



Chicago's Southeast Side

Historical
Cultural
Ecological
Environmental
Tour



D. S. TAYLOR,

SOUTH CHICAGO



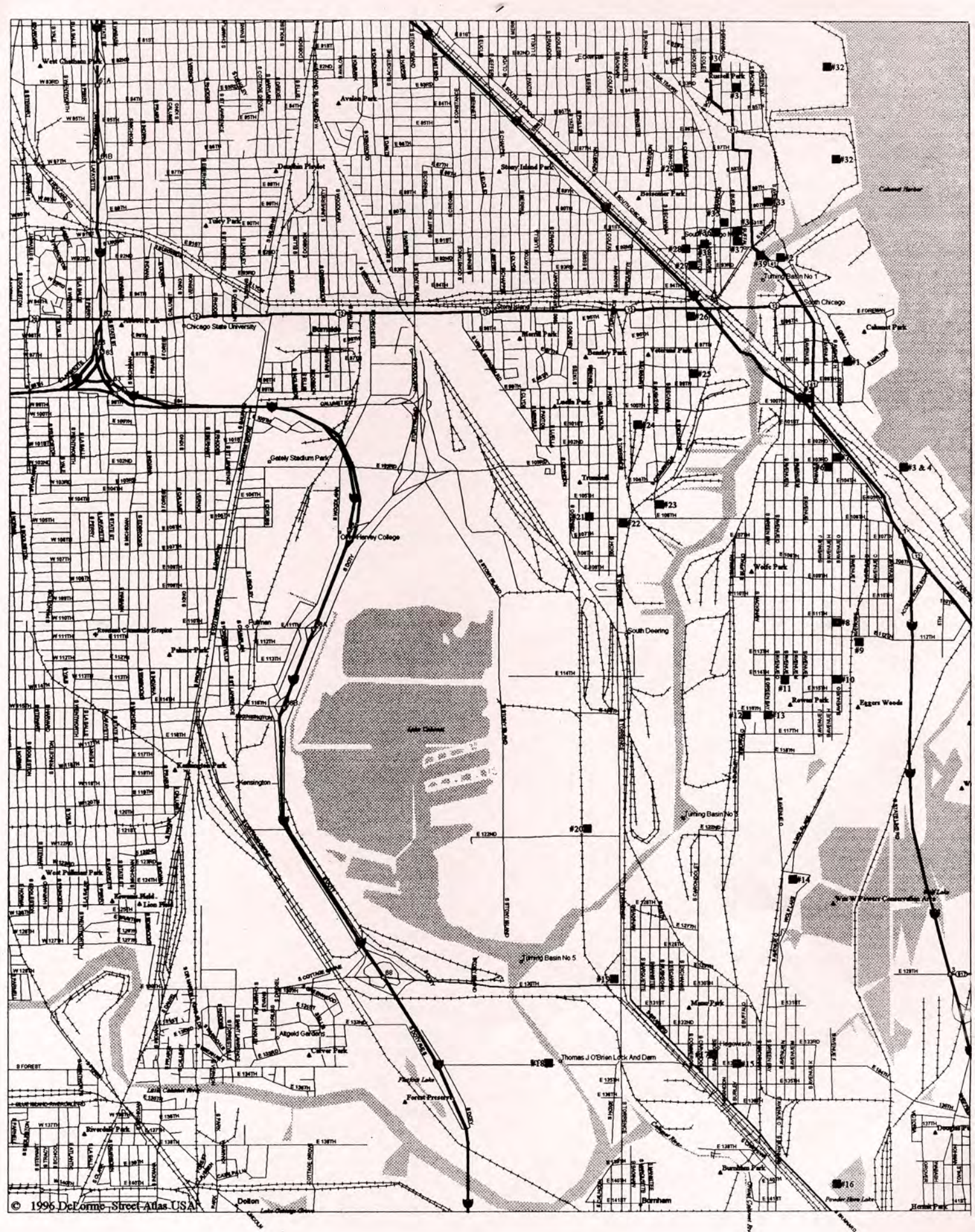
Manufacturing and Residence

PROPERTY.

C.H. VOUTE, Agent. No. 127 Dearborn Street



Prepared by the
Biology
Chemistry
History
Museology
Classes of
Washington High
School





Douglas Taylor, an early real estate developer, lived in this East Side house with his wife who had inherited the property from an uncle. Taylor sold lots for homes in the area north of the Pennsylvania and New York Canals, the land between Lake Michigan and Lake Calumet. Photo: The...

Douglas Taylor House



Von Zirngibl Gravesite

Directions

To sites 1 and 2
 Begin at Calumet Park Field House
 (9801 Avenue G)
 Visit Southeast Historical Museum
 Drive North to exit park at 95th Street North
 (right) on Ewing to 93rd Street
 Right on 93rd Street to Kreiter Avenue
 Check in at main office of Illinois Scrap to
 view gravesite.

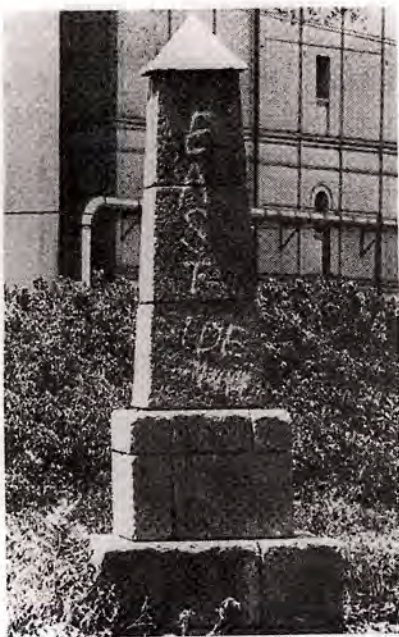
1) Calumet Park Field House / Southeast Historical Museum

The Calumet Park Field House stands approximately on the site formerly occupied by the Douglas Taylor house. Taylor was an early real estate developer who sold lots for houses in the area between Indianapolis Boulevard on the south, 95th street on the north, Ewing Avenue on the west, and Lake Michigan on the east. The field house is an example of neoclassical architecture and is one of the neighborhood's most impressive structures. The Southeast Historical Museum has been located in the fieldhouse since the mid 1980's and houses an extensive collection of materials related to the history of the Southeast Side of Chicago.

The biology class found several species of birds at the park including seagulls, geese, cardinals, and parrots. Students also found the following trees in the park: sugar maple, basswood, American sycamore, eastern cottonwood, and shingle oak. Patrons of the park can swim in Lake Michigan. The rocks that border the lake near the Coast Guard and at the north end of the park have fossils on them.

2) Von Zirngibl Gravesite 1855

The Von Zirngibl Gravesite is located on 92nd street on the river. It has been located there since 1855. "The one armed veteran of Waterloo" was one of the earliest settlers in the Southeast Chicago region. Andreas Von Zirngibl died in 1855 and was buried on land that became prime industrial property. The land is currently the location of a scrap processing operation. That land use now threatens the existence of the grave. The grave was restored in July of 1987. Access to the grave may be impossible if the scrap yard is operating but the grave may be viewed from the back fence next to the railroad tracks.



State Line Boundary Marker

Directions

To sites 3 and 4
 South on Ewing Avenue to 98th Street
 East (left) on 98th Street to Avenue H
 South (right) on Avenue H to 100th Street
 East (left) over the tracks
 Turn right at the first street
 Follow road to entrance of Generating
 Station and the State Line Boundary
 Marker

3) State Line Generating Station 1920's

The State Line Generating Station is a coal burning power plant. It is located on the shores of Lake Michigan on the Illinois Indiana border. The plant has undergone several changes during the past century. The station has a capacity of producing over 424,000 watts. In recent years it was sold by Commonwealth Edison. The plant is a great example of Art Deco Industrial design.

4) State Line Boundary Marker 1830?

The Illinois-Indiana State Boundary Line Marker, is an obelisk believed to be the oldest monument in the Chicago region. The best available information puts the erection of the marker at about 1830, when the state boundary line was resurveyed by order of Congress. The fifteen and one half foot high obelisk stood at the northern end of the line that was the surveyed boundary between Illinois and Indiana. At the time of its creation, it stood near the shore line of Lake Michigan. Over the years it was pretty much forgotten and ignored. It was rediscovered, moved, restored and rededicated by members of the East Side Historical Society (now the Southeast Historical Society) and others. A local member of the Historical Society, Allen J. Benson, member of the East Side Chamber of Commerce, and an employee of Commonwealth Edison Company, influenced his company to sponsor the rehabilitation of the marker, under the joint auspices of the Illinois and Indiana State Historic Preservation agencies, with the active participation of the East Side, Hammond and Whiting-Robertsdale historical societies, the Whiting, Hammond, and EastSide Chambers of Commerce. When finished the monument was imbedded in a seven foot concrete base, was completely refurbished, and was completed with the addition of brass plates which had the original words that were previously chiseled in the soft stone of the marker. The new location is 190 feet from the original site, but still is located on the state line. The marker is under constant watch by the station's security staff. If one looks closely at the stone of the marker, fossils can be seen.

Chemistry students from Washington High School collected soil samples from the immediate site of the monument and tested them for soil nutrients and contaminants. Also the marker was examined to determine if there was damage from acid rain, which is very likely because of the proximity of the coal burning generating plant in the immediate vicinity. The soil samples were unremarkable except for the presence of lead in the soil, which was not found in any of the other sites tested by members of the class. There was evidence of pitting on the marker which is very possibly due to acid deposition from the power plant.



**Bethlehem Lutheran Church
Holy Thursday, 1918**

Directions

To sites 5, 6, and 7

North to 99th Street, west (left) to Ewing Avenue

South to 100th Street and Indianapolis Boulevard

Park on Fitzgibbons Drive next to the East Side Mural along the viaduct if you wish to view the sculpture on the site.

South on Ewing to 103rd Street

East to Avenue G

5) Hummel Square (100th Street & Indianapolis Boulevard)

Hummel Square is named after a famous early East Side resident by the name of Ernst Hummel. It has been the site of various memorials and monuments. The East Side train station was located there in the early years of the century. After the station was moved a WW I cannon served as a veteran's memorial. A welcome center was built on the site for the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition. Currently a tank and veteran's memorial and sculpture, which interprets the history of the area, are on the site. A mural painted by local students is also visible.

6) Bethlehem Lutheran Church (103rd and Avenue H)

Lutherans organized the first church in 1874. The district was then known as Colehour, after a local real estate developer, over a century ago to fill the spiritual needs of a community of devout German-Americans in Colehour. It is the oldest church in the East Side community. Frederick A. Eggers, was the leader who established the church. On March 28, 1918 (Holy Thursday), the second church to occupy the site, was destroyed by a fire. The fire was discovered shortly before one o'clock, spread with great rapidity and within half an hour the entire building was a mass of flames. The firemen, despairing of saving the structure, turned their attention to saving the adjoining buildings. Three firemen were injured in the blaze. The steeple fell at about 2:15 in the afternoon. Amazingly, no one was hurt. A few days later, on Easter Sunday, the congregation resolved to build a new church and school.

7) Colehour House

The Colehour House is located at 10261 S. Avenue H. It is claimed to be the oldest house in the neighborhood. It is estimated that the house dates back to the 1870's. In 1873, Charles Colehour and Douglas Taylor developed an ironworkers subdivision near Silicon Steel Company land on the Calumet River. That same year a railroad station on the Michigan and Southern line opened at 100th street and Ewing Avenue, and Colehour built the Ewing House Hotel (demolished). The style shows a strong vertical emphasis common in Chicago residential architecture of the period.



**View of 112th Street looking west from
Avenue G in the early 1940's**

Directions

To sites 8 and 9

Drive south on Avenue G.

Annunciata Church is located at 111th and Avenue G.

Turn east (left) on 112th Street at the entrance to Eggers Grove Forest Preserve

8) Annunciata Church (111th Street between Avenue G and Avenue H)

Annunciata Church at 111th and Avenue G, was founded by Archbishop Samuel A. Stritch in July 1941. The parish was founded to serve Catholic families who had settled in the 420 acre subdivision known as Fair Elms. Frank J. Lewis, a manufacturer of Coal Tar Products, donated the parish site in his real estate development which was bounded by 108th Street on the north; 114th Street on the south; Green Bay Avenue on the west; and the Illinois Indiana state line on the east. The Servite Fathers began the work of organizing this parish. Rev. Philip M. Philbin, first pastor of Annunciata Church, celebrated mass in a maintenance garage owned by Frank Lewis. Until a small white wooden church was erected at 11131 South Avenue H, mass was celebrated in this garage, beginning on December 21, 1941. Father Philbin also directed the construction of a combination convent and school building which was completed at the southwest corner of 112th and Avenue G. Eight nuns, Servants of Mary from Ladysmith, Wisconsin, opened Annunciata school in September 1949 with an enrollment of 363 children in grades one through six. The parish grew so rapidly that a new church was constructed on 111th St. between Avenues G and H.

9) Eggers Grove Forest Preserve (Entrance at 112th Street and Avenue E)

Eggers Woods is located on 112th Street on Avenue E. It is a forest preserve and therefore covered with trees. It also includes smaller plants such as mosses, shrubs, and wild flowers. In addition, many kinds of birds, insects, and other animals make their home at Eggers Woods. There are many indigenous (native) plants and trees in Eggers Woods. Though plants and trees were here long before the existence of man, there are also some exotic (non native) plants and trees brought here later on by other people from different parts of the world. For example, Garlic Mustard is foreign to this area. It is growing in Eggers Woods and basically taking over a lot of the native forest area. Garlic Mustard is edible before the flower has not grown on top.

Eggers Woods has many different types of trees including Elm, Oak, and Willow trees. American Elm trees grow about 100' (30 m) high and the diameter up to 4' (1.2 m), sometimes even larger. Oak trees range in height from 80-100' (24-30 m) or more with a diameter about 3-4' (0.9-1.2 m). The sizes in Willow trees vary because there are so many different kinds. There is a Ranger Station and a creek. Trails, prairie areas, and picnic areas are also open to the public. But pollution can be a problem. Water drains into the sewer system at 112th St., instead of following its natural drainage pattern into Wolf Lake.



Aerial view of Washington High School in the late 1970's

Directions

To sites 10 and 11

After viewing Eggers Grove, proceed west on 112th Street to Avenue G.

Turn south (left) to 114th Street

St. Simeon Mirotocivi Serbian

Orthodox Church is located at 114th Street and Avenue G

Turn west (right) on Avenue G and

proceed to Washington High School at 3535 East 114th Street.

10) St. Simeon Mirotocivi (114th and Avenue G)

Post World War II Serbian immigrants organized St. Simeon Mirotocivi Serbian Orthodox Church in 1964. They left St. Micheal Archangel Church during a brief schism in the Serbian Orthodox Church, which ended in 1992. The building is a reproduction of the 15th Century Serbian Monastery of Kalenich. The architects are Pavlecic, Kovacevic and Markovich and the style is the Morava school of Serbian Byzantine Architecture.

11) George Washington High School (3535 East 114th Street)

As you drive west on 114th Street there is a definite contrast between various styles and eras of residential architecture. To the right are homes that were primarily built in the post WW II housing boom. There are single family residences, duplexes, and apartment dwellings. To the left are single family houses built in more recent years on land that was once mostly wetlands. In fact, there are numerous protected wetland sites on the outskirts of the area. Many of these wetland areas were filled in with slag from the surrounding mills. There are a variety of housing styles in the area of the East Side ranging from very modest to much more ornate styles. A brief detour along the route takes you to the home built by former Alderman Edward Vrdolyak at 115th and Avenue J.

Washington High School is architecturally significant because it is different from typical Chicago school buildings. It resembles suburban schools built at the same time. It was built at the same time as the suburban boom occurring in the United States in the 1950's. The cornerstone was laid in 1956 and the architects are Perkins and Will, a well known Chicago firm. A recent rehab at the school has taken this historical significance into account. The school opened in 1958 and was originally intended to serve students from the East Side and Hegewisch communities. These students formerly had to travel to Bowen High School or Chicago Vocational High School in South Chicago. In the aerial photo at the top of this page (view toward the east) one can see Washington High School and the surrounding area. To the south (right) are Rowan Park and the wetlands of the area, many of which have now been replaced with residences and a shopping mall. The trees at the top of the photo are part of Eggers Grove Forest Preserve.



Aerial View of Republic Steel c. 1951

Directions

To site 12

Turn left (south) on Avenue O and drive to 116th Street. Turn right to view sculpture at entrance to mill.

12) Republic Steel (along the east bank of the Calumet River 110th Street to 122nd Street)

Republic Steel began as an outgrowth of the Chicago Tack Co., and was built in 1876 in an area known as Grand Crossing. In 1901 they acquired a site at 118th Street and the Calumet River. This was where the first unit of two 50-ton open hearth furnaces, and a 35-inch blooming mill were started. At the start of World War II, a completely integrated electric furnace, coke ovens, blooming and rolling mills were built on the site for the government and operated by Republic Steel. Following the war the company purchased the operation from the Defense Department. Employment at Republic peaked at 6,335 in 1970. In 1977, two 225-ton Q-Bop (Quelle Basic oxygen process) furnaces replaced four World War II vintage open hearths. This ended the making of steel by open hearths for Republic Steel. During the 1980's, the Chicago District Plant was the third largest plant of Republic's six districts. In December 1981, America's most energy efficient, environmentally advanced coke battery began operation. Sixty, six meter high coke ovens replaced 75, four-meter ovens which had operated since 1943. In 1984, Republic Steel was merged with J&L Steel to form LTV steel, a wholly owned subsidiary of the LTV Corporation, a Dallas based conglomerate which is also involved in energy, aerospace, and defense.

The chemistry students at Washington High school conducted water and soil tests at the site in the spring of 1999. The students were trying to determine if the land was viable for residential, commercial, or further industrial use. Samples were collected on different days from different locations in the vicinity of 117th and Avenue O. These were taken to the lab where tests were conducted for various chemicals such as lead, iron, magnesium, phosphates, sulfate, soil organisms and bacteria. Most of test results showed very low levels of these minerals. This is desirable for lead but not desirable in terms of the other minerals for growing plants. The pH level of the soil was slightly basic which might have to be adjusted to grow plants and a water sample taken from some standing water on the site showed a high level of bacteria. Owl pellets were found near a large tree on the site and a hawk was seen in the vicinity of the tree on several occasions. Evidence of nature reclaiming the area was apparent as seen by the growth of vegetation on gravel and trees sprouting up through tiny cracks in old foundations.

12) Sculpture and Plaque (116th Street between Avenue O and Green Bay Avenue)

The monument at the entrance to the Chicago District plant was dedicated to Republic Steel's employees and area residents. Six long bars symbolize Republic's six steel districts, the four short bars mark the cardinal compass points from the plant to the community, and the spiral bar signifies the bond between Republic and its neighbors. Many mistakenly call this the Memorial Day Massacre Memorial. The actual commemorative plaque is in the parking lot of Memorial Hall. That plaque lists the names of the ten people who lost their lives in the massacre.



Police action at the Memorial Day Massacre, 1937

Directions

To sites 13 and 14

Return to Avenue O and proceed south to Memorial Hall (11731 Avenue O)

After viewing the Plaque, drive south on Avenue O to the entrance to Wolf Lake State Park (126th and Avenue O)

13) Memorial Day Massacre Site

On Memorial Day, 1937, an incident took place in an open stretch of prairie near the South Chicago plant of the Republic Steel Corporation that ranks as one of the bloodiest confrontations in American labor history. In 1937 steel union organizers declared war on Little Steel, including Republic, Bethlehem, Inland, and Youngstown Sheet and Tube. Republic spent \$79,000 for tear gas alone to prepare for the strikers. On the morning of May 30, Republic strikers held a pep rally in a hall near the plant. Later 300 of them went to harass the guards at the gate. As the strikers approached a line of police at the gate, they were greeted by gunshots. Ten of their colleagues fell dead, shot in the back or side. 125 other men, women, and children sustained some sort of injury. The dead were all participants in or sympathizers with the Little Steel strike, called against four steel companies by the steel workers organizing committee (SWOC), a group affiliated with the Congress for Industrial Organization (CIO). 35 of the injured were members of the Chicago Police Department, who were acting as security for the property of the Republic Steel. Observers of the incident included steelworkers who had chosen to remain in the plant during the strike in order to maintain production for the corporation. The dead were from a crowd of approximately 1500 persons who had gathered to protest the interference of the police in the strikers attempts to establish a mass picket line at the main plant gate.

14) Wolf Lake State Park and the Veterans Memorials

The Veterans Memorial consists of 104 commemorative markers and trees planted as living memorials in 1946. The memorials are made of composite stone and measure 9"x 18" on the surface side. Each is about 10 inches thick. Each stone and tree represent a specific veterans organization. The markers and trees, in double rows, are lined on both sides of the entrance road from about midpoint to the lake and then continues north and south in the same pattern, but now parallel the shoreline. Members from some 60 veterans groups marched in "full regalia" in a parade on September 15, 1946, to Wolf Lake to dedicate Veterans Drive, the new access road to Wolf Lake. The monuments were donated by State Senator Walker Butler. He sponsored the legislation that established in the park in 1945, but work on the \$250,000 project did not begin until mid-1946 when all of the land had been purchased, much of it from the Shedd family. Named on the memorial stones are groups which represented communities as far away as Ford City, the Chicago Stock Yard, and Homewood, IL. Groups included American Legion posts, Veterans of Foreign Wars groups, as well as Polish Legion of American Veterans, Catholic War Veterans, Jewish War Veterans, Spanish American War Veterans, and American Veterans of WWII. Several rededications of the living memorials have been conducted since 1946.



Delaware House at Wolf Lake in Hegewisch c. 1920

Directions

Site 14 Wolf Lake State Park

Enter the park from Avenue A at Veteran's Drive.

Follow the road which will take you past the Veteran's Memorials, the Dedication Marker, and near the site of the Delaware house.

The road the the north (as soon as you enter the park) leads to the site of the former Nike base.

14) Wolf Lake State Park (cont)

The official dedication of Wolf Lake State Conservation Park took place on the island at the mouth of Indian Creek on October 13, 1946. A marker commemorates the dedication by Governor Dwight Green.

Nike Missile Site

Land at the north end of Wolf Lake was purchased in 1955 for Nike Ajax Batteries for the defense of the Chicago-Gary area. The batteries, located at Wolf Lake, were designated as C-44. This site was one of 18 that lined Lake Michigan from Fort Sheridan to Chesterton. The Nike site also consisted of barracks and radar towers. These sites were positioned purposely in the vicinity of Chicago and Hammond because of their high industrial output, which is a primary target for a wartime enemy. All sites were built, maintained, and controlled by the U.S. Army and the Army National Guard. Nike missiles became obsolete and were dismantled in 1971, although the Hegewisch base was closed earlier.

The Delaware House

This very historical landmark was located at 130th Street and Wolf Lake. The home was placed in the World's Fair as the designated representation from the state of Delaware. A French-Canadian fur trapper and adventurer, Elias Bennet, relocated the house from the Columbian Exposition by putting it on a barge and towing it down Lake Michigan into Wolf Lake. He set it on the best piece of land he saw, even though he didn't own it. Since then it has been operated as a tavern, eating house, and living quarters. Muskrat dinners were served to notables such as John G. Shedd, Honore Palmer, and Anton J. Cermak. Due to poor maintenance the Delaware House caved in and was eventually torn down.

Flora and Fauna

The Biology class did an inventory of plant and animal life found at Wolf Lake. Some of the types of trees are: Norway Maple, White Oak, and Chestnut Oak. Some of the animals that may be found at Wolf Lake are beavers, squirrels, birds, frogs, rabbits, toads, snakes, and insects like butterfly, bees, beetles, mosquitos, and some grasshoppers. Birds that frequent the area include sea gulls, robins, and different types of geese, just to name a few. Wolf Lake is full of many different types of birds. If you like to bird watch this is the place to be.

Environmental Findings

Wolf Lake, which is situated on the border of Chicago and northwest Indiana, has been a recreational site for many years. It is surrounded by industry and former industrial sites and thus has been exposed to many different kinds of potential pollutants for the last century. The chemistry class from Washington High School collected soil and water samples from the area of the recreational center closest to the school. Overall the results of the tests fell in the normal range. The only exceptions were that the ammonia was low and the chlorine level was very high in the soil. This makes it unlikely that some types of plants could thrive here. The results of the tests on the water were all within normal range and showed no significant pollution.



Hegewisch business district at the turn of the century

Directions

To sites 15, 16, and 17

Exit the State Park and drive south on Avenue O.

You are in the community of Hegewisch.

Drive south to Brainard Avenue (Brainard runs at an angle and crosses Avenue O at approximately 13800)

Turn southeast (left) to Powderhorn Lake

Exit Powderhorn Lake and drive northwest(right) to Baltimore Avenue. Turn north (right) on Baltimore Avenue

15) Hegewisch

Achilles Hegewisch founded the area of Hegewisch in 1883. He founded the area with the idea of following the Pullman Company's success with a similar community. Achilles was president of the United States Rolling Stock Company at the time. He hoped to build homes to accommodate the 1,500 employees of the company at the time. He also set up large shops and plants. Achilles also envisioned building two canals, one shortening the Calumet River, the other connecting Lake Michigan and Wolf Lake. This however never took place. Therefore, the anticipated industrial development did not take place. Hegewisch became part of the city of Chicago in 1889 when the village of Hyde Park was annexed.

16) Powderhorn Lake

The Lake Calumet area is part of a large wetland complex which until the late 1800's covered most of southeastern Cook County and extended into northwestern Indiana. It is likely that wetland vegetation was interspersed with open water in the shallower portions of the lake making a boundary between the lake and the wetland. Most of the wetland vegetation was composed of bulrush, cattails, blue-joint grass and sedges. Powderhorn is the one of the nature sites which makes up the Calumet region. Powderhorn is least established natural area with the most diversity of plants and animal species within the city of Chicago. In Powderhorn we can find various types of trees, including different types of oaks, cottonwoods and blue beech. The most common trees found at Powderhorn are different kinds of oaks. The leaves are lobed and simple, and their condition is mostly undamaged. This means that they are not burned, broken or scarred. A few of them, though might be cankered, missing or flaking. These trees are there for the environment, for cleaner air and to provide for better biodiversity.

Flocks of migrating waterfowl and endangered birds manage to survive in this industrial area encompassing the Little Calumet River. The area is also used by the public for fishing. It is also utilized by environmental groups because of its diversity and beauty. In the middle of Powderhorn is the marsh. Water from that marsh is not clean and is not safe to drink. Powderhorn is a wetland. There are many trees, but Powderhorn is not a forest.

17) Hegewisch Shopping District

The major commercial strip of Hegewisch is along South Baltimore Avenue (originally known as Erie Avenue) from 132nd to 134th streets. This shopping district was originally set up by Achilles Hegewisch when the town was developed. The Hegewisch Theater is a former movie theater located on the 133rd block of Baltimore Avenue. The white facade of the building is unusual for the area. It is now used as a Knights of Columbus hall. The Opera House was located at 13305 Baltimore Avenue. The building was built in 1888. At the time it was located above what was the Hegewisch Branch Post Office. It was a favorite destination of residents and members of surrounding communities who came to see the theatrical and musical presentations staged there. In the early twenties it presented silent films. The first talking picture shown there was "A Face in the Fog." The theater was able to seat 950 attendees. Today the Opera House building is home to Cousin's Restaurant.



Aerial view of the entrance to Lake Calumet in the early 1960's

Directions

To sites 18 and 19

Continue north on Baltimore Avenue to 130th Street

Turn west (left) on 130th Street and continue past

Torrence Avenue and over the 130th Street Bridge

At the bottom of the bridge turn south (left) at the Army Corps of Engineers sign and follow the road to the O'Brien Locks and wetland area.

Leave the O'Brien Lock area and drive east (left) on 130th Street to Torrence Avenue

18) O'Brien Locks

The first person to recommend the improvement of the Calumet Harbor and River, was Lieutenant Jefferson Davis, who, in 1833, was sent to Calumet by the government to make a topographical survey of the region. He made his recommendations because the Calumet River had a good natural depth, and because Lake Calumet would make a good naval station, such as the one north of Chicago.

The depth of the Calumet River, after improvements, conforms approximately with the St. Lawrence Seaway standard of 26 ½ feet. The river, instead of flowing toward Lake Michigan as nature intended, runs away from the lake to the Mississippi River. The O'Brien Locks were built to monitor the flow and also to prevent stream backup. In 1922, the original lock was located near Blue Island. Then, in 1956, a larger lock was authorized as part of the Cal-Sag project to enlarge the waterway, for more efficient barge transportation. The Thomas J. O'Brien Lock was completed in 1960 with a width of 110 feet and a length of 1,100 feet.

The Cal-Sag Channel was built to reverse the flow of the surface streams and to divert sewage away from Lake Michigan. It has proved to be useful to barge transportation.

Located north of the banks of the Calumet River are landfills. The "mountain of garbage", as it is often called, was constructed because space in the old landfills was running out. So the wetland areas were used for waste disposal. The nearby residents in Altgeld Gardens blame high incidents of cancer on these landfills. Presently, the conditions are improving. This is partly due to the new side-stream aeration pools along the waterway and partly due to better construction of landfills, better sewage treatment, stronger environmental awareness, and environmental regulation. There is a very interesting small wetland area located next to the Waste Management landfill. Also be sure to view the information kiosk in the parking lot. It is maintained by CEPA, a local environmental group.

19) Ford Plant (130th and Torrence Avenue)

Ford purchased a large tract of land easily accessible by water and rail along the Calumet River in South Deering and began construction of its second largest assembly plant in the United States. In spite of the economic depression that followed the 1929 stock market crash Americans fascination with cars continued. To meet demand, production at the Chicago Plant was 5,000 cars per month in the mid 1930's.

The 1940's was a decade of change at Ford. In March 1942 the last civilian car was produced at the Chicago Assembly Plant (CAP) and production of M-8 armored cars and M-20 reconnaissance armored units was begun. On Dec. 7, 1945 the two door Mercury sedan marked the return to production of civilian cars.

During the 50's, 60's and 70's, Ford kept increasing production according to the growing demand of Americans. City and state dignitaries helped CAP celebrate production of its 5,000,000th unit on February 8, 1972, a day the mayor proclaimed Ford Day in Chicago. For the last nine decades Ford has been supplying Chicago not only with hundreds of jobs but with cars as well. The Taurus, which is produced in the Torrence Avenue Ford Plant, became the nations best selling passenger car in 1992.



Wetland at Indian Ridge Marsh

Directions

To sites 20 and 21

Turn left (north on Torrence) to 122nd Street

Turn left (west) and stop before the railroad tracks

After viewing the marshes, drive back to Torrence

Avenue and turn left (north)

Proceed to 106th and Torrence

20) Indian Ridge Marsh and Paxton Landfill

Indian Ridge is a 105 acre parcel of land bordered on the east by Torrence Avenue, the Norfolk and Western tracks on the west, 116th Street on the north, and 122nd Street on the south. Indian Ridge is owned by numerous private owners. Surrounding land use includes waste disposal sites, heavy industry, and private residences. The property to the west is primarily private active and inactive waste disposal sites. Open land sand sludge drying beds owned by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago are located south and southwest of the marsh. There are several other natural resource areas located in close proximity to this site, including Dead Stick Pond, Big Marsh, and Heron Pond. Indian Ridge Marsh has been classified as degraded wetlands, although it contains a large nesting colony for the black-crowned night heron and other endangered species.

The use of the area for waste landfills began in the 1940's. In 1948 the Clean Water Act directed industry to treat waste or dispose of it on land. This resulted in the destruction of many wetlands, which were prime sites for landfills. In 1971 the Paxton I Landfill was opened. The landfill accepted general refuse, industrial waste, and sludges under permits authorized by the IEPA. In 1974 inspections of Paxton I showed inadequate daily cover which resulted in standing water pooling at the bottom of the trenches which surrounded it. Two years later Paxton II was opened. In 1992 the City of Chicago closed Paxton II because of concern about its safety. Paxton II remains in the news even today because of inadequate capping has led to "Sludge Slides" which threaten the natural wetlands in the immediate vicinity such as Big Marsh.

The chemistry students at Washington High School tested water and soil samples from Big Marsh and Paxton landfill in the spring of 1999. Most of the tests came back in the acceptable range except for a high calcium concentration in the soil and a higher than average bacteria level for Indian Ridge South. The city of Chicago is considering this site for a new resource Nature Center for the south side of Chicago, because of its diversity of wet lands, birds and species. The biology classes noticed different types of trees like black maple, red oak, black walnut, and more. The Indian Ridge Marsh is entirely within an area of minimal flooding. This area is known as the cluster site. Indian Ridge North has been categorized as degraded wet lands, it contains a large nesting colony for the state of Illinois. Indian Ridge Marsh is the home and a nesting site for the endangered black crowned night heron.

21) Irondale (112th to 103th, Torrence west to Trumbull Park)

The name "Irondale" came in 1875 when the Joseph H. Brown Iron and Steel Company constructed a plant on the west bank of the Calumet River at 109th Street. People began to call the area "Irondale". In early South Deering, about 1880, the Brown Mill built a row of company houses along the east side of Torrence Avenue between 106th and 109th Street. The area extended west to Trumbull Park. Business men, around this time, rented the property from the Brown's Mill for \$1.00 per year. Businesses were mainly taverns. Irondale residents referred to these taverns as the "Buckets of Blood".



Directions

To site 22 and 23
 Turn east (right) at 106th Street
 Drive to Muskegon Avenue and turn north (left)
 Muskegon runs into Commercial Avenue

Aerial view of Wisconsin Steel Works
Intersection at bottom right is 106th & Torrence

22) Wisconsin Steel (106th and Torrence Avenue)

The Wisconsin Steel Works was founded on July 5, 1875. The former production area is bordered on the north by 106th Street, on the south by 114th Street, on the east by Calumet River, and on the west by Torrence Avenue. The main plant was located south of 106th Street. It was the first mill built in the Calumet region, and it was originally called the Joseph H. Brown Iron and Steel Company.

On November 21, 1875, the first ore boat wound its way through the channels of the Calumet River. This was the first such cargo shipped into the Calumet Region. This voyage proved, for the first time, that the Calumet River was navigable, a history making event in itself. In 1879 the #1 blast furnace was built. This was a very historic event since it was the first blast furnace in the Chicago area. The Wisconsin Steel Plant at the time normally employed from 1000 to 1500 men who lived near the mill along Torrence Ave. That avenue was named after General J.T. Torrence, a stockholder in the Brown Mill. About 1882, Brown and Torrence sold their interest in the mill. It then became known as the Calumet Iron and Steel Works. In 1899, it was sold to the South Chicago Furnace Company. On August 12, 1902, five of the largest harvesting companies in the country formed the International Harvester Company. In 1977, Navistar International, formerly International Harvester Wisconsin Steel Works sold the mill to Envirodyne Industries. In 1980 Wisconsin Steel workers on the three o'clock shift were told to go home because the mill was closed and headed for bankruptcy. By 1982, the furnaces were shut down, doors, gates, and machinery were closed and turned off, and the process of selling site assets began. After a series of court challenges, the property is now once again owned by Navistar which is charged with the responsibility of cleaning it up so that it can be used for light industry.

There have been extensive studies of the environmental viability of the site over the past twenty years. Some of the results are as follows. Chromium, PCB, lead, arsenic and zinc levels at various locations on the site exceed the Tier I industrial standards. Tests on fish collected from barge slips on the site showed concentrations of copper, lead, selenium, and zinc that are near the maximum levels reported in the National Contaminant Biomonitoring Program. Fish tissue also contained Aroclor 1248, fluoranthene, and pyrene. External tumors were not observed on the collected fish.

Chemistry students from Washington High School collected water and soil samples from the site. Soil was tested for both nutrients and contaminants. Nitrogen was found to be low which is not good for growing things. Not surprisingly, the iron level of the soil was quite high. A test for coliform bacteria taken from water on the site shows a high bacteria level.

23) General Mills South Chicago Plant (104th and Muskegon Avenue)

The South Chicago plant actually began in 1902 when the Wabash Railroad built the Rialto Grain Elevator on a slip on the Calumet River. A year later a flour mill was erected by Star and Crescent Milling Company. (continued on next page)



Dumping slag from the furnaces of Wisconsin Steel

Directions

To sites 23, 24, and 25
Follow Muskegon / Commercial Avenue
north to 100th Street
Turn west (left) on 100th Street to view
Slag Valley (see below)
Return east on 100th Street to Commercial
Avenue and turn north (left)

23) General Mill (cont)

In 1922 Washburn Crosby purchased the flour mill and a year later ground was broken for a seven story cereal plant. In 1929 the General Mills Corporation was formed. Among the many products made at the plant were Wheaties introduced in 1924. Cheerios were originally named Cheerioats but the name was changed to Cheerios because of complaints by Quaker Oats. Cheerios were first processed in 1941. Also produced at this plant were Bisquick, Kix, cake mixes, piecrust mix, Jets, Cocoa Puffs, Frosty Os, Sugar Sparkled Twinkles, Total, Trix, Body Buddies, Apple Cinammon Cheerios, Honey Nut Cheerios, Ripple Crisp, Peanut Butter Puffs, Suncrunchers, Country Corn Flakes, and Corn Total. The announcement of the plant's closing came in 1995.

24) Slag Valley (110th Street to 104th, Muskegon Avenue to rail line east of Torrence Avenue)

The molten refuse from the steel making process is called slag. Rail cars dumped the slag from the Wisconsin Steel Mill in a field where it cooled before being used for various byproducts. The neighborhood near Wisconsin Steel's slag dumping area came to be called "Slag Valley." The close of the 20th century finds this formerly dynamic industrial community trying to find a niche in the post industrial economy. Part of the challenge involves dealing with the cleanup of the old industrial sites.

The chemistry class from Washington High School collected soil samples from three sites in Slag Valley: 101st and Escanaba, 100th and Muskegon, and 100th and Marquette. There was a remarkable difference in the amount of vegetation growing at these three sites ranging from heavy to virtually none. The most notable results were a high manganese and calcium concentration and also a high pH in the area with no vegetation.

25) Saint Michael Archangel Church and Grove Park Village (9801 S. Commercial Avenue)

Serbian immigrants founded St. Micheal Archangel Serbian Orthodox Church in 1919. The church was designed by Franz Roy in 1926. Seventy-nine years of Orthodox Serbian worship on Commercial Avenue came to an end on July 2, 1998, when the congregation moved to the Serbian Social Center it built in 1986 in south suburban Lansing. Worshippers hope to build a new church adjacent to the social center.

Grove Park Village is a new housing development located near 98th and Commercial Avenue in the neighborhood of Veterans Park. Grove Park will have 116 single-family homes on 13 acres, much of the land acquired in the purchase of land from Saint Michael the Archangel Serbian Orthodox Church and its grounds. The models and the initial homes are on Commercial Avenue, a busy thoroughfare with a mix of commercial and residential buildings. Grove Park is a mostly triangular subdivision, bounded by Commercial Avenue on the west, portions of 98th and 97th Streets on the north, then extending to nearly 100th Street.



**Original Bowen School located at
93rd and Houston, built 1876**

Directions

To sites 26, 27 and 28
Continue north on Commercial Avenue
As you pass 95th Street you are leaving the
community of South Deering and entering South
Chicago.

26) Saint Patrick's Church (95th and Commercial Avenue - southeast corner)

Saint Patrick's was the oldest church on the southeast side and was founded in 1857. It originally stood at the location of the old Bowen School at 93rd and Houston Avenue. It is a territorial parish primarily for English speaking Catholics, mostly Irish. It was also the first Catholic church to be founded south of 31st Street, the southern boundary of the city at the time. In 1877 the parish moved to 95th and Commercial and took over a public school building. A fire destroyed the church in April 1903 and Father Martin Van de Laar hired architect William J. Brinkman to design a combination church and school building. Some of the parishioners wanted the church moved north to where more development had been occurring and they were not particularly happy with the design of the building which they called the "shoe factory" because it resembled a factory building. A plain three story brick building was dedicated on July 9, 1903. At one time (1916) the elementary school of the parish had over 900 pupils and the parish had a coeducational high school which opened in 1889.

27) Original Bowen School (93rd and Houston)

The original Bowen High School was located on 93rd and Houston. It replaced the first school in the area, South Chicago School, in 1876. The original school served students of both elementary and high school grades. It eventually developed into a large public high school serving southeast side youths. Residents named the first Bowen School for James H. Bowen, the "Father of South Chicago." A new high school, Bowen High School, opened in 1910 and is located at 2710 East 89th Street. The school was an imitation of Schurz High School, a North Side landmark building designed by Dwight Perkins, a Prairie school contemporary of Frank Lloyd Wright. The five-story, 1,400 student building, complete with metal shops, laboratories, and an 818 seat auditorium, cost roughly \$600,000 to construct. The site of the original Bowen (pictured above) is now a vacant lot across the street from the South Chicago Fire Station.

28) South Chicago Commercial Avenue Shopping District (Commercial Avenue 95th to 83rd)

Although all of the neighborhoods had their own shopping and entertainment districts, the largest and most popular was along Commercial Avenue and was centered at the intersection of 92nd Street. When residents of the other Southeast Chicago neighborhoods were going shopping along Commercial Avenue, they said they were going "Uptown" as opposed to going "Downtown", which meant State Street in the Loop. (continued on next page)



Commercial Theater located in the heart of the Commercial Avenue shopping district

Directions

To sites 28 (continued) and 29
Continue north on Commercial Avenue

28) Commercial Shopping District (continued)

Calumet National Bank (9117 S. Commercial Avenue)

Calumet National Bank was built in 1909 and is located in the shopping and banking center for the community. The building is in near perfect condition. Calumet National Bank was part of a group of banks, including Roseland Trust & Savings Bank, Cottage Grove State Bank, Interstate National Bank and Hegewisch State Bank. As of 1925, according to the Calumet Record, a neighborhood newspaper, these six banks made more than nineteen millions of dollars, making them the strongest financial group in the outlying districts of Chicago. During the Depression however, this group of banks went out of business.

Store (8952 S. Commercial)

The store located on 8952 S. Commercial Avenue was designed by architect Franz Roy and built in 1925 in a classical style at a cost of \$9,000. It is deemed to be worthy of landmark recognition due to its excellence in design and craftsmanship, but has not yet received that designation. Noteworthy features of the site are that the building retains an original first floor commercial display area with wooden trim, and parapet wall shaped like the top of a star.

People's Gas Store (8933 S. Commercial)

Commercial Avenue continued to develop in the 1920's with the erection of the People's Gas South Chicago Neighborhood Store at 8935 S. Commercial Avenue. This structure was completed in 1925. This building is worthy of being a landmark because it has exceptional quality of design overall. Other factors contributing to its landmark essence are: its quality in craftsmanship, detail in Terra Cotta, and its association with an important architect, Elmslie & von Holst. Some noteworthy features of the site are: symmetrical elevation, with tall elaborately detailed piers at its corners that stand in front of and above the rest of the facade, framing it. This building is the only officially designated landmark in the four southeast Chicago communities.

29) Immaculate Conception Church (8758 S. Commercial Avenue)

Immaculate Conception Church at 88th and Commercial Ave. was organized as an ethnic parish in 1882 to serve Polish families in South Chicago. Ethnic or national Catholic parishes were organized to serve non English speaking Catholics. Although the services were in Latin, the sermons, bulletins, and social activities of the Parish were conducted in the native language. Architect Martin Carr designed a Classical Revival styled building. In 1898 work began on the superstructure of the church and it was dedicated on April 23, 1899. As a result of the enormous growth of the Polish population in this steel mill district, Immaculate Conception parish was divided three times to form the Polish parishes of St. Michael, St. Mary Magdalene, and St. Bronislava. In 1900, 950 children attended the parish elementary school.



Employment office at Illinois Steel (later U. S. Steel) with a sign in six languages

Directions

To sites 30, 31 and 32

Continue north on Commercial Avenue to 83rd Street

Turn east (right) to South Shore Drive

Turn north (left) on South Shore Drive to 79th Street

Turn east (right) on 79th Street and drive to Brandon Avenue (site of the former South Works Plant)

30) Saint Michael Archangel Polish Catholic Church (83rd and South Shore Drive)

St. Michael's Parish, Eighty-third Street and South Shore Drive, South Chicago, was organized in 1892 from a division of the parish in the Immaculate Conception. St. Michael's was founded as a national parish to serve the Polish families of the "Bush". The work of organizing the new parish out of a nucleus of about 300 families was at first entrusted to the Rev. John Zyla. However, he was soon succeeded by the Rev. Adolph Nowicki, who immediately, with the help of his parishioners, constructed a small temporary building, in which services were held until the completion of the large brick building on Eighty-third and Brandon Avenue, in September, 1892. The parsonage was built in the same year. The current Gothic revival church structure with a 250 foot steeple was built in 1907 by architect William Brinkman. It is a masonry building constructed of brown brick with limestone trim. The building is cruciform in plan with large Gothic-arched stained glass windows designed by F. X. Zettler of Munich, Germany.

31) The "Bush" (Area east of South Shore Drive (US Route 41) from 79th Street to 85th Street)

The "Bush" was named for the small plants which grew on the sandy soil of this area which originally was on the shores of Lake Michigan. Originally it was a favorite picnic spot for Chicagoans from other neighborhoods, especially Hyde Park. Once a steel mill was built in the area it became a working class neighborhood predominantly populated by Polish immigrants, most of whom worked in the nearby mill. As the mill grew, landfill was added extended the shoreline of Lake Michigan several blocks into the lake.

32) U. S. Steel Site (79th Street to 92nd Street along the shore of Lake Michigan)

The first steel plant in South Chicago which began operations in 1880 was the North Chicago Railway Mill Company. The lake offered economical shipping routes for iron ore, coke, and limestone that could be shipped here by boat or barge to various industrial markets. Fresh water needs were met by Lake Michigan and the Calumet River. Ground breaking for the mill was March 22, 1880, with the first steel produced on June 14, 1889. North Chicago's Steel Companies: Union Steel, Joliet Steel, and the Bayview plant of the Milwaukee Iron Companies later merged to form the Illinois Steel Co. In 1890 the company merged with the Union Steel Co. to form Illinois Steel. In the year 1901, U.S. Steel South Works, Illinois' largest steel mill, was Incorporated. It occupies about 576 acres of lake front property. In 1913, steel production in the U.S. was 31,300,874 tons, more than Britain and Germany combined. In 1917, production of steel in the U.S. was 45,060,607 tons, more than two-thirds of the world output. At its peak of production South Works employed close to 20,000 workers. In 1979 the number of employees was down to about 10,000, and layoffs became common. On Thursday, January 9, 1992, when the shutdown became official there were less than 700 workers. On April 10, 1992 South works was permanently shut down. The plant was closed partly because of the stagnation of the economy, which had depressed demand for the structural steel that was South Works' only remaining product.



Female welders at South Works during WW II

Directions

To sites 32, 33, 34 and 35

Follow the U. S. Steel South Works site south to 91st and Avenue O (south to 83rd street - east to Green Bay - south to 86th Street - west to Burley - south to 89th Street - east to Avenue O - south to 91st Street)

Turn west (right) on 91st Street and proceed to Burley Avenue (This is a good opportunity to exit your car and walk this area)

32) U. S. Steel South Works (continued)

The land is currently on the market awaiting buyers and future development. There have been various proposals to use the vacant land for residential, recreational, commercial, or industrial use. But there is a continuing concern about the environmental hazards that might exist because of its industrial history. Some chemistry students from Washington High School collected water and soil samples from land adjacent to the site. The soil tests did not show anything beyond normal range, but the water sample taken showed a high bacteria count. Since this was from a standing water site, this is not terribly surprising. The students were not able to obtain soil samples from the area within the former mill, so it is not possible to say if the site itself is viable and safe for recreational and residential use.

33) New Park (91st and Avenue O)

The South Chicago neighborhood, where green space is at a premium, is in line for a new 20-acre park, the largest built in the city in 20 years. The park is being built on mostly vacant land in an area bounded by 89th Street on the north, 91st Street on the south, Avenue O on the east and Mackinaw Avenue on the west. The property is adjacent to the nearly 600-acre site of the former U.S. Steel South Works, which the city wants to develop for business, light industry and residential uses, as well as park land. The park will feature a pair of baseball fields, three basketball courts, two playgrounds, three multipurpose fields and a walking and jogging path. Under the plan, vacant land and abandoned buildings were acquired by the city and turned over to the park district, which is developing the park.

34) Pilgrim Baptist Church (91st and Burley Avenue)

Ten members of the New Hope Missionary Baptist Church founded Pilgrim Baptist Church in 1917. In September 1946 the congregation bought Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church. Pilgrim is one of the oldest African American churches on the Southeast Side and was the location of a famous gospel music scene from the original Blues Brothers movie which was partially filmed on the Southeast side of Chicago.

35) Our Lady of Guadalupe (3200 East 91st Street)

In 1923 Rev. William Kane S.J. began to minister to the growing Mexican community in the South Chicago area. In 1924 the Claretian Fathers came to the district to staff the church, which is the oldest Mexican parish in the Chicago area. The church provides the site for the National Shrine of Saint Jude, the solemn novenas to Saint Jude, and the Saint Jude League for Catholic policemen. The current church was built in 1928, a classical revival building designed by architect James Burns. The parish opened an elementary school in 1948 and in a period which often sees Catholic elementary schools faced with declining enrollments and closings, Our Lady of Guadalupe School continues to grow and prosper.



**Dedication of memorial to parishioners from
Our Lady of Guadalupe killed in Vietnam**

Directions

To sites 36, 37, 38 and 39

After completing your walking tour, drive west on 91st St. to Baltimore Avenue and turn south (left)

Drive to 92nd Street and turn left (east) and continue to the 92nd Street Bridge over the Calumet River

Cross the bridge and drive to 95th Street

Turn east (left) and enter Calumet Park, the starting and ending point for the tour

36) Vietnam War Memorial (3201 East 91st Street)

The parish of Our Lady of Guadalupe of South Chicago suffered more war dead during the Vietnam War than any other Catholic parish in the U.S. This monument, erected in the 1970 stands in memory of the sacrifice of twelve parishioners. It is located across the street from the church at 91st Street and Brandon in South Chicago.

37) St. John the Baptist (9129 S. Burley)

St. John the Baptist was founded as a Catholic Slovak national parish on May 16, 1909 to serve Slovak immigrants from the South Chicago and East Side neighborhoods. The first pastor of the church purchased a former Protestant church which was intended to be a temporary facility for the parish. It was the only building ever used by the parish. The building is currently owned by Our Lady of Guadalupe Church and is used for various church functions.

38) Union State Bank (92nd and Baltimore Avenue)

The Union State Bank was located at 92nd and Baltimore Avenue and was one of numerous area banks driven by the local steel economy. The bank closed during the Great Depression and the building fell into disrepair. A local community group, the United Neighborhood Organization (UNO), restored the building with its cast iron facade.

39) 92nd Street Bridge (92nd Street and the Calumet River)

This bridge crossed the Calumet River and connected the communities of South Chicago and the East Side. This was an important transportation corridor which originally was a Native American trail. Later it was used as a stage coach crossing, a ferry boat crossing, a toll bridge, and currently US Route 41. The bridge on the site was built in 1914.

This is the conclusion of the tour. We hope you have enjoyed the tour and learned more about our community. We invite you to return again soon to learn more about the history, culture, ecology and environment of Chicago's Southeast Side.

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