

LAKE FOREST PRESERVATION FOUNDATION

PRESERVATION

Spring 2024



Lake Forest's Unique Planning History, pages 4 and 5

FROM THE PRESIDENT

As the City considers how to preserve and redevelop the Historic Business District, it is important to remember that Lake Forest was not created by accident. From the beginning, it attracted and retained many of the nation's foremost urban planners, architects, and landscape and garden designers. While they came from different disciplines and times, with varying approaches, styles, and ideas, they shared one thing in common — *vision*. Such vision enabled them to plan spaces and structures in Lake Forest that were not only beautiful and inspirational, but economically feasible, fully livable, and compatible with their surroundings.

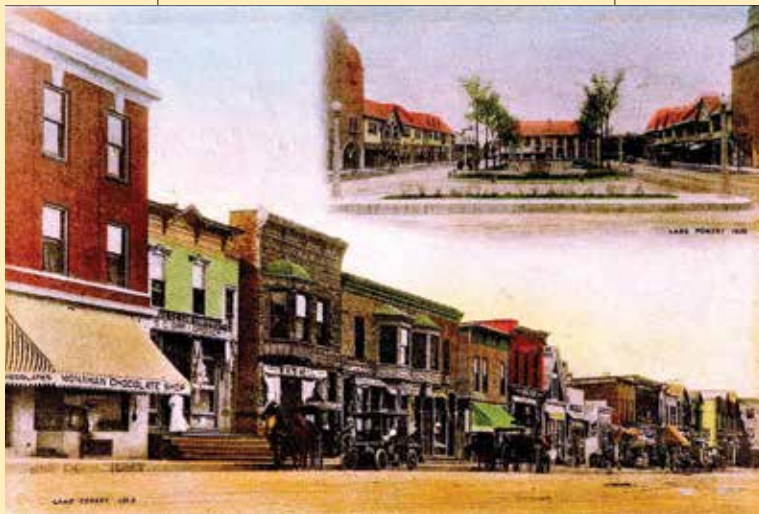
As described in this issue, this began with Almerin Hotchkiss, the leading landscape architect in the Midwest in the mid 19th century, who drew up the original plat for Lake Forest in 1857. We can imagine what he saw in an undeveloped Lake Forest by what he did. Through vision, he preserved the natural beauty of the area by platting Lake Forest in an organic manner, following the contours and topographical features of the land, rather than by laying down a rectilinear grid that ignored such features. In addition, he dedicated the best land along the lake for a park — Forest Park — which residents have enjoyed for over 160

years. His general plan for Lake Forest has aptly been described as a city in a park and was among the earliest, large scale commercial residential developments in the Chicago region, predating both Frederick Law Olmstead's design for Riverside and Nathan Franklin Barrett's design for Pullman.

Through vision, Howard Van Doren Shaw transformed Lake Forest's original business district, then consisting of a haphazard jumble of storefronts along Western Ave., into Market Square (see photo above), the first planned shopping center in the United States. Market Square is still studied today, over 100 years later, as a masterpiece of urban design, arising out of

the City Beautiful Movement. As a result of this plan and many other exemplary works, Shaw was the first Midwesterner to receive the prestigious American Institute of Architects' Gold Medal, awarded in recognition of his significant body of work of lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture.

From the beginning, [Lake Forest] attracted and retained many of the nation's foremost urban planners, architects, and landscape and garden designers.



Western Ave. 1913, Market Square 1926

And, more recently, through vision, Peregrine Bryant designed the Lake Forest Bank and Trust Building (1990s) and the (on the cover) Baytree/Federal Savings Bank Building in the Market Square South Courtyard (2005), while Bill Bergmann (1967) and Diana Melichar (1987) designed additions to the First National Bank/Northern Trust Building, along Deerpath Rd. In each instance, these architects created buildings and spaces that were visually compatible with the heritage structures in Lake Forest's Historic Business District and contributed to the traditional village style that characterizes it.

Now, as before, vision is needed to

thoughtfully redevelop the Historic Business District. Vision alone, however, will not be enough to achieve this objective. Thoughtful development requires cooperation and a consensus among City governance, owners, and residents. The first step in this process has been the City-initiated surveys aimed at determining what residents value in Lake Forest. These surveys confirmed that residents treasure the historic visual character of Lake Forest and want to preserve it. In the *Looking Forward Lake Forest* survey, 92% of respondents agreed with the statement that the overall character of Lake Forest's Historic Business District was a defining element of Lake Forest. More recently, in the 2023 City of Lake Forest Community-Wide Survey, 92% of respondents identified the historic character of Lake Forest as important when choosing to live here.

As a result of such overwhelming input and support, the City committed in the revised Comprehensive Plan for the Business District to preserve, restore, and maintain the historic character of that district and to ensure that any new development is compatible with that character. The City is implementing this plan, starting with Bank Lane, and finds itself in a familiar spot — seeking to retain a consultant

with vision to assist in developing design concepts for enhancements to the Bank Lane streetscape.

The Lake Forest Preservation Foundation is committed to working with the City to find and retain urban designers with vision and experience in creating compatible structures and spaces within historic districts — not only for Bank Lane but for the entire Historic Business District. With such vision, the Foundation believes that Lake Forest can once again be a model of thoughtful development that preserves and enhances its now historic character.

Brian Norton, President

Lake Forest Library Mural Restoration Update

You've undoubtedly noticed by now that the iconic dome on Lake Forest's historic library has been restored in all its glory! But what you may not know if you haven't been inside the library lately is that restoration work of the famous Nicolai Remisoff murals in the Rotunda is underway. The murals on canvas depicting The Poets and Writers of Antiquity which are original to the building were discovered in 2017 to be buckling due to water damage from the leaking dome above. The Friends of Lake Forest Library generously donated the funds for restoration and PARMA Conservation was selected to undertake

the work which will be completed in April. The Library and PARMA welcome site visits while the work is underway. Stop by and see the renewal in progress. It's thrilling!

Meanwhile, watch for ongoing projects of renewal and restoration at our beloved library which might include a master plan to consider repurposing of spaces, evaluating the location of collections, infrastructure and ADA needs including HVAC and the elevator, restoration of the courtyards, masonry repair, and appropriate furnishings for the foyer. The best is yet to come!



Rotunda, Lake Forest Library

Time to Nominate: 2024 Historic Preservation Awards



366 Bluff's Edge Drive

This annual program plays a crucial role in recognizing and encouraging efforts to safeguard and conserve the cultural, historical, and landscaped heritage in our community. Over the past 35 years more than 250 properties have been honored.

Structures or landscapes over 50 years old are eligible as well as compatible in-fill/new construction less than ten years old. Nominations are welcomed from any interested party — the property owner, a neighbor, a friend or even an admiring

passerby. Handsome bronze plaques will be presented to winners at LFPF's Annual Meeting on May 5.

To learn more about the awards, view past award winners or submit a nomination, visit lfpf.org/nominate. The deadline to submit 2024 nominations is March 31, 2024. We can't wait to see your favorites!

If you missed our March 3rd program *Preservation Awards — What Makes a Winner*, visit our website lfpf.org/videos to view the recording.

It's time to *Join* or *Renew* your membership in the Preservation Foundation for 2024

Lake Forest's charm, beauty, and architectural significance didn't just accidentally occur. It's the product of years of fine planning and design. Architects like Howard Van Doren Shaw, Frost and Granger, Edwin Hill Clark, and Stanley D. Anderson shaped our Historic Business District. Through the Foundation's continuous dedication to the preservation of the historic visual character of Lake Forest, we ...

Educate — our community and beyond in different ways. This year, we hosted Steven Semes, from Notre Dame's prestigious School of Architecture, to speak about the Heritage Conservation of Lake Forest. We celebrated the "Tour de Plaques" placing 18 brass plaques on landmark buildings in the Historic Business District. Artist Mark McMahon designed

a pull-out map featured in our summer issue of *Preservation* with locations and the history of the landmarks. We participated in the Traditional Building Conference and hosted three garden strolls on historic properties. And with the History Museum, hosted author Scott Powell who presented a delightful review of his new book on Frances Elkins, the famous interior designer who worked closely with her brother, architect David Adler.

Advocate — for sensitive development that satisfies both the codes and ordinances as well as promoting a greater respect for our surroundings. Our Historic Preservation Awards recognize projects that contribute to the visual character of the city. We support our boards and commissions that work with our city staff along with developers and designers maintaining

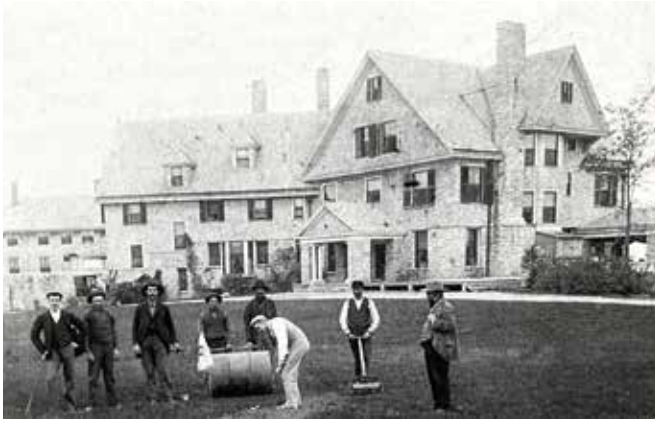
a delicate balance throughout Lake Forest.

Fund — to honor our city through various projects. This year, the Foundation restored the 1920s Ravine Park Gates at the entrance to Ravine Park Drive. We published *Architectural Lake Forest: A Guide to the National Register Historic Districts and Properties in Lake Forest*, a two-year project written by Arthur Miller. We continue to support the preservation of local treasures as well as fund *Preservation*, our tri-annual newsletter delivered to all households in Lake Forest free of charge.

Help us secure the path for future generations to value our community's historic character.

To learn more about the benefits of membership and to join or renew visit lfpf.org.

Lake Forest's Unique Planning History



Cobb farmhouse, 1893, by 1895 first Onwentsia club house, to 1927



848 N. Summit Ave., warming hut at West Park, Frost, 1923

As the City of Lake Forest embarks on plans to improve its Central Business District, or downtown, the town's remarkable heritage of planning for development provides a valuable historic context.

Hotchkiss Railroad Garden Suburban Plan, 1856–57

Starting in the 1850s Lake Forest has been a leader in town planning, beginning with its 1857 plan for 1,200 acres east of the tracks and across ten ravines. The town founders hired Almerin Hotchkiss, a St. Louis landscape gardener and cemetery designer, October–March 1856–57, to create the largest to that date trans-Atlantic type railroad garden commuter suburb.

The 1856-organized Lake Forest Association, Chicago, had bought up approximately 2,000 acres of what today is east Lake Forest. About 1,200 acres were east of the 1855 completed railroad track between Chicago and Waukegan. Hotchkiss was intrigued by the irregular terrain east of tracks and focused his work there, also creating a somewhat perfunctory grid layout west of the tracks, a support area for the 285 estate scaled lots east of the tracks.

Hotchkiss began his plan by selecting

the longest bluff top site between ravines for his Forest Park, with its deer path down to the shoreline at the north end. The deer path became his organizing street, wandering along the ravine up to the 1855 completed train tracks, where he placed the station.

The support area west of the tracks was set up with a few streets parallel to the tracks: Western Ave., the west side border of the garden suburb, for businesses facing the station, with an alley behind, now Bank Lane; Forest Ave., Oakwood Ave., and Green Bay Rd. Three streets from the curvilinear plan east continued as straight ones west of the tracks.

Campuses and Onwentsia, 1880s–90s

By the 1880s and 1890s, Lake Forest University plans refined three campuses by Cobb & Frost (Ferry Hall), O.C. Simonds (Lake Forest Academy), and the Collegiate campus, thirty acres (Simonds and Warren H. Manning). F.L. Olmsted, planner of NYC's Central Park, ca. 1858–60, laid out the H. I. Cobb farm, *Rockwood*, 1890–93, by 1895 becoming the Onwentsia Club. The clubhouse was the first local residence of planner Edward H. Bennett, 1907.

Market Square, 1912–16

The Chicago architect and critic Peter B. Wight, writing in *Western Architect*, October 1917, reported that Market Square at Lake Forest was the first commercially developed and implemented artful town plan. The character was Beaux Arts, an adaptation of European town markets, drawing in traditional, classic, and modernist styles, blended harmoniously. The final design was the work of Howard Van

Doren Shaw, 1915. The third, final, rendering of his plan introduced the long park west to Bank Lane, with the stores north and south visible from the west side train station, when Chicagoans arrived.

Shaw's Atteridge Farm Estates and West Park Neighborhood, 1906–16

But this was not architect Shaw's first planning rodeo. Already in town he had platted two estate enclaves. The first came in 1897, one for his family at *Ragdale* and two for clients to the immediate north. The second was a bigger, two-part plan on the 1830s Cole/Swanton/Atteridge farm. On the west side of Green Bay Rd., he developed six estates between Westminster and Laurel Ave. Shaw also laid out in 1906 the neighborhood of middle-class houses east of Green Bay Rd., with West Park set aside between these as a buffer for the expensive estates. The park, though, offered a great amenity for the homeowners in the east side's builder houses. Today all of this Atteridge farm plan, like Market Square, is on the National Register.

Bennett and Lake Forest Zoning and Plan Commission, 1920s

Market Square was completed just prior to the U.S. joining World War I, though built with profits from the conflict dating from August of 1914. The war ended abruptly in late 1918, slicing into the economic boom, as did both the 1918–20 influenza epidemic and the 1920 Red Scare. The economy only revived by 1925. Local resident and co-author with Burnham of the 1909 *Plan of Chicago* Edward H. Bennett's planning firm segued from major central downtown plans to, by 1923, zoning plans



Western Ave. ca. 1890s



Edward Bennett

for Chicago and Lake Forest, and by 1929 to a Plan Commission for Lake Forest to oversee development. This tilted the initiative from central planners to property owners and developers, with a zoning context. This worked into the 1950s with little Depression-era and later development and with Bennett present in town.

New City Boards and Commissions, 1960s–1990s

By the 1960s as development volume increased after Depression era income tax levels began to recede, the City launched a Building Review Board by residents to guide and manage new petitions. This initiative sought to continue the Beaux Arts harmony that from the 1890s to 1940–42 had become the prevailing or defining local architectural character, even as some modernist houses were built, as well.

By 1976, when the Preservation Foundation was organized, the U.S. bicentennial had awakened interest in historic preservation of older buildings and neighborhoods. After creating two 1970s National Register historic districts and one for Green Bay Rd. estates in the

1990s, the City passed an historic preservation ordinance grandfathering in those three districts for east Lake Forest estates, Green Bay Rd. estates, and south of Illinois an Oakwood and Vine district for a small support neighborhood. Since 1998, changes to historic properties—additions, new construction, and demolitions—are overseen by the Historic Preservation Commission with its decisions reviewable by the City Council.

Public-private non-profit organization partnerships

In the 1970s and 1980s and again in 2009–18 the Preservation Foundation collaborated with the City to save and restore the 1900 Frost & Granger train station. The 2009 planning work was guided by noted preservation architect Gunny Harboe.

Several landscapes for parks and public buildings in town have had major plans since the 1970s and 1980s, which introduced in part leadership by the Lake Forest Garden Club.

These include:

- a series of in effect distributed community centers: Gorton (1972), Ragdale Foundation (1986), Grove Campus (ca. 2000), and Elawa Farm Foundation (ca. 2000).
- the 1978 Lake Forest Library additions, with landscape by Franz Lipp.
- the mid 1980s Forest Park Beach, with a City bond issue for \$9 million, design by Steve Christy.
- the 1998–2000 Market Square 2000 project, the landscape and hardscape renewed, design by Rodney Robinson, Delaware.
- the 1998 City Hall garden, design by Doug Hoerr, Chicago.
- the 2009–15 Forest Park bluff top

landscape, with design by Stimson Associates, Massachusetts, with Craig Bergmann and Cliff Miller.

What this list shows is that successful civic plans build on public-private organization partnerships for assessment, planning, and shared funding. Private funding can be less successful when it shifts the balance of decision-making to the individual private owner-developer. This is shown in the recent McKinley/Westminster Phase Three, for example, a long monotonous, industrial-character building's east façade. This has been built less than a block from AIA Gold Medalist Howard Van Doren Shaw's Market Square demonstration, a century earlier, of how to design a long building with scale-reducing traditional character.

Getting the best possible planning and architectural input for new initiatives would be consistent with the Lake Forest Association's hiring of St. Louis-based Almerin Hotchkiss in 1856–57, working with estate owner investors to develop Market Square with Shaw in 1912–16; and hiring Edward H. Bennett, the nation's leading planner in the 1920s.

The Depression and WWII broke that way of doing things, with little changed. But since the late 1970s and 1980s, private non-profit organizations' leadership has played a major role in planning for shared resources, such as the central business district.

The best nationally recognized planning is part of Lake Forest's DNA almost 160 years after Chicago's Lake Forest Association first hired leading Midwestern landscape designer Almerin Hotchkiss to lay out this town east of Green Bay Road. Maintaining this very high standard is the challenge for this generation.



1230 N. Green Bay Rd., Ragdale, Shaw, 1897, for family



89 E. Deerpath, Bagatelle, Bennett, 1916, for family

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Save the Dates!

Annual Meeting and Reception

Sunday, May 5
1:00 p.m. Meeting and Awards
Presentation
Member and award winner reception to follow at an historic residence.

Modern Beyond Style and the Pursuit of Beauty

Thursday, May 16
6:30 p.m., Gorton
A lively discussion of the new book that highlights over 50 years of the architectural work of Booth Hansen with principal Larry Booth and local author Jay Pridmore.

Early Summer Garden Stroll

Friday, June 21
5:30–7:30 p.m.
In a garden that will delight the senses.

Annual Crab Tree Farm Tour

Saturday, July 13
Time TBD, please check our website in early May.
A special summer program that is always a favorite.

Late Summer Garden Stroll

Friday, August 23
5:30–7:30 p.m.
Always a great event to wind down the summer.

Check the LFPF website for details and additional events — lfpf.org/events
Members always attend free or at discounted prices. Join or renew your membership today.

View our past programs on our YouTube channel – LFPreservation

ON THE COVER: MARKET SQUARE COURT

London Architect Peregrine Bryant's 2005 west courtyard addition to Howard Van Doren Shaw's 1917 Krafft's Drug Store Building, immediately south of Market Square, 1916. This passageway portion between the 1917 east section and a new office wing west was designed to face into the former Market Square alley, since the 1980s John Vinci designed rehabilitation, a courtyard. This classic English Renaissance north face of this passageway—inside a kind of winter garden—uses a

simple though formal design to elevate this space as a destination, now the context for a Starbucks cafe terrace. Bryant has done work for King Charles III, who has promoted traditional style in Britain. This was commissioned by the late Howard Adams' early 21st century Baytree Bank, now Federal Savings Bank. This sort of modestly scaled simple though elegant infill building suggests the way smaller Bank Lane projects could enhance that streetscape.