

A BRIEF HISTORY

CHILDCARE@TEMPLE



For 25 years Temple University operated a daycare center that educated the children of its students, employees, and members of the community. Originally located in Mitten Hall, the center relocated to the Burk Mansion at 1500 N. Broad St. in 1975. Many of the center's teachers were graduates of Temple's program to train daycare workers. All were women.

The center cared for between 80 and 100 children, from age 3 months through kindergarten. At the time of its closure in 1995, full tuition was \$614 per month for infants and \$468 for preschoolers (roughly \$1016 and \$775 today adjusting for inflation). The program accepted state child care subsidies.

Built in 1909, Burk Mansion began to fall into disrepair. In July 1993, a mechanical fire caused smoke damage to part of the building, but the daycare center remained open. On June 10, 1995, citing the building's \$300,000 maintenance cost, university administrators announced their intent to close the center and sell the building, acting on an outside consultant's recommendation as part of a plan to cut \$18 million from the budget. They planned to close the center on July 28, giving families of the center's 85 students just over a month to secure child care elsewhere. 14 staff members would lose their jobs.

The decision was met with protest. Students, faculty, and community



members organized demonstrations throughout the month, pleading with the university to keep the center open. On June 22, Philadelphia City Council unanimously passed a



Photo credits

First page upper: Alvarez, A. "Council twits Temple, Cosby." Philadelphia Daily News, Jun. 23, 1995.

First page right: Photo of children in Temple University Day Care walking outside Paley Library. Temple History in Photographs. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University.

Page two upper: Photo of daycare center worker Theresa Hudreck reading to children at Temple daycare center. Temple History in Photographs. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University.

Page two left: "Temple Day Care Bye Bye Buggy." Temple History in Photographs. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University.

Page two right: Photo of children and day care workers standing outside the Temple University Day Care Center. Temple History in Photographs. Special Collections Research Center, Temple University.

References

- Carlin, S. (2011 Sep 6). An uncertain future for a historic mansion. *The Temple News*.
- Goodman, H. (1995, Jun 10). 85 WORKERS ARE LAID OFF AT TEMPLE. *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- Woestendiek, J. (1995, Jul 25). 4 STUDENTS ASK JUDGE TO STOP TEMPLE. *Philadelphia Inquirer*.
- Woodall, M. (1995, Jun 10). UNIVERSITY'S DAY CARE IS A CASUALTY. *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

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resolution requesting that Temple reverse its decision. At that time, Temple had been waiting over a year for Council to approve an \$85 million project to build the Liacouras Center. With that in mind, Council President John Street asked, "If they can raise \$40 million for a gymnasium, how much time would it take them to raise \$300,000 to save a daycare center?"

The confrontation over the daycare center came at a time of dwindling financial support from the state. Prior to the announcement of the closure, President Liacouras had urged members of the Temple Association of University

Professionals to accept a wage freeze mid-contract, which they refused. He later suggested that the bargaining unit thus shared blame for the layoffs and cuts.

As the center's closure neared, Temple administrators provided parents with information about nearby facilities, but many reported difficulty finding acceptable alternatives for their children. Some students argued that, without the support of the daycare center, they would have to delay their studies or leave the university altogether. Four of those students filed a complaint in Common Pleas Court to keep it open. They cited a breach of contract and argued that the university overstated the cost to maintain the building. Their appeals were denied, and the center was closed at the end of July as scheduled.

The Burk Mansion, still owned by the university today, remains shuttered and vacant.

*by Leanne Finnigan,
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