



HISTORIC CHICAGO BUNGALOW ASSOCIATION



Growing up in Oak Park, Sylvia Kete has always had a love for bungalows. And when looking for a new home in 2000, it was easy for her and her housemate Marcela to fall in love with this cozy bungalow in Chicago's Ravenswood Manor. What is unique to this bungalow is its low roof and large cantilever that covers the front porch and steps. This leads into a surprisingly open interior that creates a wonderful welcoming and flexible space.

In this ethnically diverse area of Chicago, the bungalow sits mixed in with other bungalows and one to two story homes. The bungalow's history is somewhat mysterious. It has seen at least four different owners including Sylvia and Marcela. Clues left behind include a Jewish Mezuzah that is still on the back door hinting that previous owners were Jewish. And from the patina on the brick garage and stories from the neighbors, they know that in the sixties the owner had a strange obsession with the color turquoise, and painted all of the interior walls and the garage accordingly.

Construction of the bungalow started in May of 1922. The original owner, W. H. Struning, lived in the home with his wife and daughter whom were all born in Illinois and of German descent. Struning worked with contractor P. J. Babbington, whose parents had recently immigrated from Ireland. At the time of construction the one story brick home was estimated at a building cost of \$7,000 and just 8 years later the U.S. Census listed its value at \$15,000.

Like most owners of older homes, Sylvia noticed how hard it was to heat the house. "Energy would escape so quickly, I felt like I was heating the neighborhood".

In 2006 they attended the HCBA Bungalow and Green Homes Expo, where they learned they could have an energy audit done to improve the energy efficiency in their home. The audit was very thorough and it included a number of tips on energy conservation.



“There’s a lot you can do yourself to see a drop in your gas bill.” Sylvia states as she remembers the many solutions. Work they did themselves included putting in air tight baffles in the light cans, caulking the windows, putting an airtight damper on their fireplace, replacing the latches on the windows, and using a programmable thermostat. The primary energy improvement was adding insulation in the attic. The project qualified for a \$1000 Energy Savers Grant from the HCBA. With their new insulation and these minor improvements Sylvia saw an immediate drop in her bill. She estimates that the improvements have cut her energy costs by approximately thirty percent.

Being very pleased with the process and its results, the homeowners hope to continue working on new ways to improve their bungalow. They are currently looking to disconnect a downspout and put in a rain barrel to collect rainwater. This would be ideal and garden friendly to the three new trees they had planted on their property. With the tree coverage, they have just the right amount of shade and privacy, and still get to catch a glimpse of the brown line train tracks just a few hundred feet from their backyard.