



123 MADISON STREET, OAK PARK, ILLINOIS 60302

## HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION REPORT



**Robert Parker House  
1019 Chicago Avenue**

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**Preliminary Determination of Eligibility approved by the  
Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission on May 14, 2009**

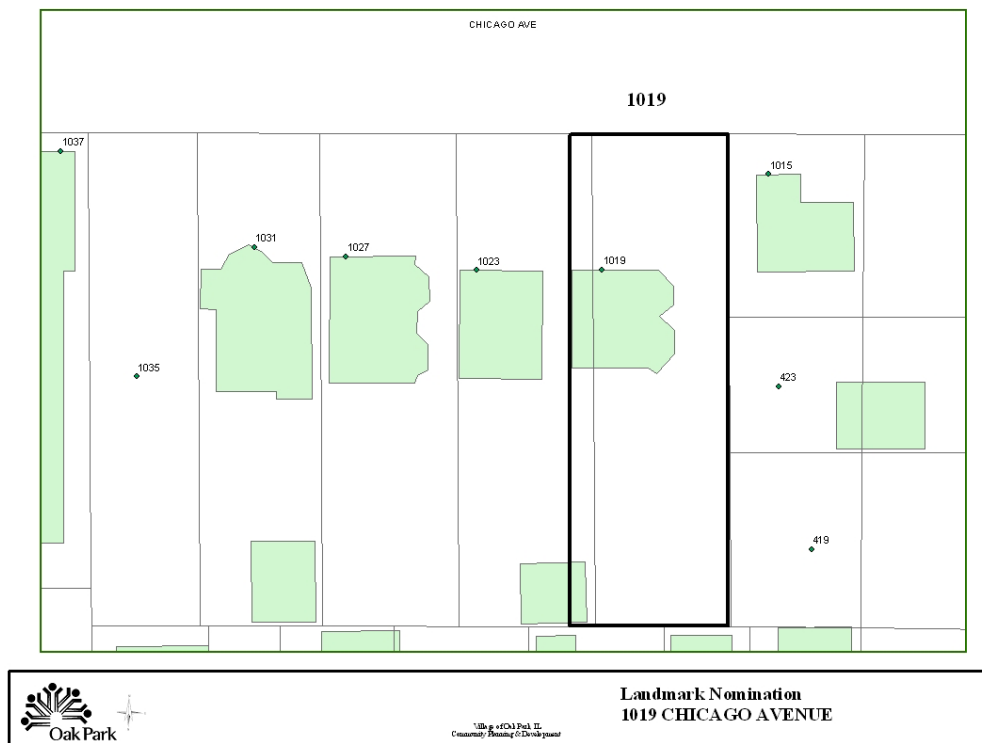
**Designated by Village Ordinance on July 20, 2009**

# Robert Parker House 1019 Chicago Avenue

**Built:** 1892  
**Architect:** Frank Lloyd Wright

The 1892 Robert Parker House is located at 1019 Chicago Avenue in Oak Park, Illinois, and faces north. The two-story Queen Anne style structure is rectangular in plan, rests upon a stone foundation and is sheathed in wood clapboard. Its high-pitched hipped roof is covered with wood shingles (installed by the current owners in 1999) and features overhanging eaves, polygonal dormers and a brick chimney. The structure's northeast and southeast corners break out into polygonal towers with conical roofs. The windows in each tower are a mixture of fixed and casement windows that are arranged in horizontal bands; larger windows on the first floor and smaller windows on the second floor. All window and door openings are wood with wood frames. A driveway along the east side of the house leads to a vinyl clad garage with a street-facing gabled roof. The current owners returned the house to its original red color in 1996.<sup>1</sup>

The north (front) façade features a half octagon open wood porch with side walls and no roof (recreated by the current owners in 1998), front door and adjacent casement window. In addition to the previously described two-story tower at the northeast corner, this elevation also includes a dormer with a pair of casement windows. A window to the right of the door includes an abstract Sullivanesque seed pod design.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Eva Brown. *Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus house walk (amended 2003)*, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Eva Brown. *Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus house walk (amended 2003)*, 4.

The east (side) elevation is terminated at each end by the two-story polygonal towers. In between, there is a wood porch with side walls and no roof and a central double door on the first floor (both recreated by the current owners). The second floor between the towers is a central wood shingle roof that hangs down over the double doors.

The south (rear) elevation is dominated by the tower at its eastern corner. The original rear porch had been enclosed in the past. The current owners designed a new back porch inspired by the back porch at Wright's Home and Studio. The porch railing height is dictated by the belt course detail and the porch includes wood decking, a limestone stair tread and hobs, as well as two newel post globe lights flanking the stairs.<sup>3</sup>

The west (side) elevation has two small windows on the basement level. On the first floor, there is a casement window at the northern end and a row of three casement windows at the southern end. This elevation also features two dormers, one directly above the other, both of which include a pair of casement windows. The topmost dormer has a shed roof while the lower is hipped.

The two-car garage that sits at the end of the driveway was built by the current owners in 1996. The roof pitch, band of windows and general proportions of the building intentionally echo that of Wright's own home on Forest Avenue.<sup>4</sup> The Robert P. Parker house was restored to its original exterior design between 1996 and 1999 by the current owners. The work is based on the original house plans. One feature not original to the house is the gate and post across the driveway, the design of which was inspired by Wright's 1893 Winslow House in River Forest.<sup>5</sup>



<sup>3</sup> Eva Brown. *Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus house walk (amended 2003)*, 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> Eva Brown. *Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus house walk (amended 2003)*, 5.

<sup>5</sup> Eva Brown. *Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus house walk (amended 2003)*, 12.



## History of the Robert Parker House

The Robert Parker House is a rare surviving example of Frank Lloyd Wright's "bootlegged" houses, designed between 1891 and spring 1893 while he was still working for Adler and Sullivan. Of the eight executed bootlegged houses, only six are extant. Although some of these structures feature popular architectural styles of the era, such as the Queen Anne Robert Parker House, as a group they represent Wright's evolving design ideas during the 1890s that would lead to his mature Prairie style of architecture. The Robert Parker House has retained excellent integrity, and its exterior stands virtually unchanged from its 1892 appearance.

### *Historical Context of the Robert Parker House*

The following historical information about Robert Parker and his family was prepared by Eva Brown for the Wright Plus house walk research report in 1999 and amended in 2003:

#### **The Land**

*On March 20, 1837, Joseph Kettlestrings acquired a patent from the United States government for 172 78/100 acres of land in the "North West quarter of Section 7, Township 39, Range 13 and in the District of Lands." Two years earlier, he had paid \$1.25 per acre, i.e., a total of \$215.97 for this patent. In 1865, Kettlestrings sold a portion of this land to Edwin O. Gale, who deeded it to one of his sons, Thomas Hart Gale, on October 31, 1891.*

### **The Builder**

*Thomas Hart Gale was a realtor, speculator and developer with offices in Chicago; he also held a law degree. In 1892, he commissioned Frank Lloyd Wright, a friend, and the young architect who had built his own home just three years earlier a block away, to design two homes on Chicago Avenue – one for himself and one on speculation. He quickly found a buyer, Robert P. Parker, even before construction of the house began, as evidenced by Parker's name appearing on some of the plans.*

*Thomas H. Gale was a member of one of Oak Park's founding families, along with the Austins and Scovilles. In 1837, the year the Erie Canal opened, his father Edwin O. Gale (1832-1913) had come to Chicago from New York, as a young boy, with his family on the steamship Illinois. They settled in this area when Chicago was an Indian trading post. The section North and East of Oak Park and North Avenues, known as Galewood, formerly was farmland owned by the Gale family.*

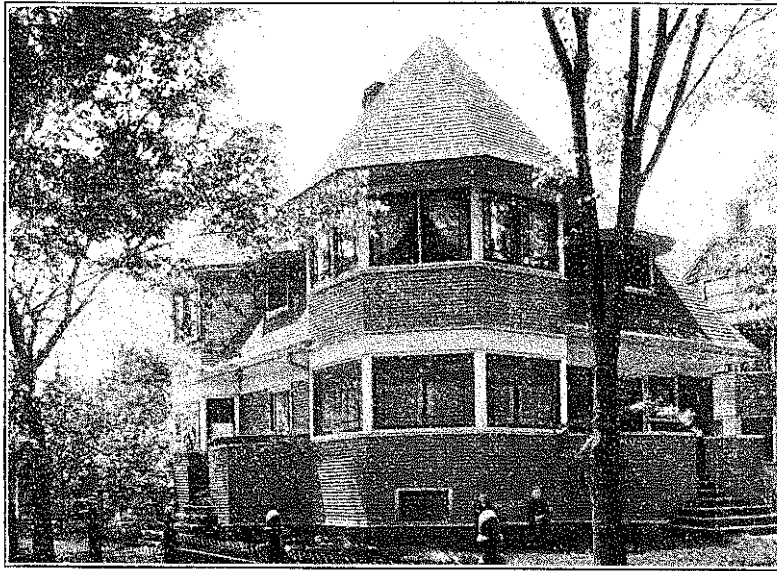
*Thomas was one of the seven sons of Edwin O. Gale and his wife Julia Esther Hart (1833-1916). He was born in 1866 and died in 1907. His older brother, Walter Henry Gale (1859-1916), a druggist, became a neighbor in 1893 when he moved into the home at 1031 Chicago Avenue, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. It was Wright's first completed commission after his break with Adler & Sullivan.*

*The Gales were charter members of the Unitarian Church in Oak Park, where Frank Lloyd Wright and his family were also members. One of Thomas Gale's nephews, Charles Bolles Gale (1906-1989), son of Abram Gale and his wife Kathryn Schock Gale (1906-1993), were instrumental in the founding of the Frank Lloyd Wright Home and Studio Foundation (now the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust) in 1974 as well as the Historical Society of Oak Park and River Forest in 1968.*

### **The First Owner – Robert P. Parker**

*Robert Parmenter Parker was born on May 16, 1860 in Brandon, Vermont. In 1863 his family moved to Chicago. After graduating from Lake View High School in 1878, he attended Lake Forest College. He also played for the White Sox from 1878 to 1880. For his senior year he transferred to Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, where he at once gained prominence through his athletic and oratorical activities. Parker graduated from Dartmouth College in 1882.*

*In 1884 he returned to Chicago and was licensed to practice law in Illinois on November 12. Parker entered the law office of W. C. Goudy for two years of study. He also taught elocution on the side and gave readings. He began to develop as a public speaker on political and literary subjects. For a time, he was President of the Republican Club of North Chicago.*



## The Above Home For Sale

Parties leaving city. Lot 50 ft. x 185; Small barn; hot water heat; ideal boiler; right and left screw nipple radiators; electric light; eight rooms, reception hall and bath. Easy terms. Apply to owner. Phone 5474.

**L. C. LANGDON**

330 Chicago Av.

Oak Park

Source: Oak Leaves, December 28, 1907

*When Parker purchased the house in Oak Park in 1892 he was still a bachelor, but he married Sarah Robbins Weston on June 20, 1892 in Philadelphia before construction was completed. Sarah Weston's mother, Sarah A. Devereaux, moved into the house with her daughter and son-in-law and lived with them until her death in 1900.*

*Sarah Weston was born on December 1, 1864 in Summerdale, MA near Boston. She married Edward Weston and they had a son, Walter Scott Weston. She was widowed when she married Robert Parker, who adopted her son. Sarah Parker died on May 3, 1922 of (presumed) apoplexy.*

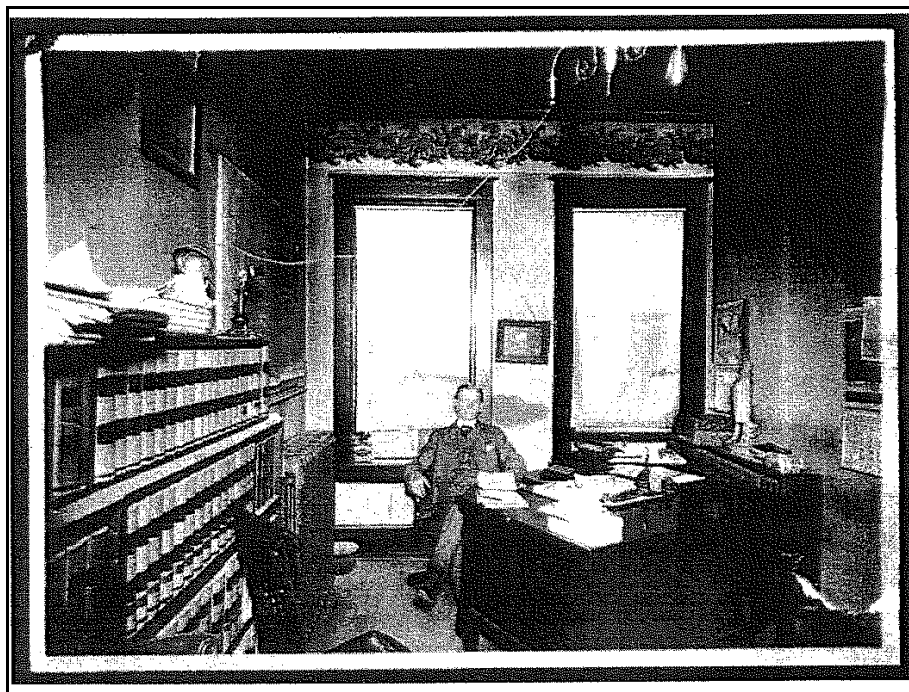


Robert and Sarah Parker  
(Source: Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus House Walk (amended 2003) prepared by Eva Brown)



Sarah (Weston) Robins Parker

*After becoming a full-fledged attorney, Parker established his own practice in Chicago. Through the influences of F. Chatterton, then Acting Governor of Wyoming, he moved his family west, establishing his office in Sheridan, WY in April 1903. There Parker served as Police Magistrate, District Court Commissioner for Sheridan City, with power of Judge in his absence, and President of the Sheridan Bar Association. He was a member of the Elks and President of the Athenaeum Society of Sheridan.*



Robert Parker in his office at 112 Dearborn Street, Chicago  
(Source: Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus House Walk (amended 2003) prepared by Eva Brown)

*In 1930, Parker published "Oratorical Discourses," a collection of 33 of his speeches on political, social, civic and literary subjects. In 1939, Parker married his second wife, Mrs. Allen Reed of Sheridan. Robert Parker died of a heart attack on August 15, 1943.*

*Walter Scott Parker, Robert Parker's adopted son, married Irene Gore. He was her second husband. He worked for the post office in Story, Wyoming for some time, and passed away in 1962. One of his children is Mr. James Parker, who lives with his second wife Cecilia in Chicago. Irene Gore's first marriage was to a Mr. Nicolai. Their son Eugene lives with his family in Downers Grove. One of his children, Thomas Nicolai, works today in a firm specializing in the restoration of historic homes, especially of the Prairie School.*



Walter Scott Parker

(Source: Robert P. Parker House research report for the 1999 Wright Plus House Walk (amended 2003) prepared by Eva Brown)

#### *Subsequent Owners*

*As far as can be ascertained from the records in the Recorder of Deeds Office of Cook County, Illinois, and from Oak Park Directories, the history of the Robert P. Parker House includes the following changes in ownership:*

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <i>1892-1903</i> | <i>Robert P. and Sarah (Sadie) R. Parker</i> |
| <i>1903-1908</i> | <i>Leonard C. Langdon &amp; Wife</i>         |
| <i>1908-1911</i> | <i>Earl N. Cherry &amp; Wife</i>             |
| <i>1911-1914</i> | <i>George H. Snow &amp; Wife</i>             |
| <i>1914-19xx</i> | <i>Edith R. Martin</i>                       |
| <i>19xx-1928</i> | <i>Lois E. Wands (Mrs.)</i>                  |

- 1928-1946 *Benjamin Z. and Clara Thesen: Benjamin Thesen was a pharmacist and at least until 1930 partner in the Thesen & Zehender Pharmacy at 1101 Chicago Avenue (corner of N. Marion Street). The Zehender drug store closed in 1998.*
- 1946-1996 *Mary V. Huber and heirs: The 1966-67 Oak Park Directory shows an Otto C. Huber, an engineer with Kraft Foods Co., with wife Mary; son James, born 1948, and daughter Madge, born 1951. His obituary in the Oak Leaves of August 11, 1993 read as follows:*  
*“O. Charles Huber, Jr., 79, died August 4 in his Oak Park home. Born July 26, 1914 in Chicago, Mr. Huber attend Morgan Park Academy and Northwestern University where he received an engineering degree. He was a 1<sup>st</sup> lieutenant in the engineer corps of the Army in World War II, and an engineer for Kraft Foods until his retirement in 1973. Mr. Huber was a resident of Oak Park for 46 years....Mr. Huber was the father of James of Oak Park and Madge Laitala of Oak Park; and grandfather of James, Robert and John Huber, and David, Jennifer and Matthew Laitala....”*
- 1996-now *William and Krista Ferdinand*

### **Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie Style of Architecture**

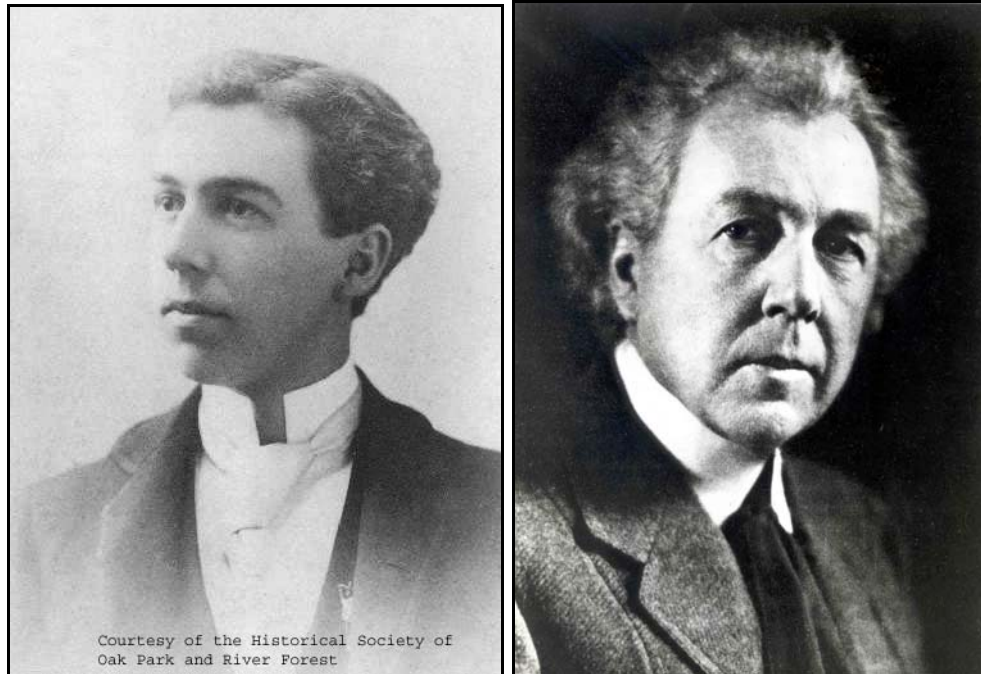
The following information about Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie style of architecture was prepared by Jean L. Guarino in 2002 for the Village of Oak Park’s Historic Landmark nomination for the Thomas Gale House at 1027 Chicago Avenue:

*Universally recognized as one of the greatest architects of the twentieth century, Frank Lloyd Wright was born on June 8, 1867, in Richland Center, Wisconsin. Wright moved to Chicago in 1887 and initially worked for Joseph Lyman Silsbee, a prominent architect known for his residences inspired by East Coast architecture. Silsbee introduced Wright to the Shingle style of residential design, which features bold geometric forms, large overhanging roofs, sheltering porches and emphasis on natural materials.*

*Wright was profoundly influenced by the work of his next employers, Louis Sullivan and Dankmar Adler. Sullivan, famous for his ornament inspired by nature, crusaded for an authentic American Architecture based on the principle that a building's form should follow its function. Hired originally to develop detailed sketches for the Auditorium Building in Chicago, Wright was soon promoted to head draftsman and developed remarkable skill in residential architecture. Most notable was his design of the Charnley House in Chicago’s Gold Coast neighborhood. Featuring flat, streamlined wall planes, spare ornamentation, and an overall appearance of horizontality, the rectangular structure looks unmistakably modern.*

*Wright’s residential commissions were a small part of his duties at Adler and Sullivan’s office, however, and were usually done at home after hours. He mainly worked on the firm’s numerous commercial commissions. Wright also contributed to the firm’s design for the Transportation Building for the 1893 World’s Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In this*

capacity, he would have made a number of trips to the fair grounds in Jackson Park and likely saw the Ho-o-den, a replica temple that comprised the official exhibit of the Imperial Japanese government. This encounter would have spurred his already dawning fascination with Japanese art.



Frank Lloyd Wright, Architect  
Source: Historical Society of Oak Park & River Forest

*In 1889, Sullivan loaned Wright the money to buy a lot and build a home in Oak Park for himself and his bride-to-be, Catherine Tobin. Wright's family grew quickly and eventually comprised six children: Lloyd was born in 1890; John in 1892, Catherine in 1894, David in 1895, Frances in 1898, and Robert Llewellyn in 1903. In order to supplement his income, Wright began to design houses in the evenings outside Adler and Sullivan's practice. They were all built or projected between 1891 and late spring 1893. Two of these were located on Chicago Avenue, just down the block from his own home: the Robert P. Parker House and the Thomas Gale House. Wright designed six additional "bootlegged" houses that were built, including the Harlan House, Chicago (demolished); MacHarg House, Chicago (demolished); Blossom House, Chicago; McArthur House, Chicago; Emmond House, LaGrange, Illinois; Peter Goan House, LaGrange, Illinois.<sup>6</sup>*

*According to Wright scholar Grant Carpenter Mason, at first glance, the character of the bootlegged houses seems to regress from the great promise of the earlier Charnley House. Rather than pointing the way to a new modernism, they include historical styles such as Colonial Revival, Dutch Colonial and Queen Anne. However, as a group they also demonstrate the dawning individuality of Wright as he adapted these styles to his personal conception of architecture. For example, although the Colonial Revival Blossom House features a classical portico, fan-lighted doorway and Palladian windows, Wright eliminated*

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<sup>6</sup> List of bootlegged houses taken from: Grant Carpenter Mason. *Frank Lloyd Wright To 1910: The First Golden Age*. (NY: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1958) 48.

*the Classical cornice, flattened the hip roof and added a massive chimney of Roman brick. The McArthur House has a prominent gambrel roof—the hallmark of the Dutch Colonial style—along with picturesque dormers and a polygonal corner bay. However, the use of Roman brick on the lower façade, a horizontal strip of casement windows in the bay, and an entrance situated along the side rather than facing the street, are all foreshadowings of Wright’s later Prairie style.*

*The Robert Parker, Thomas Gale and Robert Emmond houses are all similar in appearance and plan, the Emmond being a mirror of the others. All three houses have picturesque elements that characterize the Queen Anne style, such as asymmetrical massing, steeply pitched roofs with dormers, polygonal towers, and front entry porches – all of which Wright would later abandon. However, the Parker and Gale houses in particular represent a considerably streamlined version of the Queen Anne style, and feature rectilinear elements that would soon become a hallmark of Wright’s work. In both houses, the square mass of the first floor dramatically contrasts with the vertical emphasis of the adjacent towers. Other premonitions of Wright’s mature Prairie style in the Parker and Gale houses include the horizontal banding of the windows in the double towers, the wide, overhanging eaves, and the use of casement windows. The rectilinear windows are bordered by muntins to create a geometric grid pattern. Another deviation from the Queen Anne style is the use of clapboard as the only cladding material, rather than a variety of materials as is common to the style.*



Thomas Gale House  
1027 Chicago Avenue, Oak Park, Illinois

*The design of the bootlegged houses discussed above violated Wright’s contract with Sullivan and brought about his dismissal from the firm in 1893. Wright immediately set up his own practice in Room 1501 of the Schiller Building in downtown Chicago and constructed a studio connected to his Oak Park home in 1898. During the remainder of the 1890s, Wright continued to develop his principles for a new type of residential architecture, a subject that would continue to fascinate him throughout his career. Much of Wright’s work in this decade foreshadowed what was to come, such as the 1894 Winslow House in River Forest. A rectangular structure of great simplicity with a hip roof and overhanging eaves, the Winslow House was a true forerunner of the Prairie House. An interesting contrast to the Winslow House is the 1895 Nathan Moore House, designed for a lawyer who lived*

across Forest Avenue from the Wrights. According to Wright's account in his *Autobiography*, the client insisted on an English Tudor style and Wright agreed because he needed the money. To Wright's chagrin, the Moore house was considered as successful as the Winslow House.<sup>7</sup>



Frank Lloyd Wright Home & Studio  
428 Forest/951 Chicago, Oak Park, Illinois

Other early Wright-designed homes in Oak Park are the Francis J. Woolley house (1893) at 1030 W. Superior, the Harrison P. Young house (1895) at 334 N. Kenilworth, and the Harry C. Goodrich house (1896) at 534 East Avenue. Like so many of Wright's other early residences, his Oak Park designs from the 1890s feature steeply pitched roofs, polygonal dormers, and bay windows, as well as a tendency for complex, interlocking masses. In addition, Wright's early residences often displayed a variety of materials, textures and classical detailing, such as the Walter H. Gale house, with its combination of shingles, clapboards, brick, diamond pane leaded glass, and a Palladian window. Later Prairie Houses would be streamlined in terms of their massing and use of materials. Square, semi-detached porches, seen in the Woolley and the Goodrich houses, were later abandoned by Wright in favor of entries hidden behind low walls or along side elevations. However, many of Wright's residential designs of the 1890s also included at least some hints of the architect's emerging style, such as broad chimneys and strips of casement windows.



1030 Superior Street  
Francis J. Woolley House



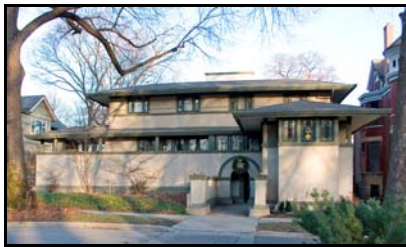
334 N. Kenilworth Avenue  
Harrison P. Young House



534 N. East Avenue  
Harry C. Goodrich House

<sup>7</sup> Frank Lloyd Wright. *An Autobiography: Frank Lloyd Wright*. (New York: Horizon Press, 1977 reprint. Originally published 1932) 152-153.

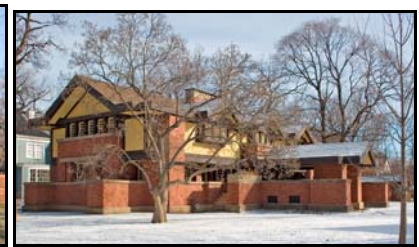
The first decade of the twentieth-century represented the end of Wright's transitional period and the start of what historian Grant Manson calls his "First Golden Age." After ten years of experimentation, Wright officially unveiled the Prairie House in 1900 with the design of two model houses published in the *Ladies Home Journal*. A number of Oak Parkers commissioned homes in the new style, including Frank Thomas (1901), William Fricke (1901), Arthur Heurtley (1902), William Martin (1903), Edwin Cheney (1904), Peter Beachy (1906) and Mrs. Thomas Gale (1909). These homes were generally well regarded by both architecture critics and the general public. Throughout this decade, Wright's Oak Park Studio served as a laboratory where the architect and several colleagues refined his Prairie principles, designing an impressive number of structures that signaled a new and highly influential era in American residential design.



Frank Thomas House



Arthur Heurtley House



Peter Beachy House



William Fricke House



Edwin Cheney House



William Martin House

Prairie style homes represented a dramatic departure from the tall Victorian homes of the day, and eliminated all references to historical styles. Sweeping horizontal lines are emphasized in these structures by low, hipped roofs, overhanging eaves, strips of casement windows and continuous sills. The use of natural colors and materials, such as Roman brick or stucco with wood trim, are other Prairie style hallmarks, as these homes were meant to blend in with their settings. After 1900, Wright discarded the double-hung window in favor of the casement and arranged his fenestration in horizontal strips. The main living spaces of Prairie style homes are often situated above a raised first floor, such as in the Heurtley and Frank Thomas houses, allowing for maximum privacy of the homeowners. Some Prairie homes are contained as rectangular blocks while others have projections. The front entrance is often hidden in some way, either tucked away within a deep porch, behind a terrace wall, or recessed within the side of the structure. Ornamentation is carefully integrated into the structure, and includes art glass windows, built-in flower boxes and geometric urns. In all of his streamlined Prairie homes, Wright eliminates the stuffy attic and the dank "unwholesome" basement.

Inside the Prairie home, plans were loose and flowing, with interior partitions reduced to a minimum and often replaced by screens that merely served to indicate the type of use.

*Whenever possible, Wright preferred to design all the furnishings of the house: carpets, draperies, lighting fixtures and furniture, as he strongly believed that these elements should be integral features of the building.*

*Wright's twenty year Oak Park period ended in 1909 when he left his family and traveled to Berlin with the wife of a client to publish a large drawing portfolio of his work—the Wasmuth portfolio—in the following year. At the time of his departure, Wright had designed 20 buildings in Oak Park. Ranging from tall, gable-roofed residences, to low, hipped-roofed houses in the Prairie style idiom, these structures comprise an outdoor museum of Wright's evolving design ideas.*

## **Criteria for Designation**

According to Section 7-9-6(B) of the Oak Park Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Historic Preservation Commission must make a preliminary determination of eligibility after receiving a nomination. A determination of preliminary eligibility must be based upon a finding that there is a likelihood that a nominated historic landmark will meet one or more of the "Criteria for Designation" set forth in Section [7-9-5](#) of this Article.

The Robert Parker House was nominated under the following criteria:

- (1) Significance as an example of the architectural development or heritage of the Village of Oak Park;
- (3) Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic or social heritage of the Village of Oak Park, the State, or the United States;
- (5) Embodiment of those distinguishing characteristics of a significant architectural style;
- (6) Identification as the work of an architect whose individual work is significant in the development of the Village of Oak Park, the State of Illinois and the United States;
- (7) Contains design elements, detail, materials or craftsmanship that make the property architecturally innovative, rare or unique;

In addition, the property is at least 50 years old and has sufficient integrity of location, design, materials and workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.

## **Bibliographical References**

### **Primary and unpublished sources**

Village of Oak Park. Building permits for the Robert Parker House. (Copies of the permits are available on microfiche at the Oak Park Village Hall-Building Department.)

## Secondary and published sources

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## **OAK PARK HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

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Nomination Report prepared by:

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