Charles N. Loucks House
3926 North Keeler Avenue

Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, February 7, 2008

CITY OF CHICAGO
Richard M. Daley, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Arnold L. Randall, Commissioner
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 which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

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

Cover: Current photo of the Charles N. Loucks House (left) at 3926 N. Keeler Ave. in the Irving Park neighborhood. Architect Clarence Tabor built the house in 1889 and later published the design in his mail-order pattern-book catalog, Tabor's Modern Homes (1891 ed.). Homes built using this method was vital to the rapidly-growing suburbs in the 19th century. (Photo by Terry McGuire)
Charles N. Loucks House
3926 North Keeler Ave.

Built: 1889-1891
Architect: Clarence Tabor
(Tabor’s Modern Homes, 1891 Ed., Design #2)

In the mid-19th century, the neighborhood of Irving Park, located on Chicago’s northwest side, was a series of small “railroad suburbs” clustered around two rail lines that provided passenger service to the area. The communities grew as real estate developers promoted the area’s large lots, its distance from the city’s congestion and pollution, and its excellent transportation. After the Chicago Fire of 1871, Irving Park gained greater recognition for maintaining its “suburban-ness” as people rushed to replace property lost in the fire.

With the city’s urgent need to rebuild—and the rapid outward growth into the suburbs—it seemed virtually impossible for a finite number of architects to produce such a variety of designs for each individual client. By its very nature, the architect-client relationship was too intimate to successfully keep up with the demand. House plans via mail-order or “pattern book architecture” was a method devised to multiply the effectiveness of the architect, plus educate the home buyer in the basics of architectural design and taste. As a pattern-book house, the Charles N. Loucks House exemplifies this important housing design phenomenon.

The Charles N. Loucks House, begun in 1889 and featured in the pattern book, Tabor's Modern Homes (1891), is one of the finest and most unusual Queen Anne-style houses in Irving Park. Made from pressed brick on the first floor and clad with cedar shingles above, it’s most visually-distinctive feature is its 2-1/2-story turret with numerous art-glass windows and an elliptical roof.
The Charles N. Loucks House at 3926 N. Keeler Ave. is located in the Irving Park neighborhood on Chicago’s Northwest Side.
The house was designed for real estate developer Charles N. Loucks. Built in 1889 by architect Clarence Tabor, the house was later published (below) in Tabor’s Modern Homes (1891 ed.), an architectural pattern book which contained a variety of home designs. The public could purchase an identical set of complete working drawings and have them sent by mail-order. Its Queen Anne design demonstrates the architectural style that was popular at the time.
The house has excellent physical integrity, and exemplifies the type of residential architecture designs produced through the mail-order pattern book method. It also represents a late stage of Irving Park’s development as a railroad suburb.

“RAILROAD SUBURBS” AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF IRVING PARK

Irving Park is a classic example of the “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 real estate speculators began to plan outlying communities around commuter railroads. 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.

The present-day Irving Park neighborhood grew from a consolidation of three early suburban settlements within Jefferson Township: Irving Park, Grayland 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. Jefferson’s town hall was built in 1857 on land donated by John Gray, a farmer and businessman who was elected Cook County Sheriff shortly after the town hall was completed.

In 1869, New York businessman Charles T. Race purchased 160 acres from Major Noble, whose father bought land in the area in 1833. Race’s intent was to become a gentleman farmer, but 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, assisting his father in this new business venture. Charles Race also took on additional family members and 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 grime of a burgeoning population in Chicago. Initially, the Chicago & North Western Railroad (C&NW), whose tracks were in close proximity to the land, didn’t 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. The Loucks House was built in 1889 on land purchased from the Race family, albeit much later in the settlement’s history.
Above: An 1874 map indicating the Irving Park, Grayland and Montrose railroad suburbs in Jefferson Township. New York developer Charles T. Race, Irving Park’s founder, persuaded the Chicago & North Western Railroad to make regular stops in exchange for providing payment for the train depot.
Top: A historic photo of the Irving Park settlement in what was then Jefferson Township. This early-1880s view looks south along Irving Park Blvd. The Chicago & North Western Railroad tracks are in the foreground.

Right: An advertisement for the Irving Park Land and Building Company, 1874. Charles T. Race founded the Irving Park settlement in 1869, and after the depot was built, advertised train timetables or mentioned the frequency of trains to the area. Charles Loucks purchased land from Stephen A. Race in 1889 to build his house.
The settlement of Grayland adjoined Irving Park on the southwest and located along the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad (CM&St.P). In 1869, John Gray built an Italianate-style house located at 4362 W. Grace, and in 1873 subdivided his land and christened it “Grayland.” Shortly afterward, an artesian well was tapped to provide water to his settlement, and a depot was built along the rail line. John Gray initially subdivided his land to provide for his six children and their families, but the high demand and prices being paid for land outside of the city limits were hard to ignore. Gray eventually abandoned farming and worked exclusively in land development until his death in 1889.

Like Irving Park and Grayland, Montrose shares a similar history. With the C&NW and CM&St.P railroad tracks criss-crossing through the center of the settlement, Montrose became the largest of the three settlements, spurred by the added advantage of two train lines. Soon there were as many as 60 houses clustered around the three depots, and the population of Jefferson Township in 1880 swelled from 700 to 4,876.

19th-Century Pattern Book Homes

In the late-19th century, America’s cities and towns grew with such rapidity that it seemed virtually impossible for the limited number of architects at the time to produce a variety of designs for each individual client. By its very nature, the architect-client relationship was too intimate to successfully keep up with the demands of the nation’s burgeoning suburbs. House plans via mail-order or “pattern book architecture” were a method devised to multiply the effectiveness of the architect, plus educate the home buyer in the basics of architectural design and taste.

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 inspired its reader with an array of architectural design possibilities. The book was not primarily intended to sell plans, but if a homeowner wished to have any of the architectural designs replicated, the author would provide his 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.

Shortly after the war, plan books were a means to generate home sales. Inexpensive and produced on inferior paper, they were nothing more than catalogs of house plans that were available for purchase. Since the money generated from these books were produced from house plan sales rather than book sales, the books were often discarded shortly after the building was completed. In the book *Architecture: Designs for Street Fronts, Suburban Houses, and Cottages* (1865), architects Marcus F. Cummings and Charles C. Miller went back to the earlier format of architectural pattern books, but focused almost entirely on architectural detailing and millwork, rather than providing complete house designs.
One of the most prolific writers who established himself in the pattern-book tradition after the war was New York architect George E. Woodward (1829-1905). Unlike his contemporaries, Woodward produced high-priced publications, complete with presentation drawings, elevations, sections, and carpentry, masonry and plumbing specifications. The thoroughness of the drawings was intended to allow the homeowner to become his own general contractor, while protecting him against shoddy workmanship.


Another successful publisher of pattern-book architecture was George Palliser (1849-1903). An English immigrant who arrived in Newark, New Jersey, in 1868, Palliser worked as a master carpenter and became a co-owner of a millwork company. In 1873, he moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut, where he formed a company commissioned to build speculative housing by the town’s mayor, and future circus entrepreneur, P. T. Barnum.

The publication of inexpensive pattern books was the key to Palliser’s success. In 1876, he published a booklet called Model Homes for the People, a Complete Guide to the Proper and Economical Erection of Buildings. It sold for 25 cents, at a time when comparable books cost as much as ten dollars. Palliser was able to lower the cost by including ads from local businesses and by printing it on inexpensive paper. Its low cost, coupled with the wide variety of stylish, low-cost designs it featured, made the book a success, selling all of the 5,000 copies printed.

By 1878, George was joined by his brother Charles in “Palliser, Palliser and Co.” which became the first large mail-order-plan business. Neither were architects in the modern sense of the word, though George’s experience was probably sufficient at the time for him to be recognized as one. The brothers had a clear sense of the urgent need for architectural services throughout the country, as indicated in their enlarged and revised second edition of Model Homes (1878).

In effect, the Pallisers offered the services of a mail-order architect. Anyone interested in one of their designs filled out a questionnaire addressing such matters as the building site, budget, materials desired, and space needs. Fees for plans ranged from 50 cents (for plans of a relatively modest $3,000 house) to $40 (for a more detailed $7,500 residence).

Customers would receive working drawings, including any alterations necessary for their individual needs. A customer could also make arrangements for the company to design a house from scratch, for which the Pallisers charged two percent of the building’s cost; by comparison, most architects of the period charged 3.5 percent. With the Pallisers’ plans in hand, the owner would then make arrangements with a local contractor to build the house. In 1878, the brothers

Top right: Tabor offered a free copy of his pattern book designs in this 1891 advertisement.

Above: In 1889, real estate developer Charles N. Loucks commissioned Tabor to design the house he would eventually own at 3926 N. Keeler. It was to serve as a “model home” to show to prospective clients.

Left: The house later appeared as Design No. 2 in the 1891 edition of *Tabor’s Modern Homes*. 
published *Palliser’s American Cottage Homes*. Design No. 35 was used by Rev. Johan Edgren for his home at 2314 W. 111th Place in the Morgan Park neighborhood and is a designated Chicago Landmark.

Little is known about Pennsylvania-born architect **Clarence H. Tabor** (c. 1857-?) and his activities in the Chicago area. In 1889, he published a book titled, *Tabor’s Modern Homes: An Illustrated Semi-Annual of Practical and Modern Designs*. The book was published by the Tabor Building Plan Co., and featured seventeen designs of buildings priced from $1,000 to $12,000, with complete building plans priced from $7.00 to $75.00. Clarence Tabor hoped his company would succeed by modelling it after predecessors in the architectural pattern book business: George E. Woodward and George and Charles Palliser. There was still a high demand for suburban housing stock, and people were still unable or unwilling to pay high architect’s fees.

In addition to his publication, Tabor opened his architectural office in Room 516 in the Chicago Opera House Building (located at Clark and Washington streets, demolished). Tabor also placed ads in the *Chicago Tribune* and other local newspapers. His illustrated ads boasted 40 ready-to-build designs for single- or multi-family use. Also located in the Opera House Building in Room 512 was C. N. Loucks & Co., a real estate firm run by Charles N. Loucks. Loucks eventually hired Tabor to work as the firm’s in-house architect.

In October, 1889, Loucks commissioned Tabor to build the elaborate Queen Anne-style mansion on Keeler Avenue (formerly Irving Ave.) to serve as a showpiece for prospective clients. A few brief articles appear in the mid-1890s mention Tabor’s contribution to the city’s real-estate developments, such as 36 single-family homes near 72nd St. and Eggleston Ave. Whether these were ever built is unknown. Tabor remained in Chicago until after the turn of the century, then relocated to Brooklyn, New York, and formed the C. H. Tabor Land Improvement Company. His firm continued to design homes for real estate developments in the New York area well into the 1950s.

**Building Design and Construction**

The Charles N. Loucks House is a handsome two-story Queen Anne-style house located on a double lot in the 3900-block of N. Keeler Avenue. It was designed in 1889 by Clarence H. Tabor of the Tabor Building Plan Co.

The house is constructed of orange pressed brick on the first story and wood-frame construction used for the second story, with a cross-gable roof with flat-roof dormers possessing small clear panes. The second story is clad with cedar shingles. The front gable has an oriel attic window with small clear panes, tucked under a pediment with applied metal ornament. The second-story window below is made with stained glass framed with a wood cornice and dentil. The gable is trimmed with carved wood eaves. On the side elevations, the building has two-story projecting bays with semi-circular tripartite windows with small clear panes. The entire house sits on a raised foundation made of limestone.
The most visually-distinctive feature of the Loucks House is its 2-1/2-story turret with an elliptical roof at the building’s southeast corner. The turret has six double-hung windows in which the upper panes are fixed and made from brightly-colored beveled and leaded glass in floral designs. The roof of the turret is pierced with four square windows with small clear panes, each punctuated by triangular window hoods with applied metal ornament. The turret is topped with a copper cap.

The building’s highly-ornamental verandah spans the width of the front of the house, except for the turret, and has a plethora of beaded spindle work, carved columns and arches, accented by a large swan’s neck pediment with applied metal ornament. The house possesses unusually fine physical integrity for its age.

Charles N. Loucks (1855-1950) was from Menasha, Wisconsin, and part of the second wave of land development to Irving Park (the first wave of development was in the 1860s and 70s, only to slow due to the Panic of 1873.) Loucks originally came to Chicago in 1880, but moved to Irving Park five years later. He appears in city directories as a realtor, and by 1888 C. N. Loucks & Co. was actively engaged in developing vacant lots in and around Irving Park. His office was in Room 512 in the Chicago Opera House Building. Loucks hired Clarence H. Tabor as his firm’s in-house architect and had him design an extravagant “model home” that he would eventually own. In 1891, Tabor issued a second edition of *Tabor’s Modern Homes* (the first edition was published in 1889), in which a rendering of the Loucks House appears as Design No. 2, at a cost of $7,500.

Clarence H. Tabor (c. 1857-?) was an architect in the Chicago area in the 1880s and 90s, also with offices in the Chicago Opera House Building. He was not a member of the Illinois Society of Architects, but listed himself (not his company) as an architect in city directories. His ads appeared sporadically in newspapers and were conveyed in the same manner. It is presumed that his Tabor’s business relationship with Loucks was first established by his firm’s proximity to Loucks’ real estate firm, C. N. Loucks & Co, in the Opera House Building.

In 1895, Loucks was appointed Chief Clerk of the Department of Street Engineers for the City of Chicago before dabbling in politics. The following year, he made an unsuccessful bid for City Council hoping to become Irving Park’s alderman. In 1897, Loucks moved his family out of the house, but continued working as a real estate developer until the 1920s or 30s. He died in 1950 at the age of 95.

The Charles N. Loucks House is an orange-rated building in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1984.

### The Queen Anne Architectural Style

The Loucks House is an extraordinary example of the Queen Anne style. The style was eclectic and highly popular for domestic architecture built between the late 1860s and 1890s in England and America. Although named after the early 18th-century queen, the Queen Anne style as originally conceived in England in the 1860s and 70s was based more closely on country house and cottage
The Charles N. Loucks House is a fine example of the Queen Anne architectural style. Other examples of the style include the Chicago Landmark Frederick Schock House (above) and Fredrick Beeson House and Coach House (middle), both in the 5800-block of W. Midway Park; and the Dr. Wallace C. Abbott House (below) in the 4600-block of N. Hermitage Ave.
architecture of the earlier Elizabethan and Jacobean periods of the late 16th and 17th centuries. As adapted by American architects, the Queen Anne style is a visually rich and diverse style.

Queen Anne-style buildings can range from elaborate multi-towered mansions and commercial buildings with a plethora of applied ornament, to simply-planned and detailed smaller houses and cottages. What unifies these diverse buildings are a dependence on asymmetrical composition and a wide array of decorative forms, materials and textures. Architectural features can include towers, turrets, tall chimneys, projecting pavilions, porches, bays and encircling verandahs. Ornament can be in wood, metal, terra cotta, or stone, and range from the simplest wooden spindle work to elaborate terra cotta and pressed-metal details.

Fine surviving examples of the style include the Dr. Wallace Abbott House at the 4600-block of N. Hermitage, as well as the Beeson House and Frederick Schock House on the 5800-block of W. Midway Park, all designated Chicago Landmarks.

**Later History**

Built in 1889, the Charles N. Loucks House remains largely unchanged. The building’s slate roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles, and the side porch was enclosed sometime during the 1920s. A stand-alone two-car garage with paneled accordion-style doors and cedar-shingled parapet was built in 1927 on the northwest corner of the property, along with a brick privacy wall along the alley behind the house. The wall, which also dates from the 1920s was dismantled and rebuilt recently. The wrought-iron fence that spans over the driveway has both new and historic elements. A rear octagonal “greenhouse,” was added recently.

Over time the Loucks House changed owners, and although the interior was divided into at least two apartments around World War II, the exterior remained virtually unchanged. In 1982, Jack and Elizabeth Wilson purchased the Loucks House, and spent years researching and rehabilitating the house back into a single-family residence. The current owners, Terry McGuire and Sharon Graham, purchased the Loucks House in 2000, and have maintained the house in fine condition.

**Criteria for Designation**

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for landmark designation,” as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Charles N. Loucks House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.
Clockwise from top left: A view of the Loucks House verandah; Elliptical roof on the building's turret; Oriel attic window and pediment with pressed metal ornament; Leaded-glass window in the turret with a floral design.
**Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City’s History**

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

- The Charles N. Loucks House exemplifies the variety of residential architecture designs produced through the mail-order pattern book method. It also demonstrates the important role pattern-book house design played in early neighborhood development, in the city’s heritage.

- The Loucks house represents the Irving Park neighborhood’s late stage of development as one of Chicago’s “railroad suburbs” in the 19th century.

**Criterion 4: Important Architecture**

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

- The Charles N. Loucks House is an exceptional example of 19th-century mail-order pattern-book architecture, a design and distribution method popularly used in suburban development.

- The Loucks House is an excellent example of residential architecture in the Queen Anne style, an architectural style of great significance in the history of Chicago and the United States. It possesses numerous features characteristic to the style, including its elaborately-carved spindle work, leaded glass windows, pressed-metal details and its 2-1/2-story turret with an elliptical roof.

- The Loucks House possesses a high quality of design, building materials and excellent craftsmanship.

**Integrity Criteria**

*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, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.*

The Charles N. Loucks 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 a majority of all exterior materials, features and detailing.

Changes to the Loucks House are minor and include the replacement of the original slate roof with asphalt shingles and a small rear addition attached to the southwest corner of the house.

**Significant Historical and Architectural Features**

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant
Counterclockwise from top right: Ornately-carved columns and spindlework details accent the Loucks House verandah; Additional examples of the colored and leaded-glass windows in the turret; The house has a wrought-iron fence and garage. The garage dates to 1927. While the fence has historic portions, the arch is believed not to be original.
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 the Charles N. Loucks House, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building, and historic fencing on the property.

**SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY**


Cook County Recorder of Deeds. Land records for the Loucks House.


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Illustrations
From Chamberlin, Chicago and its Suburbs: p 5.
From Chicago Daily Tribune (Classifieds) 1 March 1891: p. 9 (top right).
Collection of Terry McGuire and Sharon Graham: Cover, pp. 9 (mid.); photos by James Gregorio: pp. 3 (top), 14 (mid. left), 16 (top left, mid. left).
Commission on Chicago Landmarks: pp. 2, 12, 14 (top, mid. right, bot.), 16 (top right, bot. left, bot. right).
Irving Park Historical Society: p. 6 (top).
From Posada, “Suburb into Neighborhood: The Transformation of Urban Identity on Chicago’s Periphery”: p. 6 (bot.).
From Tabor’s Modern Homes: [1889 ed.] p. 9 (top left); [1891 ed.] pp. 3 (bot.), 9 (bot.).
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