

people

to

people

neighbor

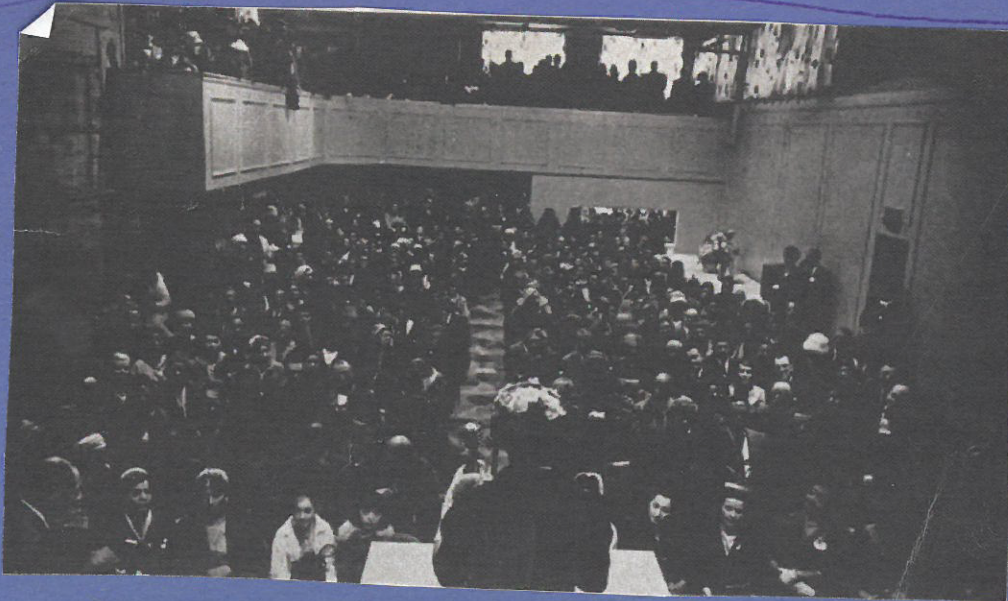
to

neighbor

WHEN in 1960 a two-hour blaze destroyed Boston's Freedom House, it seemed like the end of the road for the interracial, interfaith civic center, which for a decade had served the city's Roxbury community. But as unexpected contributions began to pour into a hastily-set-up emergency building fund, the fire proved a blessing in disguise. Last January, a new and better Freedom House, rebuilt and refurbished at a cost of more than \$70,000, opened its door to thousands of persons for a two-day re-dedication celebration, ready to resume its work toward better understanding between men.

Freedom House's humble origin dates back to 1949. In that year, a Boston Negro couple, Mr. and Mrs. Otto Snowden, envisioned a civic center where Negroes, whites, Catholics, Protestants and Jews could experience warm interpersonal contacts and pool their talents in effective community programs. "We didn't even have the proverbial shoestring, just an idea in the head," recalled Mrs. Snowden, who, like her husband, is a trained social worker. "But," she continued, "with a small interracial group of 17 people who believed in us and the project, we rented a \$10-a-month office, ob-

A photograph of the restored Freedom house building.



A crowd of citizens attending a re-dedication ceremony at the restored Freedom house building. Interracial and interfaith.

tained some battered desks, second-hand typewriters and a telephone, and started the work which resulted in today's Freedom House Civic Center." Added her husband: "It was a long, uphill fight. Many times we were pretty discouraged; but we never let go of the vision of our community as one in which we could be proud to live. We were determined to prevent Roxbury from becoming another blighted area."

Gradually, some of Boston's wealthiest and most influential citizens joined the project as financial contributors, and before three years had elapsed, a modern, attractive building was acquired to house the center. Foundations and trust funds helped and the people of Roxbury became paying members and promoted benefits to raise funds. Then came the fire and the work had to be done all over.

Today, Freedom House is unique as a center for adults interested in maintaining the standard of their neighborhood and in preserving interracial harmony. It is a cultural bulwark against community deterioration and, unlike other centers which aim at keeping children off the streets, works to keep the streets safe for children to play in and enjoy life.

FREEDOM HOUSE—THE HEART OF A COMMUNITY