

IPHS Housewalk - 30 Years of History



Our Facebook page recently has been peppered with a number of inquiries regarding our holding a Housewalk this year. Since the majority of us were not here for the first event, we thought it might be prudent to at this time re-visit the earliest days of this event and come to understand how it became so popular. In the same spirit, between then and now-30 years later- facts have been unearthed to affirm or in some cases disprove what was published then. All of these tidbits contribute to making Old Irving Park one of Chicago's most unique neighborhoods. In the intervening years, there have been the occasional updates resulting from more efficient research, or something occasionally found in an attic or wall, and shared with the IPHS for the homeowners of the future ...

*All photos these pages from IPHS Archives;
drawings by Sue Auerbach ©1986*

The second Irving Park Historical Society Housewalk, held September 13, 1986, featured three local churches, an ongoing restoration of what would become a Chicago Landmark building, and six houses. Starting point Mt. Olive had held its services at the local Myrtle Masonic Temple before its current building was built in 1922/27. The Irving Park United

Methodist Church, started by a group of neighbors who'd withdrawn from the Dutch Reformed Church (Keeler at Belle Plaine), was on its second structure (1912), the original frame building having been constructed in 1892 at the same site. St. John's Episcopal is the area's second oldest (1887), and built on land donated by local patriarch John Gray. The "Whistle Stop Inn", as it was then known, was cited as an "example of restoration currently sweeping the Old Irving Park community". A number of local contractors, woodworkers and painters were involved in its restoration, which was then targeted to be completed the following year.

The houses featured that year included the interior of the Ropp-Grabill house at 4132 N. Keeler; it had only been a walk-by the previous year. The others were:

3758 N. Tripp - Saverbri House
A 1926 Chicago Brick Octagon Bungalow

"This residence was built by Valentine and Ida Saverbri ... is typical of the brick octagon in its floor plan except for an open back porch ... the hall ceiling fixture is original ... the keyhole arch over the front entrance matches the design over the living room fireplace"

2015 update:
This home has been lovingly owned and occupied by the same family since 1968 -- nearly fifty years! Since this particular housewalk, the back has been expanded to match the front. It truly is one of the warmest homes in the neighborhood.



3900 N. Keeler - C.O. Loucks House
A 1913 Colonial Revival

"This home was built by architect Cady ... the colonial revival has an accent on symmetry ... the Loucks family retained ownership of this house until 1970, which accounts for survival of most of its original features, including a maids room on the third floor, servant's staircase, and summer veranda"

2015 update:
Charles Olney Loucks was the son of Charles N. Loucks. He and his brother Vernon were also prominent residents of the neighborhood. C.O. was a lawyer, active in Republican politics in the 27th ward, and was instrumental in spearheading the drive to secure the local YMCA.



4037 N. Lowell
An American Foursquare - Exterior viewing only

"This house was built in the early 1900s ... during recent restoration a newspaper dated 1903 was found on the first floor between the wall studs ... the house still has the old gas and electric lines to the lighting fixtures ... owned by three families prior to 1986 ... restored exterior to original appearance by the replacement of the front porch and painted wood siding ... rumor has it the original owner, a judge, and the owner of the red brick colonial to the north were friends ... decided to put in the common driveway between the two houses"

2015 update:
The original owner was Robert Newton Holt, a prominent city attorney and later a special assistant attorney general. After their next-door neighbors (the Elmer C. Jensens at 4041) moved, attorney John Houston and his family resided there before the Windmuellers. The driveway was installed during the Holt-Houston neighborhood, sometime before 1930.



4159 N, Tripp
A Tri-Gable Ell

"Built in 1887 by Chapin A. Day ...purchased the entire block ... variation of a basic homestead house ... two stories, two intersecting rectangles ... original clapboard covered with cedar siding ... original woodwork in oak, birch and pine ...front hall lighting fixture is original."

2015 update: While the original occupant of this house is as yet unconfirmed, we know much more about Mr. Day, a 35-year veteran of Marshall Field & Co. who retired in 1911 as its treasurer, had been intimate enough to act as pallbearer at Mr. Field's funeral (and received a legacy in his will!), and whose second career was heading up a cement company in Utah. The entire block in Irving Park was a good business investment, and a number of the 1880s houses remain extant. Chapin and wife Ella were public-spirited and socially prominent; by 1900 they'd moved to a fashionable Hyde Park neighborhood, where they remained some years before heading west. The Day house itself was around the block from this one and was demolished in the building of the Kennedy Expressway. Chapin and Ella both died in October 1931, and are interred in Glendale, CA.



4227 N. Keeler - The VanHarlingen House
Queen Anne Victorian

"Built in 1895 for Harry C. and Flora Edna VanHarlingen ... unusual because it includes both a square and rounded turret on the front ...cost \$3000 to build ... many changes in this home are a reflection of changing architectural tastes."

2015 update: Harry and Flora didn't stay very long at this address. By 1900, they'd moved over to 4146 N, Kostner, and soon after that went back to their native state of Ohio. The surprise connection, though: that same year, the house was owned by Alfred D. Richey -- the D. stands for Day -- who worked in freight claims at (guess where?) Marshall Field & Co., and was Chapin Day's nephew. Two blocks away, living in the old Day family house on Kildare, was his elder brother Fred Richey, also established at MF&C in the credit department.



