



Explore Oak Lawn

an historic guide

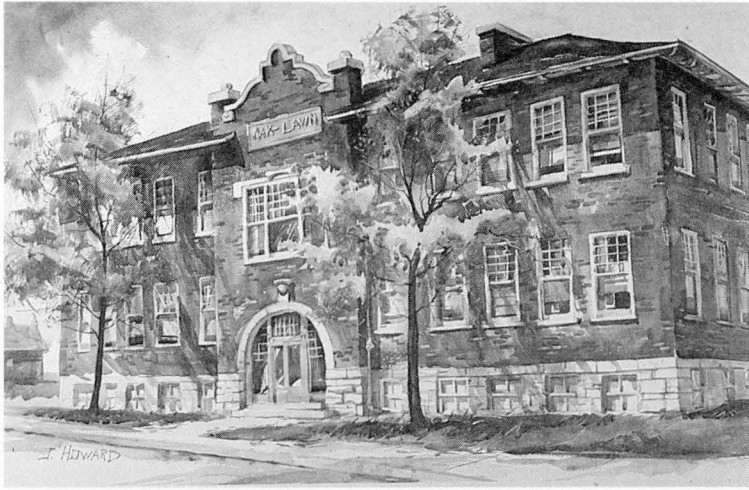
Founded when Chicago was still a frontier town, Oak Lawn maintains a distinct hometown atmosphere. Incorporated in 1909, this village has an interesting local history. Please share with us pieces of history which make Oak Lawn unique.

Thank you to the many people whose interest in history made this project a reality.

Thanks to the Project Committee, Pam Cusack, JoAnne Keeney, Bud Meyer and Ernie Nance. This guide is a result of their efforts.

Thanks especially to the Illinois Arts Council and Richard Huff, their Executive Director, for the matching grant that made this project possible. Thanks also to the "Citizens to Save Cook School" whose financial contribution and support greatly assisted this project.

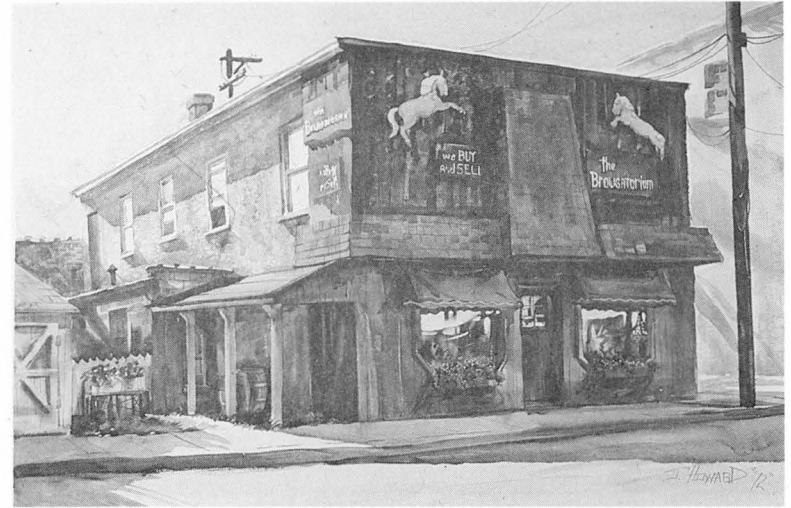
Special Thanks to the Oak Lawn Park District Board of Commissioners: Alex Kazmierczak, President, David Heilmann, Patrick Sullivan, Paul Karr and Therese Carberry, Commissioners.



Cook School

9526 South Cook Avenue

Oak Lawn School, commonly known as Cook School, was built in 1905. Originally it was a single-story prairie style brick building with two class rooms. A growing population forced the building of an addition in 1915 which consisted of the second floor front, and the crenulation at the roof line over the entrance. The final addition opened in 1925. The extent of the original building may be clearly seen in the shading of the brick work when viewed from the side. From 1906 until 1938 Cook School was the only school in the District 123, housing at times both elementary and secondary students. In 1991 it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Browsatorium

9505 South Cook Avenue

This building was built in 1910. Originally it served as a stable for the Krueger Butcher Shop, a business once located at 95th Street and Cook Avenue. The Browsatorium is now an antique shop, as it has been for over twenty years.



O'Brien Court House

9530 South 53rd Avenue

Known as Oak Lawn's first courthouse, this historic home was built in the 1920s. Wedding ceremonies were held in the judges library chambers as well as the sunken living room. The roof line indicates Dutch Revival influences. The front door, oak trim and stair rails were imported from Spain.



Minnick Avenue

9500 block of South Minnick Avenue

One of the most historic streets in Oak Lawn, nearly all the homes date from the 1900s. A notable building is the Oak Lawn Methodist Episcopal Church constructed in 1902 to house a congregation composed of many prominent members of the community, such as Oak Lawn's first mayor, James Montgomery. By 1918 services had ceased and the congregation was officially closed in 1920. The church remains essentially the same today as when it was first constructed. The vacant lot on the southeast corner was originally the site of the Hoffman Blacksmith Shop. Neoclassical elements, taken from larger public buildings elsewhere, can be found on many of the homes, most notably the ionic columns as porch supports.



Key Hole House

5400 West 96th Street

This elegant Victorian home in the Queen Anne style was built during the development of the Oak Lawn Lake area in the early 1890s. Built originally for Ira McCord, a prominent Blue Island Banker, the home's most prominent resident was Dr. Edward G. Schussler. The son-in-law of Oak Lawn's first physician, Dr. Schussler conducted his practice using the first floor area marked by bay windows facing 54th Avenue as his office. Of architectural interest is the key-hole shaped stained glass window which illuminates the main staircase to the second floor, hence the name, "Key Hole House." The Key Hole House was among the first in the Oak Lawn area to feature gravity-fed running water from a cistern, gas lighting, and heat from coal burning fire places.



Auschwitz House

9625 East Shore Drive

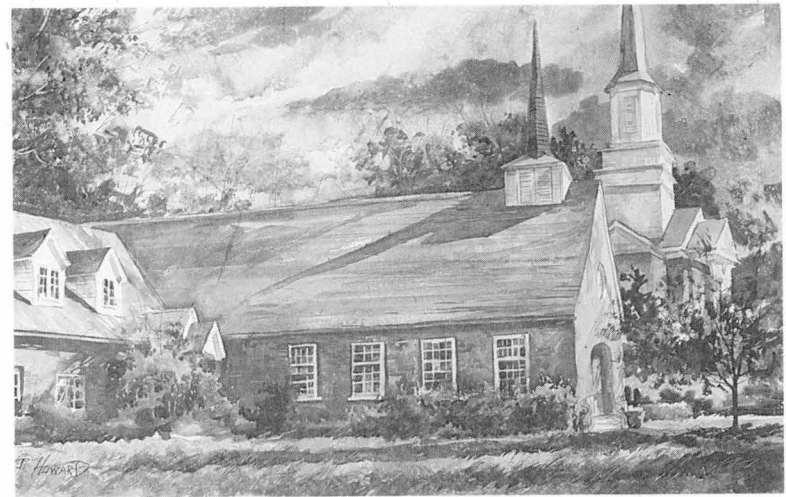
Believed to have been built prior to 1900, this house was moved to its current location in 1910 by teams of horses and rollers to become the first house on the lake. The Auschwitz family was noted for their patriotic services in World War I and although many families gave sons to the effort, Enid Auschwitz is the only known woman to have served from Oak Lawn. Women were first officially accepted into the armed services at this time as typists and other non-combatant personnel. Enid was a Navy typist during the 1917-1918 period, ranking as one of the earliest woman in the armed services.



Oak Lawn Lake and Lake Shore Park

9600 South between East Shore and West Shore Drive

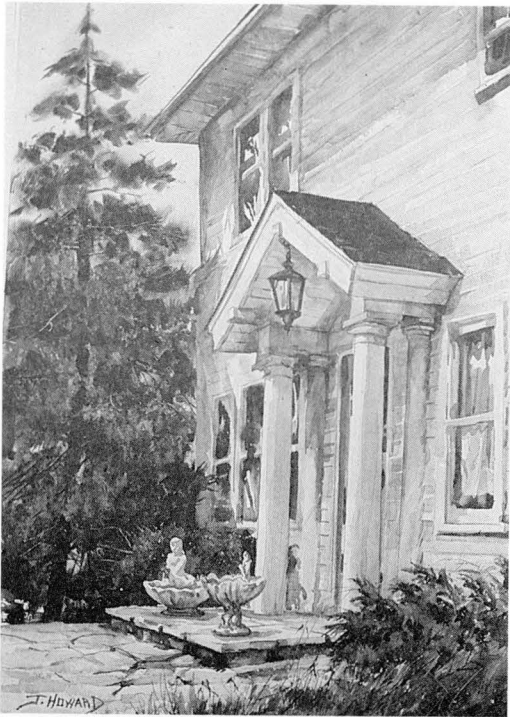
Part of a real estate speculation that coincided with the Columbian Exposition, Oak Lawn Lake was excavated from 1891-1895 by the Campbell Investment Company in an effort to drain swampy land with intentions of developing it as a recreational community. It was found that several underground streams were keeping the lake and Stony Creek filled with fresh water. In 1944, due to the efforts of Lucille Gaddis, the Oak Lawn Park District was formed by referendum and Lake Shore Park consisting of the area surrounding the lake was added to the District in 1945. Purchased for \$25, it was one of the first parks in the Park District.



Pilgrim Faith Church

9411 South 51st Avenue

The organization of this church can be traced back as far as 1891. In 1915 the church moved to this location. Rebuilt in 1949, the structure was adorned with a wood frame bell tower at its north end. The church expanded and built a larger colonial structure with a bell tower which was dedicated in the fall of 1954.



Beaudry Nurseries

4108 West 103rd Street

Built in 1917, the site was not actually incorporated into Oak Lawn until 1929. The beautiful white frame house with colonial style pillard entry is easy to spot on 103rd Street by its high white stone frontage protecting the porch. This had been a terrace until 103rd was widened in the 1960s. The home was originally on 160 acres, spanning from 99th street to 103rd from Crawford to Kostner. Some of the evergreens from the old nursery still remain on the properties along Keeler and Kedvale Avenues. (Not shown on map)



Wolfe Wildlife Refuge

109th and Laramie

This nature preserve found along the Stony Creek is dedicated to establishing a native Illinois wetland. The project began with the grass roots organization the Oak Lawn Environmental Task Force, and is sponsored by the Village and the Park District of Oak Lawn. Recognizing the crucial role that wetlands play in a healthy environment the community decided to restore this area to its natural setting. It now provides many opportunities for education and passive recreation, while it serves as a water retention basin, providing an area for storm water run-off and a natural filtering system for water in the Oak Lawn Stony Creek Area. (Not shown on map.)

About the Artist

John Howard is a recognized artist whose expertise includes watercolor paintings and landscape portraits. He is an instructor at Moraine Valley Community College and a south side resident.



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Parkside Ave

Central Ave

55th Ct

55th Ave

54th Ct

54th Ave

Lawton Ave

Key Hole House

Campbell

West Shore Drive

East Shore Drive

Robertson

Edison Ave

Oak Lawn Lake and Lake Shore Park

Auschwitz House

Warren

Franklin Ave

