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Chicago Loop's Cowpath at 100 W. Monroe - since 1844.

One of the odder pieces of real estate in Chicago's Loop belongs not to the bulls, or the bears, but to the cows. Much of the Loop we know today was once part of the William or Willard Jones (depending on the source) farm. As the city expanded from its roots around Fort Dearborn (Michigan Avenue at Wacker) he sold off patches of his property to developers. Though this could have made him the city's first real estate mogul, he remained a farmer at heart and needed to make sure his cows has a place to graze. So in 1844 as part of one of his sales, the contract included an easement for cattle to pass from his farmstead to a pasture where the Chicago Board of Exchange was.



November 26, 1932 - This photo shows the cow, Northwood Susan the Sixth, being milked on her arrival at the end of the historic cowpath which can be seen behind her.



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Jones kept one strip 10 feet wide, 177 feet long and 18 feet in height to be used to take his cows from stable to pasture. Of course, neither the farm nor the field exist today, but the cattle path does. In the early 20th century a court ruled that the easement is still legally binding, even though the cows have moved to greener pastures, and thus there are building in the Loop which are build astride, along, and even above this cow trail.



The “cowpath” is located at 100 W. Monroe, Chicago. It’s behind these black metal doors but is not open to the public.