



## HISTORIC CHICAGO BUNGALOW ASSOCIATION



Nestled in the quiet West Ridge neighborhood is the unpretentious, blond brick bungalow belonging to Julie Parson-Nesbitt and her husband. “We knew it was the right house when we walked in,” explains Julie. They fell in love with the house immediately as they stood in the front living room eight years ago. “We liked that it was so bright and roomy,” she adds as she stands in the same room, which at that moment is illuminated by the stained glass windows glowing in the afternoon sun.

Peter E. Carlson, a carpenter and builder, constructed the bungalow in 1928. Mr. Carlson was an immigrant from Sweden, who arrived in the United States in 1881. In 1930, he was living on the south side of Chicago with his 26-year-old daughter Mildred, a single woman who was working as a stenographer.

On May 28, 1928, Mr. Carlson took out a building permit for the brick residence on the 6600 block of North Fairfield Avenue. The house is unique in that it is slightly larger than the average Chicago bungalow. Indeed, the specifications for the house listed on the building permit indicate that it was to be 26 ½ feet by 67 feet by 20 feet. Typical bungalows from the period often measured at least two feet less in each dimension. Construction began in June of that year. Although the residence wasn’t finished until November, Mr. Carlson sold the house in June to Henry P. Wagner.



The 1930 census showed Mr. Wagner, aged 53, lived in the home with his wife Emma, aged 37. The couple had been married for two years. Also living in the home was his 11-year-old daughter June. Mr. Wagner, born in Illinois, was the son of German immigrants. He earned his living as a salesman for a plumbing company. The Wagners lived in the home until Henry’s death in 1949, at which time it was sold to Henry and Minnie Mittelman.

The Nesbitts have found the home to need very little rehabilitation or restoration work. They are pleased with the historic details the home possesses, including the stained glass windows, interior woodwork, fireplace, original letterbox in the front door frame, and numerous interior doors. The home even retains original window boxes, which are located on the front of the house and on the garage.

The couple has done research into both the era of the house's construction and the bungalow as a housing style. They have made an effort to decorate their bungalow with period-appropriate furnishings, including arts and crafts style furniture.



Although very few changes have been made to the house, the Nesbitts did make one very interesting alteration. When replacing the flooring in their kitchen, the couple chose to use an environmentally friendly material—bamboo. As bamboo is a grass, it can be harvested every three to five years. An added benefit is the natural ability of the plant to abundantly replenish itself. It is estimated that in 5 years, a well-maintained bamboo forest can produce as much flooring material as a hardwood forest produces over a 40-

year period, hence its label as an environmentally friendly product. Additionally, bamboo flooring can be installed as a floating system, without the use of toxic glues typically required to adhere flooring materials to the sub flooring.

The process used to produce bamboo flooring is relatively simple. The bamboo shoots are harvested and sliced into strips. These are boiled to remove the starch. The strips are then allowed to dry and glued together to form boards. Finally, the boards are treated with a preservative and a low-toxic acrylic urethane. The result is an attractive and durable product which is highly stain and water-resistant.

In addition to their lovely home, which was certified with the Historic Chicago Bungalow Association in July 2002, the Nesbitts are very fond of the West Ridge neighborhood. “It’s a friendly, quiet and stable community,” Julie explains. Located on a block lined with bungalows, their neighbors on both sides have lived in their bungalows for 30 years or more. The neighborhood boasts a pleasant mix of young and old and of different cultures, one of the most attractive features to the Nesbitts. “We love the diversity here. There are people here from every part of the globe,” she adds. Indeed, the couple is very happy to have found this spacious bungalow, located in such a vibrant community. When asked to describe their house, they replied succinctly and without hesitation--“It’s the perfect house for us.”

