

SCHORSCH IRVING PARK GARDENS HISTORIC DISTRICT

NORTH TO GRACE ST., SOUTH TO PATTERSON AVE.,
EAST TO AUSTIN AVE., WEST TO MELVINA AVE.

The development of the Schorsch Irving Park Gardens from 1917 to 1926 typified the rise and enormous popularity of Chicago bungalow neighborhoods between 1907 and 1930. The tens of thousands of one and one-and-one-half story brick bungalows built in the city's outlying neighborhoods between 1910 and 1930 stood at the forefront of the expansion of single-family homeownership. Built together on entire blocks, the unprecedented form of Chicago bungalow created an entirely novel form of Chicago urbanism.



The area that would become Irving Park Gardens lay largely undeveloped until the turn of the century—the opening of the Milwaukee Avenue streetcar line through Portage Park in 1894 and the extension of another line along Irving Park Road in 1896 raised new interest in the area's development. The city built the O.A. Thorp Public School on the west side of Austin Avenue in 1916. The school provided something of a magnet for residential development, which began in 1917 with the construction of 16 bungalows on the 6000 block of Grace Street, immediately north of the school. These bungalows, designed by Axel V. Teisen, were the first of over 600 bungalows that real estate developer Albert J. Schorsch & Company would build during the late 1910s and early 1920s.



Schorsch was born in 1888 in Hungary to Anton and Mary Schorsch, his German-speaking parents. In 1895 Schorsch's parents and their five children immigrated to Morris, IL. In his teens, Albert worked in a bakery and as a night watchman at a bank in Morris. He then moved to Chicago to find work. In 1913, at the age of twenty-five, Schorsch



started his own real estate, contracting, and building business. He built his first bungalow on North Nagle, just a few blocks south and west of the tract he would develop as Irving Park Gardens.

Albert Schorsch's modest beginnings as a German-speaking immigrant laborer and his struggle to make a better life for himself and his family connected him to the middle-class and working-class families who bought his bungalows. Foreign-born immigrants headed



approximately one quarter of



the neighborhood families, and American-born children of immigrants headed many more. Many of these families had moved from apartments in Chicago neighborhoods where commercial, industrial, and residential buildings existed noisily

side by side. The fairly uniform, quiet residential bungalow blocks in Irving Park Gardens stood in sharp contrast to the “crazy-quilt” urbanism that prevailed in the city’s older neighborhoods.

Critics of the bungalow neighborhoods that were springing up around Chicago in the 1910s and 1920s worried about the monotony that could arise from identical bungalows lined up and fairly tightly packed on adjacent urban lots. One of the notable elements of Albert J. Schorsch's Irving Park Gardens was the studied effect to create varied blocks. Schorsch worked



with architect Axel Teisen and, to a larger extent, with residential architect Ernest Newton Braucher to create different bungalow designs that would give variety and rhythm to each block. Nevertheless, the uniform building lines, street lawns and residential fabric in the area created broader neighborhood cohesiveness. On such restricted bungalow blocks, a diverse ethnicity was assimilated into a fairly uniform American residential fabric.