

CTPA Quarterly Meeting: Presidential & First Lady Sites in Chicagoland

Monday, January 23, 2017

Roosevelt University, Gage Building, 18 S. Michigan Avenue, 7th Floor

59 attendees gathered on a dark winter's evening to network, socialize, and enjoy a spread of cheese, crackers, cookies, fruit, and beverages. President Donna Primas opened the business meeting at 6:02 pm.

Business Meeting Notes

- 1) Donna saluted the outgoing board members and introduced the new. Incoming president Wayne Galasek offered a tribute to Donna, who has been a crucial part of CTPA's success since 1992, which was met with a standing ovation.
- 2) 17% of members have not yet renewed their memberships.
- 3) New members were introduced.
- 4) Guests were introduced.
- 5) Donna asked company owners present to stand up and be identified.
- 6) Gratitude was expressed to Bill Host who has arranged our meeting space at Roosevelt University.
- 7) The financial report was shared; approximately \$11,000 is the current balance.
- 8) 2017 Quarterly Meetings were announced:
 - a. March 27: Job Fair, CTPA Committee recruitment, membership packets distributed
 - b. June 26: Greg Borzo will present on Chicago fountains
 - c. October 23: TBD

Presidential & First Lady Sites in Chicagoland

A Slide Lecture by Forgotten Chicago historian, Patrick Steffes

Patrick provided an introduction to the work of Forgotten Chicago, whose mission is to discover and document little-known elements of Chicago's infrastructure, architecture, neighborhoods, and general cityscape, whether existing or historical. Their hope is that exposing many of these often overlooked elements of Chicago's built environment to a wider audience will result in more interest in their preservation. His fellow historian, Jacob Kaplan, was in attendance, as well.

The program served up highlights of the intersection of politics and Chicago, specifically the many political conventions held in the city, and the U.S. Presidents and their wives with ties to Chicago.

Conventions

- For 130+ years, Chicago has been the frequent site of political conventions.
- 1860 was the famous Republican convention that nominated Abraham Lincoln, held in the temporary Wigwam building (Lake and Market Streets).



- In 1864, the Democratic Party held their convention at the NE corner of Michigan Avenue and Roosevelt Road (site of today's Agora sculpture).
- Six conventions were held between 1904 and 1920 at the Chicago Coliseum at the SW corner of South Wabash and East 14th Street.
- The last Republican convention in Chicago was 1960 at the Chicago Stadium (West Madison Street). Because of perceived (if not proven) charges of election fraud in Illinois, Nixon lost to JFK, his party's conventions would never return to Chicago.



- The last Democratic convention was in 1996. Patrick hopes that Chicago can host another national political convention.

McCormick Place

- This convention center has a bit of obscure presidential history. The first McCormick Place, built with the weighty support of Mayor Daley, was the largest in the United States. It contained a gourmet restaurant opened on Inauguration Day 1961 and operated by Hilton Catering and featured a “Presidents’ Walk,” a line-up of U.S. presidential portraits. In 1967, the building burned down and was replaced by the current McCormick Place structure in 1971 – not in time for the 1968 Democratic Convention, as Mayor Daley had pledged.

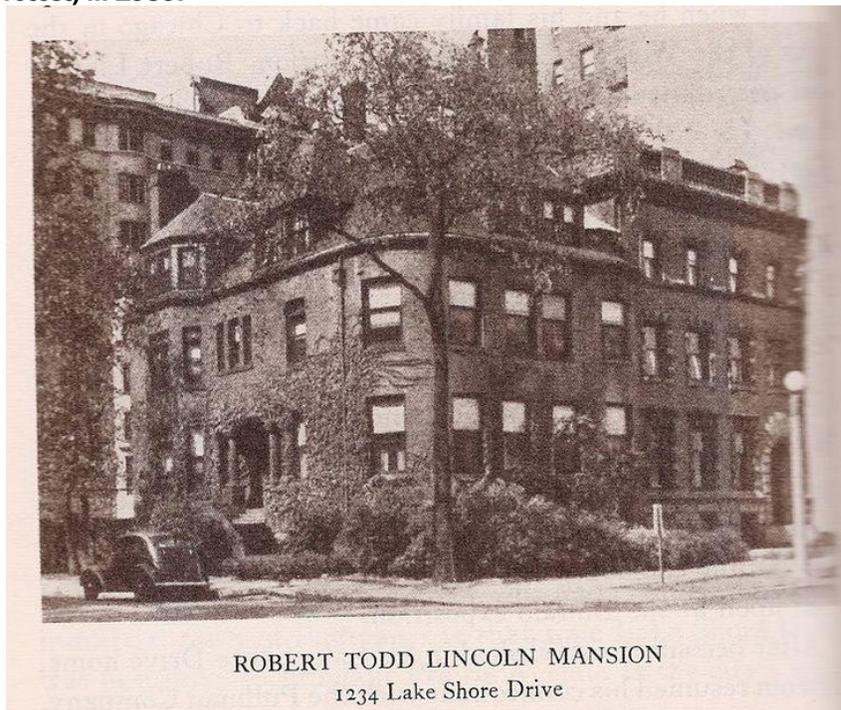
First Televised Presidential Debate

- Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy famously faced off in a live debate televised nationally from the WBBM studios in Chicago (NW corner Ontario & McClurg – building demolished 2009 – WBBM is now in Block 37).



Lincoln Family Sites in Chicago

- Some are familiar to us, some not at all.
- There once was a 1937 plaque honoring a Mary Todd Lincoln home that stood at 1236 W. Washington Boulevard. The building was remodeled and the plaque was removed by 2013
- Tad Lincoln attended the Brown School at 1758 West Warren; the building was demolished in 1956.
- Robert Todd Lincoln lived in large home designed by Solon Bemon at 1234 Lake Shore Drive, which was razed (to little protest) in 1959.



President Reagan's Chicago

- Ronald Reagan's boyhood home was in Chicago at 832 East 57th Street (corner of Maryland Avenue). The University of Chicago Hospital tore down the building in 2013, and the site is a parking lot in 2017.



President Obama's Chicago

- There are many Chicago Obama sites, but no landmarks (yet).
- Barack Obama was active as a community organizer at the Reform Evangelical Church in Pullman.
- He worked closely with residents of Altgeld Gardens on the far south side and worked out of an office in the public housing development.
- In 1995 he announced his run for the Illinois Senate at the former, 50th On The Lake Motel.
- In 1989 Barack and Michelle had their first kiss in Hyde Park outside the Baskin-Robbins at 53rd & Dorchester Avenue (there is a marker there) as part of their first date.



- In 1992, they held their wedding reception at the South Shore Cultural Center (7059 S. Lake Shore Drive).
- On Election Day 2008 Barack and Michelle voted at the public school at 1330 E. 50th Street.
- The 2008 Election Night victory speech and celebration took place in Chicago's Grant Park with 240,000 people in attendance. There should be a marker! The Obamas had watched the returns at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

FIRST LADIES

- Many first ladies have had ties to Chicago.



- Betty Bloomer Ford was born in Chicago at Lake View Hospital (likely in Lake View or Uptown) and lived for a few years at 1252 W. Columbia in Rogers Park before settling in Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- Nancy Davis Reagan, while born in New York City, grew up in Chicago and lived at 199 E. Lake Shore Drive. She was the flower girl for her mother's wedding at Fourth Presbyterian (N. Michigan Avenue) in 1929.
- Hillary Rodham Clinton was born at Edgewater Hospital in 1947 (the building was abandoned in 2001). Her girlhood home was at 5722 N. Winthrop in Edgewater. Her family moved to Park Ridge and that is where she attended high school.



- Michelle Robinson Obama is the first First Lady who is all Chicago: born, grew up, and her entire professional career here. Her first home was in Parkway Gardens project (1950) at

6446 S. King Drive. When she was 4-5 years old, her family moved to 7436 S. Euclid and she grew up there.

Will the Obamas return to Chicago?

The Obama Presidential Library will be built in Jackson Park.



**Respectfully submitted,
Wendy Bright, CTG, Co-Secretary**