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Mopetown Neighborhood of Chicago, Illinois

Mopetown was a tiny neighborhood tucked between the Bridgeport and McKinley Park neighborhoods. Its boundaries were from Ashland Avenue on the east to Hoyne Avenue on the west and from 31st Place on the north to 33rd Street on the south. Mopetown grew up as a collection of cottages inside a triangle surrounded by the tracks of the Santa Fe and the Chicago-Alton railroad lines.

The people were Irish, German, Italian, Polish, English and Bohemian people of all kinds lived there. The name came from a German family name that was somehow translated to "Mope". The term "Mope" had nothing to do with the characterization of a Mope - prolonged spells of low spirits or listless apathy.

Mopetown was one of the last places in Chicago to get paved streets and sidewalks.

The death blow to Mopetown came from the construction of the Stevenson Expressway (I-55) which wiped out much of it. The City of Chicago condemned the houses forcing the families to move away. Then they razed the houses, leveled the neighborhood and built the expressway. After the expressway was built, there were six houses left in Mopetown. Then there were four. Then there were two.

Russell Wilkens and his wife, Mary --- the last family --- in the last house in Mopetown moved out in 1990. The Wilkens family had to. One side of their simple wood-frame home at 1845 W. 31st Pl. simply crumbled and collapsed. The old home couldn't remain standing any longer. That was it for the Mopetown neighborhood. It doesn't exist anymore.



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