

269 Hamilton

Any city experiencing growth during the early 1900's will possess a number of bungalows. At first glance, the bungalow seems unassuming, but this housing type exemplifies an interesting aspect of our history. Bungalows answered a need for affordable housing for the working class families that needed urban housing. Different areas of the nation took the simple house and added details from their own local history and culture. There are stucco bungalows with Spanish elements in Los Angeles; bungalows decorated with Victorian details in San Francisco; Prairie style influences on the Midwest bungalows; and, of course, the solid, squat, brick bungalows in Chicago, "Hog Butcher of the World."

The bungalow on this year's housewalk was built in 1906 for Royal and Otilia Schlager. It was sold to William C. Urs, an employee of the Borden's Condensed Milk Company, in 1911. This whole area was once part and parcel of the Finla McClure holdings.

The current owners went on the annual Gifford Park Housewalk, but that was the extent of their "old house" activity. One year after the housewalk they were sitting in their backyard looking at the 8-inch aluminum siding covering their house. Suddenly the aluminum siding changed in their eyes from a "maintenance-free exterior" to a "inappropriate cover-up of the original house as it was built". Despite dire warnings from a neighbor concerning the state of the original siding, the owners proceeded then and there to tear off all of the siding they could reach with a crowbar. Seeing the original narrow clapboard siding on the first floor and the shingles above convinced them they were doing the right thing. But then they realized they weren't sure how to proceed from this point. They found their solution by joining the Gifford Park Association where they found help, advice, and contractors to finish the ambitious job they had started! (Despite the neighbor's warning, there was

only a small section of shingles that needed to be replaced). The current 3-color paint scheme highlights the simple yet interesting lines of the bungalow.

Victorian architecture was considered "out-of-date" after the turn of the century, and the bungalow is a reaction to the profusion of details common in Victorian homes. The original porch was replaced by a substantial brick porch with Prairie style detailing, but the original wainscotted ceiling was retained. In the interior, the door and window casings, the square newel post, and square balusters are kept purposefully simple, although a small bead trim on the newel posts show a reluctance to omit all detail.

A "crafter"/collector lives here and her work is evident in the stenciling along the stairway, the grapevine wreaths, the flower arrangements, the stained glass displayed in the back room, and the porcelain dolls and trucks which were handed down to the owners by their families. The brick walk from the patio to the driveway is made from old brick found behind a former "chicken coop" on the property.

There is much to appreciate about the "simple" bungalows the more you get to know about them!

