

The Robert Lake House
Jackson, Michigan
317 W. Wesley
January 13, 2003

Legal description, 317 W. Wesley Jackson, Michigan

Being a part of the West ½ of the Northeast ¼ of Section 3, T3S, R1W, City of Jackson, Jackson County, Michigan. More particularly described as:

The West ½ of Lot 4, block 4 South, Range 2 West, of the Original Plat of the Village of Jacksonburgh

Building type

This building has had numerous additions. Visual evaluation of the building determines that there are at least 3 separate building campaigns (see appendix, exhibit B and F), 2 of them within a short length of time, the third somewhat later and possibly accomplished in several different steps.

The original building is constructed of brick using multiple wythes. The brick has been heavily painted, but appears to be what is commonly called Chicago Common, a pinkish low fired brick. The material may have been colored with a buff surfacing material when originally constructed. The paint obscures this information. The brick is laid up in running bond.

The original building is very classical in its massing. The front gable, with a 4:12 pitch, is wood and overhangs the porch. The wall to roof connection features relatively small overhangs with dentils and brackets. The supporting columns are of wood, and feature Ionic details. The archtypical scrolling capitals are of unknown, non-wood material of a reddish color.

The one over one double hung windows may not be original, as it was uncommon to find windows of this size at that time, but they are consistent, and some still feature 'wavey', not rolled glass, suggesting that they are from a time when machine made glass was uncommon. The paneled doors with beveled glass, may not be original, but do exhibit 'Victorian' hardware, highly ornate and decorative. The unusual side location of the door suggests that the owner always intended to build the portion designated as addition group A. Some of the non-classical detailing such as the garlands and decorative 'window' in the gable are not unusual in colonial revival building.¹

Addition group A is constructed of brick using multiple wythes. The brick has been heavily painted, but appears to be what is commonly called Chicago Common, a pinkish low fired brick. The material may have been colored with a buff surfacing material when originally construction. The paint obscures this information. The brick is laid up in running bond.

With its cross gable roof, the building moves away from the 'classical' building structure. The gable end still features the typical classical 4:12 pitch, but the cantilevered 2nd floor would not have been common in a classically inspired building. The wall to roof

¹ A Field Guide to American Houses

connection features relatively small overhangs with dentils and brackets. The supporting columns are of brick, and feature Ionic details. The archtypical scrolling capitals are of unknown, material of a reddish color, possibly terracotta.

A pedimented gabled dormer in front, while the dormer in the rear features a flat roof, as well as the use of different materials for the two dormers, suggests that the two dormers were not built simultaneously.

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Addition group B consists of at least two sub additions. The additions borrow details freely from original building, including brackets and corbels. These additions feature two different textures of stucco. It does not appear that the stucco has wood siding under it, as is common in this region for pre-turn of the century buildings. The massing of the additions are distinctly non-classical, proportioned quite differently from the earlier parts of the building. The gables feature 4:12 pitches and stucco.

Latest of these additions would be the second floor bay window, which features a type of Art Deco detailing in the leaded glass. Other than the casement and awning windows in this bay, the windows are doublehung, many with divided lights.

Utilizing the defining system established by the 'Field Guide to American Houses'² this building *could* be designated as a 'Colonial Revival', however the full height porch on the original structure would be more common on the very eclectic 'Folk Victorian' style.

Age

The original structure (see Appendix, exhibit B) on this site was first occupied between 1879 and 1881³. There have been numerous additions. The style is common for that period. Based upon the evidence given by the similar brick, window style and hardware and column cap, it is believed that the area designated as Addition group A was constructed shortly thereafter. The varying stucco textures, window styles and overlapping roof lines suggest that the additions noted as Addition group B were built over a number of years, possibly in the 1910-1920 era.

Occupants

Prior to its recent purchase, this building had only been owned by 3 families. Robert Lake first occupied the building in ca. 1881⁴. In 1904 he sold the home to Mr. John W. Miner⁵. The Miners occupied the building until Mrs. Miner died there in 1957. Her estate sold the property to Mr. And Mrs. James Carlson in 1963 (see appendix exhibit C)

² A Field Guide to American Houses

³ Polk Directory 1879-1881

⁴ Polk Directory 1879-1881

⁵ Polk Directory 1904, Jackson History drawer L-O, Jackson Citizen Patriot, Jan 30, 1961

Robert Lake (b. 1848 d. 1919) was born in Dorset, England⁶. He came to the United States in ca 1849 as a young child. Mr. Lake was a contractor, building many of the buildings of nationally renown architect Claire Allen, notably the Ionia block of Jackson. Mr. Lake made his fortune as a building material supplier. With his father and brother, he was a founding partner of Robert Lake Company. At its inception, the Robert Lake company occupied offices at the Carter block⁷. By 1891, the firm had moved to the building at the southwest corner of Liberty and Mechanic streets⁸. Mr. Lake was a member of many social clubs, an avowed democrat, a card-carrying member of the Agricultural Society, and a one time secretary of the board of directors of Jackson Corset. When members of the Jackson Oddfellows⁹ determined to split over disagreement over the need for a new facility¹⁰, Mr. Lake became an officer and founding member of L.O.O.F lodge #162. Mr. Lake was a Charter member of Co. G, 1st Michigan Infantry formed February 10, 1875¹¹

Robert Lake's father George Lake (b. 1818 d. 1880) was trained as a mason in his native Dorset, England. He emigrated with his family in 1849. City directories of the mid-1880s identify George Lake as a dealer in lime, salt and plaster. George served as the 'chief engineer' for the Jackson fire department 1876-1877¹²

Robert Lake's mother, referred to as Martha or Margurete in various reference sources, was born in England (b. 1821 d. 1900)¹³

Anna Berger (b. 1865 d. 1958) married Robert Lake on February 25, 1885¹⁴. Born in York Pennsylvania, Mrs. Lake was the Goddaughter of Anna Theresa Berger Lynch. According to a plaque in library, Mrs. Lynch was recognized in her lifetime as "the world's renowned women cornetist". According to one reference, Mrs. Lake was an accomplished musician and vaudeville performer. It is even said that Mrs. Lake performed with Jack Benny. This information is suspect as Mrs. Lake would have been in her 50s or 60's when Mr. Benny was performing on the Vaudeville circuit. Mrs. Lake died in 1958 at the age of 94. She is buried at Mt. Evergreen Cemetery¹⁵.

John W. Miner was a local Attorney, banker and businessman. He served as president of Jackson City Bank and Trust¹⁶ and owned numerous pieces of property in the Jackson area.

⁶ Portrait and Biographical Album

⁷ Polk directory 1879-1881

⁸ Polk directory 1891

⁹ Portrait and Biographical Album

¹⁰ Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, Vol 18

¹¹ Portrait and Biographical Album

¹² History of Jackson County

¹³ Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, Vol 18

¹⁴ Births, Deaths and Marriages up to 1929

¹⁵ Michigan Pioneer and Historical Collection, Vol 18

¹⁶ Jackson Polk Directory 1935

James and Gwendolyn Carlson are a local family. Mr. Carlson is the operator of a local restaurant. Mrs. Carlson is a retired employee of Thompson-McCully, a local asphalt paving manufacturer/contractor.

Statement of Significance

Jackson, Michigan Under the Oaks Historic District

The City of Jackson is a highly diversified community. The largely residential Under the Oaks Historic District is a representative slice of that community.

Jackson has a highly diverse economic history. From the mid-1860's thru the late 1920's, Jackson has been a center of transportation, industry and the burgeoning power production business. The Under the Oaks District was the home of barons of more than 20 manufacturers of automobiles, the movers and shakers of the powerful railway industry, plow and farm implement producers, fledgling radio and television manufactures and the founders of the corporation which eventually became Consumers Energy. The Under the Oaks District was also the home of the newly created 'middle class', the workers who actually built the products and contributed to the great industrial growth of Michigan in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Jackson has a highly diverse civic history. Before and during the civil war, Jackson was the home of abolitionist and patriots. The heart of the Under the Oaks District is the modern Under the Oaks Park, home of the monument, set by President Taft, designating Jackson, specifically the area of the park, as the birthplace of the republican party. Jackson residents of the under the Oaks District were among the first of Michigan's residents to volunteer for the Civil war. Jackson was a major 'mustering out' point for Michigan veterans returning from the war. Many of them settled in the Under the Oaks District.

Jackson has a highly diverse architectural history. Again, the Under the Oaks district is a thumbnail sketch encompassing that diversity. From the High Victorian mansions of First street, to the California Bungalow homes of Second and Third streets, to the pre-1850 'farm houses' scattered throughout the district, the Under the Oaks District has it all.

The building, known as The Robert Lake Home, at 317 W. Wesley is a significant structure, highly compatible with the Jackson Under the Oaks Historic District.

Exhibit 'A'

Exhibit 'B-1'

Exhibit 'B-2'

Exhibit 'B-3'

Exhibit 'C'
Jackson Citizen Patriot
January 30, 1963

Exhibit 'D'

Exhibit 'E'
Jackson Citizen Press
April 30, 1919

Exhibit 'F-1'



North Elevation



East Elevation



West Elevation



South Elevation



South Elevation

Bibliography

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