

LAUNCH FUND APPEAL FOR TRAVELER'S AID

Great Service Enterprise to Strangers in City Makes First Plea for Aid from Public

by Hamish Campbell Duncan

Where is Main street, Chicago? Try it on a traffic cop and watch the puzzle wrinkles furrow his noble brow. Try it on a taxi driver and see if he knows. Try it on the oldest inhabitant. It's a hundred to one shot you'll draw a blank in each instance. Then try it on one of the Travelers Aid workers on duty in the various Chicago railway stations. She'll tell you. A question like that is mere child's play to some they're asked, these trained women who daily assist an average of more than 200 persons in need of help, comfort or information. It would seem, after listening to some of the queries put to them, that the only thing about the city they can't tell you is where to get a subway-train for Oak Park.

But to get back to Main street. What's the answer? Just a minute! The other day an Austrian woman, without a single word of English, climbed down from the train in the

La Salle street depot, on her way to friends of her dead husband, who, according to the address on a grubby piece of paper clutched in her hand, lived at a number on "Main Street," Chicago. It took the Travelers Aid worker about two seconds to solve the riddle. This worker had been born in a small town and knew exactly what a "Main street" should look like. She simply magnified the picture in her mind by about five hundred diameters and got—

State street!

Simple, wasn't it? Yes, the worker was right and in a couple of hours, long enough to check up, the woman was with her friends.

Ready for Service

That's just a small sample of the kind of thing the Travelers Aid workers are doing every day—giving service. They helped 80,000 travelers last year in pretty nearly as many different ways. No problem is too simple or too difficult for them to tackle, and solve. These problems run the full gamut from farce to tragedy, with a measure of melodrama thrown in. These trained workers will take the lost and panic stricken, and give comfort and protection, or they'll tell the inquiring traveler where to buy a postage stamp. All is grist to their mill, providing it constitutes a service.

During its dozen or more years of activity the society has made not a

single appeal to the public for financial assistance. It has relied upon private subscriptions and casual gifts to pay its workers and maintain the guest house at 152 East Superior street, in which those requiring overnight care are housed. Now, however, the demands for service have grown to such an extent that it has been forced to appeal directly to the public to assist it in performing its gratuitous public services. Therefore, next week, March 6-12 the Travelers Aid society of Chicago and Cook county will launch a drive for \$95,000 to be used for the continuation and extension of its work.

Night and day the Travelers Aid workers are on the job in each of Chicago's railway stations. Their vigilance has saved many a traveler from inconvenience and misfortune. Among the thousands daily arriving or passing through the city are children unaccompanied by friends on their way to distant relatives, old folks traveling alone, young runaways headed for inevitable doom if once they get past the station gates, those who have lost their money or tickets by theft or misadventure on their journey, the foreigner unable to speak the language, the sick and forlorn. All these find aid and encouragement at the hands of these wise and tactful women.

Must Know Everything

There is nothing a Travelers Aid worker is not expected to know—"What time does the five-fifteen pull out?"

"Will I have time to do some shopping before my train for Denver leaves?"

(Whisper) "Where can I find a reliable bootlegger?" (Unanswered, even if it could be.)

"Can you recommend a good play to see? I want to take my niece. It must be something nice—not vulgar, you know. What would you suggest?"

"Is there a store near here where I can buy imported Russian cigarettes?"

"Is there a Gloria Swanson film showing in the city this week?"

"Where's the baggage room?"

"I want to leave some laundry in Chicago to be done up and forwarded to me in Kansas City. How shall I do it?"

And so it goes. Fool questions, silly questions, important questions, they are all answered. But the real function of the Travelers Aid is to help those with serious problems.

There are, for instance, the little unmarried mothers-to-be—and their name is legion—who flee their homes to hide in the city. Hundreds of them are intercepted yearly before they succeed in slipping out of the station, cared for, and returned to their friends. Here is where the tact, gentleness, intuition and human understanding that are the essentials of the workers' equipment, get full play. The trained

worker seldom misses one of these desperate children, for most of them are little more. They are quick to read the fear in their eyes, the furtive, shamefaced glances they cast about them, the shrinking away from human contacts. To stop these unhappy travelers and speak to them is no easy matter. To draw their stories from them requires infinite tact, and to persuade them to turn back from their flight and go back to their friends requires the ability to use kind and gentle argument.

Sense Their Problems

When Elmer, aged 9-going-on-10, takes the money he has earned by shoveling snow, running errands, and sifting ashes, and sets out for the big city to become a bank president, confident that in a few years he will be rich enough to lap his mother in luxury, he finds a smiling woman on the platform ready to take the edge off the lonely, homesick feeling that has already begun to weigh down his sturdy young heart, while she sends word home that he is safe and ready to go back.

When Mildred, 16, decides that her family doesn't appreciate her and that a career as a movie actress awaits her in Hollywood and dons a suit of brother's clothes in which to "beat her way" to the coast, she has a hard time deceiving the keen eye of the worker who spys her slipping through the station.

When the little bride from Europe, a stranger in a strange land ignorant of the language and feeling fearsomely alone, arrives in the city on the way to her prospective husband working in the lumber camps of the north, she finds a friend in the Travelers Aid worker, to see that she gets on the right train and to her destination in safety.

When the little old grandmother on the way alone to spend the twilight of her life with a son thousands of miles from her home town, suddenly finds that the pocketbook containing her railway ticket and little store of money has been lost or stolen, it is a Travelers Aid worker who takes care of her, communicates with son, and sees that she is started safely on her journey again.

When a lonely boy, who has set out to seek his fortune, finds himself broke and hungry and yearning for home again, it is a Travelers Aid worker who puts her O. K. on the telegram that brings funds for a ticket back.

Last year the Travelers Aid helped 2,354 physically disabled travelers, 3,272 children traveling alone, 403 persons who had lost money or tickets, 4,969 whose friends failed to meet them at the depot, 11,710 immigrants of whom 11,262 could not speak English and many, many others with problems and in trouble.

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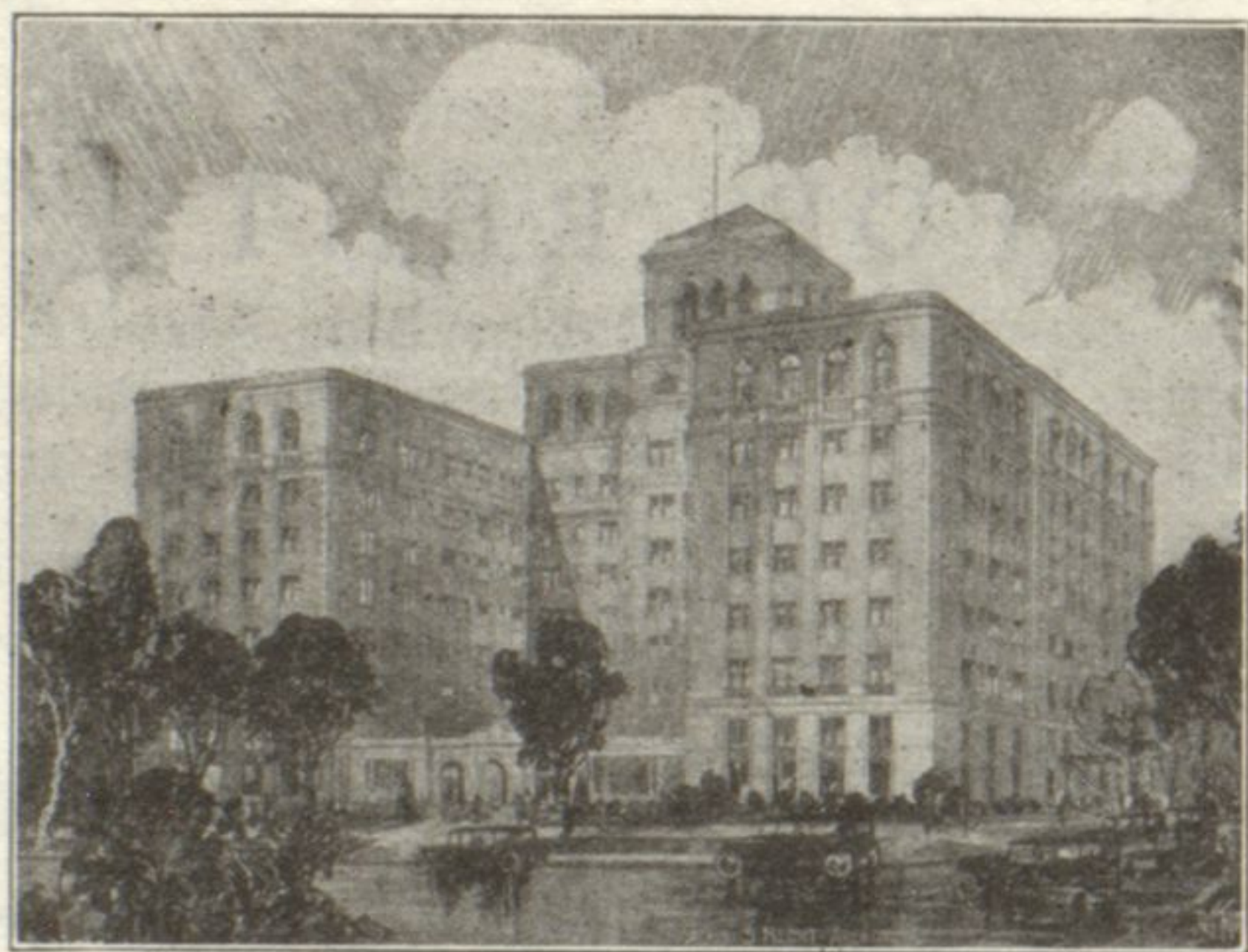
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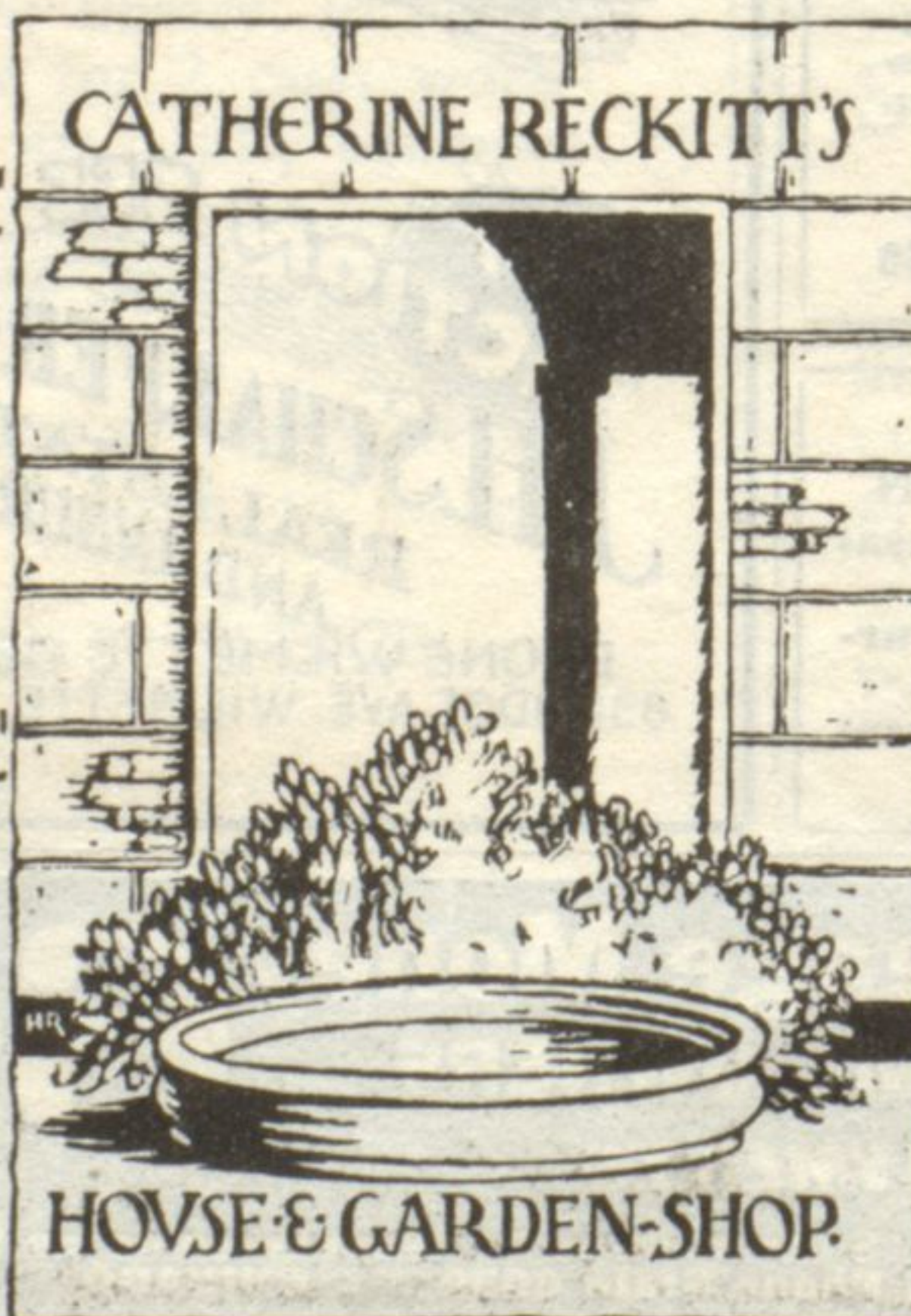
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