

BEGINNINGS

1812–1871



(Left) Thompson House, 1936 South Prairie Avenue
(Right) Staples House, 1702 South Prairie Avenue

The history of this area has been closely linked to that of the City of Chicago for nearly two hundred years. The Fort Dearborn massacre took place on August 15, 1812 along the Lake Michigan shoreline in this general vicinity. A large cottonwood tree at the northeast corner of Prairie Avenue and 18th Street, dating to the time of the massacre, became a traditional symbol of the event. (After the tree died, it was replaced by a bronze statue commissioned by George Pullman in 1893.) In 1834, Elijah D. Harmon purchased a 138-acre tract of land bounded by present day 16th Street, Cermak Road, State Street, and Lake Michigan. Soon after, he sold a 20-acre parcel to Henry B. Clarke who completed his Greek Revival home in 1836 in what is now the 1600 block of Michigan Avenue. Having been moved twice, it survives as Chicago's oldest house. In the early 1850s the area was subdivided and in 1853 the first house on Prairie Avenue was completed for John Staples. Additional houses were built over the next decade with building activity increasing dramatically after the close of the Civil War. In 1870, Daniel Thompson built the first \$100,000 house on the South Side at 1936 S. Prairie Avenue. George Pullman and Marshall Field both acquired property on the street and announced plans to build, firmly establishing Prairie Avenue as Chicago's premier residential street. The Chicago Fire of 1871 bypassed the area, and other business and civic leaders, burned out of their homes, soon purchased lots and built in the neighborhood.

AREA ATTRACTIONS

Glessner House Museum

1800 S Prairie Avenue,
312-326-1480
www.glessnerhouse.org
Hours:
Wednesdays – Sundays
1 and 3 pm
(closed major holidays)
Admission:
\$10/adults;
\$9/students & seniors;
\$5/children 5-12;
free/children under 5

Clarke House Museum

1827 S Indiana Avenue
312-326-1480
(for tour information)
www.clarkehousemuseum.org
Hours:
Wednesdays – Sundays
12 and 2 pm
(closed major holidays)
Admission:
\$10/adults;
\$9/students & seniors;
\$5/children 5-12;
free/children under 5

Chicago Women's Park and Gardens

1827 S Indiana Avenue,
312-745-0040
www.clarkehousemuseum.org
Hours:
Open everyday
8:30 am – 8:30 pm
Admission: None

Second Presbyterian Church

1936 S Michigan Avenue
1-800-657-0687
www.2ndpresbyterianfriends.org
Hours: Tours available,
please call for dates and times
Admission: \$5

National Vietnam Veterans Art Museum

1801 S Indiana Avenue,
312-326-0270
www.nvvam.org
Hours:
Tuesdays – Fridays
11 am – 6 pm;
Saturday 10 am – 5 pm
Admission:
\$10/adults;
\$7/students & seniors

Chess Records Studio/ Blues Heaven Foundation

2120 S Michigan Avenue,
312-808-1286
www.bluesheaven.com
Hours:
Mondays – Saturdays
12 – 3 pm
Admission: \$10

**Admission prices current
as of Summer 2007*

PHOTO CREDITS
*All photos from the collection
of the Glessner House Museum
except as follows:*

*Chicago History Museum
– Thompson House, Staples
House, Pullman drawing room,
Hump Hairpin Mfg. Co.*

*Special Collections
Research Center, University
of Chicago Library –
R.R. Donnelley & Sons under
construction*

*Bob Thall –
Clarke House Museum*

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PRAIRIE AVENUE MUSEUMS & GARDENS



WALKING TOUR GUIDE



CLARKE HOUSE MUSEUM