

NORTH MAYFAIR HISTORIC DISTRICT

W. FOSTER AVE. (NORTH), N. PULASKI RD. (EAST), THE EAST SIDE OF N. KILBOURN AVE. (WEST)
AND W. LAWRENCE AVE. (SOUTH)



North Mayfair was originally part of the town of Montrose in Jefferson Township, one of a group of small farming communities northwest of the city. Mayfair was ripe for growth by the time Jefferson Township was annexed to Chicago in 1889, and inroads were made quickly. By 1894, streetcar lines along Elston, Milwaukee, Montrose and Cicero Avenues linked portions of the area just south of North Mayfair to the center city. Streetcar lines along Pulaski Road (known at different times

in its history as 40th Street, Crawford Avenue, and Clybourn Avenue) also served to bring Czechs from the city to the Bohemian National Cemetery, which had opened in 1877, despite initial resistance by Jefferson residents, to provide “freethinking” Czech immigrants with an alternative to traditional Catholic burial. The cemetery, which often served as a site for picnics and games, along with the Bohemian Home for the Aged, constructed in 1896, helped to attract a “noticeable number of Bohemian settlers” to the area by the turn of the century, a trend that would continue into the twentieth century, as the area filled with bungalows.

Despite their restrained style, the early bungalows in North Mayfair were well built and well-designed homes. Architects like Benedict Bruns and Ernest Braucher were just beginning to make names for themselves within the emerging bungalow belt. These early bungalows, though simple, reflected a thorough understanding of the form. As residential construction increased



exponentially in North Mayfair between 1919 and 1923, a degree of variety began to emerge among the rows of brick bungalows. However, variations remained well within the framework established

by the first homes in the district. Unlike many Chicago bungalow neighborhoods, North Mayfair did not develop in a strictly linear fashion with a clear and predictable evolution of form. The bungalow in Mayfair did not begin simply and evolve into an increasingly complex form, as it did in neighborhoods like Rogers Park Manor and South Park Manor. Instead, architects and developers in the district worked within a much more narrowly constructed definition of the Chicago



bungalow. As a result, the district is visually much more cohesive than one would expect given the number of builders and designers involved, and the streetscapes are more consistent than many Chicago bungalow neighborhoods.

Like most bungalow districts in Chicago, North Mayfair drew families from a diverse array of ethnic and economic backgrounds together under the common goal of homeownership. Over one-third of the homes in North Mayfair were owned by immigrant families; approximately three-fourths of American born heads of household in the district were children of immigrants. Male heads of household worked at a broad array of skilled blue collar and middle-class white-collar jobs that afforded them enough income to make a modest down payment on their bungalows and to keep making monthly payments. A good number of bungalow owners in Mayfair housed extended family or adult children who maintained jobs outside the home and likely made contributions to the household economy. The bungalows that emerged in North Mayfair between 1913 and 1930 allowed working and middle-class, blue- and white-collar families to also share in the American dream of homeownership. For these families, and for families living throughout Chicago's bungalow belt, the bungalow provided a thoughtfully designed, solidly built, and thoroughly modern home, while providing a place where groups of economically, ethnically, and culturally diverse people could come together into a uniform American residential fabric.

