

Eye on Evanston: Thoughts on Design | Coming of age in the 20s

Part two of four on the proposed Northwest Evanston Historic District
by [Jack Weiss, Design Evanston](#) October 26th, 2022

[Part one](#) of this series reprinted the introduction to the 1988 proposal by Anne Earle to consider nomination of a Northwest Evanston Historic District and provided her description of the older east portion. Part two features Earle's discussion about the types of properties in the proposed district, reproduced below as originally written.

If you're reading this for the first time, keep in mind that much has changed in northwest Evanston since the grant proposal was written 35 years ago. Also, many homes we admire today, although present at the time of the proposal, were "newer" than the early 1930s time frame and were therefore not mentioned.

Coming of Age in the Twenties: The Development of Northwest Evanston in the First Third of the Twentieth Century

By Anne O. Earle

Property Types

Eighty per cent of the houses within the proposed Northwest Evanston Historic District were built between 1918 and 1931; most of those houses are brick, but a number of houses are stone, stucco, wood and combinations thereof. Eight per cent of the houses within the proposed district were built before World War I; most are frame or stucco. They are clustered in the eastern arm of the district. Prairie Style houses designed by nationally known architects and contractor foursquares are represented. Only four houses within the proposed district were built in the 1890s. Less than five percent of the houses are post-World War II infill.

The earliest house within the proposed district was built in 1894 at 2315 Lincoln by a North Evanston real estate developer who lived a block away (outside district). In 1895 the three houses around the corner at 2444, 2450 and 2454 Pioneer Road were designed as an ensemble by Robert C. Spencer, Jr., for Evanston developer Charles Wightman. That trio of houses illustrates the origin of the dominant pattern of development in the proposed district: nearly simultaneous construction of similar houses on adjacent lots. That development pattern persisted into the early years of the Depression. In contrast, the usual pattern of single-family residential construction elsewhere in Evanston prior to World War II was to build two or three houses per block, leaving vacant lots between for later infill. Harrison and Lincoln streets immediately east of the proposed district boundaries illustrate that multigenerational pattern of development.



2200 Lincoln St., a local landmark. Architect: Tallmadge & Watson. 1910. Credit: The Lakota Group

The eight houses within the district on Pioneer Road south of Quinlan Park were built between 1908 and 1911. Their construction on adjacent lots within a short time span is characteristic of development within the proposed district. Building permits name contractor John Anderson, who lived two blocks away (outside district), as owner and architect of the group of three houses at 2401, 2407 and 2415 Pioneer Road, which were built in 1908. Evanston carpenter-contractor Thomas B. Carson is listed as owner and architect of the houses at 2341, 2410 and 2414 Pioneer Road, which were built in 1910. But permits for the houses at 2402 and 2406 Pioneer Road that Carson built the following year name Evanstonian Harvey Wright as architect.

The most architecturally significant houses within the proposed Northwest Evanston Historic District are the Prairie Style houses on Lincoln Street. They were built before World War I and most are stucco and frame, unlike the majority of houses within the proposed district. The Prairie houses set far back on generous landscaped lots set the tone for the later development of Lincoln Street. Although not, for the most part, built on adjacent lots, the Prairie houses stand comfortably next to houses of later generations; but there are usually only two generations of houses per block. Many of the Prairie houses were designed by nationally known architects. Dwight Perkins lived in a 1904 house of his design at 2319 Lincoln Street; it is listed on the National Register.



Perkins House, 2319 Lincoln St., National Register and local landmark. Architect: Dwight Perkins. 1904. Credit: The Lakota Group

Five other houses at 2212, 2333, 2401, 2610 and 2700 Lincoln were designed by Perkins & Hamilton or Perkins, Fellows & Hamilton between 1906 and 1912. Tallmadge & Watson designed the two houses at 2222 and 2200 Lincoln in 1909 and 1910 respectively. Alfred Altschuler designed the house at 2201 Lincoln which was built in 1910. Charles R. Ayars, a local Prairie architect, lived at 2419 Lincoln in a house built in 1904; he also designed the house at 2525 Lincoln in 1910. One distinctive late Prairie house designed by George Elmslie was built at 2700 Grant Street in 1922.



2444 Hartrey St., local landmark. Architect: Alfred S. Alschuler. 1908. Credit: The Lakota Group

The dominant character of the district, however, is formed by the ensemble of houses constructed during the building boom between the end of World War I and the early years of the Depression. Although each house is different from its neighbors, a feeling of cohesiveness unites the proposed district. The core of the district is the seven block area of twenties houses that lies between Grant and Harrison streets on Ewing Avenue, Forestview Road, Lincolnwood Drive, Central Park Avenue, Marcy Avenue, and part of Lawndale Avenue. Large revival houses designed by local architects for original owner-occupants are interspersed with equally large revival houses built by contractor-builders for speculation.

Somewhat smaller revival houses interspersed with large bungalows line the nearby streets. Groups of contractor houses and smaller bungalows are at the south and west periphery. As one moves outward from the core of the proposed district, the tree-lined parkways become shallower, the lots narrower, and the setbacks less deep. But the transition from street to street is quite gradual. Most houses on a block have uniform setbacks, are similar in size, scale and massing to their neighbors on either side, and face similar houses across the street.

Two broad streets, Lincoln Street and Central Park Avenue, lead to the core of the proposed Northwest Evanston Historic District. Each has 100 foot wide right-of-way and very broad parkways. Large houses with generous setbacks on wide landscaped lots contribute to the feeling of graciousness and gentility.

Lincoln Street is an extension of a street laid out in the platting of North Evanston in 1868. Lincoln was, and remains, the major entrance to the district from the east. Though a broad thoroughfare from the Chicago & North Western Railway tracks to its western terminus at Lincolnwood Avenue, Lincoln Street changes character abruptly at Hartrey Avenue, the eastern edge of the district and the western boundary of the original Village of North Evanston. Within the district, lot sizes, prevailing setbacks and house sizes on Lincoln are significantly larger than to the east. Within the proposed district, the houses on Lincoln reflect the successive stages of development from the dominance of Prairie houses near Hartrey Avenue to the dominance of eclectic styles near Lincolnwood Drive.

Part three of this series is scheduled to post Nov. 9.

Design Evanston's "Eye on Evanston" column focuses on Evanston's design history and advocates for good design. Visit designevanston.org to learn more about the organization.

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