

This Week in Eden History
January 19 | Eden House in the City



The religion section of the Jan. 19–20, 1985 issue of the St. Louis Globe-Democrat carried the headline, “Students Turn Faith into Action: Eden House Works as Urban Classroom.” The article described a new Eden Seminary project designed to train pastors for urban ministry by embedding them into the city itself. Students in the program took classes at Eden in Webster Groves but lived and worked in the Hyde Park neighborhood in north St. Louis. Second year UCC students Richard Gambel, John Fillmore-Patrick, Loraine Tuenge and Roger Pancost were the first program participants. The four students, plus one spouse, shared a house at 1517 Bremen Ave.

In addition to their studies at Eden, each student had work placement in north St. Louis. Gamble worked at North Side Team Ministry, a 20-year-old ecumenical ministry helping to revitalize the Hyde Park neighborhood by renovating buildings and selling them to people with low-incomes. Tuenge was involved at Holy Trinity Catholic Church's food bank, collecting and distributing food in an area of high unemployment and poverty. Fillmore-Patrick tutored area children struggling with schoolwork and organized basketball and volleyball programs. Pancost helped at Hyde Park Renovation Effort that was attempting to improve housing in the community. Each student was also active in the ministry of Friedens United Church of Christ, 19th St. and Newhouse Ave., where they were supervised by co-pastors Martha Brunell and David Mehl (D. Min. 2003).

Reflecting on his experience, Roger Pancost recently commented, "My time at Eden House in the City was a life-changing experience for me. While it is possible to discuss issues of poverty in an academic setting, it is very powerful to live in an area experiencing the challenges caused by poverty." Each Eden House participant went on to graduate from Eden and to have successful ministries in the United Church of Christ.