



123 MADISON STREET, OAK PARK, ILLINOIS 60302

HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION REPORT



**George and Mary Sheppard House
217 South Humphrey Avenue**

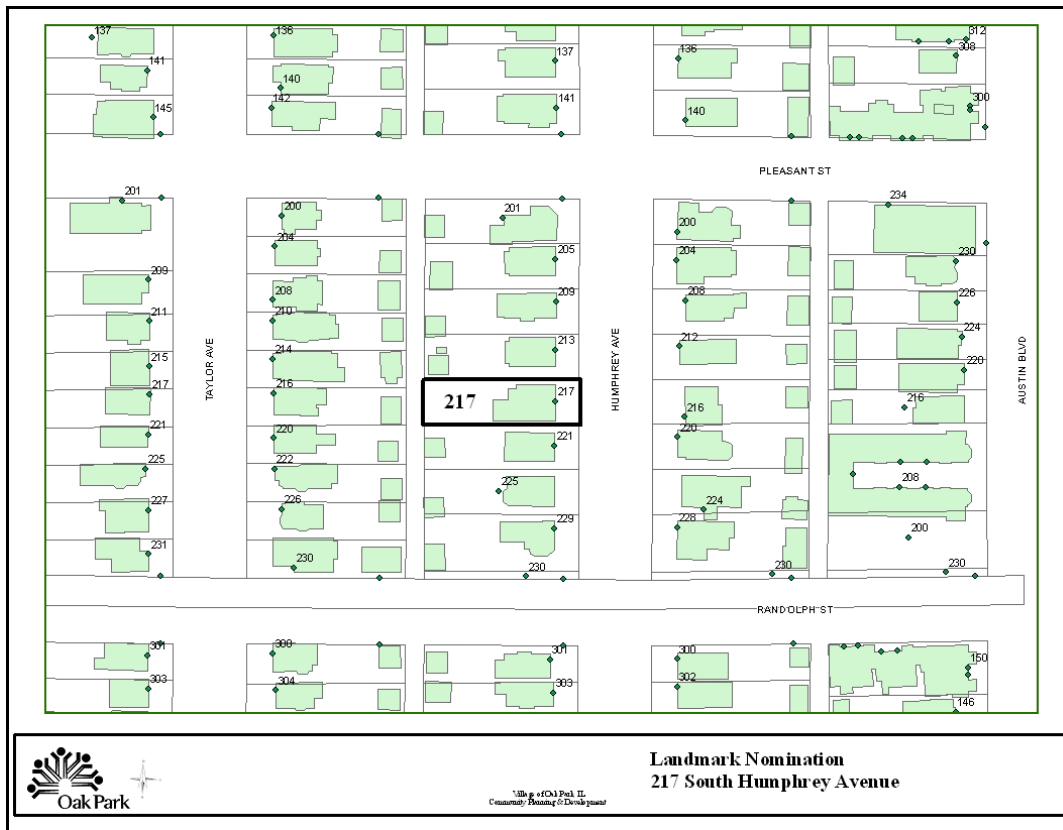
Preliminary Determination of Eligibility approved by the
Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission on August 11, 2011

Designated by Village Ordinance on October 3, 2011

George and Mary Sheppard House 217 South Humphrey Avenue

Built: 1904
Architect: Unknown
Contractor: F. A. Hill & Company

The Sheppard-Hill House was built in 1904 by developer F. A. Hill Company. The building is located on the west side of the street mid-block between Pleasant and Randolph Streets. The two story house is rectangular in plan and faces east. The house is clad with narrow wood clapboard siding, rusticated limestone foundation and wide board banding at house and front porch eaves. There is a central front door with sidelights flanked by massive one-story bay windows. A central bay window on the second floor is flanked by large one-over-one double-hung windows. There is a central hipped dormer above the bay with paired double-hung windows. The hipped roof is clad with asphalt shingles and includes flared eaves with deep overhanging eaves and wood bead-board soffits.



The north side façade is comprised of asymmetrically placed double-hung windows on the first and second floors and a curved bay window with a band of four casement windows and a wide eave, which was added later based on historic photographs. A large two-story bay comprises the west half of the south façade directly behind a tall angled brick chimney with limestone cap. The rear façade includes a small one-story partial width porch, a hipped dormer on the roof, and a large sun porch over a below-grade garage, which was likely

added around 1924 based on family history (the building permit does not note the year, but the addition was shown on the 1930 Sanborn map).

The defining horizontal element on the house is the broad, full-length front porch with hipped roof, wide overhanging eaves, and wood baluster and railings set between round Doric columns spaced symmetrically at the corners and flanking the central stair.



South and East Elevations

(Source above and below: Village of Oak Park)



East and North Elevations



East Elevation

(Source above and below: Village of Oak Park)



West Elevation

History of the George and Mary Sheppard House

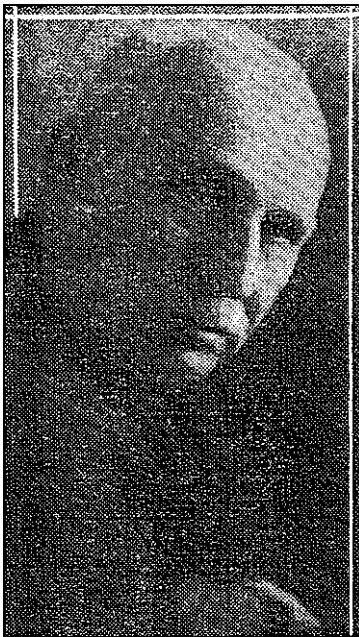
The George and Mary Sheppard House is an excellent example of an American Foursquare house, influenced by the Prairie and Colonial Revival styles of architecture. It was constructed in 1904 by developer Frederick A. Hill & Company and purchased by George and Mary Sheppard while under construction. George Sheppard was a successful wholesale

grocer in Chicago and president of the Sheppard-Strassheim Company. The Sheppards owned and lived in the house for 34 years. The house has only had three property owners in 107 years. The house is virtually unchanged from its original condition other than a new roof. The exterior retains its original siding, front porch, chimney and windows.

Frederick A. Hill & Company

Frederick A. Hill, Sr. was born in Chicago in 1862 and lived in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago until later in life when he moved to 329 N. East Avenue in Oak Park. Hill was the founder and president of F. A. Hill & Co., a successful real estate company which developed many homes in the Austin and Oak Park areas, including subdivisions on the 100-400 blocks of S. Humphrey Avenue and the 200 block of S. Cuyler Avenue in the early 20th century.

In his youth, Hill worked for Armour & Company, the meat packing house, and worked under the person supervision of P. D. Armour. He later became a member of the Board of Trade, but sold his seat in the grain market after a few years. He then opened his real estate business with offices in Austin. He also was active in the stock and bond business in Chicago, and beginning in 1931 was the chairman of the Board of the Bond Holders' committee for the Ritchie Bond & Mortgage Company.¹



F. A. Hill
(Oak Leaves, 1933)

Real Estate Service
FOR THE DISCRIMINATING

A Complete Organization for Sales, Property
Management, Loans and Insurance

F.A. HILL & CO.

OAK PARK OFFICE:
1107-1109 South Boul.
Fone Oak Park 5102

CHICAGO OFFICE:
5636-5638 W. Lake St.
Fones Austin 0131, Oak Park 133

(Oak Park Directory, 1923)


Hill and his wife Marie had two children, F. A. Hill, Junior and Grace Hill (Corning). Hill worked in the real estate business in Chicago and the suburbs for more than fifty years, and was active in developing the west side districts of Chicago.² He was considered the first in

¹ "Death of F.A. Hill, Leader for 40 Years," Oak Leaves, October 26, 1933.

² "Funeral Today for F. A. Hill Sr., Realty Veteran" Chicago Daily Tribune, October 26, 1933, p. 16.

the area to build homes and sell them on easy payments. F. A. Hill died in 1933 at his home at the age of 72.³ Mr. Hill was credited in 1897 with being one of the earliest home builders in the area:

Much of the credit of building up and beautifying Austin and Oak Park is due to the energetic efforts of Mr. F. A. Hill, who, during the past five years, has built upward of 150 houses in the two towns and has put in several miles of streets and stone walks on his five subdivisions.⁴



Why not be your own landlord, instead of paying rent?

You can

Buy a Home in Austin or Oak Park, same as those in cut on

...Terms Same as Rent...

GROUP OF F. A. HILL'S HOUSES

New, Modern, Convenient Houses--Eight and Nine Rooms--Large Deep Lots--Wide Improved Streets--Fine Neighborhood. Choice of Six now built or will build to suit. Get my Prices and Terms before buying. _____

F. A. HILL,
115 MONROE ST., CHICAGO

(Halley's Pictorial, 1898)

Frederick Hill, Jr. was born in the Austin neighborhood of Chicago on May 1, 1888 where he was raised. Hill was a prominent businessman in Oak Park, and was president and treasurer of the Hill Motor Sales Company (located at 644 Madison Street), a successful Packard dealership. He worked with his father in the real estate business was also the president and treasurer of F. A. Hill & Co. real estate company by 1930 following his father's retirement. Hill died in 1946 following a long illness. He lived at 514 Linden with his wife Helen Flack Hill and had three sons - Frederick A. Hill, III, John Flack Hill and David Eugene Hill.⁵

³ "Death of F. A. Hill, Leader for 40 Years," Oak Leaves, October 26, 1933.

⁴ Edward Pritchard, Illinois of Today and Its Progressive Cities, 1897, p. 133.

⁵ "Obituaries: Frederick A. Hill, Jr.," Chicago Daily Tribune, May 16, 1946, p. 18.

and less prominent than the Sheppard House – though no less attractive, but contribute to the overall character of the *Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District* in which they are located. Many have the common characteristics of the vernacular Prairie elements or Queen Anne characteristics; few show the Colonial Revival details such as the prominent round porch columns found on the Sheppard House.



201 S. Humphrey, 1908



205 S. Humphrey, 1904



220 S. Humphrey, 1904



306 S. Humphrey, 1903



417 S. Humphrey, 1904



239 S. Cuyler, 1914



The house at 217 S. Humphrey (left) is significantly larger than its neighbors to the north and south also constructed by F. A. Hill (213 S. Humphrey, 1904, above right).
(Source all photos on this page: Village of Oak Park)

George W. and Mary Louise Sheppard

George Walter Sheppard was born in Chicago on September 1, 1872, the eldest child of George J. and Deborah F. (Webb) Sheppard. Both parents had immigrated to Chicago by the 1860s from Canada. George J. Sheppard was born to English parents in Toronto in 1842. By the outbreak of the Civil War, George J. had immigrated to Chicago where he enlisted in the Union Army as a private. By 1870 George J. and his partner Frank H. Cousens operated Sheppard and Cousens, specializing in butter, cheese and eggs. The store and family residence were located at 252 State Street. George, age 28, had recently wed Deborah Webb, age 31, around 1869-1872 and the couple would have five sons: George Walter (b. 9-1-1872), followed by Charles E. (b. 5-23-1875), Thomas M. (b. 7-7-1877), Harry Graham (b. 9-2-1880) and Frank Wilbur (b. 4-6-1885). Deborah F. Webb was born on June 16, 1839 of Irish parents in either Ireland or Canada. The family appears to have immigrated around the time of the Irish potato famine. Deborah would have been considered an older mother at this time; she was 33 when her first son George W. was born, and 46 at the time her youngest son Frank was born.⁶

By 1880 the family resided at 21 Artesian Street in Chicago (now the 200 block) while George J. work at 91 S. Water Street as a salesman. Deboarah's 19 year-old sister Frances E. Webb also joined the household and worked as a milliner. George W. was eight years old at this time, and he attended Chicago public schools until he was 14. In 1886 he was working as an errand boy in the grocery establishment of Charles H. Slack. He later worked for Sprague, Warren Company and the J. B. Interrieden Company.⁷ By 1890 George J., Deborah and the five boys aged 5-18 lived at 579 Warren Avenue (now 2554 W. Warren) on the city's west side. George W. was employed as a city buyer at 65 S. Water Street and later that year became a clerk/secretary in the Louis W. Stayart Company, a wholesale grocers at 155 W. Randolph Street in Chicago.⁸

In 1892 the family moved to 774 W. Adams (now 2041 W. Adams) and father George J. was a grocer salesman at 95 S. Water Street. Son George W. had become a bookkeeper with the Stayart Co., who had moved to 174 W. Randolph. In 1893 the Sheppards again relocated to 382 Warren (now 2207 W. Warren).⁹

In 1894 Deborah and George J. Sheppard separated and remained so until his death on January 24, 1900. Prior to her husband's death, Deborah lost her fourth son Harry to pneumonia in 1899. She tellingly lists her retirement as beginning in 1900. Following his separation with Deborah, George J. appeared boarded at various locations and worked as a salesman. From 1897 until his death of pneumonia, George J. seems to have disappeared. No home or business addresses were listed in Chicago directories, yet his wife and children remained in the same East Garfield Park neighborhood where they had resided for years. He was buried three months after his death at Forest Home Cemetery, near his son Harry.¹⁰

⁶ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

⁷ Albert Nelson Marquis, Editor. *The Book of Chicagoans, 1917*, p. 618.

⁸ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

⁹ Sheppard family history.

¹⁰ Sheppard family history.

George W. married Mary Louise Kenyon of Chicago on July 15, 1895. The young couple lived with his mother and younger brothers at 965 W. Monroe (now 2342 W. Monroe).



George W. Sheppard, age 23, ca. 1893



Mary Louise (Kenyon) Sheppard, age 20, ca. 1895

In 1895 Daniel Strassheim began working at the Louis Stayart Company. Over the next 12 years George W. and Daniel Strassheim worked together at Stayart in various positions; George as bookkeeper, secretary and treasurer, Daniel as salesman and clerk.¹¹ On January 1, 1907, the two men took over the company and formed the Sheppard-Strassheim Company, wholesale grocers, with Sheppard serving as president. In 1909 the company moved to 670 W. Randolph at the corner of Union Street, a prominent wholesale and warehouse district.¹²



George W. Sheppard, ca. 1907



George W. Sheppard, 1919



Daniel Strassheim, c. 1919

¹¹ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

¹² Albert Nelson Marquis, Editor. The Book of Chicagoans, 1917, p. 618.

George W. Sheppard became prominent in the grocery field, serving on the Board of Directors of the Merchant's Exchange of Chicago in 1910¹³ and as president of the Chicago Randolph Market Association in 1913.¹⁴ It was during this successful period in his career when Sheppard moved his young family to the prominent suburb of Oak Park. They rented a house at 310 S. Humphrey Avenue beginning in 1900, and lived there until they purchased their first new home at 217 S. Humphrey Avenue in 1904, which was still under construction by the F. A. Hill & Company when Sheppard purchased the home. It is mentioned in the family history that Mary Sheppard specifically wanted a bathroom on the main staircase landing, so this was constructed in the home.¹⁵



217 S. Humphrey, ca. 1906



217 S. Humphrey, undated

At the time of the purchase of their new home, George and Mary had a growing young family. Arthur Kenyon Sheppard was born on December 15, 1900 at the house at 310 S. Humphrey. Their second child Grace Adelaide was born on April 7, 1903. The family moved into the house at 217 S. Humphrey in 1905 and their third child Edith May was born there on April 19, 1906.¹⁶



Arthur and Grace, 1905



Arthur, Mary and Grace, ca. 1908



Edith Sheppard, December 1908

¹³ "Corbin to Head Exchange," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 30, 1910, p. 18.

¹⁴ "Delano Demands Less Haste for Terminal Action," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 15, 1913, p. 13.

¹⁵ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

¹⁶ Sheppard family history.

By 1908 George's mother Deborah and brother Frank were living with the family on Humphrey. Edith Sheppard died of Erysipelas at the age of two, a disease she had unwittingly been exposed to at her grandfather's deathbed nine days earlier. She was buried at Forest Home Cemetery. Youngest son William Edwin was born at 217 S. Humphrey on August 14, 1911. All of the children attended Hawthorne School (now the site of Percy Julian Middle School) and spent at least part of their high school years at Oak Park & River Forest High School. After one year at OPRF Arthur attended St. John's Northwestern Military Academy in Delafield, Wisconsin, though he did not graduate. Grace attended OPRF for three years prior to eloping with a young man at age 17. Her father retrieved her, had the marriage annulled and sent her to a boarding school to finish her education, possibly in Virginia. William attended the Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana beginning in 1927. In 1931 he attended the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce at the University of Pennsylvania, but left after one year.¹⁷ Deborah Sheppard passed away in 1912.



Arthur, Grace and Williams, ca. 1912



Mary Sheppard with baby William, Arthur & Grace on the front steps of 217 S. Humphrey ca. 1912



William Sheppard, ca. 1915



Arthur Sheppard, ca. 1914



Grace Sheppard, ca. 1920



William Sheppard, 1931

¹⁷ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

Sheppard and business partner Daniel Strassheim were one of 38 wholesale grocers arrested in government raids in 1919. They were accused in food profiteering and conspiracy to charge excessive prices for granulated sugar, a federal offense. The case was developed by the Cost of Living Bureau, established under the command of special agent Mills Kitchin. Dealers were taken in the raids and held for hearing under \$5,000 bonds.¹⁸ Neither Sheppard or Strassheim were indicted or convicted.

The firm of Sheppard-Strassheim Company became one of the largest wholesale grocery brokerage firms in Chicago until 1926, when the company went bankrupt. During the economic flush of the 1920s, speculation in markets of all kinds was rampant. George and “Black Dan” Strassheim speculated in the sugar market and lost everything. This was referred to as the Sugar Crash of 1926. Sugar futures changed hands as the product made its way northward from South America via New Orleans. Speculators gambled that sugar prices would continue to escalate as the repeal of Prohibition loomed on the horizon; sugar was an essential component in alcohol production.¹⁹



Mary Sheppard, Dan Strassheim, Meta Strassheim and George Sheppard
Children Arthur and Grace Sheppard in front, ca. 1907

Following the loss of their business, Daniel Strassheim formed his own wholesale grocery business working with canners.²⁰ Daniel continued working in his food brokerage firm of D. Strassheim Company, located in Evanston, until his death in 1958 at age 82.²¹ His son Daniel Strassheim, Jr. led the firm beginning in 1926 at age 20, until his retirement in 1983.²²

¹⁸ “Arrest 38 in War on Sugar Profiteering,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 22, 1919, p. 6.

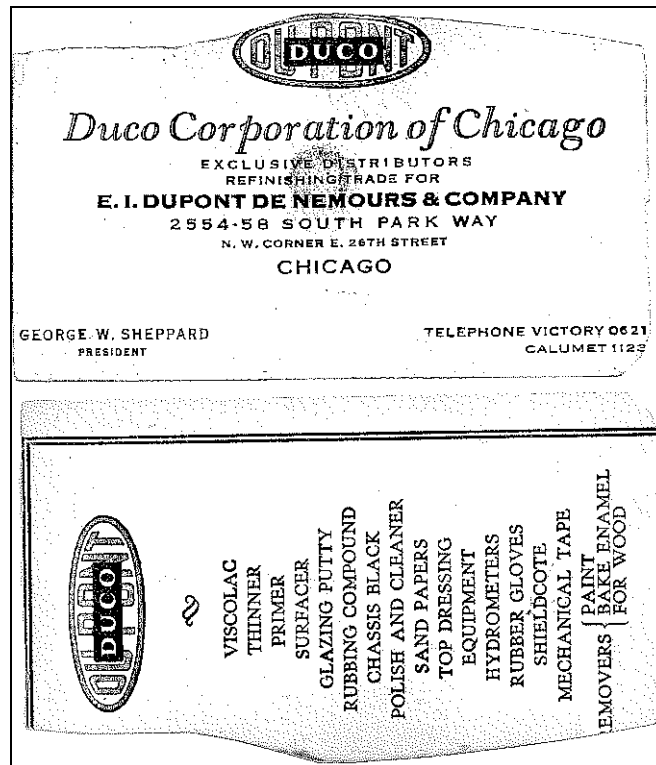
¹⁹ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

²⁰ Sheppard family history.

²¹ “Obituaries: Daniel Strassheim,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 17, 1958, p. B8.

²² “Obituaries: Daniel Strassheim, Jr.,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 25, 1986, p. A11.

George Sheppard sold the house at 217 S. Humphrey in 1926 to help pay off debts, and the family moved to a new “modern” apartment at 203 Washington Boulevard.²³ He was soon after offered the position of President of the Duco Corporation, a division of DuPont which specialized in wood strippers, shellacs and varnishes.²⁴ The Duco Corporation once stood at the current location of McCormick Place, and the Sheppard-Strassheim Company building was demolished in the 1950s to make way for the I-90/I-94 Expressway.



Arthur Sheppard married fellow Oak Park Harriet Smale Jones on September 5, 1928²⁵ and the couple moved to the Boulevard Apartments at 111 S. Harvey Avenue. Arthur died of streptococcus infection and appendicitis on April 23, 1929 at the age of 29 and was buried at Forest Home Cemetery beside his sister Edith. Grace Sheppard married advertising man Harry “Bud” White on December 29, 1929. Their reception was at the Midwest Athletic Club, a posh private club facing Garfield Park, where George was a member.²⁶ George W. Sheppard died from lung cancer, at the age of 57, on June 5, 1929.²⁷

Following the death of her husband, Mary Sheppard moved to the Oak Park Arms Hotel, and then to an apartment at 409 S. Humphrey Avenue. Grace and Harry White moved to Elmhurst following their marriage and gave birth to son William White on April 29, 1930. Although Mary had lost most of her money to poor management, bad advice and the Great Depression, she was able to buy back her house at 217 S. Humphrey in 1932. The house

²³ Chicago and Oak Park Directories, 1903-1930.

²⁴ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

²⁵ “Marriage is Announced,” *Oak Leaves*, September 8, 1928.

²⁶ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

²⁷ Death Certificate for George W. Sheppard, State of Illinois, June 5, 1929.

had been purchased in 1926 by Frank and Mary Barrett, who lived in the house with their children Earl, Leonard and Nina.²⁸

She was joined by her mother Emeline Kenyon Burdick. Grace divorced Harry White in 1935 and moved with her son William back in with her mother at 217 S. Humphrey. On July 6, 1935 William Sheppard married Selene Hansen of LaGrange. They spent their early years on the road, and would occasionally move back to the house at 217 S. Humphrey. Mary and her family helped make ends meet in the 1930s by taking in boarders. On May 29, 1943 Grace married Raymond Ketcham, and the couple moved to Elmhurst. After Mary Sheppard sold the house in 1944 she moved in with her daughter Grace and family. Son William Sheppard had divorced his wife Selene and after serving in the Army during World War II he and second wife Pat moved to San Antonio, Texas. After Raymond Ketcham died in 1955 Grace moved back to Oak Park and Mary was admitted to the Masonic Home in Sullivan, Illinois. Mary Louise Sheppard died on March 1, 1965 and was followed by the death of her daughter Grace on December 9, 1965 due to lung cancer. Mary was buried at Forest Home Cemetery and Grace beside her husband at Mount Emblem Cemetery in Elmhurst.²⁹



Grace Sheppard White and son William, 1930



Mary Sheppard (seated), ca. 1950

In 1972 William and Pat Sheppard divorced, and he married his childhood sweetheart Dorothy Anderson Becker, then a widow. William died on November 28, 1977 at age 66³⁰ and Dorothy died in 1983. Upon their deaths both donated their bodies to the University of Texas Health Science Center in San Antonio.³¹

²⁸ Oak Park Directories: 1926-1933

²⁹ Sheppard family history prepared by Susan Gilchrist and Colleen Hintz, Oak Park, IL, 1999-2011.

³⁰ Certificate of Death, William E. Sheppard, November 28, 1977, Bexar County, Texas.

³¹ Sheppard family history.

In 1944 Kathleen McCaughey purchased the house at 217 S. Humphrey Avenue from Mary Sheppard. The Sheppard family had lived in the house for 33 years between its construction in 1904 and when it was sold in 1944. Kathleen McCaughey was a widow when she bought the house, and lived in the house with her sisters. She passed away in 1983 leaving ownership of the house to her son Russell, who remains in residence today. The McCaughey family has lived in the house for 67 years.

American Foursquare (Prairie /Colonial Revival Influence)

The Sheppard House is an excellent example of the influence of the Prairie Style on a vernacular architectural type called the American Foursquare. Characteristically, the Foursquare is a symmetrical two-story box with a hipped roof and, usually, a front dormer. Steps lead to the front entrance, which can be centered or off-center. A full-width porch is typical.³² Four rooms of roughly equal size and a side staircase make up the interior of the archetypal Foursquare. They are commonly square in plan, which lends their naming Foursquare. However, some more prominent examples, such as the Sheppard House, are expanded to rectangular form, making the interior four rooms larger, often moving the staircase to the center, yet retaining the other basic elements of the type.

This type of home was very common in the early twentieth century, and was generally constructed in middle-class subdivisions. It was spread throughout the country by pattern books published in the Midwest.³³ In addition to F. A. Hill & Company, Seward Gunderson and Thomas Hulbert were two of Oak Park's most prolific builders. They bought large tracts of land on the undeveloped south side and constructed hundreds of homes, mostly Foursquares. Gunderson built wood clapboard or shingled homes with hipped or gabled roofs.³⁴ He offered forty-two models and fifteen floor plans, each with stained glass windows, an oak built-in sideboard, and bay windows for \$4,000 to \$12,000.³⁵ Hulbert offered clapboard homes with hipped roofs, painted in two or three colors. Customers could also choose built-ins and decorative windows. These developments allowed the middle class to purchase well-built, partially customized homes at affordable prices.

The Foursquare borrowed from other architectural styles for its secondary elements. Colonial Revival details, such as Doric or Ionic columns, are common and also closely related to the Queen Anne fee classic subtype.³⁶ The house also includes elements of the Colonial Revival style, including the symmetrical façade, prominent one and two-story bays, the large angled brick chimney on the south side of the house, large double-hung sash, and Doric porch columns.

Prairie style elements found on the Sheppard House include the broad, full-width front porch, hipped roofs with deep overhanging flared eaves, and horizontal frieze banding at porch and second floor eaves, all of which are evident in the Sheppard House.

³² Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 440.

³³ McAlester, p. 440.

³⁴ Village of Oak Park, *Gunderson Historic District Nomination*, Oak Park: Village of Oak Park, 2003, p. 3.

³⁵ Jean Guarino, *Yesterday: A Historical View of Oak Park vol. 1, Prairie Days to World War I*, Oak Park: Oak Ridge Press, 2000, p. 54.

³⁶ McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), 326.

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 George W. Sheppard House at 217 South Humphrey Avenue 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;

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

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Village of Oak Park building permit no. 251, dated 9 March 1904 for 217 S. Humphrey. Owner: F. A. Hill, Contractor: F. A. Hill. Two-story frame residence valued at \$3,000.

Village of Oak Park building permit no. 7043, dated 24 July (no year listed) for 217 S. Humphrey. Owner: George Sheppard, Contractor: H. Goddard. Garage and sun parlor valued at \$1,400.

Secondary and published sources

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Death Certificate for William E. Sheppard, Bexar County, Texas, November 28, 1977.

"*Death of F. A. Hill, Leader for 40 Years.*" Oak Leaves, October 26, 1933.

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Village of Oak Park, Gunderson Historic District Nomination, Oak Park: Village of Oak Park, 2003, p. 3.

Note: All photos in this document are the property of Susan Gilchrist unless otherwise noted.

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