

CHILDREN'S DOWNTOWN HISTORICAL WALKING TOUR

Your tour today begins here at the Wichman Blacksmith Shop, current home of the Barrington Area Historical Museum. This building represented the top-of-the-line in blacksmith operations when it was built in 1929. It was made of brick rather than the more common frame, and featured the latest in equipment for its time in history. You will learn more about Mr. Wichman and the kind of work he did in this building during the second half of your museum visit today.

By the way, take note of the hitching post outside of the Museum's big, double front doors. When travel by horse power was common in Barrington, people needed a way to secure their horse or team while taking care of whatever brought them to the downtown area – be it business, church, visiting, or something else. They would tie the reins to the heavy ring in the hitching post so that the horse or team would not wander away.

Across the street from the Blacksmith Shop where you see a parking lot, there once stood the original Catlow Theatre. The Catlow is now to be found on West Main Street, a block to the North. When the Catlow was on Station Street, though, it presented the latest in family film entertainment. The theatre was equipped with moveable seats and was also used as the auditorium for Barrington High School. Occasionally, the seats would be moved under the stage area, and cleared for use as a community dance hall. Later, a part of the building was used as a found-lane bowling alley and pool parlor. The Catlow Theatre moved to Main Street in 1928, and is still in active use.

Around the corner from the Blacksmith Shop on Hough Street is Barrington's Village Hall. It was built in 1898 and replaced a small frame building as the seat of local government. The present building has been altered by the removal of the original bell tower, and by enlarged windows at the street level. All of Barrington's administrative business is handled at the Village Hall, with the exception of the Board of Trustee's Meetings which are now being conducted in the Blacksmith Shop.

Sixty years ago, Barrington's first public library was located on the second floor of the Village Hall. The Village's Library was in an area the size of a small bedroom, and was originally run by Miss Jenny Lines who was the granddaughter of Barrington's first Mayor. Miss Lines was a well-educated schoolteacher who successfully shared her love of books with the Barrington public. The Barrington Area Library is now located on Northwest Highway, just outside the downtown area.

(PLEASE CAREFULLY CROSS HOUGH STREET AND CONTINUE EAST ON STATION STREET.)

As you cross the street to East Station Street, you are entering the original historic area of Barrington. Try to picture in your mind unpaved streets, wooden slat sidewalks, some of them on elevated platforms, houses and businesses of frame siding construction, picket fences defining residential backyards, and an assortment of livestock and barnyard animals in those backyards. Outhouses were also a necessary feature behind every business and private residence. Public outhouses were also located here and there through the downtown area.

Looking into the past history of the buildings now standing on the south side of East Station Street from the middle of the block to the corner of Station and Cook Streets, try to picture Creet's Blacksmith Shop. It was a frame building, owned by Barrington's first blacksmith. Mr. Creet's home was located on the southwest corner of Cook and Station Streets. That house was moved to West Station Street in 1920.

(While standing on the corner of Station and Cook Streets, consider the following historical locations.)

On the southwest corner of Station and Cook Streets is the building which now is occupied by the Village Green Florist and Antique Shop. The building itself is original to its location and was constructed in 1873. The building was first owned by a man named Garret Landwer, and he operated a general store, which offered for sale a full line of general merchandise. Next door to the south was a building which no longer stands, but which in its time was Tom Freeman's Furniture Store and Undertaking Parlor. A bit more to the south is a home now occupied by the Kaleidoscope Gallery. The house was built almost a hundred years ago, and was the residence of the Sodt Family. Their business will be discussed shortly on the tour. Looking further to the northeast corner of South Cook Street at Lincoln Ave. is the still-standing home of Milius B. McIntosh was Barrington's first mayor. The house has been altered in appearance by several additions.

(CROSS STATION STREET TO THE NORTHWEST CORNER, IN FRONT OF THE LIPOFSKY DEPARTMENT STORE.)

Here is where Barrington's own department store, first begun as a family-run business in 1896 as a general store. Harold Lipofsky was the owner and manager of the store until a fire took the store in December 18, 1989. Mr. Lipofsky managed to not only run a successful business, but to be involved in a number of other businesses in Barrington.

On the east side of this block stands the Towne Shoppe and Naidi's. These two stores occupy space in what was once the Sodt Building. The Sodt Building and Sodt General Store originally stood on the northern most corner of this block. Also, long ago, the southeast corner of South Cook and Station Streets once was occupied by a lovely and very popular octagon bandshell. A replica of this bandshell may be found in the Klingenburg Model Village at the Museum. Each week, concerts would be held at the bandshell. If they promised to be on their best behavior, children would be allowed to sit on the benches lining the inner walls of the bandshell during the concerts. In the early 1900's, the bandshell was removed and the Sodt Building was turned 90 and moved to the southeast corner where it still stands. This is one of the oldest buildings standing today in Barrington, and was originally of frame construction, with three windows on the upper level. The front of the building was changed to stucco in keeping with the architectural fashion of the 1920's.

(Walk along the sidewalk on the west side of South Cook Street, while considering the following information.)

While walking along, pay attention the sidewalks. Barrington began to replace its wooden plank walks with cement walks in 1907. Before the Village Trustees passed the ordinance regarding the use of cement instead of planks, people walked on pine boards which varied through town from being just single plank paths to being walks made from boards which were one inch thick, four feet long, and layed on two by four boards for support. The top planks were nailed down with small spaces between to allow for air circulation and help keep the boards from rotting. However, these spaces allowed for something else. It was not uncommon for people to occasionally lose coins or other items through the openings in the plank walks. Children would try their luck at "treasure hunting" by means of using a string with a wad of gum at the end. They would try to "fish" through the plank openings to retrieve the money treasure lying out of fingers' reach beneath the plank walks.

Across the street on the corner is a building constructed in 1916 as the First State Bank, and later known as the Barrington State Bank. During the Great Depression many years ago, the Barrington State Bank was one of those which failed, and had to go out of business. The bank's depositors did eventually get their money returned, but the bank's closing brought the reality of the Great Depression to Barrington in a very stunning way.

Now look eastward beyond the bank building, along Park Avenue. A frame train depot was originally located on this side of the railroad tracks until a fire destroyed the depot in 1915. The depot was brought to Barrington (then called Barrington Station) in 1854 from its original site in Deer Grove. There was also a freight and parcel pickup shed. On the other side of the tracks, near the present location of the Barrington train depot were a roundhouse and holding pens for cattle en route to the stockyards in Chicago. Cattle drives used to take place right down Main Street to the holding pens. The last such cattle drive took place in 1926, shortly after Main Street was finally paved. Frame buildings, including the original Grebe Hardware Store and Ed Sabin's Saloon were once located on Park Avenue. These two buildings burnt to the ground in 1893. Afterwards, Barrington began to build brick structures for the first time. Shortly after that fire, Barrington also organized its first fire department. Also in 1898, Barrington's first water works system was installed and wells were drilled throughout the town for a central water system. Before this system was put into operation, fires had to be fought by means of bucket brigades manned by nearby townsfolk.

(Attention should now be directed to the buildings North of Main Street, and east of Cook Street.)

On the northeast corner of North Cook Street and Main Street at the current site of Skokie Federal Savings, is the location of the original Wichman Blacksmith Shop. Mr. Wichman did business here from 1895 until 1929 when his new building on Station Street was ready. Before Mr. Wichman's shop stood at that spot, the land was empty. Small traveling circus groups would perform here, and some would bring a merry-go-round powered by a small steam engine.

The building now occupied by Talbot's on the southwest corner of South Cook Street and Park Avenue is perhaps the best documented site in Barrington. The original street was so far before the height of the buildings and walkways that this building was originally built on stilts or pilons. There are stories recorded of children ice skating on the frozen standing water beneath this building. Gradually, the street level was raised and the open area beneath the buildings on this street was filled in to the level seen in modern times. John Plagge owned the original building and ran a general store here. He later became a partner in Barrington's first bank and gave it a room in his building. Out of the partnership, the First State Bank of Barrington was chartered in 1913. The bank moved to its own building across the street in 1916. A few years later, the First National Bank of Barrington in 1919. The bank expanded to use the entire Plagge building and occupied this location until it moved to new headquarters on Grove Avenue to the southeast in 1984.

(Turn now westward along the sidewalk on the south side of Park Avenue, and continue walking westward toward the intersection of Main Street and Hough Street.)

On the north side of Main Street, east of Hough are a group of buildings which were constructed after a big fire in 1898 which destroyed the entire block of businesses. The pointed building with the date showing on the second floor level was once the home of George Foreman's Saloon. Next door was the Stiefenhoefler Blacksmith Shop, with August Jahn the wagon maker's business next to him heading west toward Hough Street. The vacant area right at the northeast corner of Hough and Main Streets was until recently the location for the Bob and Betty Shop. It was a one-story red brick building with many classic architectural features. The building was eliminated to help correct the jog at the intersection. Before the Bob and Betty Shop, the land was a swampy cattail slough until 1893.

Main Street was originally called Lincoln Street, and then was referred to as County Line Road. The road is still called "County Line Road" on either side of the Village limits. In the early 1900's the streets name was changed to "Main Street", as it is called today.

Hough Street was named for Warren Hough who owned the farm to the immediate west of that street, and from County Line Road (Main Street) south some distance.

(At the southeast corner of Hough and Main, pause for a moment and observe the intersection's curve before progressing southward back toward Station Street and the Barrington Area Historical Museum.)

According to Arnett C. Lines' History of Barrington, "In the early days of Barrington, there was a farm on the southwest corner of what was to become the intersection of Hough and Main Streets. The farmer built his barn south of the house on the corner. He had a fence across what was to become Hough Street. Hough Street was at that time on the maps, but was not opened through the farmer's land. The Village authorities were requested twice to order the farmer to open up the street. The first time he opened a narrow path to let a little bit of traffic trickle through. The second time the Village Board ordered the farmer to open the street to a reasonable width. People often ask why there is a jog or curve in Hough Street at this intersection. Basically, it is a surveying correction. The Cook County surveyors determined the location of Hough Street on their side of the county line, and the Lake County surveyors somehow decided on putting Hough Street a bit over to the west on their side of the county line. So, the curve is a sort of connecting compromise. As mentioned earlier, the Village is now attempting to ease the angle of the curve to simplify traffic flow at this busy intersection.

Looking westward just beyond the Hough and Main Street intersection, there is the present Catlow Theatre, which opened in 1926. The site was originally occupied by a country schoolhouse constructed of logs. It was built in 1846 and later was moved to Park Avenue where it became Ed Sabin's Saloon and then burnt in a fire.

(Now progress back to the Museum on Station Street.)

Across Hough Street, on the west side of the street, is the current location of First Federal Savings & Loan. Before the bank, the land was occupied by Jewel's first Barrington store.

The early 1900's stores which occupied the east side of Hough Street between Main Street and Station Street included the office of a Justice of the Peace, Powers General Store, McIntosh's Lumber office, Parker's Drugs & Jewelry, a vacant piece of land, and finally, a hardware store on the northeast corner of Hough and Station Streets.

(CROSS HOUGH STREET WESTWARD, AND THEN CROSS STATION STREET SOUTHWARD AND RETURN TO THE MUSEUM.)

This complete the tour of the historical downtown area.