner: City of Detroit Housing Department
2211 Orleans Street
Detroit, MI 48207

Present Use: Central heating plant

Significance: This building has served as the central
heating plant for Parkside Homes and the
Parkside Addition from their opening to
the present. Supplying the entire Parkside
complex with steam from a central plant
allowed the Public Works Administration
to build Parkside more cheaply than had
they used individual furnaces in each
building.

Historian: Charles K. Hyde, Wayne State University,
Detroit, Michigan 48202, July 1996.

HISTORY

Originally constructed in 1937-1938, the heating plant consisted of a boiler room housing three large steam boilers, coal storage bunkers, an attached smokestack at the northeast corner of the building, and a one-story service building. When the Parkside Addition was built, the heating plant was enlarged in 1940-1941 to provide additional capacity. A fourth boiler was placed in an addition built at the southwest corner of the existing plant and a second smokestack was added to serve the new boiler.

There is little information available about subsequent changes to the heating plant. In November 1946, the Housing Commission installed a fly ash arrester costing \$5,940 to reduce the quantity of ash coming from the smokestacks. The Detroit Housing Department replaced the original boilers in 1969 with cleaner and more efficient units burning natural gas. The new boilers were later described as "an exotic system" which unfortunately used PCB (polychlorinated biphenyl) in a system of closed pipes. The chemical was drained from the Parkside boilers in 1973, but during an overhaul of the system in 1978, traces of PCB were discovered. The Housing Department had the system flushed and created 4,000 gallons of PCB-laden waste in the process.¹

Nothing remains of the original heating system, including boilers, stoking equipment, and machinery to move coal and ashes.

¹"Curb on Fly Ash," Detroit News, 7 November 1946, p. 39 and Stephen Cain, "Waste PCB: Big Dilemma for Detroit," Detroit News, 3 October 1978, B-1, B-8.

DESCRIPTION

This is a polygonal building with a steel frame and exterior walls of brown brick using the common bond pattern. The southeast section is a single-story, flat-roofed service building, which housed repair shops and stock rooms. It is an L-shaped building, with the base of the L measuring 56 feet 5 inches wide, legs 31 feet wide, and an overall length of 102 feet 6 inches. The boiler house proper is a rectangular steel-framed, flat-roofed building measuring 50 feet by 83 feet, with the south section containing coal bunkers 54 feet in height, while the north section is 35 feet high. A 31-foot square tower connects to the west end of the boiler house and stands 62 feet in height. It originally housed equipment to lift coal from ground level to the large elevated storage bunkers above the boilers. The 1940 addition stands at the southwest corner of the original building. This is a two-story, flat-roofed building 31 feet square, with a separate smokestack. Brick quoining is found on the corners of the boiler house, at the upper level of the coal bunker section, and along the entire rear facade of the boiler house. All windows are the casement type, with steel sash.

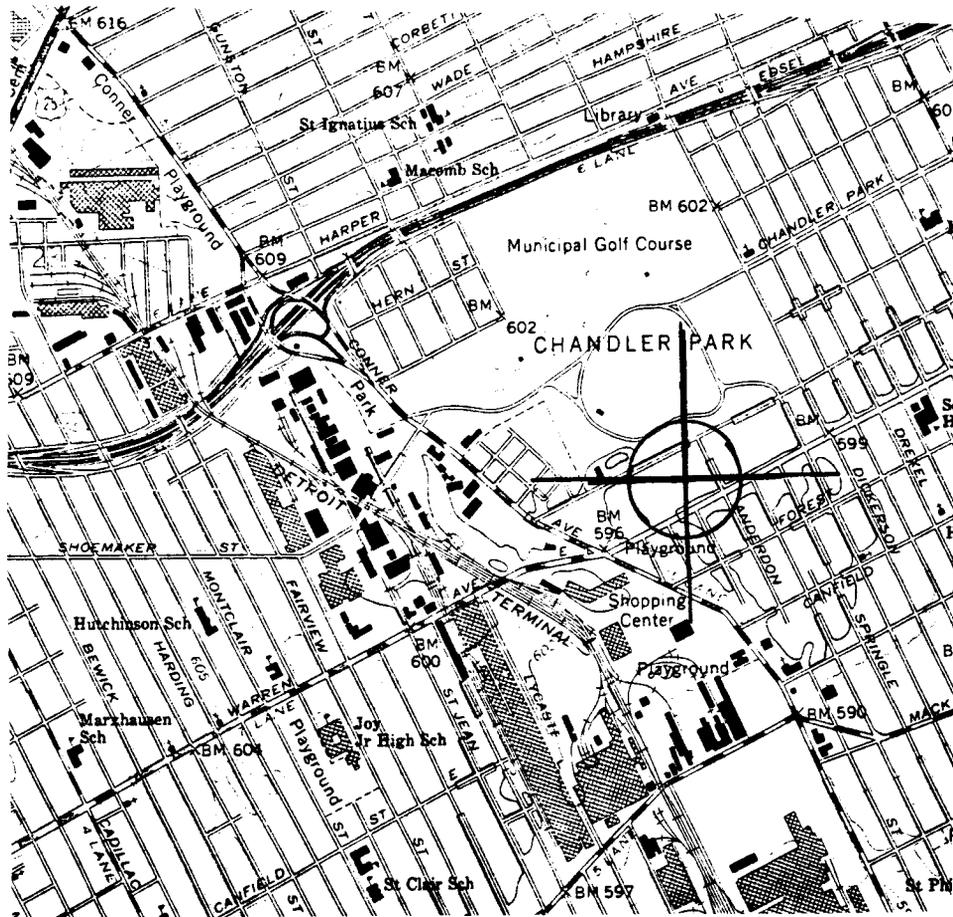
The smokestacks are impressive red brick structures with an overall height of 165 feet. Both rest on dark brown brick octagonal bases, with each side 5 feet 10.75 inches wide and an overall diameter of 14 feet 3 inches. The base, some 2 feet thick, encases a chimney which is 10 feet 3 inches in diameter at the bottom. The octagonal base rises 34 feet 2 inches from grade level and is tapered to meet the base of the remainder of the chimney structure which is round and gradually tapers to the throat. At the chimney throat, some 130 feet 10 inches above the top of the base, the stack has an outside diameter of 7 feet and an inside diameter of 6 feet 6 inches. Flat steel straps encircle the stack at intervals of six feet.

The 1938 stack is connected to the boiler room with a massive arched bridge of brown brick. It encased a horizontal conduit which carries the gasses and smoke from the boilers to the vertical portion of the structure. On the 1941 stack, a square steel conduit performs that function. For both stacks, the octagonal base serves mainly as a trap for the heavier soot particles that are not carried off into the air

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GROSSE POINTE, MICHIGAN QUADRANGLE, 1:24,000

UTM: 17.337620.4694910



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FLOOR PLAN

