

## Eye on Evanston: Thoughts on Design | Evanston's cultural and commercial landmarks

by [Jack Weiss, Design Evanston](#) April 13th, 2022

When we think of landmarks we generally think of historically or architecturally significant buildings. Many of the 150 places mentioned in Design Evanston's book *Evanston: 150 Years 150 Places* fall into these categories. A few do not. Institutions can be culturally important to a community without occupying a significant building or place. Longtime retail or service providers, too, can develop into a unifying element of a neighborhood or a shared memory of a city. All residents of Evanston have personal lists of landmarks, of places that are significant in their lives. We acknowledge here a few of the many places that come to mind as part of our collective perception and the history of Evanston.

### Amazingrace, Chicago Avenue and Main Street

Amazingrace started as a coffeehouse in Northwestern University's Scott Hall in 1971 and immediately became a focus for music. The collective hosted such greats as the Grateful Dead, John Prine, Keith Jarrett, Sonny Rollins, McCoy Tyner and nearby Evanston resident Steve Goodman (in photo). In 1974 a loyal group of "Gracers" created a new Amazingrace at The Main in south Evanston.

Amazingrace became an icon of the youth culture of the times and closed after its short but vibrant life in 1978. The original building was demolished and replaced in 2016 by a nine-story mixed-use development.



Steve Goodman in an Amazingrace performance. (Photo by Charles Seton)

### **Bookman's Alley, 1721 Sherman Ave. (rear)**

Roger Carlson opened Bookman's Alley in 1980. The store boasted 40,000 volumes and occupied an expansive one-story shed located off the alley connecting Sherman and Benson Avenues. The shop's unique ambiance came not just from its enormous selection of used books, but from its comfortable groupings of rugs, antique furniture and lamps, and the maps, paintings and posters hung on the few walls not covered with books. Carlson closed Bookman's Alley in 2013 but the unique space [continues today as Bookends & Beginnings](#) under the ownership of Nina Barrett.

### **Chandler's, 630 Davis St.**

Although Chandler's occupies a page in the *Evanston: 150* book as a significant building, many remember it as a cultural and commercial landmark as well. In [an October 2021 essay in the Evanston RoundTable](#), Kris Hartzell and Jenny Thompson say that Chandler's was in business for a century – from 1895 to its closing in 1995. In the 1940s Jared Johnson, chairman of Chandler's board, designed the *Chandler's Assignment Notebook*. The book featured a calendar that reflected the academic school year. "The notebook became a much beloved mainstay of students and was still printed after the store closed."



The Chandler's building in downtown Evanston, seen in June 2013. (Photo by Jack Weiss)

### **Crystal Table Water, 2318 Ridge Ave.**

This bottled water company was started in 1896 when three natural springs were discovered in the backyard of this house built in 1887. Crystal Table Water was bottled onsite and sold on the North Shore for over 70 years. In her 2021 E-book, *Frogtown: The Story of the North Ridge*, Kris Hartzell reports, "Remnant buildings from the business can still be seen in the alley behind the house. At one time there was a large bottling plant building just about where Colfax now crosses the property."



Crystal Table Water came from a spring in the backyard of this house at 2318 Ridge Ave. (Photo via Google Maps)

### **Evanston Sanitarium and Training School, 1916-1918 Asbury Ave.**

[Dr. Isabella Garnett](#), a member of one of Evanston's first African American families, [started the Evanston Sanitarium and Training School in 1914](#) to care for the growing African American community with her husband, Dr. Arthur Butler. Prior to this, since neither Evanston Hospital nor St. Francis Hospital would admit African Americans, patients had to travel to the south or west side of Chicago for treatment. In 1930 the Community Hospital of Evanston replaced the sanitarium in a brick house at 2026 Brown Ave. Evanston's two exclusively white hospitals began to admit African American patients in the 1950s. The Community Hospital, which had expanded to a larger location in 1952, closed in 1980.

### **Fanny's Restaurant, 1601 Simpson St.**

Fanny's Restaurant, started in 1946, was a notable Evanston eatery cited by Chicago Magazine as one of the top 40 Chicago-area restaurants ever. Patrons included the Marshall Field family. The salad dressing and meat sauce won international acclaim and are still available today. The restaurant closed in 1987 due to the health of its founder, [Fanny Lazzar](#). The building was converted to lofts in 2005. In 2014 Evanston caterer Feast & Imbibe opened the former restaurant space. Feast & Imbibe was designated one of the top 10 wedding caterers in the Chicago area.



Fanny Lazzar serves customers at Fanny's, 1601 Simpson St., in 1962. (Chicago Sun-Times archive photo courtesy Jim Craig)

### **Lemoy Ace Hardware, 1008 Davis St.**

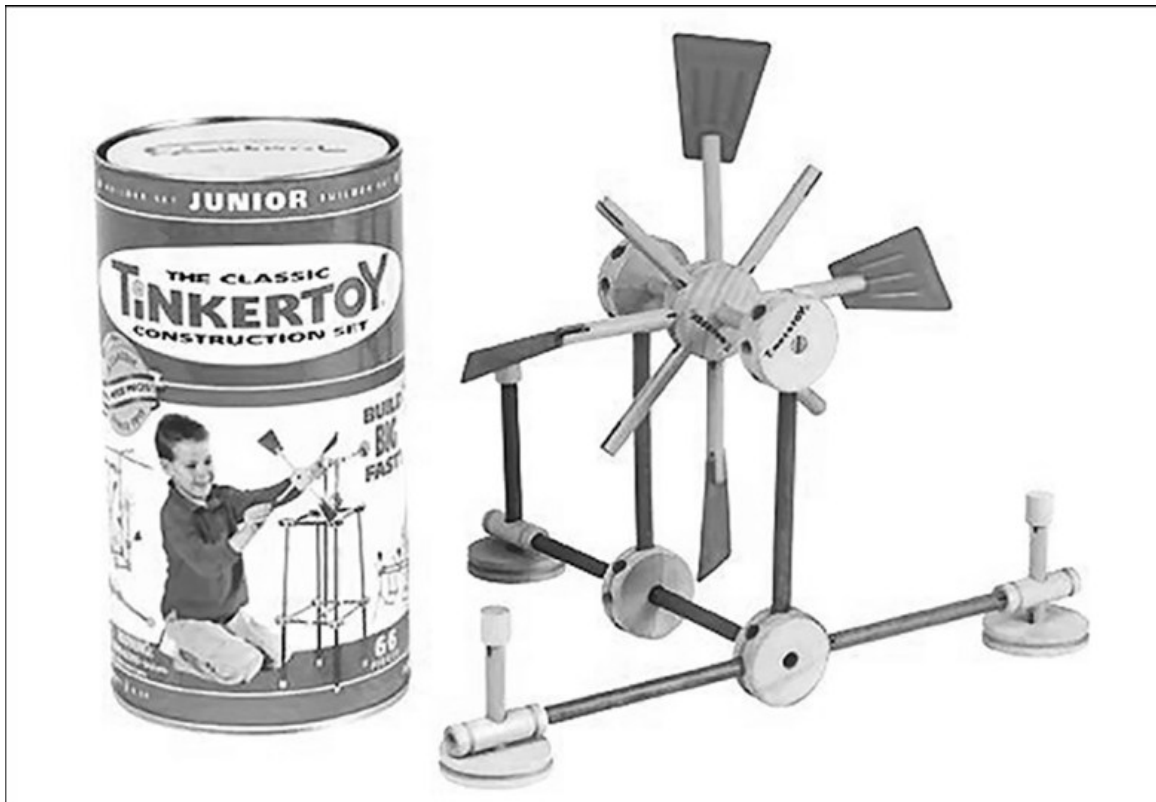
Lemoy originated as a sheet metal repair shop (Peterson-Lemoy) in 1894 on the site that became the Chandler's Building. Peter Lemoy wanted a more mainstream retail operation and launched Lemoy Hardware, Evanston's oldest retail business still in operation, in 1895. Today, under the stewardship of fourth-generation family member President Ralph Lemoy-Dupuis, Lemoy is thriving. Once a True Value co-op, Lemoy Hardware became an Ace co-op in the 1950s. Scott Evans is the current manager. Ralph's great-grandfather, Peter, and grandfather, Ralph, are pictured in this photo.



Peter and Ralph Lemoi, circa 1895. (Photo courtesy Ralph Lemoi-Dupuis)

### **The Toy Tinkers, 805 Greenwood St.**

In the early 1910s, Charles Pajeau designed the first Tinkertoy set in his garage after watching children play with pencils, sticks and empty spools of thread. The business expanded to shops at 805 Greenwood St. and later moved to a four-story plant at 2012 Ridge Ave. Pajeau and his partner, Robert Pettit, introduced the new toy at the 1914 American Toy Fair and a year later over a million sets were sold. In 1952, when Pajeau died, sales of Tinkertoy sets were estimated at 2.8 million and employment at the Evanston plant stood at 100. After a series of sales, all operations were moved out of Evanston by 1973. The brand is now owned by Hasbro.



A vintage TinkerToy set; the toy began in Evanston. (Photo from Flickr)

*This essay expands on content that appears in Evanston:150 Years 150 Places, 2015.*

*Design Evanston's "Eye on Evanston" articles focus on Evanston's design history and advocate for good design. Visit [designevanston.org](http://designevanston.org) to learn more about the organization.*

Source: Evanston RoundTable 4.13.22