

Bryan Lathrop House
(Now The Fortnightly Club of Chicago)
120 East Bellevue Place
North side of the street near Lake Shore Drive
Chicago
Cook County
Illinois

HABS No. ILL-1037

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16-CHIG,
40-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
801 - 19th Street N.W.
Washington, D.C.

BRYAN LATHROP HOUSE
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Location: 120 East Bellevue Place; north side of the street near Lake Shore Drive; Chicago, Cook County, Illinois.

Present Owner and Occupant: The Fortnightly Club of Chicago.

Present Use: Clubhouse.

Statement of Significance: A notable example of neo-Georgian Architecture in Chicago, the house was designed by McKim, Mead and White for Bryan Lathrop, a Chicago philanthropist and cultural leader.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of the property: Lot 5 of Palmer and Borden's Re-subdivision of lots 15, 16, and 18 in Block 1 of Palmer's Lake Shore Drive addition to Chicago of Canal Trustees Subdivision of south fractional section 3-39-14, recorded April 20, 1886.

The following is based on the chain of title contained in Book 421, pp. 239-41, in the Cook County Recorder's Office: On December 10, 1890, Potter Palmer, owner of the property entered into an agreement with Bryan Lathrop (Document 1386887). Palmer was still owner of the land as of his inventory on July 24, 1902 (Document P66/248). The deed was transferred from Honore Palmer et al. to William Byrne on March 9, 1925 (Document 8804876). The Fortnightly of Chicago began meeting there in 1923, however, they are not mentioned in the book until June 1, 1927 (Document 9932026). The property has since had a complex ownership, involving various trust companies and individuals, however, the Fortnightly of Chicago reports that they are the present owners.

2. Date of erection: 1891-93.
3. Architect: McKim, Mead and White (principally the work of Charles Follen McKim).
4. Original plans, construction, etc.: From the original Building Permit #2875, dated August 4, 1891, in Book H, July 1891 - April 1894: 3-story dwelling, 68' front, 40'

deep, 50' high, cost of permit, \$13.60. The following description is from Alfred Hoyt Cranger, Chicago Welcomes You (Chicago: A. Kroch, 1933), p. 149:

"Bellevue Place has always been a favorite residential district and immediately west of the Borden Chateau, such is the incongruity of our American individualism, stands the most perfect piece of Georgian architecture in Chicago, the personal design of Charles McKim for his great friend, the late Bryan Lathrop. During Mr. Lathrop's lifetime this quiet, dignified house contained many art treasures, notably his famous collection of Whistler etchings. Today it is the home of the Fortnightly Club, the most truly highbrow of many women's organizations of this amazing city. The members of this club appreciate the architectural value of their home and all the necessary alterations to convert it from a residence to a clubhouse were carried out by a former pupil of Charles McKim in the spirit of the original design."

5. Additions and alterations: The building has had few alterations; most of its original architectural character is preserved. When the Fortnightly Club took over the building, a ballroom and kitchen were added to the rear of the original house (Building Permit A71882, dated October 4, 1922).

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The house was completed just before the opening of the World's Columbian Exhibition of 1893. Charles McKim was responsible for the design of the Agricultural Building at the Fair, and came to Chicago in February of 1891 to inspect the grounds /Charles Moore, The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929)/. The 1893 Fair was probably instrumental in bringing McKim and Lathrop together.

The following is a biographical sketch of Bryan Lathrop from Edward Fitzsimmons Dunne, Illinois, the Heart of the Nation (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1933), v. 4, p. 43:

"Bryan Lathrop, who died May 13, 1916, was a wealthy, generous, and public spirited citizen to whom the people of the city were indebted during his life time and since for his constructive work in behalf of several of Chicago's cultural and philanthropic institutions.

"He was born at Alexandria, Virginia, August 6, 1844, and came to Chicago in 1865. During his early career he was identified with the real estate business, and later as a manager and trustee of estates and as an investment banker.

"Mr. Lathrop had a prominent part in the movement to place the Theodore Thomas Orchestra on a permanent basis, and for a number of years was president of the Chicago Symphony Orchestral Association. He was also president of the Chicago Relief and Aid Society and was a trustee of the Chicago Art Institute and Newberry Library. He married a daughter of Judge Asa O. Aldis.

"It was probably due to the fact that Helen Aldis Lathrop, the wife of Bryan Lathrop, was a member of the Fortnightly Club that the organization secured the building for its permanent clubhouse in 1923, on the 50th anniversary of its founding. The Club was founded in April 1873 by Mrs. Kate Newell Doggett and incorporated on June 22, 1886. Mrs. Lathrop became a member in 1879.

(Information based on material in "Fortnightly Club of Chicago." Misc. pamphlets Chicago Historical Society Library.)"

C. Bibliography:

- Dunne, Edward Fitzsimmons. Illinois, The Heart of the Nation. Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1933. v. 4, p. 43.
- Drury, John. Old Chicago Houses. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1941. pp. 146-149.
Photograph and article on the house.
- Etchings and Lithographs by James McNeil Whistler. From the collection of Bryan Lathrop. Chicago: R. R. Donnelly & Sons Co., 1912. 15 pp. Catalogue for exhibit at Newberry Library in 1912.
- Granger, Alfred Hoyt. Chicago Welcomes You. Chicago: A. Kroch, 1933. p. 149.
Granger was a Chicago architect (1867-1939).
- Moore, Charles. The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1929.

"Residence of Bryan Lathrop and of Robert W. Patterson, Chicago.
McKim, Mead and White, architects," Inland Architect, Vol.
24 (September, 1894). pl. fol. p. 20.
Early photograph.

Prepared by Larry J. Homolka
Historian
J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July 1964

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is one of the few houses built in Chicago from designs by the New York architectural firm of McKim, Mead and White.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: 68' (7 bay) front, 40' deep (original size); later addition to rear approximately doubles first floor area; three-and-a-half stories over a raised basement; basically rectangular with curved projecting bays.
2. Foundation: Limestone.
3. Wall construction: Brick bearing wall. On south (front) and east walls the brick is a dark red Flemish bond with the headers almost black. The north wall is red common brick, also in Flemish bond. West wall is party wall. There are curved projecting bays at either end of the south (front) wall.
4. Porches: Large open limestone porch on south front. The width of the porch carries from the middle of east projecting bay to middle of west projecting bay. Balustrade and steps also of limestone. A balcony appears to have existed in front of central window on third floor, but is now removed.
5. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys serve the fireplaces in the house. Other brick chimneys appear to have been built when the new addition was constructed.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Main door is located in west of three center bays on first floor. It has a double door with transom over. A service entrance is located on the east side of house and goes into the basement.
- b. Windows: Double-hung windows throughout (generally six-over-six). Window frames and glass in round projecting bays curve with radius of bay. Windows on first floor have low wrought-iron railings, flat stone lintels with key stones, and splayed ends.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape: Low hipped roof.
- b. Cornice, eaves: Wooden modillioned and dentilled cornice, and eaves above stone entablature.
- c. Dormer: Small gabled dormer in front in center of house.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: Storage area.
 - b. First floor: Dining room on west front; living room on east front; stair hall, entry, reception hall and former library between these two rooms. A ballroom has been added behind the living room and reception hall. A kitchen has been added to the north of the dining room. An original serving pantry separates the kitchen and dining room.
 - c. Second and third floors: Originally bedrooms and bathrooms for guests and family, now used as Club rooms.
 - d. Attic story: Servants quarters (originally).
2. Stairways: A wide stair leads to a landing between first and second floor and is in line with the offset entrance. A narrower stair continues to the second floor and up to the other levels in this location. A secondary stair is located to the west of the main stair.
3. Flooring: Oak strips with many covered by carpeting.

Entrance hall is now covered with asphalt tile. Oval rug in living room.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wooden panelled living room walls; remainder of house has painted plaster walls.
5. Doorways and doors: Panelled wooden doorways and doors appear to be original. Living room sides of doors to that room have natural finish. Others are painted white or to match room. Doors on first floor into library and living room off of reception hall are double sliding doors.
6. Decorative features and trim: Many delicate moldings (mostly in egg and dart motif), wainscot on first floor finished to match each room.
7. Hardware: Appears to be original brass hardware.
8. Lighting: Electricity.
9. Heating: Central, but a fireplace also exists in each major room.

D. Site and surroundings:

1. General setting and orientation: The building faces south on Bellevue Place in what was originally known as Chicago's "Gold Coast." The area presently has a number of old town-houses which have been converted into apartment houses. Several larger high-rise apartments are being built to the east near Lake Shore Drive.
2. Landscaping and walks: A small grass area exists between the porch and sidewalk on the south front.

Prepared by J. William Rudd
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
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REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

FIELD RECORDS

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