

Logan Square

Its Architecture and History

History and Development

Logan Square, part of Jefferson Township prior to its annexation into the city of Chicago in 1889, is a northwest side neighborhood extending from the west bank of the North branch of the Chicago River, its eastern boundary, to Pulaski Road, its western boundary, to Diversey Avenue and its southern boundary is formed by Bloomingdale and Armitage Streets. The neighborhood was named for Civil War hero and Memorial Day founder, General John A. Logan.

Development in what is now Logan Square began in 1836 when Martin Nelson Kimbell settled on 160 acres in the area. His land covered roughly the area bounded by Diversey (north), Fullerton (south), Kimball (east), and Hamlin (west). Kimbell, a farmer, had come to Chicago from New York state. He began raising hay because his land was marshy and, therefore, well suited for that crop. During 1836 and 1837 Kimbell sold 500 tons of hay to Chicago customers. He later added vegetables to his crop list and sold his produce at the Lake Street markets. Kimbell remained in Logan Square until his death in 1895.

In 1837 Kimbell married Sarah Ann Smalley, who had also come to Chicago from New York state, and together they raised two daughters and six sons, beginning a legacy that lasted for four generations. The last of the Kimbells to live in Logan Square was Raymond G. Kimbell, who also remained until his death.

The Kimbells took an active role in the development of the community. In 1850 Martin Kimbell drilled an artesian well that provided water for area residents. He and his wife are credited with opening the first area school in their own home and later providing funds for the construction of the first Jefferson Township schoolhouse. Kimbell eventually got into the contracting business and was responsible for building a three-mile portion of the Northwestern Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue). The Kimbell sons became active in other businesses and opened one of the area's first hotels and banks.



Martin Nelson Kimbell, Jr. residence at 2524 North Kimball Avenue.

In 1838 Kimbell built a frame house at the northwest corner of today's Kimball Avenue and Altgeld Street. The Kimbell family built two other houses that are still standing on Kimball Avenue. One, built for Martin Nelson Kimbell, Jr. in 1898, is at 2524 North Kimball. It is a large frame house with a wrap-around porch in the Queen Anne style. The other remaining Kimbell house, built for Spencer Kimbell, is a brick structure at 2556 North Kimball. The design of this house, built in 1915, features Keystone ornamentation which dominates the front facade and ornamental windows that add interest to the northern elevation. Spencer Kimbell was in the brick business.

Development in Logan Square moved more rapidly after the Chicago fire of 1871 because city residents could move there, build without having to meet the strict city fire-proofing requirements, and remain within a comfortable commuting distance to the loop. This community was then known as Jefferson Township and included today's Logan Square and Avondale. (Avondale is north of Logan Square.)

The growth of factories along the Chicago River, such as the Lyon and Healy Music Company, also encouraged residents to move into the area. Many of them were immigrants who worked in the factories. These workers built modest homes, mostly one-and-a-half- and two-story frame cottages, that today add charm and character to the side streets. These cottages were more abundant in the eastern sections until industrial development began in the northwestern part of Logan Square. Then, workers settled into bungalows and cottages there.

Among those settling in Logan Square during the last few years of the 19th century and the first two decades of the 20th century were Scandinavians, particularly Norwegians and Swedes; Belgians; Germans; and by 1920 a large number of Poles. After World War I the area also became home to a large number of Russian Jews.

The Belgians settled on the east end of Logan Boulevard, while the Norwegians settled at the west end of the boulevard around what is now the square. The St. John Berchman Church at 2529 West Logan Boulevard was built by a Belgian congregation in 1906. The Norwegian Lutheran Memorial Church (the Minnekirken) at 2614 North Kedzie Boulevard was built in 1908. Also built in 1908 on the northeast corner of Kimball and Wrightwood was the Norwegian Methodist Church. If you check the cornerstone of the church at 3232 West Wrightwood, you will find *Norwegian Baptist Church* etched in the stone. The number of Norwegian religious groups indicates the popularity of the area for them.

After Logan Square's population peaked in the 1930s, the character of the neighborhood began to change. Germans and Scandinavians began to leave, with the Poles becoming the largest ethnic group. The neighborhood continued to change and today has large Hispanic and Polish populations.

For residents who needed to get downtown, there were horse carts or horse-drawn omnibuses until 1890. Railroads, such as the *Chicago and Northwestern*, entered the region in 1854 and ran along the eastern boundary parallel to the north branch of the Chicago River. This rail transportation made getting from Jefferson Township to Chicago much easier. Consequently, more city dwellers wanting to "live in the country" moved to Jefferson Township. Even when the township was annexed into the city in 1889 and trolley cars began running down Milwaukee Avenue, the area was still fairly undeveloped. In 1895 the elevated was extended to Logan Square providing a 24-minute trip to the Loop. Finally in 1967 when the rapid transit system was extended, the current underground station, designed by Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, was built.

Parks and Boulevards

Logan Boulevard, Kedzie Boulevard, and Palmer Square form the northernmost part of Chicago's parks and boulevards system. This system began in 1869 when the Illinois legislature passed three bills establishing the North, South, and West Park Commissions. Aggressive lobbying by real estate developers, who owned land along the proposed boulevard sites, facilitated the passage of these bills. The South and West commissions were approved by referendum and endowed with independent taxing power. The boulevards, which were then considered part of the park districts, were the responsibility of the park commissions. To generate the revenues to care for the boulevards, the landowners along them were charged a special assessment. As a result, they were the first to get paved streets, street lights, sewers, and garbage collection. The boulevards also shared a special police force with the parks. These amenities, along with park commission endorsement, encouraged boulevard landowners to build stately homes worthy of their sites along these landscaped streets.

The boulevards, which connect Logan Square to Palmer Square and to many other parks on the city's west and south sides, form a green band that provides open space throughout the city for residents. Originally Logan Boulevard, Kedzie Boulevard, and Palmer Square were all part of Humboldt Boulevard. However, when Logan Square was renamed, sometime after the area was annexed to the city, the names were changed. These wide thoroughfares, landscaped for the stately mansions that began to line Logan and Kedzie Boulevards and Palmer Square, at one point were called "the boulevards of the millionaires." Kedzie Boulevard going south from Logan Square runs into Palmer Square at 2200 north. Palmer Square was named for Governor John A. Palmer, who was in office when the legislation creating the North, South, and West Side Park Commissions was enacted. This square creates a small park separating the east and westbound lanes of the boulevard, making this the widest section of the boulevard system. The square, reminiscent of an English square with its churches and residences, was originally closed off to through traffic and used for the recreation of Palmer Square's residents.

The Illinois Centennial Monument in Logan Square, dedicated in 1918 by Governor Frank Lowden, commemorates Illinois' first 100 years of statehood. The \$60,000 monument was donated by lumber magnate Benjamin Ferguson. The 70-foot monument has bas-relief figures at the base supporting a Doric column topped with an eagle. Henry Bacon, designer of the Lincoln Monument, designed the column and eagle while Evelyn Longman designed the bas-relief sculpture. The figures in the base, which include Hiawatha, Ceres, Mercury, and Daniel Boone, symbolize agriculture, labor, transportation, education, and music. Landscaping of the square was completed by landscape architect Paul Thomas. He refurbished the park with trees and shrubs indigenous to Illinois.

Architectural Styles and History

Logan Square is an area rich in architectural styles. Lining the boulevards are structures depicting practically every known residential style. While some of the structures are rather eclectic, others depict a purer style. Not only do the tree-lined boulevards hold a store of architectural heritage, but there are also many excellent samples on the side streets.

If one ventures on some of Logan Square's side streets, he will find a residential style typical of many Chicago neighborhoods, the Chicago bungalow. This one-story frame building is characterized by a front porch and a large attic broken by a dormer. In other parts of Logan Square, you will find many one-and-a-half-story brick cottages. These houses tend to be very similar but have different roof lines or decorative brickwork that distinguishes one from another. On the east side of Spaulding in the 2400 block, you can see some of these one and one-and-a-half-story structures.

Frequently a builder or contractor would come into an area and build tracts of houses, sometimes as many as a dozen within a two or three-block area. The house designs, often from pattern books, were moderately priced, ranging from several hundred to several thousand dollars. One contractor who erected many of these structures in the Logan Square area was A. H. Hill & Co. This firm also built houses designed by architects. For example, two two-story flat buildings, constructed in 1909 at 2911 and 2912 North Bernard, were designed by architect C.F. Sorenson and built by A. H. Hill & Co.



Illinois Centennial Monument in Logan Square.



Close up of the bas-relief sculpture at the base of the Illinois Centennial Monument.



Two-flat graystone at 2434 North Kedzie Boulevard.

Another structure frequently seen along some of the side streets as well as along the boulevards is the *Chicago Graystone*. These buildings are generally brick structures faced with a gray stone, hence the name Chicago Graystone. Most are usually two or three stories and are two- and three-flat buildings. Frequently these graystones have a Picturesque element, such as a round turret or a bay window. A small covered entrance is often used and, in some instances, provides a balcony for the second story. These houses, while not any one pure architectural style, may contain elements of several. For example, the two-flat at 2434 North Kedzie Boulevard has windows on the second story treated with Romanesque details, while those on the first story feature Greek details. If you examine the treatment of the doors and windows as well as the ornamental stonework on the more ornate houses, such as the Jefferson Ice Mansion at 3024 West Logan Boulevard, you will find elements of several architectural styles.

Although along the boulevards there are many single-family dwellings, a considerable number of two- and three-flat buildings also exist. *Housing in Chicago Communities*, a 1940 report prepared by the Chicago Planning Commission, states that single-family dwellings account for less than 23 percent of the structures in Logan Square. Thirty-five percent of all the buildings in the area are two-story, two-flat buildings. The study also reveals that just under 45 percent of all the structures were built before 1895 and that the median year for Logan Square building was 1902.

There are several buildings of particular interest on the boulevards. One of these which stands at 2703 West Logan Boulevard was designed around 1908 by George W. Maher for the Rath family of the Rath Meat Company. Maher was one of a handful of architects that were among the most noted designers of Prairie style buildings. These buildings, designed to blend in with their environment, were built predominantly on the prairie. The openness and flatness of the Illinois prairie is reflected in the design of this house. The strong horizontal line and low roof line of the Rath residence suggests that even though the house is two stories, it is still low to the ground. Leaded windows with ornamental mullions are a frequent Prairie style detail. The most noted Prairie school architect is Frank Lloyd Wright.



Jefferson Ice Mansion at 3024 West Logan Boulevard.



Prairie style house designed by George Maher for the Rath Family at 2703 West Logan Boulevard.

If you proceed east on Logan Boulevard to 2535 West Logan, you will find one of the area's most interesting examples of the Queen Anne style. Although not pure Queen Anne, this frame house built in the early 1900s does have the characteristic round turret and a variety of surface textures. Sullivanesque influence enhances the decorative work that adds texture under the eaves and at the top of the turret. A pure Queen Anne house would have a wrap-around porch.

At 2650 West Logan another frame house, exhibiting many elements of the Italianate style, stands. It has a gently sloping roof framing wide eaves and bay windows. Although there is no cupola or observatory on top of the house, there is a flat rectangular area where one could have been placed. Unlike a pure Italianate, although typical of a farm house, this building has a large wrap around porch.

The Eleventh Church of the Christian Scientist, at 2840 West Logan Boulevard, with its Ionic columns, architrave, and decorative frieze provides an excellent example of a classical Greek temple. The limestone facing that covers the building's eastern and southern facades hides its brick construction. The church was built in 1916 and designed by Leon E. Stanhope.

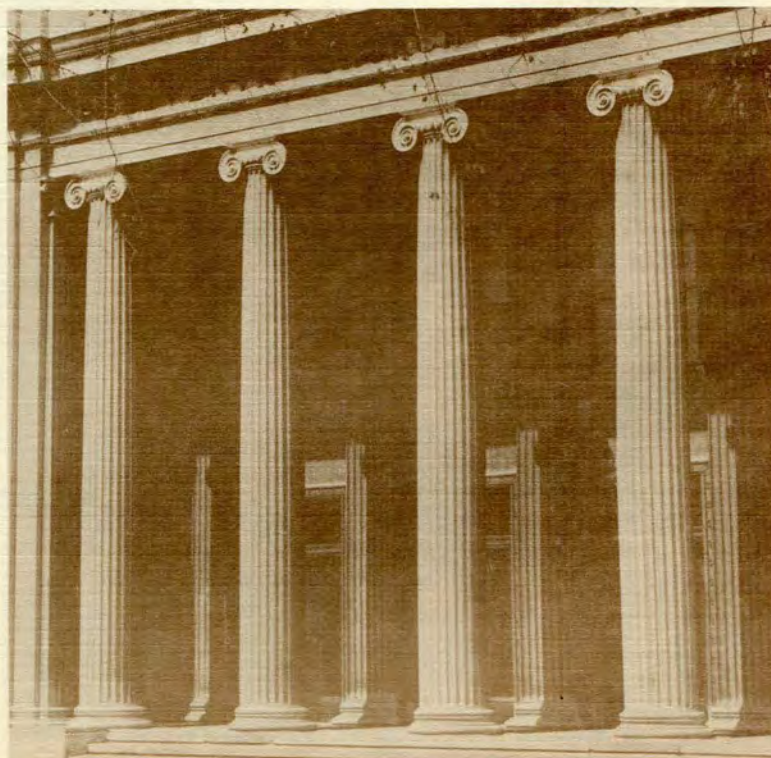
At 2934 West Logan Boulevard stands an outstanding example of an Art Nouveau structure. This six-flat building designed by Fredrick Schock, was erected in 1909 at a cost of \$35,000. The entrance illustrates the influence of the arts and crafts movement on building ornamentation, both inside and outside. The floral pattern in the stone and exterior stained glass window panes is repeated on the floor, walls, and ceiling of the entry way. The gently curved lines that accent the entrance are used throughout the building design.



Typical two-story Graystone construction which predominates along the Boulevards.



Italianate frame house at 2650 West Logan Boulevard.



*Eleventh Church of the Christian Scientist
at 2840 West Logan Boulevard.*

Adding a European feel to the Boulevard is the residence at 3000 West Logan. This Germanic style house, designed by architect J. B. Rohm, was built in 1921. The exposed woodwork on the loggia, which contrasts with the brick construction, accentuates the European feel of the design.

Further west on Logan Boulevard at 3024 is the Jefferson Ice Mansion. This two-flat building was built in 1908 for the Rustman family, owners of the Jefferson Ice Company. The house still has the original tile roof and copper gutters. Although similar to the Chicago Graystone, this structure is more ornate with decorative features from several different architectural styles. The bay windows, which provide an uneven massing, depict the Picturesque style. The high pitched gable roof broken by dormers and accented by stand-up details is reminiscent of Gothic Revival buildings. Pedimented windows, characteristic of the Renaissance Revival, shows the influence of yet another style in this structure.

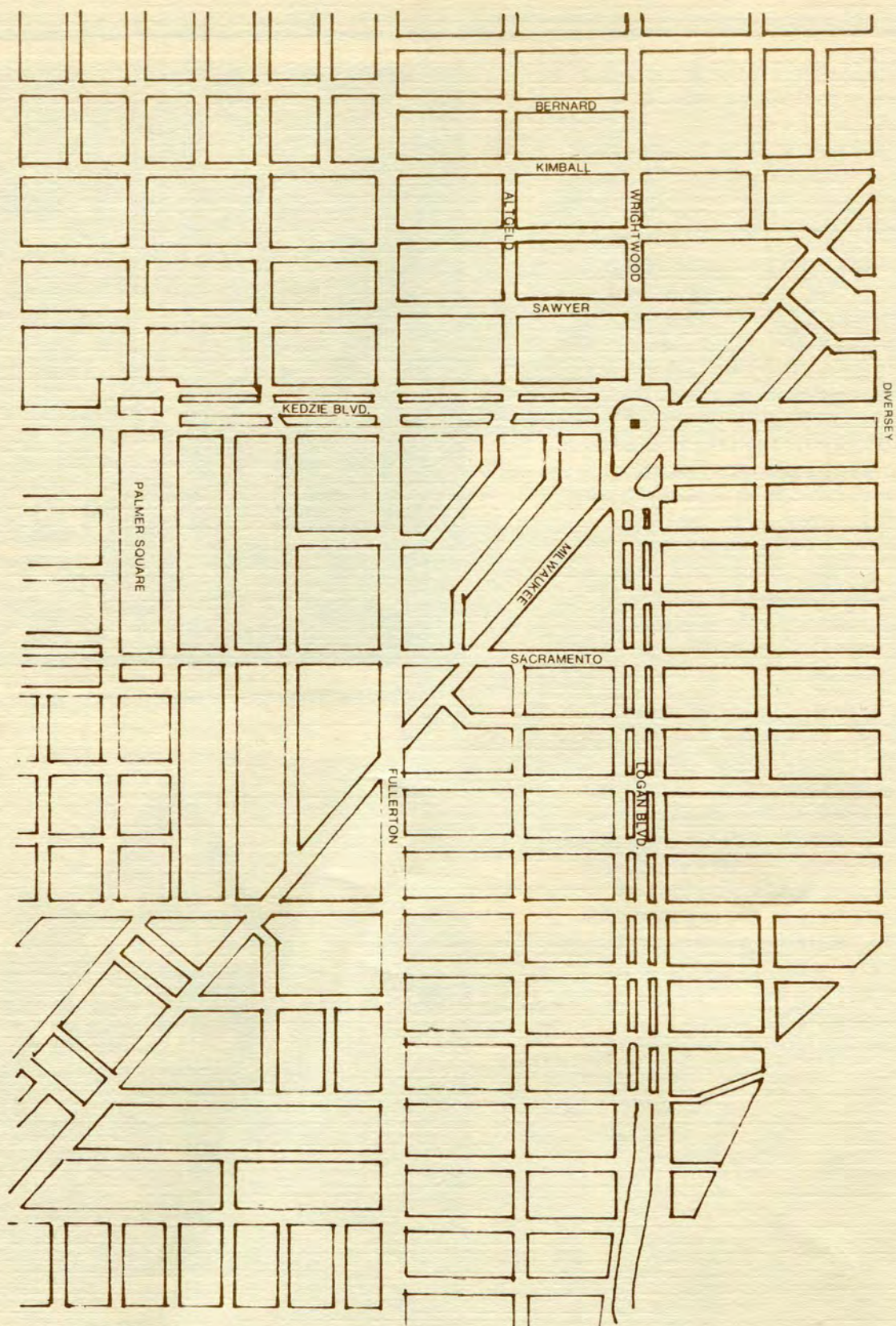
If one ventures on Kimball and Sawyer Streets, just west of Kedzie Boulevard, he can take in the Kimbell residences already mentioned at 2524 and 2556 North Kimball. He will also see more of the area's great architectural wealth. At 2521 North Sawyer is an excellent example of a late Picturesque house. The wrap-around porch, the bay projecting from the side, the exposed stick work under the eaves and at other places on the house, and the tall pitched roof are all characteristics of the style. There are also many row houses, frame houses, and cottages to be enjoyed on Logan Square's side streets.



Art Nouveau six-flat designed by Fredrick Schock at 2934 West Logan Boulevard.



Late Picturesque Style house at 2521 North Sawyer Street.



Logan Square

Logan Square's history, ethnic heritage, architectural styles, and boulevards and parks have helped it develop into a unique city neighborhood. It is convenient to the heart of downtown Chicago, yet provides room for open spaces, yards, and areas to enjoy the out-of-doors.

The information contained in this booklet provides the groundwork for a more extensive study of Logan Square's place within the fabric of the city.

This booklet was produced by Logan Square Preservation.