

Italianate styles of the first years of the nation were yielding in the 1880s and 1890s to the various styles of the late Victorian era designed by local and regional architects. Some of the first Prairie designs would be tried during this period in reaction to the high-style, overly ornate and exuberant Victorian architecture favored by Oak Park's prominent citizens. The Prairie style provoked responses, both favorable and unfavorable, and drew attention across the country.

By 1920, as a building boom ensued, the various revival styles came into vogue, supplanting both the late-Victorian and Prairie styles. Colonial, Classical and Tudor Revivals were the most popular, used widely in typical single-family homes and larger estate homes, as well as apartments and commercial buildings.

In 1902, as Oak Park severed its ties with Cicero Township and incorporated as a self-governing municipality, 10,000 people called the Village home. The population continued to grow, doubling every ten years to nearly 60,000 people in 1930. Today, the district encompasses the architectural development throughout that period.

**Guidebook**

The Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission published a guidebook to the Frank Lloyd

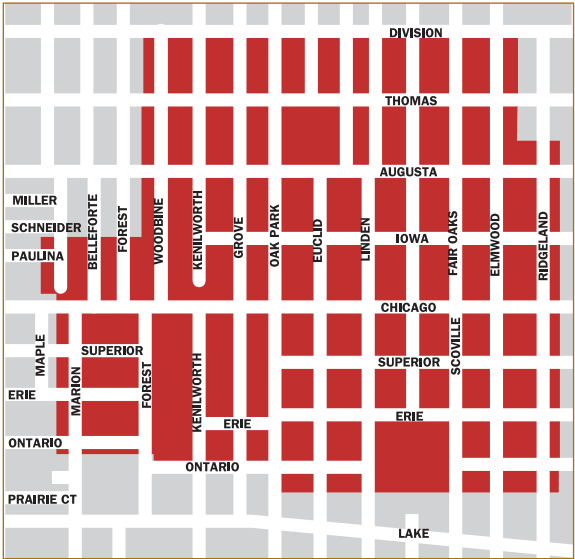


639 Fair Oaks



714 & 716 Columbian

Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District in 2000. The guidebook offers various tours through the historic district and more information on Wright and the Prairie School. The guidebook is sold at local bookstores and available in the Oak Park Public Library. Many books on the subject also are available.



Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District



For more information, call or write:  
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*On the cover: Heurtley House,  
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Frank Lloyd Wright-  
Prairie School  
of Architecture  
Historic District





The Frank Lloyd Wright-Prairie School of Architecture Historic District contains a truly remarkable collection of late 19th and early 20th century residential architecture. Within the historic district is the world’s single greatest concentration of residences designed by architects collectively known as the Prairie School.

The historic district also contains other excellent examples of architectural styles, including Queen Anne, Stick, Italianate, Shingle, Gothic Revival, Tudor Revival, Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, Art Deco, Craftsman, Bungalow and the ever-popular American Foursquare. This phenomenal range of architecture is a visual documentation of Oak Park’s evolution from a rural village to an urban suburb.

Created in 1972 by the Village of Oak Park, this historic district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The district has irregular edges, but is generally bounded by Division Street on the north, Lake Street on the south, Ridgeland Avenue on the east, and Marion Street and Woodbine Avenue on the west. Approximately 1,500 buildings are located within the historic district, about 1,300 of which contribute to its historic character. The district is



300 Forest



636 N. East

an excellent living museum of the past 150 years of architectural history in the United States.

**Prairie School Architecture**

As reflected by the name of the historic district, there were many architects, in addition to Wright, who designed in or were influenced by the Prairie style. The phrase Prairie School refers to a group of architects working in the Chicago metropolitan area between 1890 and 1917, who shared the common idea of producing an original American style of architecture that was not wholly derived from historic styles.

The buildings by the prairie architects are of interest because they are clearly exceptional works of art. Equally important is the significant historical position occupied by the prairie architects. This movement produced the first truly American style of modern architecture. Influenced by the philosophical writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman and John Ruskin, and drawing from the English Arts and Crafts Movement, the Prairie style was uniquely American both in its manifestation and its point of view. It celebrated the horizontal, Midwestern landscape in the setting and repose of buildings, reflected the openness of the prairie, exalted honesty in craftsmanship and the use of natural materials.

**Wright’s Influence**

Frank Lloyd Wright, the most famous architect of this group, lived and worked in Oak Park for 20 years. During that time, he developed his unique interpretation of the Arts and Crafts Movement later described as the Prairie style. The historic district contains 23 buildings designed or remodeled by Wright between 1889 and 1913, including his own home and studio. Two others remain in the nearby Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District. Talented architects who worked in his studio collectively evolved the style and continued to do so later in their independent careers, both in Oak Park and elsewhere.

**Development of the District**

Although still unincorporated and with only a few thousand residents, as early as 1872 Oak Park was becoming an elite suburb that had outlawed the sale of alcohol, spearheaded construction of a substantial brick schoolhouse, boasted active congregations of all of the mainstream Protestant denominations and widely advertised the fine homes of its leaders.

The architecture of the early homes built in the historic district was quite typical of any community of the era. The cottages and homes designed in the popular Greek Revival and



637 N. Euclid



175-181 Linden



710 Augusta

**What is an Historic District?**

An historic district is an area with geographically definable boundaries, possessing

a significant concentration of properties united aesthetically by plan or physical development, or by past events, that has been designated as an Oak Park Historic District pursuant to Village ordinance. In an historic district, most buildings contribute to the significance of the area without individually having the credentials of a landmark. These buildings are referred to as *Contributing Resources*. They help to maintain the historic integrity of the neighborhood. Buildings that do not contribute to the significance of the historic district are usually less than 50 years old or have been significantly altered in the recent past. These buildings are referred to as *Non-Contributing Resources*.