

Hyde Park History

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Hyde Park Houses



JEAN F. BLOCK

An Enduring Gift: Hyde Park Houses Twenty Years Later

By Stephen A. Treffman

Twenty years have passed since The University of Chicago Press published the late Jean Friedberg Block's groundbreaking *Hyde Park Houses: An Informal History, 1856-1910* in the Fall of 1978. It is as well, the tenth anniversary of her death. This presents an opportunity to look back at the significance of this book and at Jean Block's life.

When introduced to the public, *Hyde Park Houses* was characterized by its publisher, on one hand, as a "detailed architectural history of Hyde Park's first fifty years" and, on the other, as "a charming and informative guide to the historical domestic architecture of one of Chicago's oldest neighborhoods." That these are not quite the same things may have reflected some difficulty on the part of this world-class academic press about just how to characterize the book. In fact, it was the first book of its type ever published by the UC Press. The book consists of four distinct sections: first, a general history, with illustrations and maps, of the development and evolution of nineteenth century

Hyde Park-Kenwood; second, photographs by Samuel W. Block Jr. of seventy-six houses as they appeared in 1978, accompanied by a contemporary map showing their locations; third, in an appendix, biographical notes on more than forty architects along with listings of their Hyde Park buildings; and fourth, in a second appendix, a checklist of over nine hundred dwellings in Hyde Park and, where known, their architects and the names and occupations of their original owners organized by streets and street numbers. The book concludes with a bibliographic essay that reflects the wide and unusual range of sources she used and remains instructive to this day.

The book, which had a printing of 10,000 copies, was well-received and found wide distribution. Currently it may be found in at least fifty-five academic, state, and municipal libraries in Illinois alone and may be found in many major libraries throughout the United States. Several years ago, the Hyde Park Historical Society gave copies of the book to public schools in the community and also maintains a copy in its headquarter's library. The Blackstone Library catalog lists eight copies in its collection and The University of Chicago's Regenstein Library has copies at several locations.

As a guide to historic homes in Hyde Park and ➤

