

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



PHEBE AND JOHN GRAY HOUSE

4362 WEST GRACE STREET

Final Landmark Recommendation Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, on January 11, 2024



CITY OF CHICAGO
Brandon Johnson, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Ciere Boatright, Commissioner

Cover Image: Courtesy of Troy Walsh, Drone Media Chicago (2023)

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PHEBE AND JOHN GRAY HOUSE

4362 W. GRACE ST.

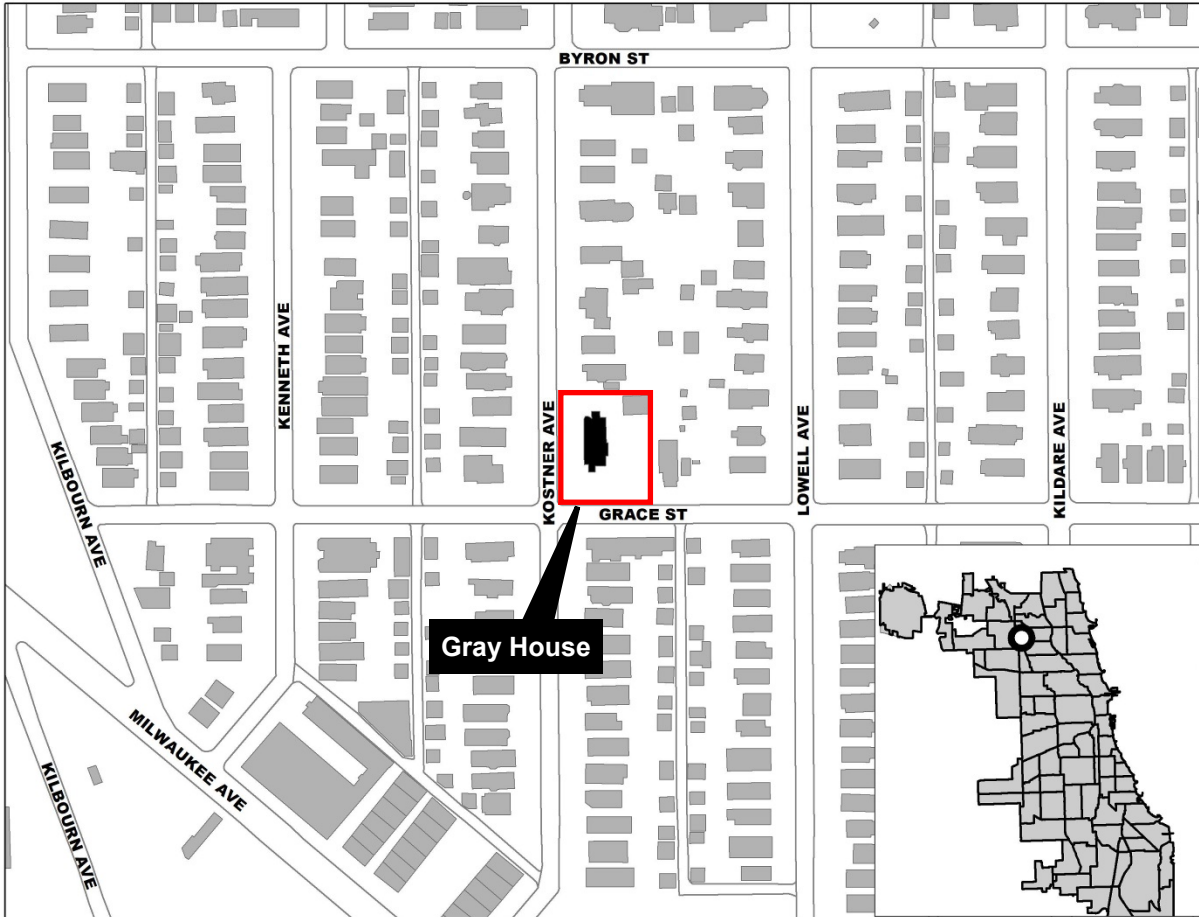
CONSTRUCTED: ca.1856

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1856-1924

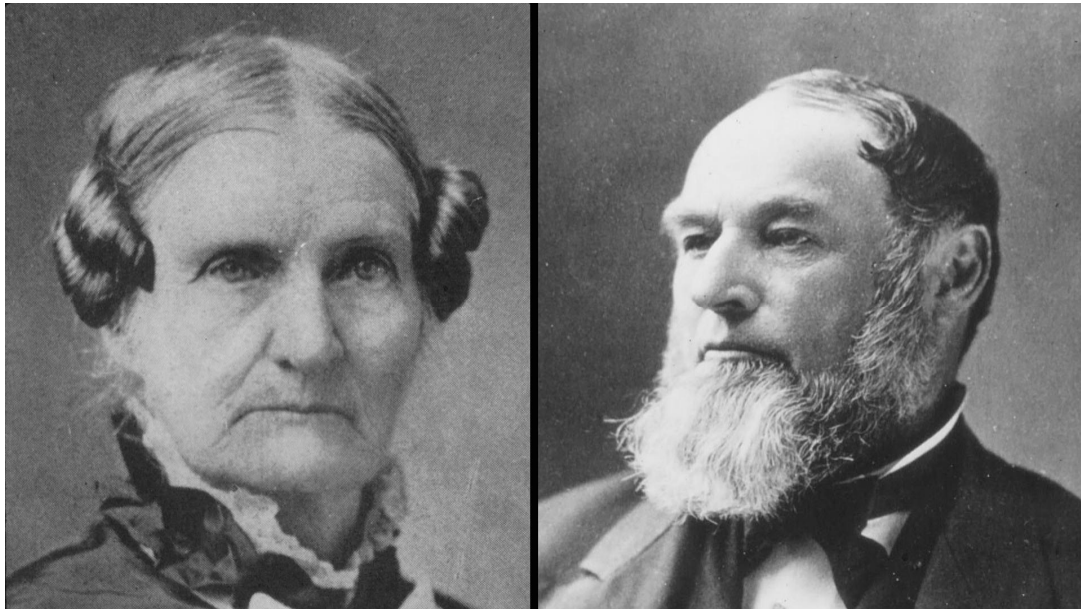
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In the 1850s, the northwest boundary of the City of Chicago terminated near Wicker Park & Bucktown, in the vicinity of Fullerton, Western, and Milwaukee Avenues. At that time, traveling further afield along Milwaukee Avenue would bring one out to a more rural landscape dotted with family farms in the Town of Jefferson (now Irving Park). One of the early non-Native settlers of the area was John Gray who, with his wife Phebe, had relocated to Illinois from New York State in 1837. After almost two decades serving as proprietors of lodging houses – first in Chicago and then in Niles – the Grays purchased 320 acres of farmland in Irving Park that was eventually along the path of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad. After the Chicago Fire of 1871, the area gained greater recognition for maintaining its “suburban-ness” as people rushed to replace property lost in the Fire. The post-Fire development boom transformed Irving Park into one of several first-ring “railroad suburbs,” named as such for their convenient passenger rail service to downtown Chicago.

The Phebe and John Gray House, built ca.1856, is a two-story wood-frame Italianate-style residence with a third-story cupola. This structure documents the evolution of Irving Park, from a farm community to a residential neighborhood of Chicago. The southernmost portion of the house, which is believed to be the oldest surviving building in the neighborhood, was built for the Grays, some of the area's first European settlers. As of 1924, Sanborn Maps indicate the original Italianate-style house had been minimally altered through the addition of larger front and rear covered porches. Subsequent owners during the 1980s and early-2000s increased the overall livable space by constructing rear additions that maintain the two-story massing of the original house.



Location of the ca.1856 Phebe and John Gray House, on the northwest side of Chicago in the Irving Park Community Area. At the time of its construction, the house was part of a 320-acre farm. The present-day house lots were first subdivided in 1874 as part of the Grayland residential development. Source: City of Chicago



Below: Portraits of Phebe and John Gray Source: Irving Park Historical Society Archives

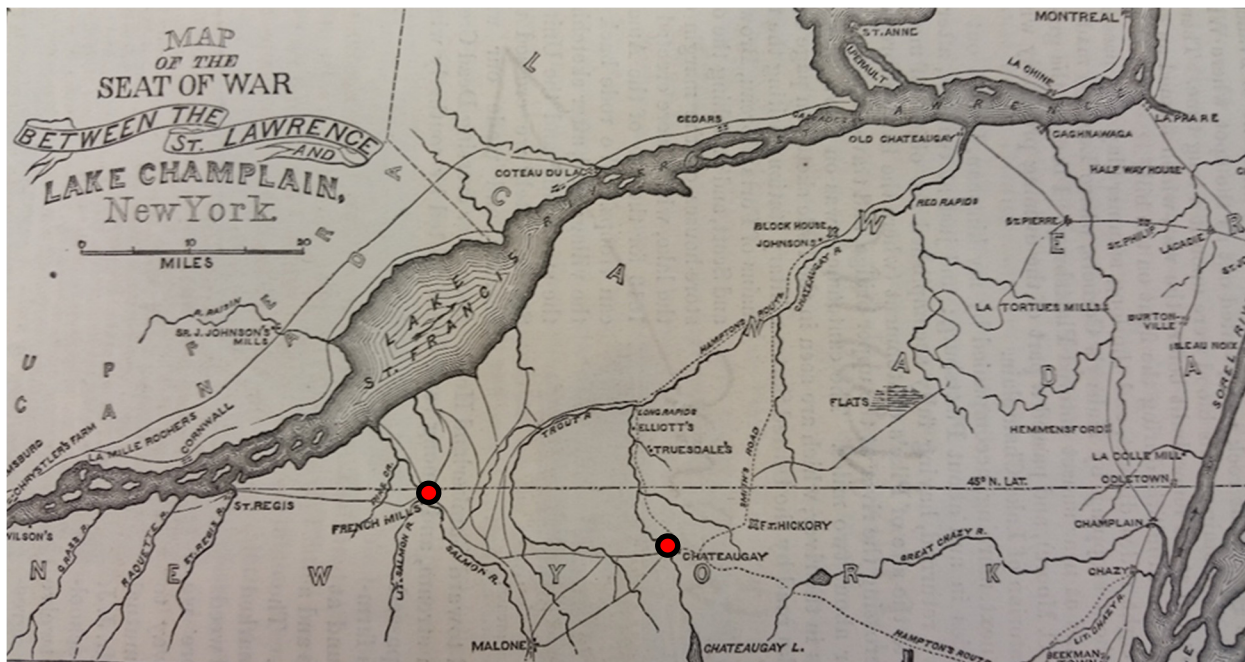
PHEBE AND JOHN GRAY

In 1837, John P. Gray (1810 - 1889), his wife Phebe Maria Allen Gray (1809 - 1886), and their two young daughters arrived in the newly incorporated City of Chicago. Phebe hailed from Franklin County in upstate New York, but little more is known of Phebe's early life other than a brief period living in Rhode Island. However, John was noted to have grown up farming in Franklin County and his obituary cited a life of early hardships. According to a family history and lineage book published by the Daughters of the American Revolution, the couple married in 1834. Three years later the Grays moved west to Chicago to join approximately 4,000 non-native residents of the fledgling city.

By 1838 the couple had taken over ownership and operation of James Kinzie's Green Tree Tavern at the northeast corner of Canal and Lake streets – which by then had been renamed the Chicago Hotel. It was here that the Grays' third child Allen was born in 1839. By 1841, however, John Gray was no longer listed as proprietor of the Chicago Hotel and was instead the owner of a livery stable, where horses could be fed and boarded. John Gray's livery work coincides with the family's time living downtown on Dearborn Street, near Madison Street. After fourteen years in Chicago, the Grays moved out of the city to the Village of Niles in northern Cook County. There they engaged in the commerce of the Northwest Plank Road by operating a hotel during the years 1850-1856.

Several years earlier, John Gray acquired 320 acres of farmland in northern Cook County. This land that was once covered by apple orchards would eventually be developed with residences and become part of the Irving Park community area. After purchasing and holding the property for some time, the Grays built a farmhouse on the land at 4362 W. Grace Street and it served as the family residence for approximately 20 years. Field notes from the Irving Park Historical Society's 1985 neighborhood survey attribute ca.1856 as a construction date for the Gray House. At the time of their move, John and Phebe had six children who ranged in age from 8 to 22 years old. During their occupancy the Grays experienced numerous milestones, including John's election as Cook County Sheriff, the Civil War, the marriages of their children, and the transformation of the area from rural farmland to an early Chicago suburb, shepherded by the construction of the Grayland passenger rail station approximately 300 yards from their house.

John Gray's election as Sheriff put him in a new post established by Cook County in 1831. Most early sheriffs held the job for two to four years. In 1858, John Gray won the sheriff's election and served in that capacity for two years until his retirement in 1860 at the age of 50. Gray's obituary noted that he was the first Republican elected as Cook County Sheriff and "an ardent anti-slavery man". In mid-19th century American politics, the Whig Party became fractured over whether to allow slavery in new United States territories. Out of that schism the Republican Party was formed in 1854, largely by disenchanting Whigs (among them Abraham Lincoln) who were in opposition, taking an anti-slavery stance. While various theories exist about Sheriff Gray's involvement in the abolition movement, including suggestions that the Gray House may have served as a stop on the Underground Railroad, historians have found no definitive evidence



Map of the Grays' area of origin, river towns located immediately south of the U.S.-Canadian border in Franklin County, New York. John Gray was born in French Mills (later renamed Fort Covington) in 1810. Phebe was born in 1809 and hailed from the town of Chateaugay, 23 miles south-east of French Mills. The couple were married in 1834 and relocated to Chicago in 1837. Source: Benson Lossing - The Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812.

Abraham Lincoln.

...my mode of illustration that made the most abstract subjects appear plain. His success at the bar, however, did not withdraw his attention from politics. For years he was the "wisest horse" of the Whig party of Illinois, and was on the electoral ticket in several Presidential campaigns. At such times he canvassed the State with his usual vigor and ability. He was an ardent friend of Henry Clay, and exerted himself powerfully in his behalf in 1841, traversing the entire State of Illinois and addressing public meetings daily until near the close of the campaign, when, becoming convinced that his labors in that field would be unavailing, he crossed over into Indiana, and continued his efforts up to the day of election. The contest of that year in Illinois was mainly on the tariff question. Mr. Lincoln, on the Whig side, and John Calhoun, on the Democratic side, were the heads of the opposing electoral tickets.—

Calhoun, once of Nebraska, now dead, was then in the full vigor of his powers, and was accounted the ablest debater of his party. They stropped the State together, or nearly so, making speeches usually on alternate days at each place, and each addressing large audiences at great length, sometimes four hours together. Mr. Lincoln, in these elaborate speeches, evinced a thorough mastery of the principles of political economy which underlie the tariff question, and presented arguments in favor of the protective policy with a power and conclusiveness rarely equaled, and at the same time in a manner so lucid and familiar and so well interspersed with happy illustrations and apposite anecdotes, as to establish a reputation which he has never since failed to maintain, as the ablest leader in the Whig and Republican ranks in the great West.

In 1840 he was elected to Congress, and served out his term, and would have been re-elected had he not declined to be a candidate. He steadily and earnestly opposed the annexation of Texas, and labored with all his powers in behalf of the Wilmot proviso. In the National Convention of 1848, of which he was a member, he advocated the nomination of General Taylor, and sustained the nomination by an active course in Illinois and Indiana.

From 1849 to 1854 Mr. Lincoln was engaged assiduously in the practice of his profession, and being deeply immersed in business, was beginning to lose his interest in politics, when the exciting ambition and growing selfishness of an unscrupulous aspirant to the Presidency brought about the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. That act of baseness did not partly arouse the sleeping lion, and he prepared for new efforts. He threw himself at once into the contest that followed, and fought the battle of freedom on the ground of his former conflict of in Illinois with more than

...erical has an infirmity for writing letters. Shortly after the scattering he gave John Davis he wrote his Nicholson letter—

Douglas (solemnly)—"God Almighty placed man on earth and told him to choose between good and evil. That was the origin of the Nebraska bill."

Lincoln—"Well, the priority of invention being settled, let us await all credit to Judge Douglas for being the first to discover it."

It would be impossible, in these limits, to give an idea of the strength of Mr. Lincoln's argument. We deemed it by far the ablest effort of the campaign—from whatever source. The occasion was a great one, and the speaker was every way equal to it. The effect produced on the listeners was magnetic. No one who was present will ever forget the power and volubility of the following passage:

"My distinguished friend says it is an insult to the citizens of Kansas and Nebraska to suppose they are not able to govern themselves. We must not stir over an argument of this kind because it happens to tickle the ear. It must be met and answered. I admit that the emigrant to Kansas and Nebraska is competent to govern himself, but," the speaker rising to his full height, "I don't his right to govern any other person without that man's assent." The applause which followed this triumphant refutation of a cunning falseth was but an earnest of the victory at the polls which followed just one month from that day.

When Mr. Lincoln had concluded, Mr. Douglas strode hastily to the stand. As usual, he employed ten minutes in telling how grossly he had been abused. Recollecting himself, though in a perfectly courteous manner—he then devoted half an hour to showing that it was independently necessary to California emigrants, Santa Fe traders and others, to have separate acts provided for the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska—that being precisely the point which nobody disputed. Having established this premise to his satisfaction, Mr. Douglas launched forth into an argument wholly apart from the positions taken by Mr. Lincoln. He had about half finished at six o'clock, when an adjournment to tea was effected. The speaker insisted strenuously upon his right to resume in the evening, but we believe the second part of that speech has not been delivered to this day. After the Springfield passage, the speaker went to Peoria and read a speech with identical results. A friend who listened to the Peoria debate informed us that after Lincoln had finished, Douglas "broke" much to say—which was pronounced

...Frederic's thorough conviction of the right of a free press. Mr. Lincoln was among the first to take the matter to the people to that movement. The Republican press in Illinois was held in the State. This speech in that convention was a prodigious feat. In the lead of the Illinois election, he was that State from the great "shaking machine of man" called its head.

Would not refer to the proceedings of all readers far as members of the Legislature of the District, by which death by a minority of the people of the State.

For Stephen A. Douglas.

Extract from an Extemp

"The Declaration of Independence of a nation liberty from those which were developed course the reason of their becoming slaves for the slave trade. The 4th of July is the anniversary of the 4th of July to abolish the 4th of July referred to as being given should not be abolished prior to 1850 was necessary to prevent a step to the traffic, which slavery had been a good thing, gave a step towards to diminish, and states the born who give, by their republican words of men." We hold these sacred rights, that among them is life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. This was the first principle of the Creator to His

Republican Standard feature article, 1860. John Gray's term as the first Republican Sheriff for Cook County (1858-1860) occurred during a period of notable political upheaval. Breaking ranks with the Whigs, the Republican Party formed in 1854 with a platform that opposed slavery in new, western U.S. territories. Abraham Lincoln, another early Republican, was nominated as his party's presidential candidate at the 1860 national convention, held in Chicago, and became the first elected Republican President. Source: Library of Congress

to substantiate those claims.

In his mid-60s John Gray shifted his focus away from farming and, in keeping with other early Cook County settlers, realized the potential of his land as a desirable suburb. After successfully lobbying the Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad to add a train station near his property, Gray prepared the acreage for sale and development. The Grayland subdivision was first marketed in 1874 and in the same year John & Phebe built a grander brick residence .2 miles south of the farmhouse near Milwaukee and Lowell Avenues (demolished in 1915) where they would live out their final years.

One of the Grays' four daughters, Clara, married and settled with her husband, John Merchant, on 13 acres of the family's land that was deeded to her by her father. The John and Clara Merchant House at 3854 N. Kostner Avenue (ca.1872; George E. Woodward, architect) was designated a Chicago Landmark in 2008.

The *Chicago Tribune* dedicated an article to the Grays' celebration of their 50th wedding anniversary, which occurred on February 20, 1884. Guests from afar arrived by train for a 1 o'clock meal, while local Irving Park friends joined the group later in the evening for dinner, music, singing and dancing. In attendance were members of the extended Gray family plus a host of "Old Settlers" from 1836-1862 who recorded their initial date of residency in the Grays' guest book. Over the next five years both of the Grays died, with Phebe dying in 1886 at age 77, followed by John in 1889 at age 78 – the same year his Grayland subdivision was annexed as part of a larger, four-township acquisition by the City of Chicago. John Gray's obituary in the *Chicago Tribune* lauded him as a "Chicago Pioneer", and "ardent anti-slavery man."

Given the emphasis in historic records on John Gray's political party affiliation, the timing of the American Civil War, and his documented stance against slavery, curiosity arose about whether discreet areas of the Grace Street basement may have served as a stop on the Underground Railroad network. Archeological research was conducted at the site in 2018; however, the results of those examinations were inconclusive.

Upon their deaths, the Grays were survived by all six of their children. Their interment site is located in Chicago's Rosehill Cemetery, just south of the William Boyington-designed entrance gate near Bryn Mawr Avenue.

BUILDING DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

At the time of its construction around 1856, the Gray House's rural setting in Jefferson Township was natural prairie and orchards of apple trees. Their 320 acres spanned from Irving Park Road to Addison Street, and Kostner Avenue to Cicero Avenue. The site of their farmhouse was immediately north of Milwaukee Avenue (then the Northwest Plank Road), which was the main route connecting Jefferson Township to Chicago.



Top Photo: South Elevation, wood trim detailing
Bottom Photo: East Elevation, including a later 1-story rear addition. The farmhouse's original rear wall was immediately south of the pictured addition.
Source: Troy Walsh, Drone Media Chicago (2023)



Top Image: Current owners, David and Kris Cloud, on the front porch of the house, which was identified as a Century House by the Irving Park Historical Society. Source: Eiliesh Tuffy, DPD
Lower Images: Architectural Details. Source: Troy Walsh, Drone Media Chicago; Eiliesh Tuffy, DPD (2023)

Beginning in 1874, the original acreage surrounding the farmhouse was subdivided by John Gray into the residential street and lot configuration visible today. The house retains a relatively large corner lot by current standards and is now predominantly surrounded by a mix of frame single-family houses from the 1880s to the early 1900s and brick bungalows or multi-family buildings from the 1910s.

Though rear additions have been added to the house, in its original form the footprint of the building included its southernmost section, with its T-shaped plan and a square tower rising from the southwest corner. The original building footprint measured approximately 37 feet wide by 53 feet deep. The building is two stories tall with a raised brick basement and an overall height of approximately 35 feet at the top of the tower. As viewed from Grace Street, a wrap-around front porch spans the entire first floor with returns that cover a portion of the north and south elevations. The large front porch was added by 1924, replacing a much smaller covered stoop that was restricted to the width of the tower. The existing porch has a low hip roof that is punctuated by a gable-front portico at the top of a wooden staircase. Supporting the porch roof are a series of round wooden columns with scrolled Ionic capitals and brick pier bases. The front portico is supported by a set of paired columns flanking the porch entrance. A low wood railing with simple square balustrades spans the distances between columns.

The building rests on a brick foundation. The exterior walls are wood frame clad with horizontal cedar clapboards and ornamental wood trim. The roofing material is asphalt shingles. Underneath the overhanging eaves are scroll-sawn brackets on an ornamental fascia band, all rendered in wood. Three brick chimneys rising from the roof are evidence of the interior's original marble fireplaces which served the building's original heating and cooking functions.

The primary elevation of the house faces south onto Grace Street and is set back from the road by a front yard approximately 30 feet deep. Beyond the covered front porch, the south elevation has an angled window bay centered on the first floor with 1-over-1 sash windows. Directly above on the second story is a set of paired, 1-over-1 sash windows in line with the wall plane and topped by a pedimented hood. This section of the façade is topped by a front-facing gable with overhanging eaves supported by wooden brackets. This elevation is asymmetrical, with the house's entrance located to the left on a wall plane that is recessed further back and at the base of the building's three-story tower. Above the porch roof, each of the two upper levels of the tower has one arched window placed on-center. The second-story window has a small, wooden-railed balcony. The square tower is topped by a hip roof with bracketed eaves.

The west elevation, facing onto Kostner Avenue, includes the three-story tower and the narrow end of the original T-shaped plan. By 1924, the current porch had been added to the house. The porch return spans the lower right corner of the west elevation. To the left of the porch is a two-story vertical wing. Both levels have a set of paired 1-over-1 sash windows topped with hoods. The west wing has a cross-gable roof that runs perpendicular to the building's east elevation. Its overhanging eaves are supported by wood brackets. Continuing to the left is a vestige of the 1-

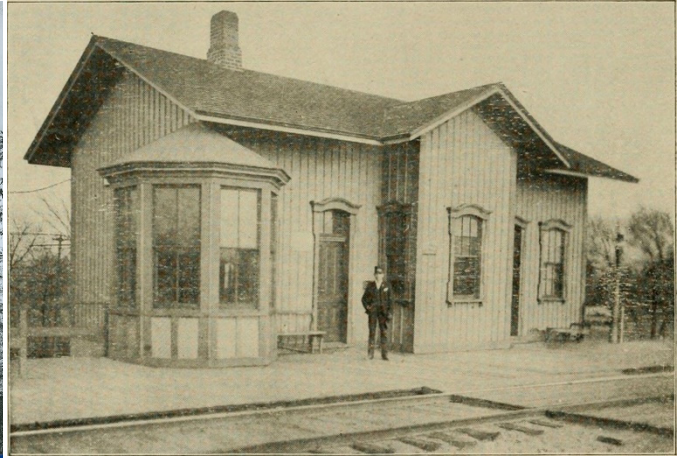
story rear wing that appears on a 1905 Sanborn map and, based on historic photographs, survived up through 1988. Behind the 1-story wing was a driveway and small garage with access from Kostner Avenue. Permit records show that, in 1989, the existing garage and driveway from Grace Street were approved for the eastern edge of the property, thus freeing up room behind the house for rear expansion. Between 1989 and 2008, the two-story massing of the original house was extended further north towards the rear property line. However, the form and massing of the Grays' ca.1856 Italianate farmhouse remains intact and legible.

The east elevation, facing the large side yard, was the longest continuous exterior wall of the original building footprint, or the top leg of the T-shaped plan. The first floor porch return spans the lower left corner of the east elevation. To the right of the porch is a two-story vertical bay that mimics the primary façade. The first floor has a projecting window bay with 1-over-1 sash windows. Directly above on the second story is a set of paired, 1-over-1 sash windows topped by a pedimented hood. This elevation is topped by a gable roof with overhanging eaves supported by wooden brackets. Immediately to the right, the original two-story massing ended approximately where the 1-story sunroom bump-out occurs. Some windows towards the rear of this elevation have been altered to casement-style sashes but retain the same proportions and window hood treatments as the double-hung arrangements.

PLANK ROADS TO “RAILROAD SUBURBS” – DEVELOPMENT OF IRVING PARK & THE GRAYLAND SUBDIVISION

The acreage John Gray purchased in Jefferson Township was bisected in 1851 with the completion of the Northwest Plank Road. In an area largely comprised of private farms, the new public infrastructure created a well-surfaced and direct path of travel to and from Chicago. Gray sited his farmhouse in close proximity to the plank road which, twenty years later, was selected as the preferred route for one of the regional railroads. As train lines began to radiate out from the urban core of Chicago new communities formed, populated by residents fleeing Chicago in the wake of the 1871 Fire or simply looking to build a home in a more rural setting.

Immediately preceding railroads, the best infrastructure for overland travel in and around Chicago were plank roads. Surfaced with wooden boards, plank roads made traveling longer distances less cumbersome than doing so on uneven dirt roads. By 1851, the Northwest Plank Road extended 14 miles from downtown Chicago into Cook County. The Cook County segment of the road crossed through rural Jefferson Township and terminated in the Village of Niles. Commerce along the plank roads involved farmers transporting crops, hay, and livestock to Chicago markets, paying tolls at various gate houses along the way, and innkeepers selling meals and lodging to travelers. Outside of those commercial thoroughfares there remained tall-grass prairies and family farms until the expansion of rail service encouraged a change in the pattern of land development. Today, Milwaukee Avenue follows the same route as the old Northwest Plank Road, and the railroad that fostered growth along the same diagonal corridor now carries the Milwaukee District North line of the Metra commuter train system.



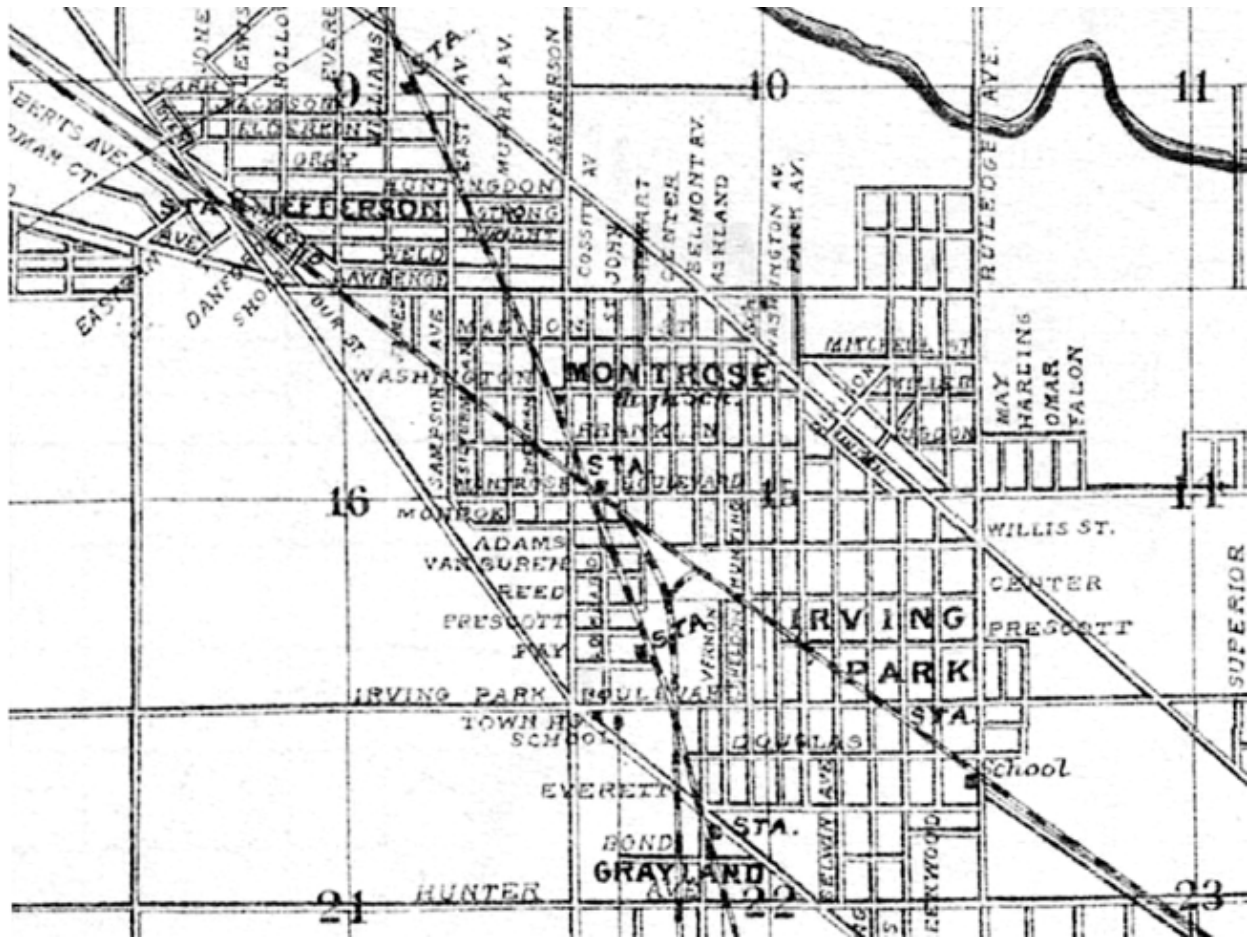
Left: Transporting of goods along a typical mid-19th century wooden plank road. Source: "Plank Road History in the Chicago Area", Digital Research Library of Illinois History Journal, 2019.

Right: Grayland Train Station, Chicago Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, ca. 1904.

Source: Alamy, Inc.



Map of Jefferson Township in rural Cook County, prior to annexation by the City of Chicago. The location of the Grays' farmland is indicated adjacent to the Northwest Plank Road (now Milwaukee Avenue). Source: James H. Rees map, 1851



Top Image: Early residential subdivisions within the Irving Park Community Area. Grayland is shown as the southernmost neighborhood. Grace Street is labeled under its previous name, Everett Street. Source: Rufus Blanchard map, 1888.

Bottom Image: 1880s Western View of Old Irving Park Source: Irving Park Historical Society

For the first 20 years in their farmhouse on Grace Street, the Grays maintained their farmland. Once neighbors, such as the Nobles, began subdividing and selling off their farmsteads, John Gray followed suit. His land was platted into individual house lots centered around a train station and connected by a regularized street grid. With the establishment in 1874 of his “Grayland” subdivision, John Gray ceased farming and was instead engaged in the business of real estate and land development.

Transition Irving Park is a classic example of a “railroad suburb”—a community that developed and prospered during the late-19th century based on access to railroad lines. During the last four decades of the 19th century, rail service had a strong influence on the patterns of urban settlement, as farmers-turned-developers enticed city dwellers to their residential communities using marketing campaigns that included passenger rail timetables for the nearest station. Developers sold large lots for the construction of single-family houses, and often sold land at discounts to civic and religious institutions that would build in the area and help attract middle-class families to these new railroad suburbs. Specifically, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, purchasers of the old Noble Farm and John Gray himself donated land and paid to have local station houses built along rail lines to provide access from the rural northwest to downtown Chicago.

The present-day Irving Park neighborhood grew from a consolidation of three early suburban settlements within Jefferson Township: Irving Park, Grayland (named after the Grays) and Montrose (later called Mayfair). Comprised of a total of 15 small settlements, the township was officially formed in 1850, despite the fact that most of its 700 citizens had settled in the area in the 1830s.

While raising their family in the Grace Street farmhouse, Phebe and John Gray allocated portions of their 320-acre farm for broader communal uses. One example occurred in 1857 with their donation of land near today’s Six Corners district for the new Jefferson town hall. Shortly after the completion of town hall, John Gray was the winning candidate in an election for Cook County Sheriff.

The northern portion of Irving Park was developed by New York businessman Charles T. Race. In 1869, Race purchased 160 acres of farmland from Major Noble, whose family first purchased the land in 1833. Race’s intent was to become a gentleman farmer, but he decided it would be more profitable to develop a settlement on the land. That same year his son, Richard T. Race, purchased an adjacent parcel of 80 acres from John Gray, joining his father Charles in the new business venture. Charles Race also took on additional family members as investors, each bringing with them additional acreage. The new settlement was to have been called “Irvington” in honor of the New York author, Washington Irving, but it was already in use by another Illinois town. “Irving Park” was eventually decided upon, and with their combined land resources, they organized the Irving Park Land and Building Company.

Early on, the company marketed to those who desired to escape the noise and congestion of a burgeoning population in Chicago. Initially, the Chicago & North Western Railroad (C&NW

RR), whose tracks were in close proximity to the land, didn't have a passenger stop there; however, Charles Race persuaded the railroad to make stops in Irving Park in exchange for Race paying to have the depot built. The railroad agreed, and soon houses sprang up around the depot, establishing the first railroad suburb in Jefferson Township. Shortly thereafter, the desperate need of new homes in the aftermath of the Chicago Fire of 1871 spurred rapid growth to the area. Subsequently the Irving Park Land and Building Company routinely mentioned the railroad's frequency to the area, or printed train timetables in their advertisements.

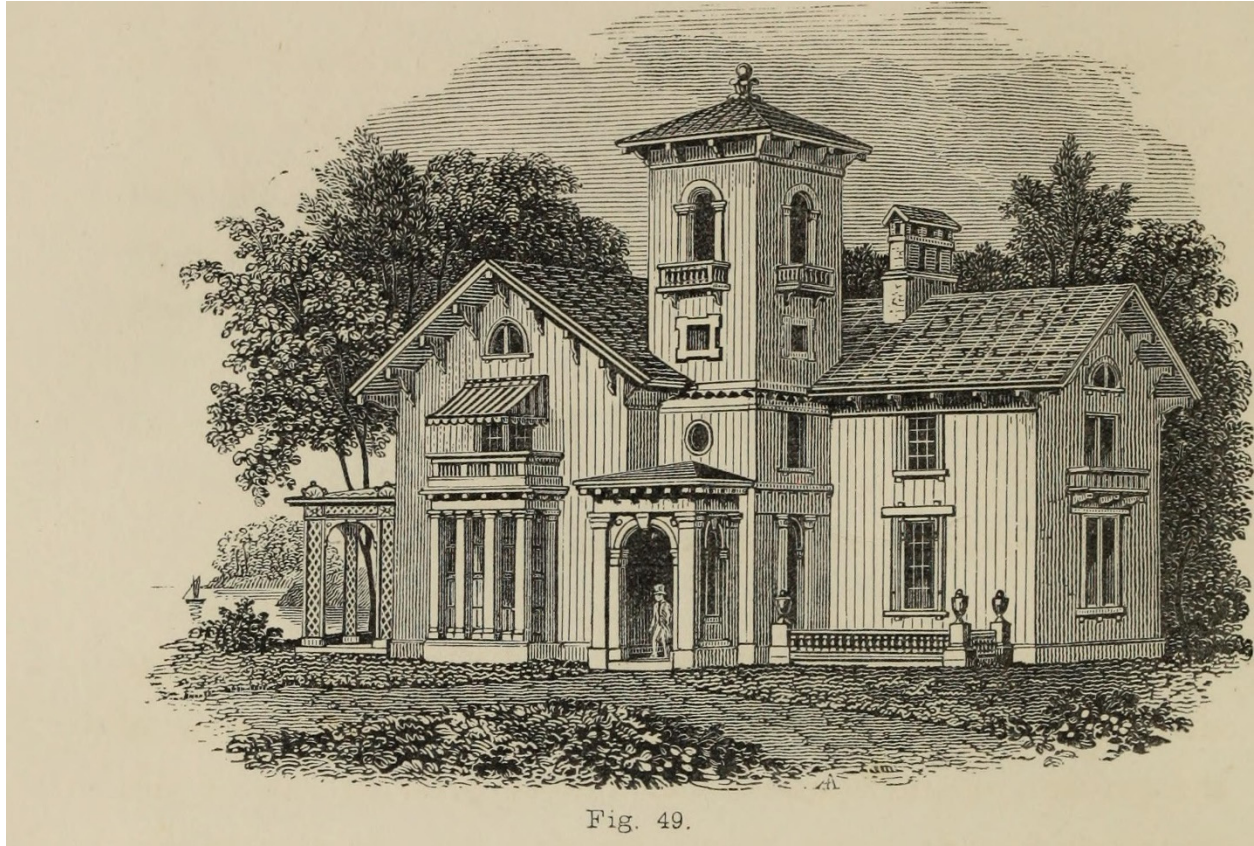
Several years after the Chicago Fire the Grays also paid to construct a train station on the stretch of tracks traversing their property and, by 1874, had subdivided their acreage into standard residential-sized lots to create Grayland. Historically, Grayland stretched north to south from Irving Park Road to Addison Street, and east to west from Kostner Avenue to Cicero Avenue. John Gray eventually abandoned farming and worked exclusively in land development until his death in 1889.

A third Jefferson Township subdivision, Montrose, shares a similar history. With both the C&NW and CM&StP railroad tracks crisscrossing through the center of the settlement, Montrose became the largest of the three settlements, spurred by the added advantage of two train lines. By 1880 there were as many as 60 houses clustered around the three depots, and the population of Jefferson Township reached 4,876.

19TH-CENTURY PATTERN BOOK HOMES

When Phebe and John Gray House built their farmhouse in rural Jefferson Township, no building permit was required and few architects would have been available to design it. Like most rural residents of the period, the Grays almost certainly based the design of the home on publications that were widely circulated in America known as pattern books. The Grays were farmers but had also previously operated hotels, and John Gray was for a time a Cook County Sheriff. With this background, it is understandable that they may have wanted a house that was more than just functional shelter. In the absence of architects, families like the Grays turned to pattern books which offered an almost inexhaustible array of choices loosely based on architectural precedents in Europe and other countries. The range of influence included Swiss chalets, Tuscan villas, Moorish- and Byzantine-style ornament, Gothic cathedrals, and Medieval castles.

Prior to the Civil War, the first of the "mass-produced" house plans were introduced and advertised through a type of book that was loosely similar to the architectural pattern books of the late 19th century. Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842) was a popular publication that offered an array of architectural design possibilities. The book was not primarily intended to sell plans, and if a homeowner wished to have any of the architectural designs replicated, the author would provide their architectural services. With this method, Downing generated a few building commissions from the book's popularity, but his profits were chiefly derived from book royalties.



Pattern book designs for houses in the Italianate style.

Above: Downing's "Villa in the Italianate Style, Bracketed", Design VI (1842).

Left: Side elevation of Sloan's "Small Villa", Design XV (1852).

Source: Internet Archive, archive.org

After Downing's pattern book gained popularity, numerous versions were published by different entities. In a 1985 publication, *Master Builder*, historian Jane B. Davies explained the impact of pattern books on American architecture:

The English ideas of the picturesque, which they espoused, revolutionized the American house, relating to its setting, giving irregularity to its shape, plan and surface, and freeing it from the austere rigidity of the traditional box pattern. The diversity of the new styles enriched the American scene. Many of the forms and features were imitated so much that they passed into the vernacular, and some—such as the asymmetrical massing, bay windows, board and batten siding, wide decorated eaves and expansive verandahs—became lasting contributions to American domestic architecture.

Based on the design of the Phebe and John Gray House, there are several potential pattern book designs that may have served as its inspiration, including Andrew Jackson Downing's "Design VI, An irregular villa in the Italian style, bracketed" in his *Cottage Residences* (1842) or, in Samuel Sloan's *The Model Architect* (1852): "Design I, Italian Villa"; "Design VI, Italian Villa"; and "Design XV, A Small Villa". These house patterns, which would have been published prior to the start of construction on the Gray House, effectively combine such Italianate elements as window bays, porches, bracketed eaves, and, most important, a three-story bracketed tower. Once an owner selected a house design, they would then hire local builders to transform the published patterns into architecture.

THE ITALIANATE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

Though it is likely derived from pattern books, the Gray House is a fine example of the Italianate Style within the pattern book tradition. The Italianate style dominated American housing constructed between 1850 and 1880. By the 1860s its popularity surpassed the once-fashionable Gothic Revival style. Both styles are derived from 19th century Europe and the influence of the Picturesque and Romantic movements that reacted against the classical and rational traditions that were prevalent in art of the 18th century. Promulgated by pattern books, the style takes inspiration from Italian architecture, but instead of classical forms the Italianate is modeled on rambling farmhouses in Italy's agricultural regions.

When applied to residential architecture, the Italianate style's character-defining features are buildings two to three stories tall, relatively flat wall surfaces, low-pitched roofs with bracketed cornices, and tall narrow windows topped by segmental or curved arches that project from the wall. Double doors with arched detailing are characteristic, and in city houses they open off a raised front porch. All these features are found in the Gray House.

The Italianate's easy adaptability in terms of materials and detailing made the style nationally popular by the time of the Civil War. It remained widespread in Chicago and surrounding Cook County into the 1880s. Its features can be found on hundreds of the city's residential and com-



Left: Bracketed cornice and decorative frieze band under the eaves of the tower's hip roof.

Below: South Elevation, fronting Grace Street

Source: Troy Walsh, Drone Media Chicago (2023)



mercial buildings.

Later History

After Phebe and John Gray moved to their nearby brick residence in 1876, the farmhouse at 4362 W. Grace Street was sold to A.B. Corvell. No additional details were found on Corvell, who owned the house for four years, from 1876-1880. John Gray then re-purchased the house for one of his children, which is presumed to have been Jane, as the title was transferred to her name in 1888. Jane lived in the house through 1902. Collectively, Gray family members owned the house for 42 years.

The next long-term owner of the Gray House was the Hummel family, from 1902-1971. Philip Hummel, a clergyman of German descent, and his wife, Elizabeth, appear in the 1910 census along with three children. During the Hummels' ownership, the corner lot was reduced in size when a separate parcel was created on the east end of the lot on which a new brick house was built in 1914. Although the Hummel family are the longest residents of the house, details about their 69-year ownership are few. Since 1971, the house has changed ownership five times.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for designation" and that it possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Phebe and John Gray House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

CRITERION 1: VALUE AS AN EXAMPLE OF CITY, STATE, OR NATIONAL HERITAGE

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

- The Gray House represents the Irving Park neighborhood's early stage as rural farmland in Jefferson Township, prior to annexation by the City of Chicago.
- The Gray House's gracious proportions, and large corner lot harken back to a time preceding the advent of suburban subdivisions. The juxtaposition of the Gray House with the repeating pattern of standardized house lots that surround it speaks to the development of Chicago's "railroad suburbs" in the 19th century.



The Gray House, as captured in 2023 (Above) and in a 1950s photo, a century after its initial construction (Below). Based on historic maps, and the presence of both the wraparound front porch and the one-story rear wing, this is how the farmhouse appeared from ca.1924 through the late 1980s. Source: Troy Walsh, Drone Media Chicago (2023); Kris and David Cloud

CRITERION 4: EXEMPLARY ARCHITECTURE

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

- The Phebe and John Gray House is an exceptional example of 19th-century mail-order pattern-book architecture, a design and distribution method popularly used in suburban development.
- The Gray House is a handsome example of residential architecture in the Italianate style, an architectural style of great significance in the history of Chicago and the United States. It possesses numerous features distinctive to the style, including its asymmetric footprint, arched porches, arched-header windows (often in pairs), shallow-gabled roofs, overhanging eaves supported by cornice brackets, balustraded balconies, and a three-story tower.

INTEGRITY CRITERION

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

The Phebe and John Gray House possesses excellent physical integrity, displayed through its siting, scale, overall design, and historic relationship to the surrounding area. It retains its historic overall exterior form and almost all exterior materials, features and detailing.

Changes to the Gray House are minor and include the replacement of the original roof shingles with asphalt shingles, the expansion of the original front stoop with a wraparound porch, and minimal window alterations towards the rear of the original house. In 1989 and 2008, the home was expanded by removing portions of the Italianate's rear wall to accommodate a two-story extension at the far north end of the building.

In 2023, the Clouds had the house repainted, choosing to replace the yellow exterior with a deep shade of red. Details of the Italianate's ornamental trim are showcased by the new polychrome paint treatment.

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the "significant historical and architectural features" of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark. Based on its evaluation of Phebe and John Gray House the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.

Excluded from the significant features is the garage at the northeast corner of the lot, which was permitted for construction in 1989.

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The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council that individual building, sites, objects, or entire districts be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law. The Commission is staffed by the Chicago Department of Planning and Development, City Hall, 121 North LaSalle Street, Room 905, Chicago, IL 60602; (312-744-3200); www.cityofchicago.org/landmarks

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

COMMISSION ON CHICAGO LANDMARKS

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