

## **“CHICAGO BUNGALOWS” – MULTIPLE PROPERTY NOMINATION**

In the first three decades of the twentieth century Chicago's population more than doubled. The number of Chicagoans rose from 1,698,575 in 1900 to 3,376,438 in 1930. In accommodating over 1.5 million new people the city's urban form and architecture changed dramatically. Images of this press of humanity in the second largest city in the United States filled guidebooks, travelers' accounts, novels and newspaper columns. The new density was palpable on crowded streets and transit lines, in massive new factories and shopping emporia, and above all on the city's impressive downtown skyline. In 1900 Burnham & Root's twenty-two-story Masonic Temple Building, at 302 feet, was Chicago's tallest building. By 1930 numerous buildings had eclipsed it, including Holabird & Roche's Board of Trade building that doubled the height of the Masonic Temple Building.

Chicago's residential landscape also reflected the city's booming growth. The number of dwelling units in Chicago rose from 346,755 in 1900 to 623,912 in 1920 to 843,578 in 1930. Popular images of the residential landscape varied widely. The proliferation of high-rise apartment houses and apartment hotels easily captured people's attention. They were strikingly different from earlier urban residences. Between 1900 and 1930, for example, builders and architects like Benjamin H. Marshall lined the Gold Coast section of the north side with elevator apartment buildings. These buildings gave tenants luxurious accommodations, high levels of personal and mechanical services, and an extraordinary setting on the lakefront. In many middle-class neighborhoods, low-rise apartment buildings and, perhaps most notably, Chicago courtyard apartment buildings with their landscaped courts, their series of separate entrances, and their projecting sun parlors and balconies seemed designed to absorb a growing population. Turn of the century housing reformers chronicled other aspects of the city's growth. In Chicago's poorest neighborhoods, immigrants crowded into rented flats in two and three story frame and brick tenements that filled building lots and left little space for light or air. The luxury high-rise apartments and the blocks of tenements provided two contrasting images of the new density that characterized Chicago urbanism in the early twentieth century. In turn, vast new districts of single-family homes provided a counterpoint to both tenement and apartment living.

Between 1910 and 1930 Chicago developers built tens of thousands of one and one-and-one-half-story brick bungalows on large tracts of land previously occupied by farms and prairie fields.<sup>i</sup> These new bungalow neighborhoods represented a major innovation in Chicago urbanism. Here a new style of house, unprecedented in the previous century, provided Chicago homebuyers of moderate means with extraordinary levels of domestic comfort made possible through innovative systems of heating, plumbing, and electricity. Generally rectangular in plan, with the narrow end facing the street, the bungalow mass was dominated by low-pitched overhanging roofs. The front elevations had face brick, often with stone trim, while the side and rear walls were constructed of common brick. Expansive front windows, often grouped into single architectural frames, flooded interiors with natural light. Porches generally opened to the front and the rear of the house.<sup>ii</sup> Bungalows typically had bedrooms on the first floor. In 1924, surveying the popular development of the bungalow, Country Life reported, "As the American idea of a residence was a building of at least two stories, with the bedrooms in the secluded upper part of the house, it was a radical change to put everything on the ground floor."<sup>iii</sup> Indeed, this change anticipated the public acceptance of modern houses planned on a single level that came to characterize popular housing form for much of the twentieth century. The unfinished attic spaces, illuminated with gable end windows or front, back, or side dormers, provided a space into which a family could expand when resources permitted. The bungalow played a crucial role in fostering home ownership among the expanding ranks of Chicago's middle and lower middle classes.

Chicago's bungalows emerged as a local appropriation and variant of a house style that was national in scope. The bungalow style was well represented in all parts of the United States. Popular magazines like Ladies Home Journal, Good Housekeeping, Country Life in America, The Craftsman, Keith's Magazine as well as pattern books and catalogues from companies like

Aladdin Homes of Bay City, Michigan, and Radford Architectural Company of Chicago promoted the national diffusion of the bungalow style. National marketing of bungalow building kits by Sears, Roebuck, Montgomery Ward, and other companies further popularized the style. Nevertheless, Chicago's massive population expansion during the period of the greatest popular enthusiasm for the bungalow form, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, meant that the bungalow was particularly well represented in Chicago. The collapse of the home building market with the onset of the Great Depression severely limited bungalow construction after 1930. By the time mass home building resumed after World War II newer house forms, like the Cape Cod and the ranch house, surpassed the bungalow in the residential landscape. The three key associated historic contexts that frame the Chicago bungalow relate to both its architectural and social significance. The associated contexts relate to the adoption and modification of the bungalow for use in Chicago residential development, 1907-1930; the role of bungalow neighborhoods in the rise of an ordered and cohesive residential landscape, 1907-1930; and finally the role of the bungalow in facilitating Chicago home ownership and with it a process of assimilation to one of the powerful ideological elements of American citizenship, 1907-1930.

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<sup>i</sup> Homer Hoyt, *One Hundred Years of Land Values in Chicago*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1933), 245, estimates that 100,000 bungalows were constructed in Chicago and Cook County between in the period between the World War I and 1933; *The Chicago Bungalow*, edited by Dominic A. Pacyga and Charles Shanabruch, (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), gives a similar figure, 80,000-100,000 built in Chicago between 1910 and 1940.

<sup>ii</sup> Scott Sonoc, "Defining the Chicago Bungalow," in *The Chicago Bungalow*, edited by Dominic A. Pacyga and Charles Shanabruch, (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2001), 9-30.

<sup>iii</sup> Roger B. Whitman, "The More Than Popular Bungalow," *Country Life*, 46 (July, 1924), 41.