



HISTORIC CHICAGO
BUNGALOW ASSOCIATION

It all started with a little friendly competition. After hearing about the Historic Chicago Bungalow Initiative certification program for Chicago bungalows, the Foster Park Community Council, an organization that represents forty local block clubs in the Auburn Gresham Community, decided to organize a competition between two of its blocks, to see which block could get the most bungalows certified by the HCBA. “We wanted to do something to get people excited about block clubs **and about their houses,**” says **Sandra Halbert**, director of the Council. “Since most of the houses in the area are Chicago bungalows, we started looking at the certification program. No one else had ever tried getting entire blocks certified, so we decided to try and be the first.”



The 8200 block of South Aberdeen Avenue and the 8500 block of South Loomis Avenue were chosen for the competition because they both contained mostly bungalows and both had active block clubs. The two blocks worked with

members of the Council, who took pictures and completed application forms for all of the residents who wanted their bungalows to be certified. Competition was fierce, but when the tallies were done, the Aberdeen block came out on top with 100% of the bungalows on the block certified. The contest, Halbert says, “generated a lot of excitement, not just among the competing blocks, but throughout the community. Now other block clubs are saying, ‘We want to be the next bungalow block.’”

The 8200 block of South Aberdeen, like the other bungalow blocks in the area, developed in the 1920s, when many South Side communities experienced rapid growth. In 1922, C. R. Carlson commissioned architect L. J. Allison to build a modest bungalow at 8209 South Aberdeen—the first bungalow on the block. Within the next three years, a flurry of building activity filled the rest of block with bungalows. Most of these



bungalows were commissioned individually, not in large clusters, which gives the block a sense of diversity that many bungalow blocks lack. However, since the same architects, mostly small firms like Lantz & Christensen and Kocher & Larson, designed many of these bungalows design patterns repeat as you walk down the block.



Several of the block's first residents commissioned their own bungalows and oversaw the construction of their homes from the ground up. William Nystrom hired Lantz and Christensen to design his bungalow at 8227 S. Aberdeen in 1929. Later that year, Nystron, a carpenter, moved into the new bungalow with his wife Frieda and their teenage sons, Alister and

Marshall. Like many of the residents of Auburn Gresham, the Nystroms were Swedish. Swedish and German working and middle-class families dominated the block through the 1960s.

Like these original families, the middle-class African American families that occupy the area today take great pride in their historic Chicago bungalows. "These are the best houses you could ever buy,,," claims long-time resident Will Taylor, who moved into 8237 S. Aberdeen (a bungalow built in 1924) with his wife Grace in 1965. "We wouldn't trade it for any other house."

