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Hyde Park Township; A Chicago Annexed Neighborhood

Hyde Park Township was founded by Paul Cornell, a real estate speculator and cousin of Cornell University founder Ezra Cornell. He paid for a topographical survey of the lakefront south of the city in 1852. In 1853, following the advice of Senator Stephen Douglas, he bought 300 acres of speculative property between 51st Street and 55th Street. Cornell successfully negotiated land in exchange for a railroad station at 53rd Street setting in motion the development of the first Chicago railroad suburb. This area was 7 miles south of the mouth of the Chicago River and 6 miles south of downtown Chicago.

In the 1850s, Chicago was still a walkable urban area well contained within a 2 miles radius of the center. He selected the name Hyde Park to associate the area with the elite neighborhood of Hyde Park in New York as well as the famous royal park in London. Hyde Park quickly became a popular suburban retreat for affluent Chicagoan's who wanted to escape the noise and congestion of the rapidly growing city. By 1855 he began acquiring large land tracts, which he would subdivide into lots for sale in the 1870s.

The Hyde Park House, an upscale hotel, was built on the shore of Lake Michigan near the 53rd Street railroad station in 1857. For two decades, the Hyde Park House served as a focal point of Hyde Park social life. During this period, it was visited or lived in by many prominent guests, including Mary Todd Lincoln, who lived there with her children for two and a half months in the summer of 1865; shortly after her husband, Abraham Lincoln was assassinated. The Hyde Park House burned down in a fire in 1879. The Sisson Hotel was built on the site in 1918 and was eventually converted into a condominium building (the Hampton House which still stands).

Hyde Park was incorporated in 1861 as an independent township (called Hyde Park Township). Its boundaries were Pershing Road (39th Street) on the north, 138th Street on the south, State Street on the west, and Lake Michigan and the Indiana state line on the east.



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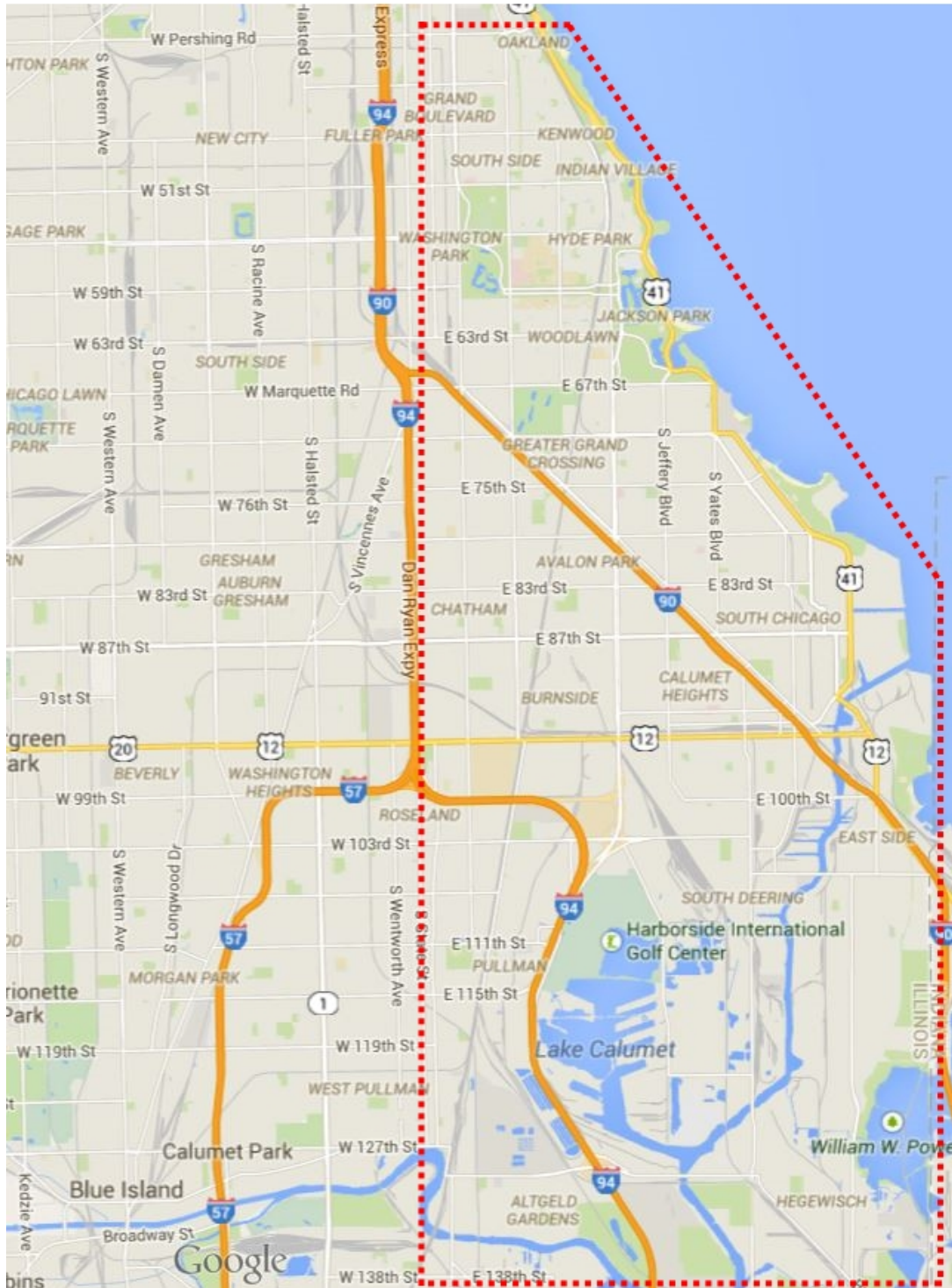
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HYDE PARK TOWNSHIP, ILLINOIS





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In 1837, the City of Chicago incorporated, and by the 1870s the surrounding townships had followed suit. After 1850, Cook County was divided into basic governmental entities, which were designated as townships as a result of the new Illinois Constitution. Illinois's permissive incorporation law empowered any community of 300 resident citizens to petition the Illinois legislature for incorporation as a municipality under a municipal charter with more extensive powers to provide services and tax local residents. Hyde Park Township was created by the Illinois General Assembly in 1861 within Cook County. This empowered the township to better govern the provision of services to its increasingly suburban residents.

Following the June 29, 1889 elections, several suburban townships voted to be annexed to the city, which offered better services, such as improved water supply, sewerage, and fire and police protection. Hyde Park Township, however, had installed new waterworks in 1883 just north of 87th Street. Nonetheless, the majority of township voters supported annexation. After annexation, the definition of Hyde Park as a Chicago neighborhood was restricted to the historic core of the former township, centered on Cornell's initial development between 51st and 55th streets near the lakefront.

Two years after Hyde Park was annexed to the city of Chicago (1891), the University of Chicago was established in Hyde Park through the philanthropy of John D. Rockefeller and the leadership of William Rainey Harper. The University of Chicago eventually grew into one of the world's most prestigious universities, and is now associated with eighty-nine Nobel Prize laureates.

Hyde Park hosted the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The World's Columbian Exposition brought fame to the neighborhood, which gave rise to an inflow of new residents and spurred new development that gradually started transforming Hyde Park into a more urban area.