

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



Burling Row House District

2225-2245 NORTH BURLING STREET

PRELIMINARY LANDMARK RECOMMENDATION BY THE
COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS ON JULY 12, 2000



CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Christopher R. Hill, Commissioner



Above: The Burling Row House District dominates a one-block stretch of Burling Street in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, between Oz Park and Children's Memorial Hospital.

Cover: The ten attached brick houses that comprise the district, built in 1875, form a distinctive Italianate-style row, ornamented by elaborate stone lintels and a continuous wood cornice, extremely rare for its age and physical intactness.

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor, was established in 1968. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance recommended to City Council should be regarded as final.

BURLING ROW HOUSE DISTRICT

2225 - 45 N. BURLING ST.

DATE: 1875

ARCHITECT: EDWARD J. BURLING

The Burling Row House District, ten brick row houses on the 2200-block of North Burling Street, forms a rare grouping of attached single-family residences from the 1870s. It is an excellent example of the high-quality building construction in Chicago during the decade following the Fire of 1871.

Built just after the passage of an 1874 city ordinance requiring brick construction throughout Chicago, the Burling Row House District is among the city's finest remaining groups of Italianate-style row houses. These row houses possess excellent detailing and craftsmanship with their incised stone window hoods and rare, continuous wood cornice.

The Burling Row House District also is a rare surviving work of Edward J. Burling, one of Chicago's earliest architects. Although Burling designed many of Chicago's most prominent early buildings, most have vanished—either destroyed in the 1871 fire or lost to redevelopment. These row houses are among the few buildings identified with this significant Chicago architect still standing.

DESCRIPTION

The Burling Row Houses were built in 1875. They were commissioned as investment properties by real estate broker and banker Levi Wing, who took out a City of Chicago building permit on July 29, 1875. Ten attached brick houses with common party walls were constructed.

The architect was Edward J. Burling (1819-1892) and, ironically, the street on which these houses are located is named in his honor. Burling owned property in the area and the street naming appears to have taken place during the 1850s.

The group of row houses, which visually dominate the Burling streetscape, were conceived as one unified design. All are two stories in height, set on raised basements. Common setbacks create a distinct sense of visual unity and symmetry, with the two outermost houses at either end projecting forward from the other six.

Walls are built of pinkish-brown common brick. Similarly placed building entrances and porches create a consistent visual rhythm. Double-hung windows are ornamented with dramatic Italianate-style stone window hoods ornamented with fine incising. Doorways are slightly recessed beneath curved transom window openings. An elaborate, Italianate-style wooden cornice, ornamented with paired

brackets, scallops, and incising, runs continuously across the roofline of the attached row houses.

The Burling Row House District has been widely recognized in several publications for its architectural quality. The *Chicago Historic Resources Survey* rated the row house group as “significant to the community,” and it was cited in the *AIA Guide to Chicago*. The row houses also were noted as “structures of special distinction” in the nomination form for the Sheffield Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sec. 2-120-620 and -630), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to recommend landmark designation for a building, structure, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Burling Row House District be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

The Burling Row House District is a fine example of the high-quality residential row houses constructed in Chicago's neighborhoods as the city rebuilt and expanded following the Fire of 1871.

As land values increased in the aftermath of the Fire, real estate investors subdivided large sections of land into standard 25-foot-wide residential lots. In order to create more efficient residential units, architects began to alter their designs from the large free-standing dwellings of the pre-Fire era to more compact, though equally elaborate, attached residences—or row houses.

Row houses begin to give areas of Chicago a more urban character, such as more established Eastern cities like Baltimore, Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Chicago's earliest row houses, such as those on Burling, featured flat fronts built of common brick, rather than face brick, which was more uniform in color, texture, and shape. They were decorated with elaborate cornices that provided a visual end to the building's vertical lines while keeping rainwater off the flat facades.

The original residents of the row houses on Burling Street were middle-class, as were most of those who resettled the North Side following the Fire. Among the row houses' early residents were Maltravers Solomon, general agent



The Burling Row Houses were among the first masonry residences built to conform to the city's 1874 mandate for fireproof construction. The four end units project slightly (left), forming bookends for the ten-unit ensemble.

with the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad (2225 N. Burling); M. Eugene Morrison, clerk with the Chicago, Rock Island and Peoria Railroad (2229); William H. Chadwick, partner in the commercial mercantile firm of Wanzer & Co. (2231); carriage merchant Samuel A. Whitfield (2233); real estate broker Franklin Hatheway (2241); and salesman William H. Brown (2243).

The Burling Row House District represents one of the earliest surviving groups of brick row houses built in Chicago following an 1874 city ordinance that required “fireproof” masonry construction in most of the city’s neighborhoods.

Following the Fire of 1871, strict fire codes went into effect that eliminated wooden structures within a “fire limits” boundary that was established around the central business district. These limits only extended to North Avenue.

In 1874, however, following another fire, the limits were extended to include larger portions of the city, including the Near North. Based on building permit records, it appears that the Burling Row Houses were constructed very soon after this new ordinance took effect, making them a very early example of this type of fireproof, masonry buildings.

Criterion 4: Important Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

The Burling Row House District is one of the earliest, surviving examples of a large group of row houses in Chicago.

Many of the city’s original row houses were destroyed in the Fire of 1871—or by urban renewal efforts of the 1860s. The few early examples that survive are in the Calumet-Giles-Prairie District on the Near South Side or in the Lincoln Park and Washington Square neighborhoods of the Near North Side.

Several early post-Fire row houses survive in the Mid-North District (east of Burling) and along Fremont Street (west of Burling). However, the Burling row houses are unusual both for their age (1875), size (10 units), uniform design, and excellent retention of important exterior features, including stone window lintels and a continuous wood cornice shared by all units. As such, these row houses constitute a rare, surviving group of “first-generation” row houses in Chicago, which were built in response to increasing land costs in many neighborhoods following the Fire of 1871.

The Burling row houses are distinguished for their high quality of details and materials, which exemplify late-19th century craftsmanship.

The building row’s carved stone elements include decorative keystones on the basement windows and highly ornate incised hoods above the tall, narrow windows on the upper floors. A stone course accents the building bases, while providing a unifying line for the group of row houses.



The Burling Row Houses have exceptionally fine detailing, including (clockwise, from top left): a wood cornice and stone lintels, ornate keystones, paneled doors and door frames, and “pent-style” porch roofs.

A decorative wood cornice, ornamented with paired brackets, jig-saw work, continuous scallops and floral patterns, runs across the top of the entire row of residences. It is a rare example of an intact wooden cornice in Chicago.

Other carved wood elements include the original “pent-style” roof hoods above two of the entrance doorways and slightly recessed doors and ornamented frames. An ornately detailed wood porch, which appears to date from 1895-1905, accents the unit at 2235 N. Burling St.

The overall form and details of this group of row houses exemplifies the Italianate style, as it was popularized following the Fire of 1871.

The Italianate style was based on the picturesque architecture of Italian villas. Its original use was for large, free-standing mansions. Its prominent features included broadly projecting roof overhangs, elaborately carved brackets, and window and door openings topped by ornate lintels and hoods.

During the 1860s through early 1880s, the Italianate was one of the most popular architectural styles in Chicago. Its features can be found on hundreds of the city’s residential and commercial buildings. However, few examples of the style, as it was used for row houses, have survived. Consequently, the proposed Burling Row House District is one of the largest and most intact groupings of Italianate-style row houses in the city.

Criterion 5: Significant Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois or the United States.

The Burling row houses were designed by Edward J. Burling, one of Chicago’s earliest architects.

Edward J. Burling (1819-1892) began his career at the age of 16 as an apprentice to a carpenter in his hometown of Newburgh, New York. He came to Chicago in 1843 with little formal training, but this was typical of the architects in the decade before and after the Fire of 1871. The city’s early architects, according to *Architecture in Old Chicago*, “were for the most part builders attracted by the fame of the growing city, who came here as young men and climbed up from the carpenters’ bench to the draughting table.”

Burling’s career was boosted in the early 1850s, when one of the city’s most prominent developers, William B. Ogden, commissioned him to design a number of speculative houses. Other residential commissions came from such prominent entrepreneurs as lumber baron Eli Bates and banker Charles T. Yerkes.

During the late-1850s and through the 1860s, Burling designed many of the city’s most prominent buildings, including the First National Bank, the Board of Trade, the Chamber of Commerce, Post Office, and the Tribune Building. It was during this period that, according to *Chicago Street Names*, Burling Street was named in honor of the architect.

Virtually all of Burling’s early structures were demolished in the Fire. Yet,



Edward J. Burling (top left), the designer of the Burling Row Houses, was one of Chicago's first architects. His other notable designs include (top right) the Chamber of Commerce Building (1865; demolished); and St. James Episcopal Cathedral (1873-75) and the Nickerson House (1883), which are shown above in a circa 1890 photograph.

working both alone and with partners Dankmar Adler and Francis Whitehouse, Burling played a leading role in the city's post-fire reconstruction and expansion. Among the Burling-designed buildings that remain are: the Cole and White buildings (at the corner of Lake and Franklin streets in the Loop), Unity Church (facing Washington Square), the Church of the Epiphany (201 S. Ashland), and St. James Episcopal Church (675 N. Wabash).

The row of buildings in the 2200-block of Burling Street is a rare surviving example of the residential designs of Edward Burling.

Most residences designed by Burling were destroyed in the Fire of 1871. Two post-Fire, large-scale mansions still exist—the DeKoven House (1150 N. Dearborn; 1874), built in partnership with Dankmar Adler, and the Nickerson House (40 E. Erie; 1883), designed by the firm of Burling and Whitehouse.

The only other known example of Burling's residential work—which is the type of commission that brought him his early prominence as an architect—are three groups of row houses in the 2100-block of Fremont Street, just three blocks west of the Burling Row Houses.

These groups, along with the Burling Row Houses, are the oldest buildings designed by Burling still standing.

Criterion 6: Distinctive Theme as a District

Its representation of an architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other theme expressed through distinctive areas, districts, places, buildings, structures, works of art, or other objects that may or may not be contiguous.

The Burling Row House District displays a distinct architectural unity, based on its common history, consistent scale, building setbacks, unity of design features, use of materials, and overall detailing.

This group of ten row houses forms a contiguous and distinctive building set along the 2200-block of Burling Street. Building heights are identical and the common setbacks of the central six units are “book-ended” by the slightly projecting setbacks of the two units at the either end of the building row.

In addition, each of the brick-fronted units is unified by common design features, including carved window hoods and raised entrances. The row houses also are unified by several continuous elements, such as a rare and distinctive ornamental wood cornice and stone course.

Furthermore, the unified Italianate-style design and detailing of these row houses creates a distinctive and recognizable sense of place within the larger Lincoln Park neighborhood.

The character of many of the smaller side streets in the Near North Side's Lincoln Park neighborhood is strongly defined by the “walls” formed by the residences lining them. In most cases, that pattern is an irregular one, given the varying heights, styles, and setbacks of the buildings. In contrast, along Burling Street, there is a very strong and consistent streetwall, which is created by the length of the row houses and their uniform heights and setbacks.

In addition, this portion of Burling Street is only one-block long, stretching between Oz Park and Children's Memorial Hospital. As a result, the ten units of the Burling Row House create a dominant presence for both the street and for this portion of the Lincoln Park community, which is located between a large institution and a neighborhood park.

Integrity Criterion

The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.

It is unusual to find a group of row houses in Chicago that combine age and overall integrity in the way that the Burling Row House District does. Most groups of row houses built during the 1870s have been demolished, and it is even rarer when a group of row houses—particularly a large grouping such as this one—retains all of its original units.

In addition, a very high percentage of the distinguishing features of this particular group of row houses remain. This includes uniform raised entrances and a wealth of elaborately carved stone window hoods. Quite exceptional in its rarity is the common wooden cornice that runs across the roofline of the entire group.

The most common exterior changes to the Burling Row Houses are minimal alterations, generally involving porches and windows. Several houses have newer porch railings that replaced the original cast-iron railings and posts. In addition, only a couple of the original "pent-style" roofs, which are supported on wood brackets, survive (at 2231 and 2233). However, one of the district's non-original porches, a Classical Revival-style full-width affair at 2235 has architectural interest in its own right. It appears to have been built between c.1895 and 1905.

In addition, a first-floor bay window has been added to 2235—possibly at the same time as the porch—and single-pane windows have replaced the original double-hung sash windows at 2245.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever a building is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its preliminary evaluation of the Burling Row Houses, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- all exterior building elevations, including rooflines, that are visible from North Burling Street.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CITY OF CHICAGO

Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development

Christopher R. Hill, Commissioner

James Peters, Deputy Commissioner for Landmarks

Project Coordinator

Terry Tatum

Illustrations

Chicago Department of Planning and Development: front cover, pp. 3, 5.

City of Chicago Atlas, compiled and published by the Division of Maps and Plats,

Department of Transportation, 1998-99 ed.: inside front cover.

Smith, *Mr. Burling of Burling Street*: p. 7 (top left).

Andreas, *History of Chicago*: p. 7 (top right).

Chicago Historical Society: p. 7 (bottom).

Chicago Historic Resources Survey: inside back cover.



The row house at 2231 N. Burling St., shown above in a 1992 photograph, has the distinctive physical features of the houses in the Burling Row House District, including tall, narrow windows, stone lintels, and wood cornice.

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Michelle R. Obama
Seymour Persky
Ben Weese

The Commission is staffed by the
Chicago Department of Planning and Development
33 N. LaSalle St., Room 1600, Chicago, IL 60602

312-744-3200; 744-2958 (TDD)
<http://www.ci.chi.il.us/landmarks>