



123 Madison Street, Oak Park, Illinois 60302

HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION REPORT



JOHN J. SCHMIDT HOUSE 400 North Kenilworth Avenue

Preliminary Determination of Eligibility by the Historic Preservation Commission on March 8, 2018

Recommendation for Approval made by the Historic Preservation Commission on

Village Landmark Ordinance approved by the Village Board of Trustees on

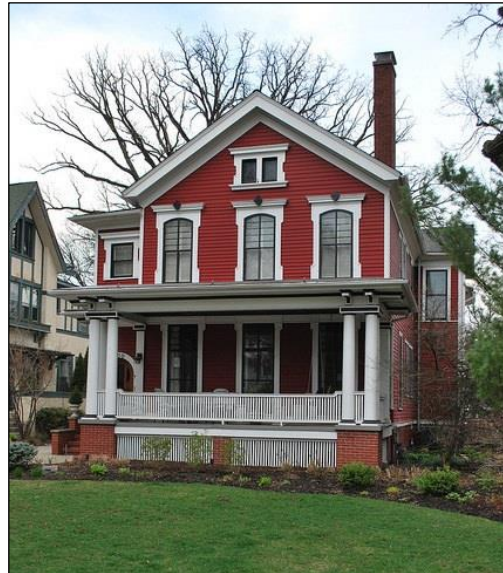
John J. Schmidt House

400 North Kenilworth Avenue

Built: c. 1872
Architect: Unknown
Remodeled: 1908
Architect: Eben E. Roberts
Contractor: Krogmann Brothers

The John J. Schmidt House is located at what is now 400 N. Kenilworth Avenue in Oak Park, Illinois. Property records kept by the current owners, Kevin and Dianne Risch, trace the lot's history all the way back to its original acquisition by Oak Park pioneer Joseph Kettlestrings and his wife Betty Willis Kettlestrings in 1835 when they paid \$215.97 to the United States government for 172.78 acres.¹

The thirty-five years following the Kettlestrings's original purchase were busy, to say the least. The Kettlestrings family relocated to Chicago for a time to take advantage of the public schools before moving back to develop what would eventually become Oak Park. The family apparently considered not returning to their country estate. The property title abstract reveals that Almon Hovey, Darius Hovey, and Lorenzo Deloss Loring signed an agreement on March 5, 1846 to purchase the Kettlestrings's entire property for \$3,000. The agreement contained terms voiding it should the purchasers fail to make certain payments. On April 11, 1870, Joseph Kettlestrings signed an affidavit stating that the purchasers only paid \$50, that they never occupied the property, and that it had been more than twenty years since he had heard from them or knew their whereabouts.² Rail service to and from Chicago reached "Kettlestrings Grove" in 1848.³ By 1857 the area was known as "Oak Ridge" when the Township of Cicero was established to govern it along with the neighboring settlements of Austin, Cicero, and Berwyn. Since there was already another Oak Ridge post office elsewhere in Illinois, the name was changed to Oak Park in 1872.⁴



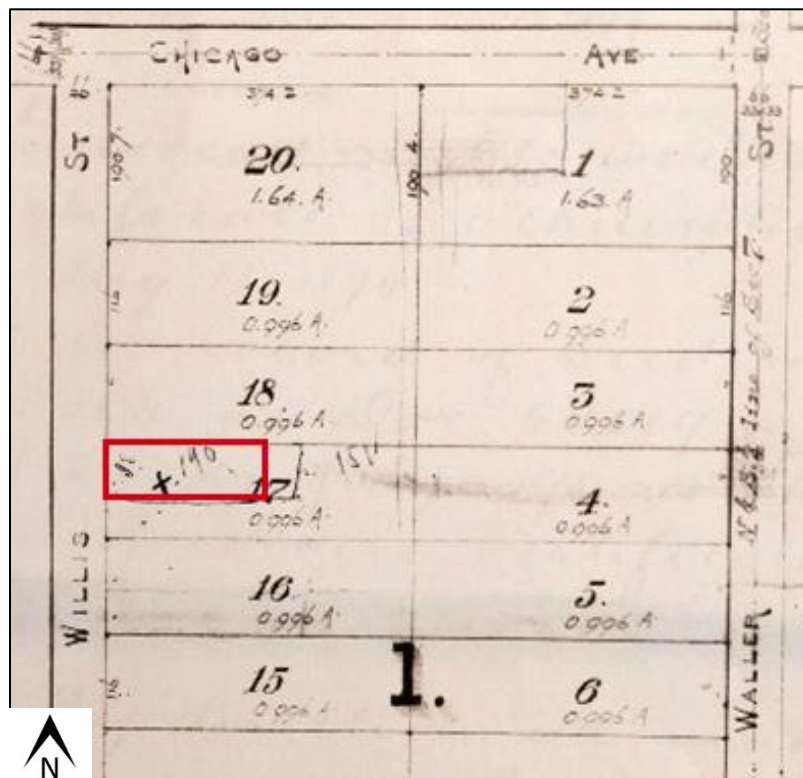
¹ The property title abstract from the late 19th century shows a purchase date of April 28, 1835. The United States patent for the property, dubbed "Kettlestrings Addition to Harlem" was issued March 20, 1837 and recorded November 24, 1847. Purchase price was approximately \$1.25 per acre. See Exhibit 3(A)(i).

² See Exhibit 3(A)(i).

³ Chamberlin, Everett, *Chicago and Its Suburbs* (Chicago: T. A. Hungerford & Co., 1874), 426-427. Average cost of house built in that period was approximately \$3,000 to \$5,000 in Oak Park in 1873.

⁴ "Oak Park, IL," *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (2005). <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/917.html>

During the summer of 1870, Joseph and Betty Kettlestrings sold the undeveloped Lot 17 in Block 1 of “Kettlestrings Addition to Harlem” to John J. Schmidt for \$2,000.⁵ Mr. Schmidt apparently paid \$670 outright and secured a mortgage for \$1,330 to cover the rest of the property.⁶ It is believed that construction on the house did not begin until the summer of 1872, when Mr. Schmidt borrowed \$4,000.⁷ No records have been found identifying the original builder, but the house was likely constructed according to pattern books and without a formally trained architect.



At left is a mid-nineteenth century map covering the present-day Schmidt House property (outlined in red, at the northwest corner of Lot 17). The map was created when County Surveyor Alex Wolcott surveyed and subdivided the northern part of the Kettlestrings property in 1863. Note that what is now Kenilworth Avenue was originally called “Willis St” (Betty Kettlestrings’s maiden name⁸) and Oak Park Avenue was known as “Waller St.” The right-of-way for Grove Avenue was not mapped in 1863, nor was it mentioned in the title abstract until 1884, but an informal path may have existed earlier since at least one house facing Grove predates even the Schmidt House. There are rumors that the Schmidt House may have been situated

more centrally on Lot 17 when built.⁹ If that is the case, it must have been moved to its current location by 1884.

Before selling his house in 1886, Mr. Schmidt divided Lot 17 into four quadrants, with the resulting two western lots (including his own) measuring 58’ x 190’ and the eastern lots measuring 58’ x 151’. The eastern lots were markedly shallower due to the fact that by 1884 “33 feet in width off the East end of said Lot [had] been deeded to the Public for a highway,” referring to what is now Grove Avenue. The southeast quadrant was sold to Carrie Porter, wife of Albert H. Porter, for \$1,160 by an instrument dated and filed August 7, 1884. The southwest quadrant was sold to Rudolph Johns by an instrument dated September 15, 1885 and filed September 22, 1885. The northeast quadrant was sold to Albert H.

⁵ The exact date of purchase is disputed but believed to be August 12, 1870. The title abstract states that there was a warranty deed dated August 12, 1870, recorded August 15, 1870, and re-recorded June 26, 1872. The first line of the tract book, however, states that the date of filing was June 26, 1870. See Exhibit 3(A)(i-ii).

⁶ The source information referenced in this and the next two paragraphs is reproduced in Exhibit 3(A)(i).

⁷ See the next section below for more information about the original construction.

⁸ Sullivan, Bob, “Before Oak Park, there was Kettlestrings Grove,” *Wednesday Journal*, September 11, 2007.

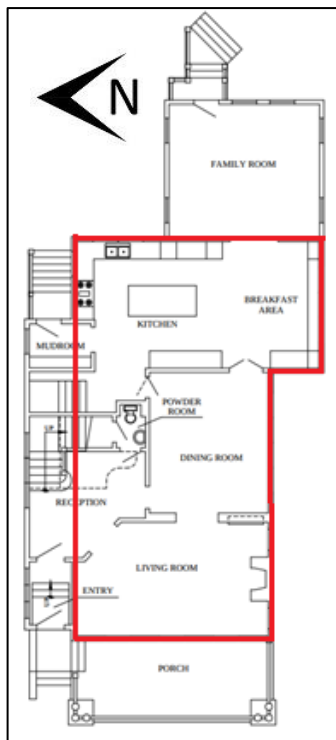
⁹ Interview with Wesley Cichosz (2017), who is responsible for the 1998-1999 renovations. Mr. Cichosz stated that it was just a rumor, and the author has found no evidence corroborating such a scenario.

Standish by an instrument dated May 7, 1886 and filed July 21, 1886. Finally, the northwest quadrant, including the Schmidt House, was sold to Calvin P. & Sarah E. Pease for \$3,200 by an instrument dated May 19, 1886 and filed May 24, 1886. The sales of the Schmidt House will be addressed more thoroughly in the Family Information section.

Original Construction

The Schmidt House was built in 1872 in the Italianate style, which in this case is marked by its moderately overhanging eaves, paired windows in the attic-level gable, and relatively tall, narrow, second-floor windows with curved caps and ornate casing or framing.¹⁰ The current single story front porch is particularly evocative of the Italianate style due to its narrow Doric support columns, which appear paired from western and north/south vantage points (though in fact they are triple columns), and its wide overhanging eaves supported by paired brackets. The current front porch and the northern

six feet (including the current front door) are later additions, however, and will be described further in the “Changes” section.



According to the 2015 edition of *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Virginia Lee McAlester would likely describe the house as belonging to the “Front-Gabled Roof” subtype of Italianate homes.¹¹ Although the original floorplan of the house was arranged in an “L” shape with a cross-gable protruding south from the eastern end (rear) of the structure, the Schmidt House does not belong to the “Asymmetrical” subtype, for which such characteristics are typical, because it does not have a compound plan.¹² Instead, the Schmidt House was what McAlester would call a “simple plan with irregularities” because the rear southward protrusion does not correspond to an entire additional interior room or full unit of construction.¹³

The Schmidt House was built using balloon-frame construction, an 1830s structural innovation that originated in Chicago.¹⁴ By replacing traditional, labor-intensive hewn-and-pegged joints with joints simply nailed together, the balloon frame greatly eased the process of building corners, meaning simple-plan buildings like the Schmidt House could have small extensions without making construction prohibitively tedious.¹⁵

¹⁰ McAlester, Virginia Savage and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 3rd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), p. 224.

¹¹ McAlester, p. 224.

¹² See McAlester’s definitions of Italianate subtypes, p. 283-284. Furthermore, McAlester notes “Cross gables extending outward the width of a single window or door are often added for light and ventilation toward the rear of front-gabled examples” (p. 298).

¹³ McAlester, p. 23-25.

¹⁴ McAlester, p. 32.

¹⁵ McAlester, p. 38-40.

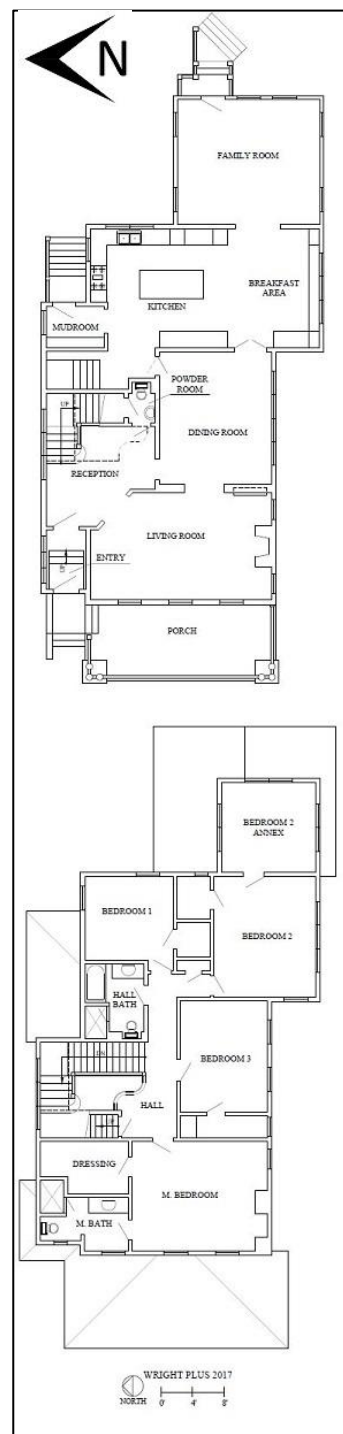
Please see Exhibit 2 for larger, official versions of the Schmidt House's current floorplans, which are reproduced at right.¹⁶

It is believed that a visitor approaching the newly completed house in late 1872 would have found a rather simple Italianate home with a small porch just wide enough to cover the front door, which occupied the furthest left of the three front windows now covered by the front porch. To the right of the front door were two large windows that survive today. Upon entering the Schmidt House, a guest would likely face a set of stairs running up the northern wall on their left and a hallway straight ahead leading to a kitchen in the rear.¹⁷ In his delightfully eloquent history of the Schmidt House written around 1978, Robert Gardner, the Schmidt House's eighth owner, surmises that the original staircase ran straight up along the northern wall, about mid-way through the house. It is not clear if he is basing this theory on a hunch or on some illustration or other record that no longer survives. Italianate homes of the period very often contain curved or spiral staircases, and it is possible that such a staircase existed in the original interior. In fact, the upstairs hallway outside the master bedroom seems unnecessarily wide for a straight staircase, and it is unclear where a full bathroom servicing all bedrooms could have been other than where such a straight staircase would have ended.

To the 1872 visitor's immediate right upon entering the home was the living room with the two large windows facing the street (west) and two similar windows flanking a marble-topped fireplace facing the entryway. Behind (east of) the living room was the dining room with dark carved wood paneling¹⁸ and perhaps two evenly-spaced windows along the southern wall. Behind the dining room, in the southeast corner of the house, was another room, probably the library, approximately six feet of which protruded south from the main east-west axis of the building. The 1895 Sanborn map reproduced on page 11 of this report reveals a west-facing door to a small porch occupying the width of the protrusion. Between the library and the kitchen to its north was a narrow staircase providing the servants with access to four bedrooms upstairs.

Changes

Since all Oak Park building permits issued prior to 1902 were lost, the first major known alteration was made by the Hare family, the Schmidt House's sixth owners, who expanded the house northward, an addition which includes the current front door, and remodeled the interior in the Prairie style. Dr. David Arthur Hare and his wife Alice A. Rathjen Hare purchased the Schmidt House, located at what was then called 448 N. Kenilworth Ave., in late Spring 1908 and set upon renovating the home right away. Krogmann



¹⁶ Floor plans measured and provided by Jerry McManus, February 2017. See Exhibit 2 for larger, official versions.

¹⁷ Gardner, Robert H., "Roots of a House," (unpublished, circa 1978), attached in Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

¹⁸ Gardner, Jean, interview with (unpublished, circa 1978). No recording of the full interview exists, but some notes survive and are attached in Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

Bros., a contractor, filed a building permit on July 10, 1908 to alter the Schmidt House for a cost of \$1,500.¹⁹ While this remodeling job does not appear in prominent inventories of architect Eben Ezra Roberts's works, E.E. Roberts's involvement in the project is proven by a few preliminary sketches in his hand and the similarities with other works he did in the period.

The permit is short on details, but thanks to an informal house history compiled by Robert H. Gardner, who owned the house from 1961 to 1979, some additional details survive. Mr. Gardner must have had access to clearer and more complete records than exist today because he describes sketches as depicting the current stairway with curved balustrade, space for the art glass windows along the stairs, details of coves and cornices, the butler's pantry, and cabinets for a bathroom upstairs.²⁰ Mr. Gardner also noted:

"Very likely, [architect E.E. Roberts] also added the [entryway] vestibule with its vaulted ceiling and the second bathroom above it, although we did not find sketches for these."²¹ A gable was added at right angles to the roof to accommodate a new stairway to the attic. The old woodwork was torn out and more imposing doorways installed. The dining room was paneled and beamed,²² and squared leaded glass windows were put in on the south wall.²³ The marble Victorian mantel was replaced with a towering mass of brick and dark oak."²⁴

Ironically, Mr. Gardner's interest in the home's history seems to exist *in spite of* the Prairie style remodel rather than *because of* it, as he noted that Roberts was hired "to enlarge the basic structure and embellish it with Prairie School details which are camp today."²⁵ Mr. Gardner goes on to say: "Fortunately, Roberts was an artist, and most of his modifications blend in harmoniously with the older features, so that one gets the impression that Queen Victoria still reigns but wears a newer gown."²⁶

¹⁹ A very brief write-up from "The Oak Park Festival 1978, Celebration of Homes" suggests it was the house itself (rather than the cost of the renovation) that was valued at \$1,500 on the 1908 permit. This was probably a mistake. While it is unknown what price the Hares paid for the Schmidt House in 1908, it had been sold for \$6,250 in late 1904.

²⁰ Robert Gardner, p. 5-6. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

²¹ See also the Rutherford-Dodge House at 308 N. Oak Park Ave., a circa-1873 Italianate that the owners in 2010 attributed to Eben Ezra Roberts. It also had an expansion to its left side, though it sits on a narrower lot and the front door was not relocated.

²² The beams in the living room were likely added at the same time. See interior photograph of the Lorenzen House living room ceiling, one of which is reproduced on page 15 here. For more details, see Francis Steiner's authoritative study of E.E. Roberts (and note that Ms. Steiner refers to the Charles F. Lorenzen House as the C. W. Helder House), particularly on page 60 of her 1970 University of Chicago Master's thesis and on pages 14-15 of *The Prairie School Review* (Vol. X, No. 2) in the article "E.E. Roberts: Popularizing the Prairie School" in 1973.

²³ Eben Ezra Roberts's Charles Schwerin House of 1908, located at 639 Fair Oaks, featured a dining room lined in wood paneling with a gridded leaded-windows on the southern wall designed to maximize the amount of natural light admitted to the room. See photos on page 15 and Rodkin, Dennis, "On the Market: Prairie Glass in Oak Park," *Chicago Magazine*, August 21, 2008. The dining room is showcased starting at about the four-minute mark: <http://www.chicagomag.com/Radar/Deal-Estate/August-2008/On-The-Market-Prairie-Glass-in-Oak-Park/>

²⁴ Robert Gardner. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

²⁵ Robert Gardner, p. 4. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

²⁶ "Roots of a House," page 5. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

E.E. Roberts's most dramatic changes to the home were made to its northern face, which was pushed about six feet north. As described by Mr. Gardner in the excerpt above, this expansion created an entry vestibule to the left of the porch, a master bathroom above it, more space for a grand staircase (under a new cross-gable) in the midsection of the addition, a butler's pantry, and a mudroom followed by a small rear-facing porch at the house's northeast corner.

While surviving historical records do not specifically reference this expansion, and in fact the house today flows gracefully, clues to the addition's location and extent can be found on nearly every level if one knows where to look. First, the basement contains remnants of the original northern wall of the foundation, which has been partially cut through to allow access to a narrow closet occupying the ground space of the addition. (The closet door interrupting the original foundation can be seen in the photograph at right.) In addition, looking up at the rafters one notices that the finish is different in this new space than under the main section. While the old foundation wall still serves the beams above, most of the house's vertical structural support comes from the original raw logs, which may date all the way back to 1872 (or slightly later if the house was in fact repositioned on the lot before 1884).



Second, a slightly paler and much narrower strip of wood flush with and parallel to the hardwood floors near the entryway and staircase also delineates the addition. Sitting

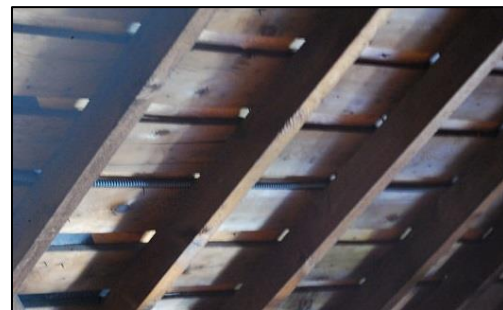
just above the original northern foundation wall in the basement, this narrow strip of wood is well camouflaged by the beautiful grain in the surrounding strips. It is hard to imagine E.E. Roberts had any interest in memorializing his addition to the house in this way. More likely, this strip of flooring was added by a later owner to fill in the gap that resulted when the new foundation walls to the north settled more than the well-established foundation wall running directly below it.

Finally, as Mr. Gardner referenced in his analysis of the E.E. Roberts work, and excerpted above, a small cross-gable stretching north was added to the middle section of the house. A closer inspection of the rafters in February 2017 confirmed that this section of the structure was newer than the rest of the roof. In fact, wider timber was used throughout the main (east-west) gable and the cross-gable protruding southward on the east side of the house (which was part of the original "L" plan) than in the "new" (1908) cross-gable which utilizes smoother timber of a more uniform size and spacing.

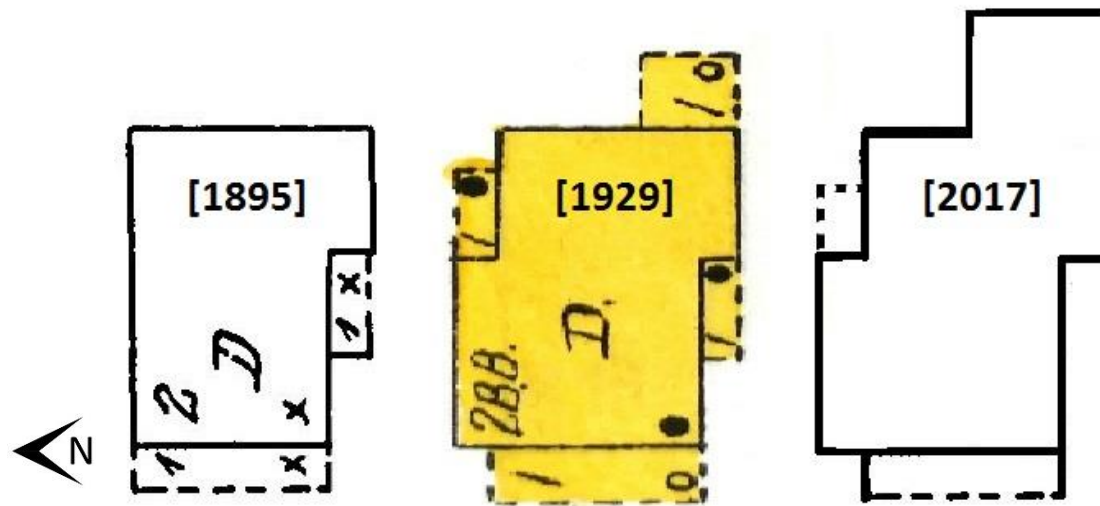
Old Section of Roof



New Section of Roof



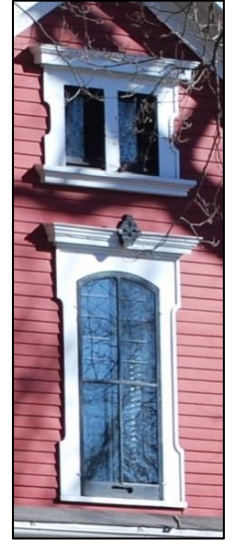
E.E. Roberts's changes extend outside as well. Among the remnants of E.E. Roberts's preliminary drawings that survive are references to the paired brackets on the wide front porch. As discussed above, the 1872 front porch may have been much smaller than today's. In an interview given around 1978, then-owner Jean Gardner suggested that the original porch was not full-width and that at some point the front porch was widened and even "wrapped all the way around [to] the middle of the house."²⁷ In fact, the Sanborn Fire Insurance Map reveals a full-width porch had already been installed by 1895 as had a small porch servicing a west-facing door from the library at the rear of the house. No remnants of that west-facing secondary door on the south side of the house survive today. Below is a comparison of the Sanborn maps along with a simplified sketch of today's plan:



In any event, today's wide front porch synthesizes the Italianate and Prairie styles well, exaggerating the already-wide eaves, celebrating the ornate, paired brackets, and appropriating outdoor space for the private living room. According to an article written when the house was put on the market in 1995, "The front porch is perfect for lazy summer evenings, and there are screens that can be attached to enclose the porch at any time if desired."²⁸ The brick foundation (and possibly other aspects) of the porch was rebuilt in 1990, though it looks practically identical today as in 1978 (compare photos on page 16).

²⁷ No other evidence has been found suggesting the front and side porches connected. Notes from the interview are attached with Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

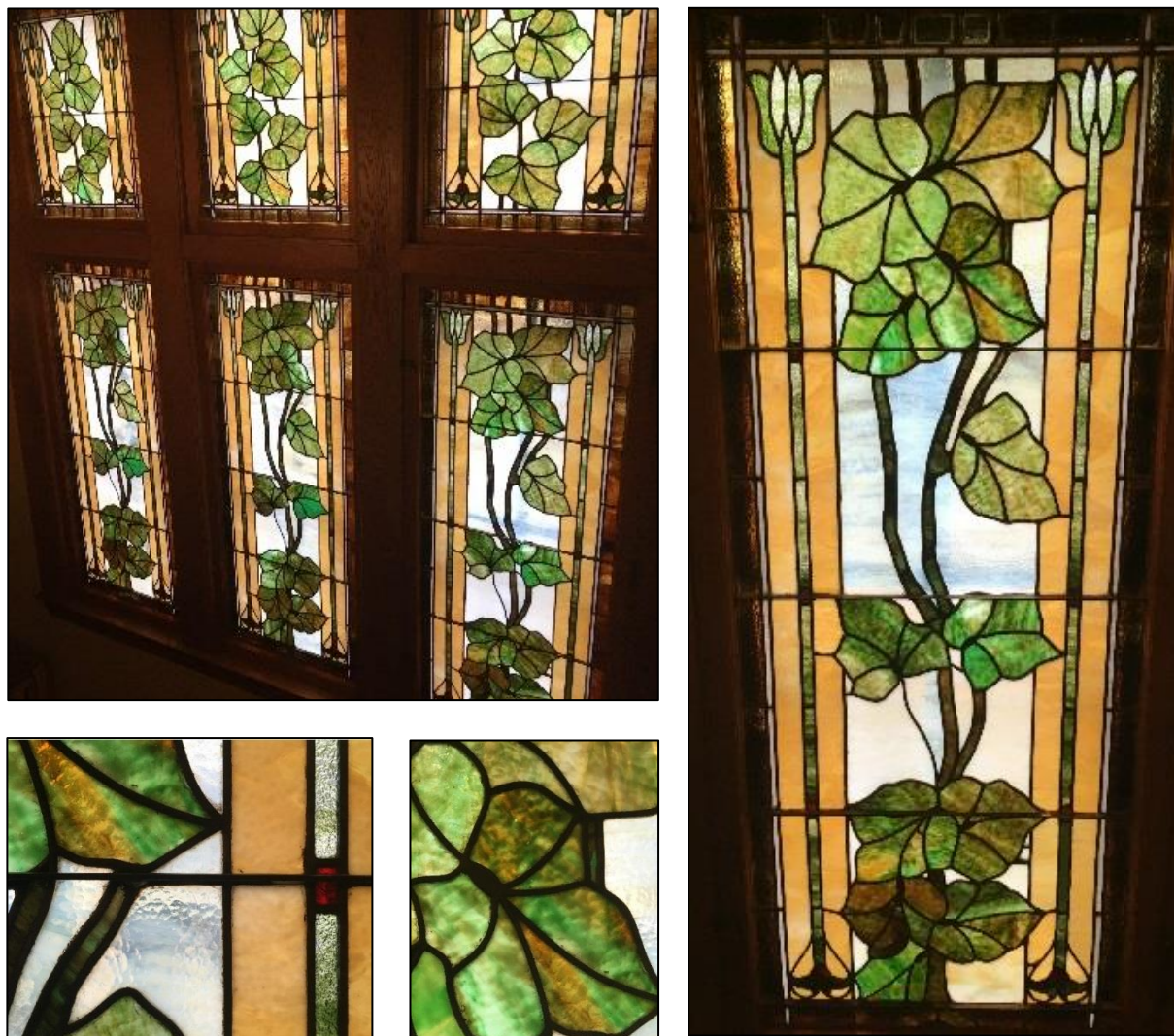
²⁸ "Stunning historic Victorian at 400 Kenilworth is truly unique," *Wednesday Journal*, March 1, 1995.



The front door (see below) also integrates the Italianate and Prairie styles. While the outer entry door's rounded head is typical of Italianate designs, it also references the Romanesque entryways of Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright. A long, narrow rectangular window crosses a circular one, as if to help soften the transition from the traditional exterior to the relatively modern Prairie interior. With its rounded cap, that rectangular window also references the shape of the distinctive second floor windows. Once inside, the vestibule itself is lit by three identical art nouveau windows along a few stairs up to the interior entrance. The secondary entrance, from the vestibule to the foyer, takes that transition a step further with a glass paneled door featuring a grid of clear glass rectangles which at once echoes the patterns on the upper section of the Italianate windows facing the street and introduces the horizontal emphasis of the Prairie style.



Stained Glass Above Main Staircase



The stained glass windows above the stairs on the north wall of the house have been the subject of much conjecture over the years. Mr. Gardner noted: "Hearsay has it that a sister of Dr. Hare designed the stained glass windows in the hall and had them made in Italy."²⁹ The notes from the interview with Jean Gardner suggest Dr. Hare's sister merely purchased the windows in Italy.³⁰ A 1995 newspaper article repeats similar claims that probably originated with the same rumors. This story is believed to be apocryphal. For one thing, research on the Canadian-born David Arthur Hare has yet to show he had any sister at all, let alone one who was living in or traveling to Italy to design or purchase fine art glass.³¹ For another thing, the imagery depicted in the Schmidt House stained glass windows is very typical of the Art Nouveau and Prairie style movements. Finally, they resemble other art glass sourced by E.E. Roberts during the period, particularly the windows appearing above the staircases in the Cessna House and the Lorenzen House.

²⁹ Robert Gardner, p. 6. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

³⁰ Jean Gardner notes. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

³¹ His obituary references a surviving brother, however. "\$535,000 is left to widow by Dr. David Hare," *Chicago Tribune*, August 5, 1959. Further, ancestry.com reports Dr. Hare had two brothers and no sisters.

Cessna House³²



Lorenzen House³³



Schmidt House



Despite the lack of a signature or other records, it has been suggested that the maker of the art glass may be William C. Wiler. In her authoritative report on the Louis H. Brink House of 1909, Research Captain Yvonne Smith said:

*"There is evidence to suggest that the artist who fabricated the art glass for most, if not all, of E. E. Roberts's buildings in the first two decades of the twentieth century was William C. Wiler. Wiler was born in 1871, the year of the Chicago Fire. Very early in his career, he worked for H. M. Hooker Co., a paint and glass company with 300 employees, traveling the country installing art glass in churches and residences. In 1896, at the age of 25, he opened his own studio, Western Stained Glass Works, in Forest Park, finally moving his company to Oak Park in 1907."*³⁴

In addition to using similar glass patterns in many of his projects, E.E. Roberts was known to recycle other elements of his designs, which resulted in similar features appearing in various permutations across his residential work in Oak Park. This is notable because even aside from the grand windows above the staircase, the interior elements that survive in the Schmidt House today echo other works by E.E. Roberts in that period. The ceiling beaming and banding in the living and dining rooms as well as the rectilinear ornament appearing on the banisters of the Schmidt House strongly resemble designs appearing in the Lorenzen and Schwerin houses of 1908 and Mr. Roberts's own home and studio, just to name a few. The leaded glass windows in the dining room, which maximize the natural light from the southern exposure, also appear in a number of residences penned by Mr. Roberts.

³² Cropped image from original photograph taken by James Caulfield of the Frank Lloyd Wright Preservation Trust and published in *Wednesday Journal* article by Lacey Sikora on May 7, 2013.

³³ Steiner, Frances, "E.E. Roberts: Popularizing the Prairie School," *The Prairie School Review* X, no. 2 (1973): 15.

³⁴ Smith, Yvonne, "Louis H. Brink House," (Wright Plus, 2008), p. 4. See Exhibit 3(B)(ii).

Schmidt House Ceiling



Lorenzen House Living Room³⁵



Schwerin House Living Room



Schmidt House Dining Room



E.E. Roberts's Own Dining Room³⁶



Schwerin House Dining Room



Schwerin House



Schmidt House



E.E. Roberts's House



Schwerin House



³⁵ Cropped from photo appearing in Steiner, *Prairie Style Review*, p. 15.

³⁶ Both photographs of E.E. Roberts's own house were taken from from the 2017 Zillow.com listing.

Some of Mr. Roberts other celebrated designs may help shed light on the Schmidt House's prior iterations. For example, just as the Cessna House's art glass is reminiscent of the glass featured in the Schmidt House, the Cessna House's fireplace (at right) seems to fit Mr. Gardner's description of the "towering mass of brick and dark oak" with "monstrous battlements over the small opening to the hearth." Until period photographs of the Schmidt House are uncovered, however, it is impossible to know with any certainty if the fireplace designed for Dr. Hare resembled the work he did for Mr. Cessna.³⁷



Upstairs there have been plenty of updates as well. Although no drawings survive, E.E. Roberts is believed to be responsible for adding a long narrow master bathroom above the vaulted entry vestibule. As discussed earlier, at the roof level above the main staircase, E.E. Roberts added a small gable protruding northward from near the middle of the house. From the second floor hallway just outside the master bedroom, one can now easily access the attic via a small unfurnished staircase. A small (roughly 4' x 4' x 4') storage cubby was built into the wall on the landing before reaching the attic floor. The Roberts-penned master bathroom survived mostly intact until at least 1979 and offered just a small closet space at its eastern end. Elizabeth Gardner, who grew up in the house from 1961 to 1979, remembers the "closet" featuring a sliding door and drawers underneath. Ms. Gardner noted that closet space was an issue in almost all of the bedrooms and that clothing was exchanged on a seasonal basis with items stored in the attic cubby. Central air conditioning must have been added in the last 39 years, as the photograph below from 1978 shows a window A/C unit in the master bedroom. Further, black accents have been added to the brackets and window casing, and the front door was stripped and stained.

1978³⁸



2009³⁹



More recently, the master bathroom was renovated and expanded (by about the width of a large window) into the bedroom. The eastern half of E.E. Roberts's addition to the master suite was severed from the bathroom and expanded into the bedroom space as well, creating a large closet east of the bathroom. Close inspection of the Schmidt House from the sidewalk along Kenilworth reveals that the three large street-facing windows on the second floor are not evenly spaced, as if the northernmost of

³⁷ Photo at right is a cropped version of the one published on Zillow.com when the Cessna House was sold in 2013.

³⁸ Photograph on file in the Schmidt House folder at the Oak Park Public Library.

³⁹ Kaarre, Douglas, AICP. "John Schmidt House 400 N Kenilworth Ave." *Historic Architecture Survey Database*. Ruskinarc, 8 Aug. 2009. Web. 17 Jan. 2017.

the three was shifted a little to the left at some point. While this incongruence may have been convenient for the new location of the wall separating the bathroom and bedroom, it is merely coincidental considering the asymmetry predates the bathroom renovation. (See the 1978 photograph.) It is possible this quirk dates all the way back to 1872, since the architecture of pattern buildings like the Schmidt House often took a backseat to the needs of the homeowner. Perhaps future research will help uncover more clues to solve this mystery.



The next bedroom east of the master (on the south side of the house) has also changed over the years. Visitors today will see a long closet running the north-south width of the room, which is illuminated by a frosted glass window and contains a floor-to-ceiling cabinet along the opposite end. Modern floor tiles there conceal the white ceramic hexagons harkening back to the days when this was a water closet.⁴⁰ When the Gardners moved in in 1961, this space was plumbed but lacked fixtures, so they added a sink below the cabinet and permanently removed a doorway that once connected to it to the master bedroom. It is believed that doorway occupied a space now covered with a mirror in the closet.⁴¹

Updates and remodeling in the front parts of the first floor have been relatively limited. Mr. Gardner found the 1872 marble mantel in the attic after purchasing the Schmidt House in 1961. The current fireplace is neither the original nor the Prairie-style replacement. Mr. Gardner reported:

"The virtues of the Prairie School had not yet been rediscovered in the early '60s, and we had no love for the monstrous battlements over the small opening to the hearth. So we had the wood torn out and removed some of the brick work. First we tried re-installing the old marble mantel top, but the proportions were wrong and it didn't look right with what was left of the bricks. Our furnishings were neither Victorian nor Prairie School, but tended toward traditional American. We ended by

⁴⁰ If, as Robert Gardner suggested earlier, the 1872 house featured a long straight staircase running along the northern side of the house, it would have terminated where the second-floor bathroom sits today. In this scenario, the space between the master bathroom and the bedroom would be the most sensible location for a second-floor bathroom.

⁴¹ See excerpts from correspondence with Elizabeth Gardner in Exhibit 3(C)(iii) for more about upstairs changes.

having a builder design a rather conventional colonial mantel in right proportion for the opening, which suits us but might offend E. E. Roberts.”⁴²

View from Living Room into Dining Room



View from Dining Room into Living Room



Other relatively recent updates were made to the rear section of the first floor as well. Sometime after 1979, the butler’s pantry designed by E.E. Roberts was replaced with a half-staircase leading to a landing at ground level. From there one can access both the driveway and a small staircase into the basement. This basement access became necessary when the walls concealing service staircases (which divided the kitchen and library) were removed in 1999. During those renovations, the kitchen was expanded to cover the entire width of the rear section of the first floor. Originally, there had been staircases dividing that space, one leading from the southwest corner of the kitchen straight east down to the basement, and one immediately above it leading from the south east corner of the kitchen straight west up to the second floor.⁴³ Once absent, those two first floor rooms were unified into a much larger eat-in kitchen.

Panorama of Current Kitchen



In updating the kitchen, the remodelers were sensitive to the home’s history and commissioned windows that appropriately mimic the style of the Schmidt House’s other windows. Removing the rear service staircases also freed up more storage space for the second floor, creating a shallow linen closet behind the doorway where the rear stairs to the second floor used to terminate and allowing for a new closet to be added to the bedroom at the northeastern corner of the house and. Once that bedroom got a closet, it is believed that its western wall was shifted east, by about the width of a door, shrinking the bedroom and enlarging the main second floor bathroom, which today serves three bedrooms. The

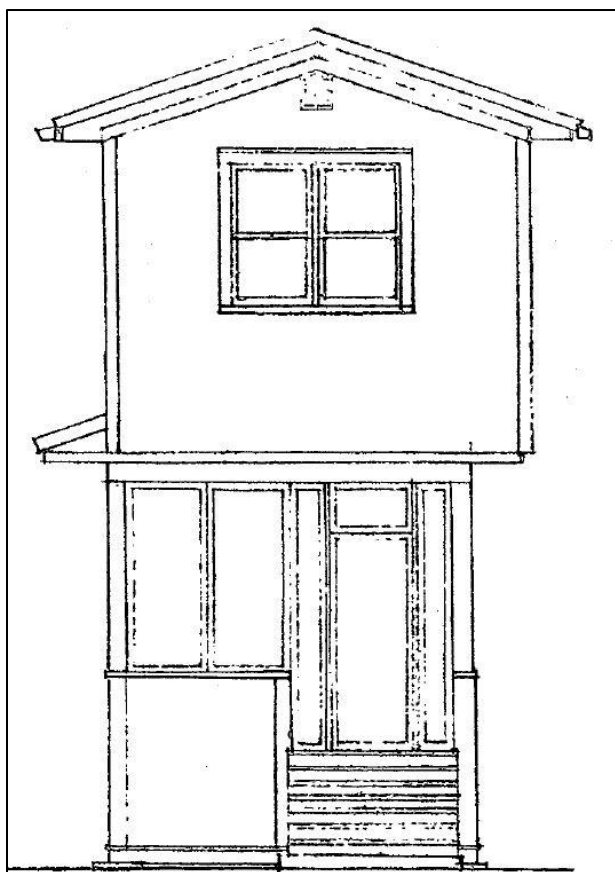
⁴² Robert Gardner, p. 7, in Exhibit 3(C)(iii)

⁴³ Interviews with Elizabeth Gardner excerpted in Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

Gardners renovated that bathroom in the 1960s before it was expanded to its current size, and it has been totally updated at least once since then.

The fourth bedroom, located at the southeast corner of the house, received an addition at an unknown date, probably by the Whistler family in the 1950s. This addition consisted of a small enclosed porch off the back wall of the library (on the first floor) and above that a slightly wider annex to the second-floor bedroom. Over the years, the porch evidently sank. By 1981 the home's ninth owners, the O'Keefes, hired Patrick Maloney Construction Company, with architect Edward Straka, to rebuild the structural support and anchoring and raise the deck of the porch back to the height of the first floor.⁴⁴ Today, the second floor annex is used as a bedroom, and the room from which it is accessed serves as a playroom.

Porch Before 1981



Porch in 2017



Even more substantial updates to the rear addition were undertaken in the last two decades. When the lower level of the porch was expanded in conjunction with the kitchen renovation in 1998-1999, the upper room's dimensions remained unchanged. This modification was no small feat considering that there is no longer a structural support beam located directly under the northeast corner of the upper level annex. Wesley Cichosz, who oversaw the project, recalls many sleepless nights during the wintertime construction project.⁴⁵ The large resulting first-floor family room is also loyal to the Schmidt

⁴⁴ Building Permits. See Exhibit 3(A)(iii).

⁴⁵ Interview conducted by the author with Wesley Cichosz in early February 2017.

House's character and features Prairie style windows which match the wide rectangular framing that can be found in the upper stiles of most of the Italianate windows throughout the first floor as well as the inner vestibule door. The ceiling beaming also mimics that of the living room and dining room.

Dr. David Hare and his family owned the house for more than four decades (1908-1952), but beyond the original remodeling work for which they hired E.E. Roberts, they are not known to have made any other notable changes to the house itself. They did, however, add the home's first garage more than 60 years after the building's original construction date. In 1935, Mrs. Hare hired local architect and former E.E. Roberts head draftsman Roy J. Hotchkiss to design and build a one-car frame garage costing \$200. This garage was replaced with a two-car garage by the Gardners, who hired Gale William Fraser to do the job for \$1,500 in 1965. That garage can be seen in the background of the 1978 photograph on page 16. The Risch family completed a total rebuilding of the garage, which now includes a coach-house with a full bathroom on the second floor, in 2017.



Significance

The significance of the Schmidt House lies in the way it thoroughly encapsulates Oak Park's long history, illustrates the progressiveness of Oak Park's turn-of-the-century citizens, and exemplifies Oak Park's broad contributions to American residential architecture.

First, the original 1872 house typifies the early development of Oak Park because it was built in the Italianate style during the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire for a commuting Chicago manufacturing executive on land purchased from Joseph Kettlestrings. Like much of Oak Park, the original one-acre property was subdivided by its owner in the 1880s to make room for three more residences as the area transitioned from wide country estates to a more populated suburban neighborhood.

Second, thanks to its 1908 expansion and interior renovation by local architect Eben Ezra Roberts, the Schmidt House illustrates how unusually progressive the citizens of Oak Park were, including Dr. David Hare, the home's sixth owner (1908-1952), who commissioned E.E. Roberts. Evidently, Dr. Hare at once appreciated the traditional European-inspired exterior while also desiring a modern interior in the style of many of his more radical Wright-designed neighbors.

Third, the harmonious integration of the Prairie style interior remodeling work within the predominantly Italianate exterior exemplifies E.E. Roberts's unique ability to make progressive architecture palatable to a wider audience. While less responsible for the direction of the Prairie style than his contemporaries such as Frank Lloyd Wright, architect E.E. Roberts had a greater impact on the spread of its ideas. Through projects like the work he did on the Schmidt House in 1908, E.E. Roberts paved the way for traditional architects to cherry pick the most broadly appealing aspects of the style and make them work for more conservative audiences. Mr. Roberts therefore allowed Prairie style ideas to proliferate across the country without requiring the more famous and less flexible architects like Frank Lloyd Wright to personally accompany its spread.

In sum, a close examination of the Schmidt House, the changes made to it during its 145-year history, and the thirteen families who have called it home help illustrate Oak Park's own history and its contributions to residential architecture across the country.

The Architect – Eben Ezra Roberts (1866-1943)

Eben Ezra Roberts was born in Boston, Massachusetts in 1866, the second son of Hattie Whittman Sanborn and George Smith Roberts. George was a wood carver who taught his son his mechanical drawing skills. George's skills survive today in a patent he filed for in 1883 while living in New Hampshire.⁴⁶

The Roberts family moved to New Hampshire while Eben was a boy, enrolling him at what is now known as the Tilton School in Tilton, New Hampshire. It was likely there that he received his formal education, which at least partially included studying architecture, though it remains a matter of debate how much time was spent studying the subject. In fact, the Tilton School was called the New Hampshire Conference Seminary and Female College during his years of attendance. An 1885 profile of the school describes the courses of study offered at that time.⁴⁷ A student selected courses of study ranging from the classics to college preparatory (enabling graduates "to enter any New-England college or university"), professional school preparatory ("designed to prepare students to enter medical, legal, or theological schools"), or scientific. If it was these studies that enabled him to become an architect, he was likely enrolled in the "industrial scientific course," which was "designed for a thorough cultivation of the eye and the hand and to supply the demand of the times for trained workingmen." This multidisciplinary approach to education probably provided him with the business



⁴⁶ Roberts, George Smith, inventor. Turning-Lathe. U.S. Patent 306,525 filed September 17, 1883, and issued October 14, 1884. Reproduced in Exhibits.

⁴⁷ McClintock, John M., ed. *The Granite Monthly: A New Hampshire Magazine Devoted to History, Biography, Literature, and State Progress* (Concord, N.H.: McClintock Pub., 1885), 323-326.

and management skills to compliment the drawing skills inherited from his father. It also helps explain how a man like Roberts, who was not the most visionary residential architect working in Oak Park in that era, was the most prolific.

Following his older brother Thomas Elmer Roberts, who moved to Chicago to study medicine in 1888, Eben relocated to Chicago. Starting in about 1889, Eben went to work for Solon S. Beman in the Pullman community, first as a timekeeper and later as a construction supervisor.⁴⁸ Later in life, Eben credited this early professional experience in which he was able to participate in so many aspects of the construction process as giving him the confidence to hang out his own shingle.⁴⁹

In October 1892, E.E. Roberts made a visit to New Hampshire and married Rossie M. Willey (pictured at right).⁵⁰ The next year, as the World's Columbian Exposition opened on Chicago's south side, Roberts left the employ of Beman and struck out on his own.⁵¹



Roberts joined a select group of progressive young architects working in Chicago at the time, many of whom leased office space at what was then 17 Van Buren.⁵² Other architects working independently in offices in that building included Frank Lloyd Wright, Robert Spencer, Myron Hunt, and Dwight Perkins.⁵³ With the ideas pioneered in their 11th floor offices in Steinway Hall, these architects would continue meeting monthly for years to compare notes and develop ideas. The group called themselves "The Eighteen" though their numbers shrank and grew.⁵⁴ While their refusal to show Wright the deference and reverence he thought he deserved eventually spurred his departure, his presence in the group helped Oak Park remain a focus for the group's members over the years. Years later, this loosely defined group of architects who met for lunch each month eventually came to be known as the Prairie School. As E.E. Roberts's career in Oak Park blossomed, he worked with various other Prairie School architects including

⁴⁸ Kaarre, Douglas, AICP, "Historic Landmark Nomination Report: Charlton H. Catlin Flats 209-211 South Elmwood Avenue," Designated April 1, 2013, which cites "Unpublished biographical essay on E.E. Roberts written by his grandson, Howard Roberts Drew, dated December 1993."

⁴⁹ Steiner, *Prairie Style Review*, page 6, citing an interview with Eben's son Elmer Roberts in March 1970.

⁵⁰ E.E. Roberts's wife, Rossie Roberts (nee Willey). Ancestry.com member photos, caption: "Grandma Collin's cousin Rossie Roberts Oak Park, Ill near Chicago (no date)."

⁵¹ E. E. Roberts Advertisement, *The Oak Park Reporter*, June 11, 1897.

⁵² The modern address is 64 East Van Buren Street, but the building was razed in 1970.

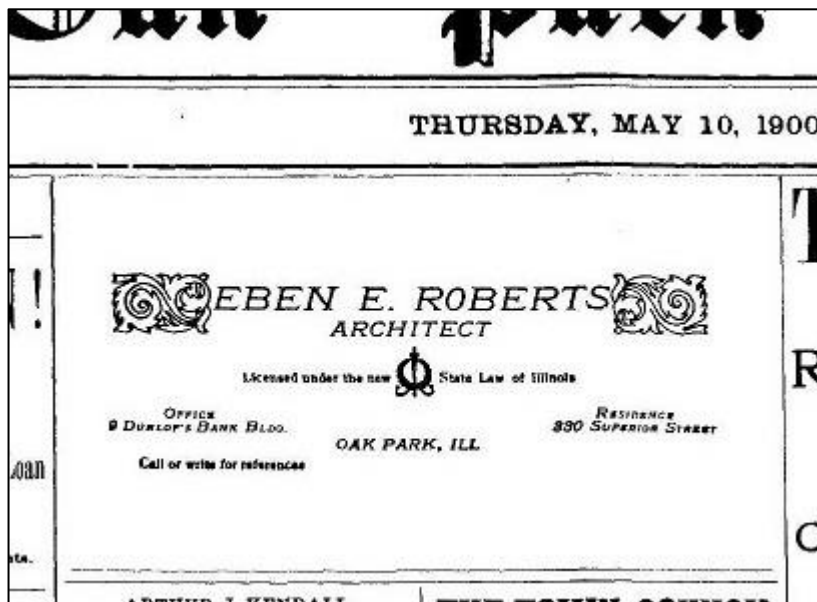
⁵³ Brooks, H. Allen, "Steinway Hall, Architects and Dreams," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 22, no. 3 (October 1963): 171-175.

⁵⁴ It has been suggested that E.E. Roberts was a member of "The Eighteen" and had office space in that building, but corroborating evidence has yet to be located. In any event, E.E. Roberts was a member of other organizations related to "The Eighteen."

John Van Bergen (who may have been working in his office in 1908-1909 during the Schmidt House renovations⁵⁵) and Roy J. Hotchkiss (Roberts's head draftsman), among others.

In many ways, Eben Ezra Roberts's life mirrored Frank Lloyd Wright's. Roberts and Wright were born in 1866 and 1867, respectively, in northern towns outside Illinois and raised during the Reconstruction era, as the United States was struggling to redefine its identity. The industrial revolution thoroughly transformed the physical environment and increasingly rewarded individuals who were brave enough to do things differently. They both arrived in Chicago within 20 years of the Great Chicago Fire and cut their teeth working for master architects cashing in on the large-scale building projects resulting from the city's rapid industrialization. They also struck out on their own at the same time, in about 1893. Despite the larger sums to be earned overseeing industrial and institutional projects, which the two men still dabbled in, both architects settled in Oak Park and made residential work their focus. Wright got there first, building a home for his wife in 1889, while Roberts arrived in 1895, building a home for his family just a block away. Their children were playmates.

While there are strong similarities on the surface, in fact the men were very different in passion and character. If Wright was an artist engaging in business, Roberts was a businessman engaging in art. In taking on projects, Wright sometimes struggled to adapt his own design agenda (driven by his personal artistic philosophy) to the needs of his clients. Meeting their budgetary constraints was not a high priority for Wright. Roberts, on the other hand, was ready and willing to give clients exactly what they asked for and had a reputation for never exceeding his original cost estimates.



This is not to say that Roberts didn't take stylistic liberties, but those liberties say more about the stylistic influences on him and his clients than about a personal drive to redefine American architecture. Even with the Dunlop homes built across the street from the Schmidt House in 1896 and 1897 and featuring the then-prevailing Queen Anne style, Roberts added his own flair: the steep roofline and vertical corner bracing, which were departures from the usual style. But these were just twists on the contemporary

styles. Frequently, Roberts's designs began with a standard American Foursquare plan and added various decorative details such as dormers.⁵⁶ The changes helped the homes feel stately and unique but not ostentatious in a neighborhood that was unusually willing to think outside the box.

⁵⁵ Douglas Kaarre, AICP, "Historic Landmark Nomination Report: Rankin-Hemingway House at 639 North Oak Park Avenue," Designated by Village Ordinance on Nov. 28, 2011, p. 8

⁵⁶ Roman, Ronald and Douglas Cotsamire, "Historic Landmark Nomination Report: Schwerin House at 639 Fair Oaks Avenue," Designated by Village Ordinance on March 15, 2010, p. 7.

It should be noted that even when his clients wanted a Prairie style home, Roberts never directly copied the work of his more progressive contemporaries. In fact, his historical importance as an architect is due more to his architectural compromises than his stylistic innovations. By using Prairie style elements in more conservative designs, he blazed a trail for incorporating the otherwise radical Prairie style elements in mainstream American architecture, a compromise many of his visionary contemporaries were simply uninterested in making. Roberts's works showed that some Prairie style innovations could be palatable to architects and clients unwilling to totally subscribe to such radically modern forms. As Douglas Kaarre, AICP, described in 2011:

"Roberts' worth lies in the fact that he bridged the radicalism of the Prairie School with the more conservative popular taste.⁵⁷ In their Survey of Historical Architecture of the Village of Oak Park, Hasbrouck and Sprague claim that it is 'possible that Roberts was the person responsible for evolving out of the Queen Anne and from suggestions by Wright and Maher, the kind of non-historical rectilinear style that was so common in Oak Park, from about 1900 to 1915.'⁵⁸ Roberts' early adaptations of the style represent the shape Prairie School architecture would take as it disseminated from Oak Park."⁵⁹

While Roberts is not primarily responsible for its most pervasive Italianate exterior style, still the Schmidt House remains an excellent example of his works because of the way it mixes the Prairie style with more traditional formats. Elements of the Schmidt House such as the Prairie style interpretation of paired Italianate brackets on the porches, the strongly horizontal patterns on the windows, the use of uncarved natural wood beaming and banding, and the enlarging of doorways to help smooth transitions between interior spaces illustrate E.E. Robert's ability to make progressive architecture palatable to a wider audience. Through projects like the work he did on the Schmidt House in 1908, E.E. Roberts blazed a new trail for traditional architects, broadening American vernacular architecture to include a growing number of Prairie style elements.

<h1 style="text-align: center;">The Oak Park Reporter-Argus.</h1>		
<p style="text-align: center;">VOL. XIX. NO. 49. OAK PARK, ILLINOIS. SATURDAY, DEC. 9, 1905. \$1.50 PER YEAR</p>		
 <p>Borden's Unsweetened Condensed Milk</p> <p>Borden's Fluid Milk</p> <p>Borden's Rich Cream</p> <p>Borden's Peerless Buttermilk</p> <p>Supplied fresh daily from our delivery wagons</p> <p><small>Every detail connected with the production, preparation and distribution of our products is under our direct control</small></p>	<p>EDITORIAL.</p> <p>DR. BARTON ON HOME TRADING.</p> <p>In his sermon last Sunday morning on "Stealing," Rev. William E. Barton, D. D., pastor of the First Congregational Church, Oak Park, touched upon a great many problems of modern trade and upon honesty in business relations. In speaking of the Golden Rule, as the only basis on which sound trade could be built up, he made a passing allusion to the all-important subject of home patronage. As this is a matter on which The Reporter-Argus has pronounced convictions, which are well known to the public, we asked Dr. Barton for text portion of his sermon. He replied:</p> <p>"What I said on the matter was so incidental that to quote it alone would not fairly represent my views of the matter. It came in as illustration of the entire of mutual confidence which</p>	<p>EBEN E. ROBERTS</p> <p>ARCHITECT</p>  <p>RESIDENCE: 230 Superior St. OFFICE: 9 Oak Park State Oak Park. Phone 290 Bank Building - Phone 1123</p>

⁵⁷ Kaarre, referencing Keleman, Katherine, "Oak Park Historic Landmark Nomination Report: 625 S. Oak Park Avenue" prepared for property owner Kevin Cuthbert. Submitted July 26, 2006, p. 6.

⁵⁸ Kaarre, quoting: Wilbert R. Hasbrouck and Paul E. Sprague, *Survey of Historical Architecture of the Village of Oak Park, Illinois* (Oak Park: Landmarks Commission of Oak Park, 1974), p. 21.

⁵⁹ From page 12 of Historical Landmark Nomination Report prepared by Douglas Kaarre, AICP, for the Rankin-Hemingway House at 639 North Oak Park Avenue, Designated by Village Ordinance on Nov. 28, 2011.

Italianate Architecture and the Schmidt House

The Schmidt House is an excellent example of the front-gabled roof subtype of the Italianate style of architecture. This type adds Italianate detailing to the simple front-gabled rectangular box popularized by the Greek Revival style.⁶⁰ Common characteristics of the Italianate style include tall, narrow windows, often arched or curved above, frequently with elaborated crowns, usually of inverted U shape. The principal areas of elaboration in Italianate houses are windows, cornices, porches and doorways.⁶¹ Porches are relatively restrained in elaboration and are of single-story height. Full-width porches are also frequent, although many of those seen today are later expansions or additions. Doors occur in the same shapes as windows (rectangular, arched); elaborate framing above doors are similar to those over windows.⁶²

The Italianate style dominated American houses constructed between 1850 and 1880 and were more frequently found in the expanding towns and cities of the Midwest, as well as in many older but still growing cities of the northeastern seaboard.⁶³

The first Italianate houses in the United States were built in the late 1830s; the style was popularized by the influential pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing, and others, published in the 1840s and 1850s. By the 1860s the style had completely overshadowed its earlier companion, the Gothic Revival. Most surviving examples date from the period 1855-80; earlier examples are rare. The decline of the Italianate style began with the financial panic of 1873 and the subsequent depression.⁶⁴ These post-Civil War economic troubles significantly affected home construction. By the time house building resumed in force at the end of the decade, a new range of architectural styles, including Romanesque, Queen Anne, Shingle and Stick-style, and Colonial Revival, had captured the American imagination.⁶⁵

The Schmidt House contains signature elements of the front-gabled sub-type of the Italianate style of architecture such as the tall, narrow windows with framed window surrounds and decorative crown molding. The front porch was another signature element of the Italianate style, usually a small entrance porch. Larger porches became more popular by the 1860s. The typical Italianate porch included square porch supports that were beveled or chamfered, often in pairs. Bracketed tops rather than column capitals were also common.⁶⁶ The front porch on the Schmidt House is simple, yet imposing, with large bracketed capitals above triple columns. The low-pitched hip roof with a flat center and deep eaves are also characteristic of the style.

There are approximately 65 documented homes in Oak Park designed in the Italianate style. They range in their expression of the various common elements found in the style. Of those, almost one-third the homes are of the front-gabled sub-type, though typically this sub-type represents only about 10% of all Italianate homes.⁶⁷

⁶⁰ Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013, p. 284.

⁶¹ McAlester, p. 284.

⁶² McAlester, p. 284.

⁶³ McAlester, p. 286.

⁶⁴ McAlester, p. 302.

⁶⁵ James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, *House Styles in America*, New York: The Penguin Group, 1996, p. 95.

⁶⁶ Massey and Maxwell, p. 95.

⁶⁷ This information was collected through research by the Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission and staff.

Examples of other Italianate style homes in Oak Park showing the front gabled subtype:



125 S. Maple Avenue



925 Chicago Avenue



144 N. Cuyler Avenue



847 Chicago Avenue



308 Home Avenue

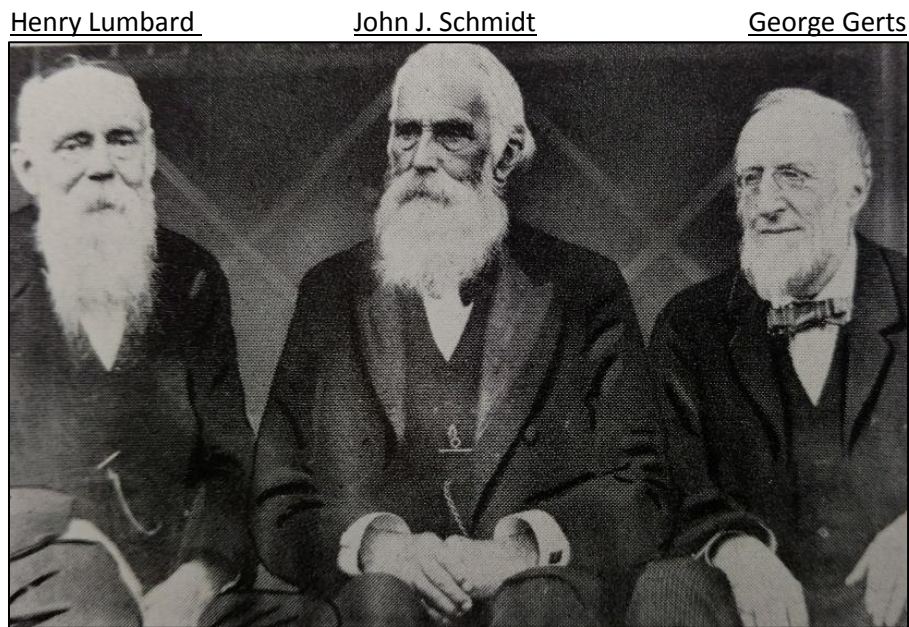


427 N. Oak Park Avenue

Family Information – Original Owner

John J. Schmidt (property: 1870-1886)

John Jacob Schmidt was born on March 5, 1826 in Horath, Bernkastel-Wittlicher Landkreis, Rheinland-Pfalz, Germany, and arrived in Chicago around 1846.⁶⁸ Within a decade he had established himself as a grocer. By the late 1860s, Mr. Schmidt had risen to the rank of treasurer at the brush manufacturing firm of Gerts, Lumbard & Co., where he would stay for more than half a century until his death in 1910.⁶⁹ His business partners were prominent early figures in Oak Park and probably served as the impetus for Mr. Schmidt's residential relocation to what was then a sparsely-populated but rapidly growing commuter suburb.



George E. Gerts and Henry Lumbard were approximately four years younger than Mr. Schmidt, and both were family men active in the early development of Oak Park. They were original members of the Unity Church, where Mr. Gerts was one of three founding trustees and served on the building committee. Henry Lumbard's home, located at what is now 922 North Blvd., is identified in the Steiner Index as built in 1870 and the "oldest in Oak Park." It is unclear if Mr. Lumbard always intended to inhabit it full time or only resorted to it after the Fire, but he lived there permanently by late October 1871.

George E. Gerts built an Italianate home, and lived at 333 Lake Street until his death in 1914. Near George Gerts lived George's friend Edwin Gale, and their children grew up together. The Gale family's later appreciation for Frank Lloyd Wright apparently extended to the Gerts family, too. In fact, George's son Walter and Edwin's son Thomas hired Wright to build a shared vacation cabin on White Lake in Michigan in 1902. George Gerts may have hired Wright around this time to construct other cabins there as well.

⁶⁸ "Obituary," *Paint, Oil and Drug Review* XLIX, No. 17 (April 27, 1910): 13, 42.

⁶⁹ *The Western Druggist* 27, (Chicago: G. P. Engelhard & Co., 1905), 188. The image of the brushes comes from p. 16.

John J. Schmidt purchased his lot, originally 0.996 acres, from Joseph Kettlestrings on August 12, 1870 for \$2,000. (Today's home sits on what was the northwest quadrant of the original property.) The next 18 months were probably traumatic ones for Mr. Schmidt. The Gerts, Lumbard & Co. factory was wiped out by the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, and presumably Mr. Schmidt's Chicago residence was as well.⁷⁰ In May 1872, Schmidt got a loan in the amount of \$2,000 and was for the first time identified as a "widower." It is believed this is when he began construction of his home. Plans for the original home do not survive, but it was likely built from a pattern book by a contractor without an architect. While the Italianate style dominated Oak Park in that era, the somewhat unusual front gable set it apart from the more traditional flat or hipped roofs in the area. Perhaps construction costs exceeded Schmidt's expectations, since it appears he got a second loan for \$2,000 more in August 1872.



By 1873, the Chicago Directory listed John Schmidt as a resident of Oak Park.⁷¹ On October 13, 1874, John married Anna E. Franzen in Chicago, but the couple continued living in Oak Park with [presumably John's] two children, Edward Schmidt (b. 1860) and Dominica "Minnie" Schmidt (b. 1868) until 1886, when they sold the home to Calvin P. & Sarah E. Pease. Upon that sale, the Schmidts moved back to the city of Chicago, taking residence at 658 North LaSalle Street. Mr. Schmidt continued to serve as secretary of Gerts, Lumbard & Co. until his death from pneumonia on April 24, 1910.

Subsequent Owners – The First 100 Years

Calvin P. & Sarah E. Pease (1886-1901)

By 1885, John Schmidt had divided his one-acre lot into four parts, keeping the northwest quadrant for himself and selling the remaining parts. On May 19, 1886, Mr. Schmidt sold his property to Calvin P. & Sarah E. Pease for \$3,200. The Peases owned the property until 1901, though it is unknown what if any changes they made to the house during that time.

The Peases were born in Connecticut and married in 1859.⁷² Mr. Pease graduated from high school in Ellington, Connecticut, taught there for four years, and then probably moved to Darien, Georgia, to work as a store clerk before moving to Albany, Illinois, and then Fulton, Illinois, where their three children were born. At some point likely in the late 1860s, the Peases moved to Chicago where Calvin and several partners opened a hardware store on Lake Street. While continuing to do business daily in



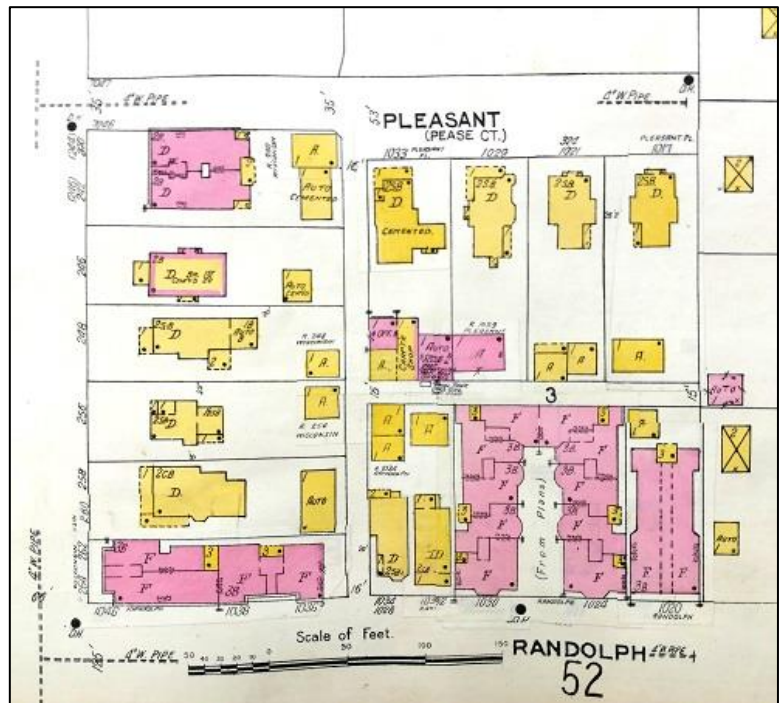
⁷⁰ Gerts, Lumbard & Co., "Our 100th Birthday Anniversary 1850-1950," (pamphlet, 1950). On file at the Chicago History Museum. At the time of its publication, John J. Schmidt's grandson was the head of the company.

⁷¹ Edwards, Richard, ed., *Edwards' Sixteenth Annual Directory of the Inhabitants, Institutions, Incorporated Companies and Manufacturing Establishments of the City of Chicago, Embracing a Complete Business Directory for 1873*. (Chicago: 1873).

⁷² Pease, David, compiler, and Austin S. Pease ass. ed., *A Genealogical and Historical Record of the Descendants of John Pease, Sen., Last of Enfield, Conn.*, (Springfield, Mass: Samuel Bowles & Co., 1869), p. 183.

Chicago, the Peases moved to Oak Park in 1868.⁷³ The 1870 census found them already living in “Cicero,” which encompassed Oak Park, and identified Calvin as a “dry goods merchant” of some wealth, valuing his real estate holdings at \$15,000. An uncited story attached to Calvin’s grave site says Calvin’s business, including \$50,000 in stock, was lost in the Great Chicago Fire in 1871, and only \$15,000 could be recovered with insurance.⁷⁴

Mr. Pease, having already worked as a teacher, a farmer, and a merchant, then apparently turned to real estate, purchasing and developing a large property along the east side of what is now Marion Street between Pleasant Street and Randolph Street. Today, property records from that area still identify some lots as being part of “Pease’s addition to Oak Park.” The road laid out to give access to the homes Mr. Pease built there was called Pease Court, a name that persisted long after the Peases left the area. Local Oak Park papers show an effort to extend Pease Court east to Home Avenue in the late 1890s, an effort that was met with prevailing resistance. Though the residences have long been demolished and some of the property absorbed by the Pleasant Home gardens, the Pease Court roadway partially survives today as Pleasant Place.⁷⁵



On May 19, 1886, Calvin and Sarah Pease purchased the Schmidt House, where they lived for five years, presumably with two of their three children (Claudius Theodore, Arthur Chapin, and Marion F.). Their middle son, who would have been 19 when they bought the property, attended Rockville High School in Connecticut and then studied engineering at Yale University with the class of 1891, and therefore presumably would have spent little if any time with his family in Oak Park. He went on to work for the Chicago & Alton Railroad briefly in 1892 before taking a post-graduate engineering course at Yale in 1893.⁷⁶ He then joined the gas engineering industry and was quite successful before his early death in 1907 brought on by “overworking.” The tunnel from Long Island to 63rd Street in Manhattan was achieved “largely under his direction.”⁷⁷

⁷³ An 1874 directory put the Peases in Fulton, Whiteside Co., IL, but those directories were notoriously outdated.

⁷⁴ Simpson, David. “Deacon Calvin Pitkin Pease, Memorial # 76600532,” *Find A Grave*. N.p., (September 16, 2011). <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=76600532>

⁷⁵ *Economist* XXXII, Chicago: Economist Pub. Co.: (October 28, 1904), p. 583 [Record of the sale of one of the Pease Court properties from C P Pease to John Farson for \$9,800 on October 4, 1904] p. 837 [“The following sales of Oak Park property have recently been made by AT Hemingway CP Pease to John Farson two houses 112x 145 321 and 325 Pease court” from the Dec. 24, 1904 issue]

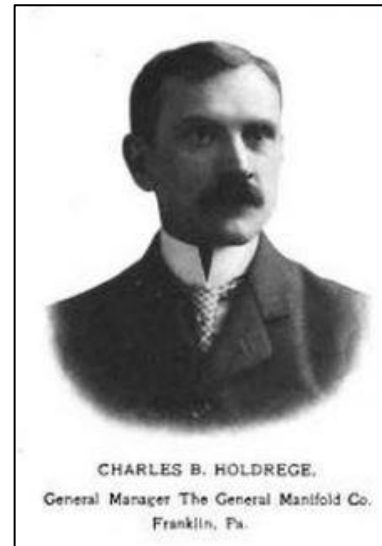
⁷⁶ “Arthur Chapin Pease,” *Obituary Record of Graduates of Yale University* (New Haven: Tuttle, Morehouse & Taylor Co., 1910), 821-822.

⁷⁷ “Arthur Chapin Pease,” *Proceedings of the American Gas Institute* (Washington, D.C.: Amer. Gas Inst., 1908), 951.

The Peases moved back to Connecticut in 1891, where Mr. Pease and his other son, Claudius Theodore, took up farming at Calvin's boyhood home. The 1900 census confirms this, finding the elderly Peases living in Connecticut, with 76-year old Calvin being a farmer and their adult son Claudius living with his parents as a "farm laborer." Nevertheless, they retained ownership of the Schmidt House for a decade after returning to Connecticut.

Charles B. & Florence A. Holdrege (1901-1902)

The Peases sold the Schmidt House to Charles B. & Florence A. Holdrege (sometimes spelled "Holdredge") on February 12, 1901 for \$4,600. Included in their purchase agreement filed March 4, 1901 was



commitment to pay all taxes and assessments dating back to 1899.⁷⁸ See Exhibit 3(C)(i) for copies of the Holdreges' mortgage payments.

Mr. Holdrege worked for large scale manufacturing businesses.⁷⁹ Specifically, at the time of the purchase, Mr. Holdrege was manager of the railway supply department for the Chicago firm of Hibbard Spencer Bartlett & Co., a company he had worked for on and off since 1875.⁸⁰ However, in December 1901 Mr. Holdrege accepted a new position as general manager of the General Manifold Co. of Franklin, Pennsylvania. By mid-January 1902, less than a year after moving in, the Holdreges had already sold the Schmidt House to the home's fourth owners, Charles E. & Ruby P. Brown.

⁷⁸ *Official Proceedings of the New York Railroad Club* 13, (1902): 461.

⁷⁹ Hall, Charles G., ed., *The Cincinnati Southern Railway: A History* (Cincinnati: McDonald Press, 1902), 196..

⁸⁰ "Supply Trade Notes," *The Railway Age* 32, no. 26, December 27, 1901, (Chicago: Railway Age, 1901), 770-771.

Charles E. Brown & Wife (1902-1904)

Charles Edward Brown was born in Huntley, Illinois on July 23, 1862 and married New Yorker Ruby Pettingill Brown in approximately 1886.⁸¹ Information on the birthplaces of their children suggest they may have lived in Madison, Wisconsin, in 1887-1891 (where daughter Ruby and son Hugh E. Brown were born) and Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1895 (where daughter Kathryn Brown Leinger was born). By the 1903 birth of their fourth child, Richard D. Brown, the family was living in Oak Park.⁸²

According to an affidavit (see Exhibit 3(A)(ii)) Charles Edward Brown resided in the Schmidt House from January 30, 1902 to February 1 or April 30, 1903, at which point he moved to Ohio. Records suggest that Mr. Brown may have been the subject of many lawsuits and default judgments around this time, allegations which he denied in the affidavit.

In any event, by 1905 he was employed “as the Managing Agent for the School Book Publishing Concern [known as Butler Sheldon & Co.]” By 1906 he was still living in Cleveland and working as Agent for New York-based American Book Company. The 1920 census also found Mr. Brown residing in Valley View Village, Ohio, farming his own land. Charles died a year later in 1921 and his wife Ruby passed away January 31, 1957.

NOTE—This form must be completely filled out. The top line of one dollar is reserved for official stamp only. Do not encumber the application.

A citizen's application must state whether she is married or not, and a married woman must state whether her husband is a native or naturalized citizen.

The rate should be ascertained before sending this application to the Department of State, Passport Bureau, Washington, D. C.

[Barcode or mark]

No.

(FORM FOR NATIVE CITIZEN.)

Issued

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

STATE OF Ohio)
COUNTY OF Cuyahoga) ss:
I, Charles E Brown, a NATIVE AND LOYAL CITIZEN
OF THE UNITED STATES, hereby apply to the Department of State, at Washington, for a passport for myself, accompanied by my wife, and minor children.
I was born at Haverly, Ill. on the 23rd day of July, 1862, and am now residing at Italy, 1862, and

I solemnly swear that I was born at Haverly, Ill. in the State of Illinois, on or about the 23 day of July, 1862; that I am a citizen of the United States; that I am domiciled in the United States, my permanent residence being at Charleston, in the State of Ohio; where I follow the occupation of Agent for American Bank Co. that I am about to go abroad temporarily; and that I intend to return to the United States within three (3) months, with the purpose of residing and performing the duties of citizenship therein.

OATH OF ALLEGIANCE.

Further, I do solemnly swear that I will support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic; that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the same; and that I take this obligation freely, without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion; So HELP ME GOD.

Charles E. Brown
(Signature of applicant.)

Sworn to before me this 1st day
of October, 1906.
Albert E Green
(Notary Public.)

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICANT:

Name: Brown
Age: 44 years.
Stature: 5 ft 7 in, height, 5 1/2 inches, Eng.
Forehead: high
Eyes: gray
Nose: straight
Mouth: firm
Chin: prominent
Hair: brown, slightly gray
Complexion: medium
Face: round

IDENTIFICATION.

Oct 1, 1906
I hereby certify that I have known the above-named Charles E. Brown personally for many years, and know him to be a native-born citizen of the United States, and that the facts stated in his affidavit are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

E. Blaudet Collette,
Ex-Atty. Gen., Ohio.

(ADDRESS OF WITNESS.)

Applicant desires passport sent to following address:

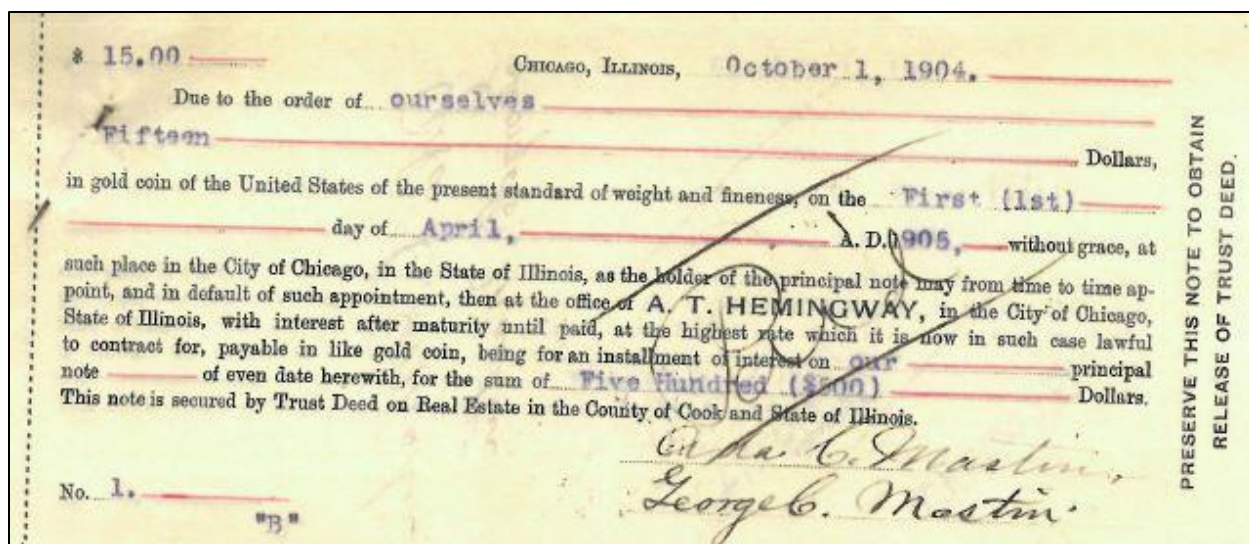
Chas. E. Brown
of American Bank Co.
1000 Washington St.
New York City
N.Y.

Ada C. & George C. Mastin (1904-1908)

Ada C. & George C. Mastin became the fifth owners when they purchased the Schmidt House from "Charles E. Brown and Ruby P., his wife, of Cleveland, Ohio" for \$6,250 in late 1904. The Mastins apparently took a loan from Anson T. Hemingway for at least \$1,500 of the purchase price. The current owners of the Schmidt House still have the original trustee deed and release deed as well as carbon copies of the receipts for each \$15 installment the Mastins made (see Exhibit 3(C)(i) and below).

⁸¹ U. S., "Passport Application for Charles Edward Brown," Application No. 21374, October 1, 1906.

⁸² Ward, Mary K., "Charles E Brown," <https://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=139534985>.



George Crawford Mastin was born in Roscoe, Ohio, on April 19, 1853, educated in the public schools of Freeport, Illinois, and eventually played baseball for Chicago University⁸³ in 1874 and studied with its class of 1877.⁸⁴ Early in life, Mr. Mastin was associated with J. Mastin & Son, Lumber & Coal Merchants in Shannon, Illinois and also did some teaching in the Carroll County Illinois public schools starting in 1875.⁸⁵ From 1881 to 1886 Mr. Mastin served as Carroll County's superintendent of schools and read law in Mt. Carroll, Illinois, where, upon admission to the bar in 1884, he married Ada C. Crummer (pictured on the right of the page, later in life) on September 30, 1885. After spending seven years practicing law and living in Kansas and Washington, DC, the Mastins returned to Illinois in 1892 or 1893 and settled in Chicago.⁸⁶



By the time they moved into the Schmidt House in 1904, Mr. Mastin was a senior member of the law firm Mastin, Moss & Sherlock (called Mastin & Sherlock after 1905) with offices in the Fisher Building at the southern edge of Chicago's Loop. Among the many large coal corporations he represented in various legal matters were the Mammoth Vein Coal Co. and the Chicago Wilmington & Vermillion Coal Co. George had one daughter, Catherine (whose mother, George's first wife, passed away in 1880). Catherine later married Frank L. Miller of London Mills, Illinois.⁸⁷ At the time of his passing on Oct. 3, 1916, George Mastin was a resident of 312 North Grove. The Mastins sold the Schmidt House in 1908.

⁸³ "Baseball in the Time of the Old University," *Chicago Alumni Magazine* 1 (Univ. of Chicago: May 1907), 96. Interestingly, Chicago University (then also known as the University of Chicago) was a Baptist college in operation on Chicago's south side from the 1850s to the 1880s. After permanently closing, the board voted to change its name to the Old University of Chicago in order to make way for a new, legally separate institution, which would be officially founded as the University of Chicago in 1890. The new school chose to adopt the old one's alumni.

⁸⁴ Fisher, G. E., ed., *Catalogue of the Delta Kappa Epsilon Fraternity: Biographical and Statistical* (New York: Council Pub. Co., 1890), p. 1099.

⁸⁵ Leonard, John W., ed. *The Book of Chicagoans: A Biographical Dictionary of Leading Men of the City of Chicago* (Chicago: A. N. Marquis & Co., 1905), 398-399. It is unclear how Mr. Mastin was studying in Chicago and teaching in Carroll County at the same time.

⁸⁶ *Oak Park Oak Leaves*, (October 7, 1916), p. 16.

⁸⁷ Crossley, Frederic B., *Courts and Lawyers of Illinois* (Chicago: Amer. Hist. Soc., 1916), p. 699.

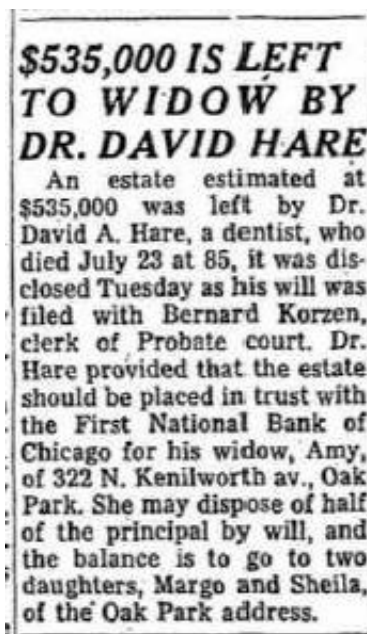
David A. & Alice A. R. Hare (1908-1952)

David Arthur Hare, a prominent Chicago dentist, and his wife Alice purchased the Schmidt House by an instrument dated May 23, 1908 and filed June 20, 1908. David A. Hare was born on December 31, 1873 in Oshawa, Ontario, Canada, the son of William J. Hare and Jane Babbitt.⁸⁸ On September 19, 1896, Mr. Hare married Alice A. Rathjen, a German-American born in Wisconsin in approximately 1877.⁸⁹ They first lived at 4305 Oakenwald Ave. in Chicago.⁹⁰ David and Alice had one son, born in approximately 1901, Arthur "Gordon" Hare.⁹¹ Dr. Hare became a naturalized American citizen on March 17, 1903.

Dr. Hare originally hired Eben Ezra Roberts to design for the Hares a new home on Scoville Avenue but apparently abandoned that idea in favor of renovating the Schmidt House in 1908. According to later owner Robert Gardner, plans for the Scoville Avenue home survived in the attic of the Schmidt House until at least the 1960s but were lost at some point in the last half-century. Please see the "Changes" section above for more information on the Hare family's substantial changes to the home during Dr. Hare's long residence there.

Dr. Hare's prominence as a Chicago dentist continued to grow over the course of his long career, and he maintained his office at 100 State Street and 25 E. Washington in Chicago for 63 years despite living on Oak Park for the majority of that time. He may have also done some work from home, as indicated in the 1910 census.⁹² In 1909, Dr. Hare's article "What is the legitimate field for porcelain inlays, as shown by our past experience with them?" was published in *The Dental Digest*.⁹³ The *Chicago Tribune* later credited him with "important contributions in the technique of using gold inlays in dental work." His work was apparently quite lucrative as well, considering he ultimately left a \$535,000 trust for the benefit of his young wife and daughters.⁹⁴

Following the death of his wife Alice on June 25, 1945, Dr. Hare married Amy Bessie Pritchard Smele in Toronto on January 1, 1949.⁹⁵ At the time of their wedding, Dr. Hare was 75 and his new wife 35. Over the next few years, they had two children: Margot Jane Hare and Sheila Katherine Hare. When the Hares moved a few doors south to



⁸⁸ U.S., *Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007*, database on-line (Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2015).

⁸⁹ Illinois Department of Public Health Records, "Illinois, Cook County Marriages, 1871-1920," Division of Vital Records, Springfield, Illinois.

⁹⁰ *Chicago City Directory* (1893), p. 838.

⁹¹ U. S. Dept. of Commerce, "Fourteenth Census of the U.S.: 1920," Illinois, Cook County, Oak Park, Sup. Dist. 2, Enumeration District 148, Sheet 4B. Reference to Arthur being called Gordon is found in "Personal Items," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (August 1, 1909), p. 7.

⁹² "Obituary," *Chicago Daily Tribune* (July 24, 1959). See also: U. S. Dept. of Commerce, "Thirteenth Census of the U.S.: 1910," Illinois, Cook County, Oak Park, Sup. Dist. 1, Enumeration District 71, Sheet 10A. For business and residential addresses see: *Oak Park Directory* (1910), p. 112.

⁹³ Clapp, George Wood, ed., "What is the legitimate field for porcelain inlays, as shown by our past experience with them, by David Arthur Hare, D.D.S.," *Dental Digest* XV (New York: Dentists' Supply Co., 1909), 49-51.

⁹⁴ "\$535,000 is left to widow by Dr. David Hare," *Chicago Tribune* (August 5, 1959).

⁹⁵ U. S., "Petition for Naturalization for Amy Bessie Pritchard Hare," Form N-40G, No. 337609, 1951.

an E.E. Roberts-designed house at 322 North Kenilworth, they sold the Schmidt House to Charles Whistler (sometimes spelled Whisler) and his wife in December 1952.

Charles Whistler & Wife (1952-1961)

Charles W. Whistler (sometimes spelled “Whisler”) and his wife purchased the Schmidt House from the Hares with an instrument dated December 6, 1952 and filed December 29, 1952. Relatively little is known about the Whistlers and their time living in the Schmidt House. It is believed they may have been responsible for adding the original two-story back porch, but otherwise they made few if any changes to the house. According to Robert Gardner, the next owner, Mr. Whistler had only just begun contemplating the sale of the house when the Gardners approached with an offer. That offer was apparently good enough that the Whistlers accelerated their exit, leaving behind a number of items in the attic (which the Whistlers also may have inherited from prior residents) including old school books, a Prince Albert coat, and an opera hat.⁹⁶

Robert & Jean Gardner (1961-1979)

In 1961, Robert and Jean Gardner purchased the Schmidt House and moved in with their three children. Mr. Gardner was born in 1913 in nearby Austin (at 212 N Parkside Avenue⁹⁷), where his father Harry was vice president of Austin State Bank.⁹⁸ By the time he started at Oak Park and River Forest High School, his family had moved to Oak Park. Robert graduated from Amherst College in 1936 and then returned to Chicago to write radio commercials for Ruthrauff & Ryan Advertising. He then managed fundraising drives for the Mitchell McKeown Organization before serving in the Army from 1943 to 1946. Upon his return home, in 1947 Robert co-founded and chaired Gardner Jones & Company, a growing business that “helped shape the fledgling field of public relations” and “was among the first [public relations firms] to guide its client CEOs and CFOs in meetings with analyst groups to tell their company stories and communicate their business outlook.”⁹⁹

Robert’s wife Jean Gardner was the daughter of celebrated children’s book author Alta Halverson Seymour, who lived in a small house at 12 Elizabeth Court nearby.¹⁰⁰ When the Gardners undertook renovations to the Schmidt House in the 1960s, they added built-in bookshelves in the library (next to the kitchen and behind the dining room) to showcase Ms. Seymour’s books and articles.¹⁰¹ Mrs. Gardner was also an avid rug braider.¹⁰² The south wall of the kitchen featured a photograph of the rustic home in Castle Park, Michigan, owned by the couple and which contained most of Mrs. Gardner’s hand-braided rugs. The Gardners apparently took quite an interest in the Schmidt House, and their work is documented in the “Changes” section above and in Exhibit 3(C)(iii) attached.

⁹⁶ Roots of a House page 1. See Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

⁹⁷ 1920 Census. House is no longer standing, but its neighbors are stately homes.

⁹⁸ Trainor, Ken, “Robert H. Gardner, 91, a public relations executive and dedicated volunteer with a long history of community service, died April 2, 2005,” *Wednesday Journal*, April 12, 2005. <http://www.oakpark.com/News/Articles/4-12-2005/Obituaries-/>.

⁹⁹ Oakpark.com Obituary.

¹⁰⁰ In the 1978 Wright Plus notes, the Elizabeth Court home was described as a former coach house, but Elizabeth Gardner notes that the property is unlikely to have served in that capacity. More likely, the house there was built (possibly by Ms. Seymour and her husband) on property that once served as a coach house for a house nearby. Please see Exhibit 3(C)(iii) for more information from Elizabeth Gardner about her grandparents’ house.

¹⁰¹ Gardner, Jean, notes from interview with (unpublished, circa 1978).

¹⁰² According to the 1978 Wright Plus notes, and confirmed by Elizabeth Gardner, Sally Carty’s book “How to Make Braided Rugs” is dedicated to the Gardners.

Elizabeth Gardner has fond memories of the family buying the tallest balsam tree available at Amling's every Christmas and utilizing the main reception hall's staircase and balcony to decorate it.¹⁰³ The Gardners sold the Schmidt House in 1979 to J. Paul and Carolyn O'Keefe and moved to 935 North Grove. In 1997 they moved to a colonial cottage at 254 Lionel Road. Among many activities in "retirement," Robert continued his long history of volunteer work. In Oak Park alone, he served "on the board of Oak Park Symphony and as a deacon, elder and council member at First United Church of Oak Park."¹⁰⁴ Mr. Gardner was a resident of Riverside when he passed away in 2005.

Later Owners

J. Paul & Carolyn O'Keefe (1979-1995)
Paul & Sherry Carbery (1995-2003)
Jeffrey & Lisa Boyle (2003-2007)
John & Clarice Harris (2007-2014)
Kevin & Dianne Risch (2014-Present)

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 *John J. Schmidt House* was nominated under the following criteria:

Criterion 1: Significance as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic or social development or heritage of the Village of Oak Park, the State, or the United States.

The significance of the Schmidt House lies in the way it thoroughly encapsulates Oak Park's long history, illustrates the progressiveness of Oak Park's turn-of-the-century citizens, and exemplifies Oak Park's broad contributions to American residential architecture. The original 1872 house typifies the early development of Oak Park because it was built in the Italianate style during the aftermath of the Great Chicago Fire for a commuting Chicago manufacturing executive on land purchased from Joseph Kettlestrings, Oak Park's original settler. Like much of Oak Park, the original one-acre property was subdivided by its owner in the 1880s to make room for three more residences as the area transitioned from wide country estates to a more populated suburban neighborhood.

Criterion 3: Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic or social heritage, or other aspect, of the Village of Oak Park, the State, or the United States.

¹⁰³ Author's Interview with Elizabeth Gardner via email, March 2017. Excerpts from her reminiscences can be found in Exhibit 3(C)(iii).

John Jacob Schmidt was born on March 5, 1826 in Germany and arrived in Chicago around 1846. By the late 1860s, Mr. Schmidt had risen to the rank of treasurer at the brush manufacturing firm of Gerts, Lumbard & Co., where he would stay for more than half a century until his death in 1910.

The second owner, Calvin Pease, purchased and developed a large property along the east side of what is now Marion Street between Pleasant Street and Randolph Street. Today, property records from that area still identify some lots as being part of "Pease's addition to Oak Park." The road laid out to give access to the homes Mr. Pease built there was called Pease Court, a name that persisted long after Pease left the area. Local Oak Park papers show an effort to extend Pease Court east to Home Avenue in the late 1890s, an effort that was met with prevailing resistance. Though the residences were demolished in the early 1970s to make way for Mills Tower, the Pease Court roadway partially survives today as Pleasant Place.

Dr. David & Alice Hare were the sixth owners of the property. Dr. Hare was a prominent Chicago dentist whose reputation as a dental expert continued to grow over the course of his long career. He maintained his office at 100 State Street and 25 E. Washington in Chicago for 63 years despite living in Oak Park for the majority of that time. He published an article in a major dental publication, and the *Chicago Tribune* later credited him with "important contributions in the technique of using gold inlays in dental work."

Criterion 5: Embodiment of those distinguishing characteristics of a significant architectural style.

The Schmidt House is an excellent example of the front-gabled roof subtype of the Italianate style of architecture. Plans for the original home do not survive, but it was likely built from a pattern book by a contractor without an architect. The Italianate style dominated house construction in the Midwest between 1850 and 1880, including Oak Park. The somewhat unusual front gabled subtype set it apart from the more traditional flat or hipped roofs in the area. However, this front-gabled sub-type is fairly common in Oak Park representing roughly one-third of the examples. The Schmidt House contains signature elements of the front-gabled sub-type of the Italianate style of architecture such as the tall, narrow windows with framed window surrounds and decorative crown molding. The front porch on the Schmidt House is simple, yet imposing, with large bracketed capitals above triple columns. The low-pitched hip roof with a flat center and deep eaves are also characteristic of the style.

Criterion 6: Identification as the work of an architect whose individual work is significant in the development of the Village of Oak Park, the State of Illinois and the United States;

The harmonious integration of the Prairie style interior remodeling work within the predominantly Italianate exterior exemplifies E.E. Roberts's unique ability to make progressive architecture palatable to a wider audience. While less responsible for the direction of the Prairie style than his contemporaries such as Frank Lloyd Wright, architect E.E. Roberts had a greater impact on the spread of its ideas. Through projects like the work he did on the Schmidt House in 1908, E.E. Roberts paved the way for traditional architects to cherry pick the most broadly appealing aspects of the style and make them work for more conservative audiences. Mr. Roberts therefore allowed Prairie style ideas to proliferate across the country without requiring the more famous and less flexible architects like Frank Lloyd Wright to personally accompany its spread. Through projects like the work he did on the Schmidt House in 1908, E.E. Roberts blazed a new trail for traditional architects, broadening American vernacular architecture to include a growing number of Prairie style elements.

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Oak Park Historic Preservation Commission

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