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Janesville, Wisconsin: Janesville Historic Commission, 2005

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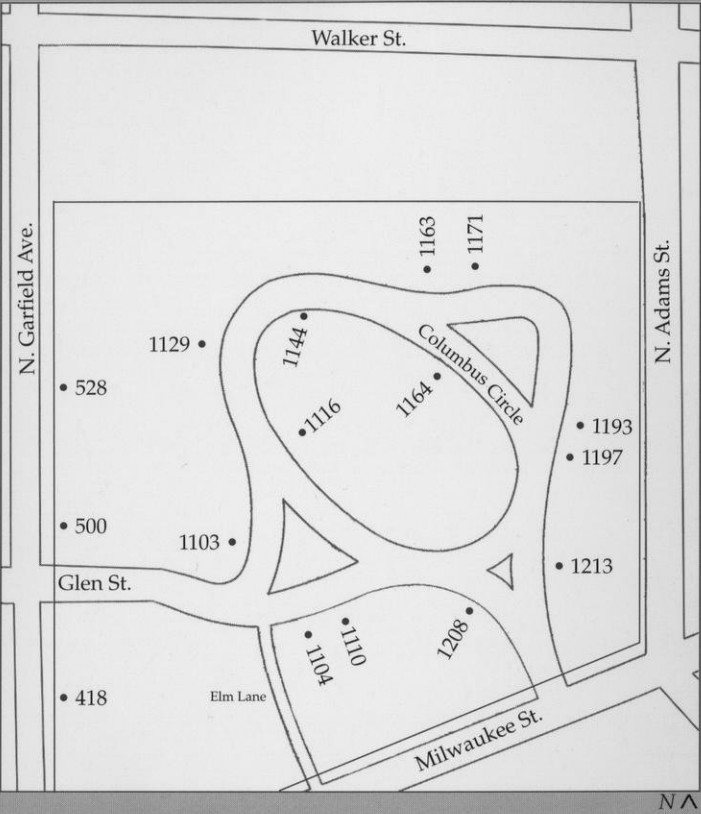


The
Columbus Circle
Historic District



A Guide

Columbus Circle
Historic District Tour Map



Historic District Tour Sites •
Historic District Boundary —

The Columbus Circle Historic District: *A Guide*

Prepared
by
Landscape Research
for
The Janesville Historic Commission
Janesville, Wisconsin

2005



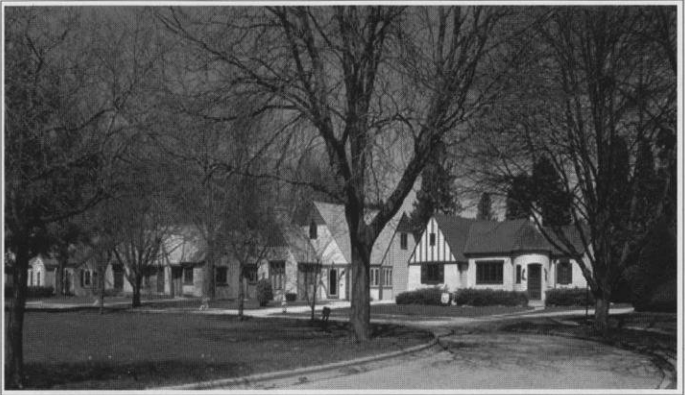


The Parkwood streets when completed will open up a new section of the city that promises to become a popular residence district.

Janesville Gazette Annual Review, January 16, 1926

*Opposite:
Parkwood Addition to Janesville
Parker Pen Co., 1916
C.V. Kerch, C.E., surveyor*

Columbus Circle Historic District

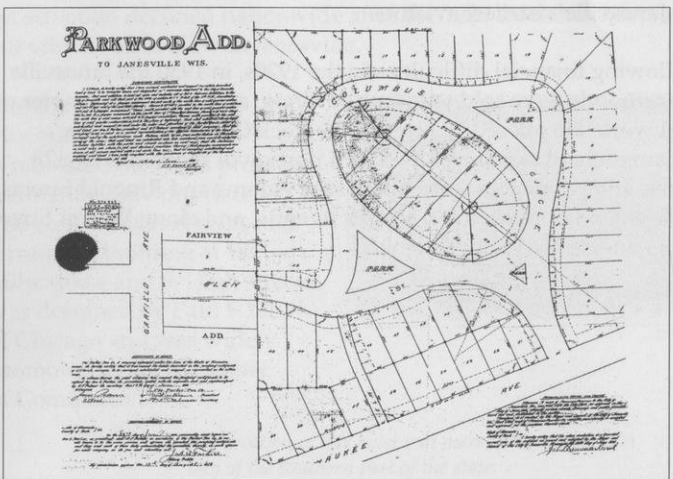


The Columbus Circle Historic District is a residential enclave arranged around the oval of Columbus Circle and three small park triangles. Developed in 1916 by the Parker Pen Company of Janesville as the Parkwood Addition, it is one of the city's distinctive exceptions to the grid-plan street layout. The small parks are neighborhood centerpieces, and building lots are turned away from the heavily traveled East Milwaukee Street and North Garfield Avenue. Columbus Circle is evidence of the strength of Janesville's middle-class housing market during the economic boom of the 1920s.



The 60 lots of the Parkwood Addition were laid out at the south edge of the Janesville Fairgrounds. It was nearly ten years, however, before the first houses were built here and in the adjoining Garfield Addition. Paving and lighting were installed in the mid-1920s, and many elms were planted throughout the area.

Most of the houses of Columbus Circle were completed between 1925 and 1935. They include a variety of the architectural styles popular in Janesville in the early 20th century. Colonial, Tudor, Mediterranean, and other revival styles were chosen by builders, along with a few Bungalows and Foursquare houses.





The Parkwood and Garfield additions and the fairgrounds shown on the Atlas and Plat Book of Rock County, Wisconsin (1929)

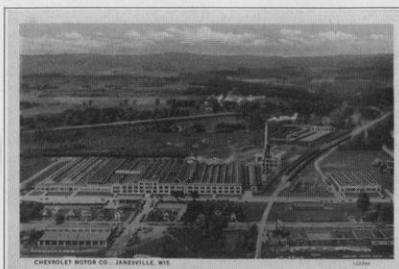
The Parkwood Addition has long been a neighbor of the Rock County 4-H Fairgrounds, which occupy a portion of the old Janesville Fairgrounds.

The Rock County Agricultural Society and Mechanics Institute was founded in 1851 and was the first such organization in Wisconsin. Rock County and Janesville fairs were held at several locations in the city, and by the 1880s the Janesville Fair was operating on a 47-acre tract on Milwaukee Street (shown on the map above). The grounds eventually featured a one-mile racetrack, a covered grandstand, barns, and a judging pavilion. Early 20th-century fairs offered horse racing and a variety of entertainment including appearances by Janesville's earliest aviators.



Following financial difficulties in the 1920s, in 1930 the Janesville Fairgrounds were sold to Joseph A. Craig, a long-time promoter of 4-H work. He offered 19 acres to the Rock County 4-H clubs. Adams School was developed on a portion of the remaining 28 acres, and residences were built along Adams and Ringold Streets, now extended north to St. Mary's Avenue, and along Walker Street to its intersection with Ringold.

Above: at the fairgrounds, ca. 1935



Chevrolet Motor Co., ca. 1930

Motors. Thousands of jobs were added to the city during the expansion of the GM Chevrolet plant during the 1920s.

Another very successful business in the 1920s was the Parker Pen Company, which grew from a small company started by George S. Parker in the mid-1880s. Parker called his fountain pen the Lucky Curve, and incorporated the company in 1892 with W. P. Palmer and C. Bassett. By 1930, the firm had over 700 employees, and through the 20th century continued international growth as a manufacturer of high-quality fountain and ball pens.

The city's strong industrial base resulted in a surge of housing construction in the 1920s. Much of it was intended for factory workers and the many new plant managers and supervisors, as well as those associated with new commercial and retail businesses. In 1929, 141 dwellings were completed, over double the total of 59 built in 1926, which had also been a record year. Housing construction declined nationwide after the 1929 stock market crash, but with a softer blow in Janesville.

The completion of the Monterey Hotel in 1930 symbolized the city's progress during the previous decade. The well-furnished brick and terra-cotta building at W. Milwaukee and S. High streets was designed by Paul F. Olsen of Chicago and was widely promoted by the Chamber of Commerce.

Columbus Circle was developed during a period of great economic growth in Janesville and surrounding Rock County. Janesville's late 19th-century economy was founded on a strong implement manufacturing industry that expanded by 1918 to include General

While there have not been any additions to the industries of the city of any great moment, the factories here have enjoyed a year of almost unprecedented prosperity . . . more individual houses have gone up since January 1, 1926 than ever before in the history of the city.

Janesville Gazette, January 15, 1927

Despite the Great Depression, houses for both workers and the middle class were also built during the 1930s as Janesville seemed to weather the Depression better than most communities, probably because the GM plant continued to operate and unionization gave workers better wages and more job stability.

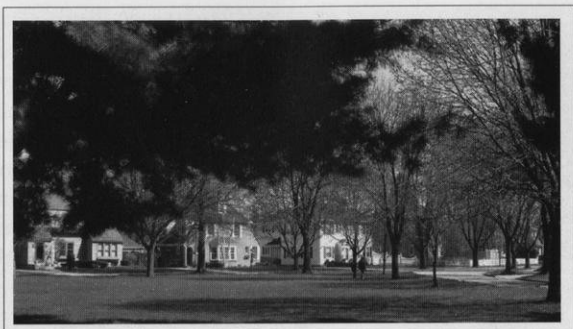
Columbus Circle National Register Nomination (2004)



Den Adler

The erection of this hotel will make it the convention city of the southern part of the state.

Janesville Daily Gazette, January 11, 1930



Columbus Circle boasted 27 new houses by 1930, and several attorneys, a physician, and a drugstore owner and their families were among its first residents. The Janesville post office superintendent, a hardware store owner, and several auto plant managers were also early builders. With few exceptions, most were natives of Wisconsin, Illinois, or Michigan. One exception was Amos Rehberg, a shoe and clothing merchant, who was born in Germany. In 1930, at least 13 families had young children, including Arthur Bergman, the widowed father of four sons. At least five families employed a live-in maid. Today there are 40 houses on the Circle, and 72 in the historic district.

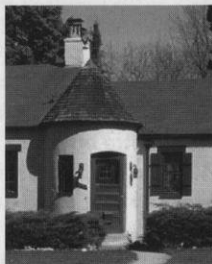
The Columbus Circle neighborhood has developed a strong sense of place in part because of its historic landscape design. Such park-like subdivision planning—featuring curving streets and small neighborhood parks—became nationally popular in the late 19th century. Columbus Circle's



park triangles have been the focus of many neighborhood parties and other events over the years. The elms planted in the first years of development resulted in a dense canopy that was lost to Dutch Elm Disease in the 1970s. Residents later replanted with a variety of new trees.

Period Revival Styles in Janesville

A national interest in the architectural styles associated with America's Colonial past began in the late 19th century. While some architects created expensive, exact replicas of 18th-century houses, plan books of the early 20th century offered the public many revival renditions of Colonial and Georgian styles, including the popular "Cape Cod." Hip, gambrel, or gable roofs, shingle or clapboard siding, multi-paned sash, decorative moldings, and prominent entries crowned with pediments were among typical features. Picturesque English Tudor, Spanish Colonial, and Spanish and Mediterranean designs were also popular. The revival of English styles incorporated half-timbering, rustic brick walls, and steeply pitched roofs, while wrought iron trim and bands of arched windows referred to Spain. Conical roofs and slender windows suggested domestically-scaled French castles.



1171 Columbus Circle

Columbus Circle Historic District



Varieties of Period Revival doorways in the Columbus Circle Historic District



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for You in 1927**

Janesville is on the edge of most inspiring growth. Commercial activities and increases assure a large influx of families in this city during the next few months. It is an outlook that is both bright and healthy.

Already there is a great scarcity of homes available in this city. Each day demands for comfortable living quarters are greater, those who have been renting in the city have come to realize that they must own their own home to be assured of a place to reside. Then, too, there are the innumerable advantages of home owning. The great saving of rent money which is now entirely lost by those who do not own their home. The possibility of choosing the type of home you desire to live in and not the least in the comfort and satisfaction that is yours in knowing that YOUR OWN HOME will not be taken from you.

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1407 Sharon St. Janesville, Wis.

Janesville Daily Gazette, January 15, 1927

Willis, and Simonsen & Huggins were among other Janesville construction firms.

The Colonial Revival style was the most popular with the builders of Columbus Circle, and there are many variations including the gambrel-roofed Dutch Colonial. Several English cottages especially stand out, and English Tudor influences are seen in the many steeply-pitched roofs of other houses. Spanish and Mediterranean influences are evident on two houses built in 1927, and two others are French-inspired. At the interior, the millwork and trim sometimes reflected the house exterior, and a matching garage was often part of the package.



1129 Columbus Circle

Well-designed houses that appealed to smaller, usually servantless households became especially popular after World War I. In Janesville, plans for smaller Period Revival style houses were advertised by local builders and the *Janesville Gazette*. Another source was Sears, Roebuck & Co., as well as the Architects' Small House Service Bureau Inc., which provided architect-designed plans and specifications. Such readily-available plans were probably the source of most of the designs in the historic district. Parkwood Realty Co. built at least five of the houses, and Severson & Schlintz, T. S.

COLUMBUS CIRCLE



1103
Paul and
Agnes Taylor
1927

The red brick Taylor house is exemplary of the Dutch Colonial Revival style. A small fanlight accents the gambrel peak of the sunroom ell, and four groups of paired columns support the gable-roofed overhang at the entry. In 1930, the household included the Taylors and their 11-year-old niece and 5-year-old nephew.



1116
J. Glenn and
Nellie McWilliams
1928

Tudor Revival features of the McWilliams house include the half-timber and stucco-clad second story, and a round-arched recessed entry. Curved boards on the front wall of the projecting ell accent the vertical half-timbering. John Glenn McWilliams was a lawyer; he and his wife were both natives of Wisconsin.



1129
George and
Isabel Smiley
1927

Among Mediterranean Revival features of the Smiley house are the round-arched, multi-light openings decorated with brick surrounds. An entry piazza is bounded by a brick wall capped with stone. George Smiley was a mason.

COLUMBUS CIRCLE



1144

Owen and
Thea Skavlem
1929



The French-inspired Skavlem house features a bay with a metal hip roof and an entry decorated with an irregular tabbed stone surround. There is also a matching one-story garage. Owen was a hardware store owner. The household in 1930 included the Skavlem's two sons, 9-year-old John and 5-year-old Edward.



1163

Henry and Ruth Dedrick
ca. 1927



This Tudor Revival-inspired design is perhaps the most picturesque building in the historic district. The wood-shingled roof flares upward at each gable peak, suggesting an English cottage with a thatched roof. The entry pavilion features decorative half-timbering. Windows are primarily multi-light casements with prominent wooden lintels. Harry was a grocer.



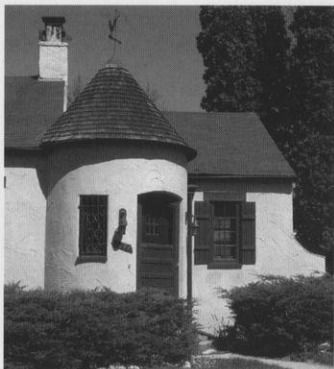
1164

Addison and
Ruth Haugan
1927



The Haugan house reflects Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. The exterior is clad with "weathered" tan bricks. A round-arched entrance and French doors are distinctive features, as are the slender second-story doors that are decorated with a wrought-iron balconet. Addison Haugan was a bond salesman.

COLUMBUS CIRCLE



1171

Lloyd and Winifred Carpenter
ca. 1930



French influence is evident in the half-timber decoration and flared corners of the Carpenter house. The ell windows have decorative “rustic” shutters, while the central window group features a prominent flat lintel. The entry is placed in a round, conical-roofed tower that has a slender multi-light window and an arched, wood-paneled door. Carpenter was a cleaner and dyer, and Winifred was a bookkeeper at the Parker Pen Company.



1193

Robert and
Jane Harper
1927



The very steeply-pitched hip roof of this house extends down to cover the sides of the second story. In keeping with its English influence, the roof shape also suggests thatch. The exterior is clad in dark brick laid in a subtle checkerboard pattern. Harper was an electrical contractor; in 1930 the household included 5-year-old Ruth.



1197

Albert T. and
Jennie Curler
1928

The Columbus Circle Historic District National Register nomination calls this the “best example of the Colonial Revival style” in the district. In 1930 the household included Jennie Curler, her son Albert, and her brother, William Wheeler. Albert (age 33) was a bookkeeper at General Motors.

COLUMBUS CIRCLE



1204
Marshall and
Bessie Honeysett
1928



The tan brick exterior of this Tudor Revival house is decorated with random-laid stones. A pair of second-story windows under a semi-elliptical arch are decorated with a wrought-iron balconet. The shape of the one-story garage ell suggests a thatched flat roof. Honeysett was a manager for the Drive Away Corporation.



1210
George and
Marguerite Geffs
1925

The Geffs house is a classic Dutch Colonial, with a gambrel roof, central entry, and multi-paned sash. George Geffs, a native of Illinois, was an attorney with Geffs and Fox. In 1930, in addition to Marguerite, the household included 4-year-old Robert, and Elizabeth Helvig, a maid.



1213
George and
Doris Metcalf
1928

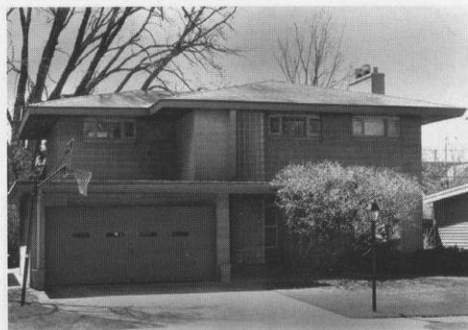
This Dutch Colonial house has an steeply-pitched central dormer, an eclectic touch on the double-sloped gambrel roof. George Metcalf was a physician. In 1930 the family included two children and a boarder, Dr. George Bartels.

GLEN STREET



1104
Margaret Enright
1931

The Enright house exhibits features of the Georgian Revival style, including round-arched, fanlight-style openings in the gable ends and a dentil course along the eaves. In 1930, Margaret Enright (age 58) headed a family of her three sisters, including Rosemary, Josephine, and Julia Enright. Rosemary worked for the Janesville Public Schools and Josephine was a bookkeeper.



1110
Ellis Jensen
1942



This concrete block house was one of the last additions to the Parkwood Addition. The Moderne style influences of the 1930s and 40s are evident in the plain details, shallow hip roof, and a projecting glass block window.



1208
Amos and Grace Rehberg
1928



This Tudor Revival house has a steeply-pitched gable roof and the eaves curve in "eyebrows" above the second-story windows. The main entry is decorated with a cornice, frieze, and pilasters. Amos Rehberg was born in Germany and operated Amos Rehberg Co., a shoe and clothing store. Grace Rehberg was a Wisconsin native.

N. GARFIELD AVENUE



418

Alex and Nellie McCulloch
ca. 1926

The McCulloch house has the pedimented entry and fanlights that are hallmarks of the Colonial Revival style. In 1930 the household included the retired McCullochs and their two daughters. Margaret worked as a dry goods store clerk and Fannie was a bookkeeper.



500

Andrew and Mary Walter
c. 1890

This house is of special interest because it predates most of those in the Garfield and Parkwood additions. Andrew Walter, its owner in 1890, was a native of Scotland. He worked as a laborer at the Rock County Sugar Company.



528

Harrison and Irene Rex
1926



Colonial Revival features of the Rex house include window sash with divided lights and a central entry flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a fanlight transom. Two columns support the gable roof that shelters the entry. Rex, a native of Indiana, was a Janesville minister.

Balconet

A guard rail fronting a window; often has the appearance of a small balcony.

Balconet



Dentil Molding

One of a series of closely spaced, rectangular blocks that form a molding. The dentil molding usually projects below the cornice.

Frieze

A panel below the upper molding or cornice of a wall.

Gable

The wall under the end of a pitched roof, typically with a triangular shape.

Gable Roof

A pitched roof with a gable at each end.

Gambrel Roof

A ridged roof with two slopes on either side, the lower slope having the steeper pitch. The gambrel is sometimes flared beyond the front and rear of the house and forms a deep overhang.

Half Timber

Exposed wood framing, infilled with plaster, stucco, brick, or stone. Modern half-timbering is usually applied to the wall surface.

Hip Roof

A roof with four sloped sides.

Lintel

A supporting wood or stone beam across the top of an opening, such as that of a window or door.

Light

The opening between mullions in a window; most often, panes.

Parapet

A low wall at the edge of a roof or other feature.

Pavilion

A prominent, usually central portion of the facade that is identified by its projection, height, and special roof forms.

Pediment

A triangular gable across a portico, door or window; any similar triangular decorative piece over a doorway.

Pilaster

A shallow, usually rectangular column projecting slightly from a wall.

Quoin

Dressed stones at a corner of the building.

Transom

A window above a door, or a horizontal crossbar in a window or between a door and a window.

The Columbus Circle National Register nomination (2004), prepared by Carol Lohry Cartwright, is among sources for this guide. U.S. census schedules (1900-1930) provided additional information about early residents. Copies of the nomination are available at the Janesville Community Development Department, 18 N. Jackson St. (608) 755-3107. Information about Period Revival and other architectural styles can be found in Lee McAlester and Virginia McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Knopf, 1986); see also Richard Guy Wilson, *The Colonial Revival House* (New York: Abrams, 2004). There are a number of reprints of 1920s plan books, including Gordon Van-Tine, *117 House Designs of the Twenties* (New York: Dover, 1992). For information about Janesville's historic preservation programs, contact the Janesville Historic Commission, 18 N. Jackson St., (608) 755-3107.



Prepared by Carole Zellie of Landscape Research LLC, St. Paul, Minnesota for the Janesville Historic Commission. Photographs by Art Wendt unless noted. Historic photographs are courtesy of the Rock County Historical Society, Janesville, and the Hedberg Public Library's Historical Janesville Postcard Collection (hedbergpubliclibrary.org). The assistance of Judith Adler, Maurice Montgomery, and Melissa de Bie is gratefully acknowledged.

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