

Community History: *South Shore*

It was the construction in 1881 of the South Kenwood Station by the Illinois Central Railroad that spurred the development of the South Shore community. Around 1889, several communities were formed in the vicinity of the station, among them Bryn Mawr, Parkside and Essex. Growth of the area was further propelled by the annexation by the city of Chicago in 1889 of Hyde Park Township, which included the South Shore community. Additionally, the location of the 1893 World's Fair in nearby Jackson Park led to a significant increase in development of the area. Numerous lots were sold not only for residential development, but also for commercial purposes. This event marked the beginning of a period of growth that would last through the 1940s.



Farm Roadhouse at 69th and Stony Island Ave., 1909

Image DN-0088471, Chicago Daily News negative collection, Chicago Historical Society



South Shore Country Club, 1916

Image DN-0065580A, Chicago Daily News negative collection, Chicago Historical Society

The initial residents of the community, particularly the Jackson Park Highlands neighborhood, were Protestants of European decent. Beginning in the 1920s, the population began to change. Numerous Irish Catholics and German and Russian Jews moved to the neighborhood from nearby Washington Park. In the 1950s, African-Americans began to move into the area, first into the northwestern part of the community and then later into the Parkside area. By 1980, 95 percent of the community was of African decent.

The mid-twentieth century was a period of decline for the South Shore community. Crime, poverty and the deterioration of the community were

In 1905, a fashionable neighborhood located between 67th and 71st Streets was developed and named Jackson Park Highlands. The neighborhood attracted new residents from Washington Park. These residents, many of whom had been affiliated with the privileged Washington Park Club, founded the South Shore Country Club. This Club, founded in 1907, became one of the most exclusive locations in the city.

The expansion continued in the 1920s with the completion of Lake Shore Drive. This led to the construction of a number of high-rise apartment buildings along the roadway. Neighborhoods of single-family homes and numerous apartment buildings continued to be constructed inland.



Pedestrians on Sidewalk, South Shore Dr. and 76th Street, 1929

Image DN-0088472, Chicago Daily News negative collection, Chicago Historical Society

serious issues that the area began to address as early as the late 1960s. In the 1970s, the Renewal Effort Service Corporation was formed to rehabilitate housing in the community. During the same time period, the South Shore Bank was purchased by a new group of investors, which were supported by both national foundations and churches. The purchase of the bank was brought about by what community members recognized as a need to keep funding sources within the community. Indeed, the newly purchased financial institution did just that—providing revitalization assistance through both not-for-profit and for-profit subsidiaries.

Today, the South Shore area is coming to life again. Ms. Lerirt Moore, resident of the community for 28 years, says she has seen the changes. “When we first moved here it was nice, then it went down, and now it’s coming back up again,” she explains. She cites the arrival of two new large chain grocery stores as an important part of the neighborhood’s renewal. “The Dominick’s came first, and then the Jewel,” she says, adding; “now there’s a Starbucks on Stony Island.” She explains that with the arrival of these new businesses, have come improvements in the infrastructure of the neighborhood. Specifically, she mentions improvements in the quality of services provided, such as the electrical systems.

Ms. Moore lives on a block lined with bungalows, which she describes as quite stable. “There’s a lot of people who’ve lived here a long time,” she says. “It’s a nice neighborhood. Everybody tries to keep up their homes.” She is pleased to see the investment being made in the community and the changes that are accompanying it. She believes things will only continue to grow. “There’s a lot of possibilities,” she says, “and people are happy to see them (the shops) coming.”