

# THE JOHN ROBERTSON JR. HOUSE

145 West Main Street, Barrington, Illinois

Historic Report and Research for Nominating  
the Property as an Individual Listing to the  
National Register of Historic Places



*Prepared for the Village of Barrington*



**October 2014**



**Name of Property, Historic Name:** The John Robertson Jr. House

**Location:** 145 W. Main Street, Barrington, IL

**Ownership of Property:** Public – Local

**Category of Property:** Building

**Number of Resources within Property:** 1 Contributing, Previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

**Function or use:** Domestic, Single Dwelling

**Current Function:** Vacant/Not in Use

**Description:** Architectural Classification – Classical Revival

**Materials:** Wood, Stone



## **Narrative Description:**

### **Summary Paragraph**

The John Robertson Jr. House was built in 1898 and is located at 145 W. Main Street on the south side of the street between South Hough Street and South Dundee Street in Barrington, Illinois. It is Classical Revival in the form of a Foursquare. Standing 2-1/2 stories, its dimensions are approximately 88' x 54'. It is topped by a steeply-pitched hipped roof. The house has a rubble stone and stone masonry foundation, with wood framing and narrow horizontal siding. It has a broad front porch on the north elevation, facing Main Street, and a small covered side porch on the east elevation. There is a large addition at the rear, built around May of 1952. The major public rooms on the first floor of the house include a large entrance hall, three parlors (currently called salons) and a dining room. The exterior has elaborate classical detailing, including fluted Corinthian columns, Palladian windows, swags and garlands. The interior classical features include modified Doric and Ionic columns and door cornices with egg & dart molding. Although there are fewer classical references on the interior, they equal those on the exterior in artistic value. The following changes occurred to the structure as the use of the house changed: dormers were altered and added at the roof; second and third floor spaces were altered, and an addition was built at the southwest corner. Nevertheless, much of the exterior and the major public spaces have excellent integrity, and the house has sufficient integrity to be listed on the National Register.

### **PHYSICAL CONTEXT**

The Village of Barrington consists of 4.8 square miles, bordered by Hart Road to the West, Illinois Route 68 (Dundee Road) to the south, Ela Road to the east and Providence Road and Taylor Road to the north. Located approximately 32 miles northwest of the city of Chicago, it straddles Cook County on the south and Lake County on the north. A cluster of communities including Lake Barrington, North Barrington, Deer Park, South Barrington and Barrington Hills surrounds it. To the Northeast is Lake Zurich; to the east is Arlington Heights and Buffalo Grove; to the southeast is Palatine; to the south is Hoffman Estates; to the southwest is Elgin and Carpentersville; to the west is Algonquin; to the northwest is Crystal Lake, and to the north is Wauconda.

The business district is centered on Main Street, otherwise known as County Line or Lake Cook Road. There are many architecturally and historically interesting residences at the west end of Main Street. There are commercial buildings lining Main Street to the east. Northwest Highway (Rte. 14) runs on the diagonal north of town; Algonquin Road (Rte. 62) runs on the diagonal south of town through Barrington Hills. The nearest highways are I90 (the Northwest Tollway), to the south, which leads to Chicago; and 290, to the east, which runs north south and connects to other major highways leading to Chicago. Barrington is served by Metra's Union Pacific Northwest Line, offering commuter service into the City of Chicago.

The Village of Barrington, as it appears today, has grown up around the intersection of the two major streets and the railroad line. Hough Street is the major north-south street, and Main Street is the major east-west street. The central business district is located around their intersection and the railroad tracks. The commercial area is set out in a grid, with the exception of the diagonal element created by the railroad line. The residential areas largely conform to a grid.

The John Robertson, Jr. house was originally located on a 3-acre lot. The lot occupied a premier downtown location, on Main Street, half a block west of Hough Street. The 1855 town grid included small lots. By 1898, when the Robertson House was built, larger lots--ranging in size from 1.9 to 25-acres, were being platted and available for sale.<sup>1</sup> The residential development of Barrington expanded around 1898 with the construction of larger homes on larger residential lots.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

### **Exterior**

The Robertson House is located at the north end of a level .465-acre lot and is approximately 54' x 88'. The majority of the lot is currently paved, leaving minimal planting areas existing immediately adjacent to the house. These areas are planted with trees, shrubs, and other vegetation. A few of the larger evergreen trees are as tall as 24' to 35' high. A 2-1/2' wide concrete sidewalk extends from the main porch to Main Street and to the side porch at the east side of the house.

The building is a two-and-a-half story modified Foursquare with an original, three-story, south extension wing that houses kitchen and service areas. The two-story addition is located at the southwest corner of the structure. The Foursquare and south service extension have a continuous ashlar rock-faced foundation with raised basement, an exterior of horizontal 3" wide weatherboard siding, a hipped roof of cedar shingles, and bracketed eaves with a row of dentils underneath the cornice. Dormers are located at the north, south, east and west rooflines. A single, centrally located, red brick chimney rises above the roofline where the interior Foursquare rooms connect. An 11' x 36' full-width porch is located on the main, north façade, and a secondary 18' x 8' porch is located on the east façade. Windows on the house are typically wood, containing one-over-one

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<sup>1</sup> The 1855 town grids included small lots (200' x 66' in Lake County and 66' x 132' in Cook County). The legal description of the property Henry Boehmer sold to John Robertson on April 8, 1898, is "the east one half of Lot number Eleven in the county Clerk's Re-division of the Assessor's Division (except Lots Nine to Seventeen inclusive and Lots Thirty, Thirty four and Thirty five thereof) of the west one half of the northwest quarter and the southeast quarter of the northwest quarter of Section One, Township Forty two north, Range Nine, east of the third Principal Meridian, situated in the Village of Barrington, in the County of Cook in the State of Illinois."

double hung sashes; some are grouped in threes. Surrounds are of wood. Some of the windows have leaded transoms. Others have a decorative element where a keystone would be located. Decorative garlands and swags are located at the top and the sides of the upper sections of some of the windows. The primary entrances are accessed from staircases located on the north porch and the east porch. The north (front) entrance opens into the main stair hall; the east (side) entrance opens into the east salon. Secondary entrances are located off of the dining room, on the east elevation, facing south and off the kitchen at the west elevation of the addition. There is an entrance to the basement on the west elevation, under the main interior staircase, through steel access doors. There are three internal staircases. The primary stairs ascend from the front stair hall. Far less grand is a set of stairs adjacent to this staircase extending from the second floor to the third. A service stair is located at the south end of the building.

### North Façade

The primary, north, façade is symmetrical with a central, 14' wide dormer containing a Palladian window at the third level. A full-width porch has a continuous, rough-faced ashlar stone foundation wall that extends as a railing on the sides. This stone railing has a semi-circular curve on the east and west sides. The curved ends of the stone porch have six, 9" square ventilation holes to accommodate air circulation under the porch deck. There is an offset 10' x 5' porch extension where the stairs to the front entrance are located. The porch floor consists of painted, wood tongue and groove decking. Fluted classical wood columns, in groupings of three, are located at each front corner and are set upon stone bases. They have Corinthian capitals. The porch is topped by a bracketed cornice with a row of dentils under the cornice. A wood balustrade with turned spindles connects the groupings of three columns that mark the corners of the porches. The first floor of the façade is asymmetrical. To the west side is the front entrance and a bay window. The entrance contains wood-paneled double doors, with operable transoms above. Slender, fluted pilasters flank the doors. The west window openings, which light the stair hall, consist of a three-part bay with fixed windows that have leaded transoms. Slender pilasters, like those flanking the front entrance, frame the three window openings. To the east is a large eight-foot window opening containing two curved glass windows with leaded glass transoms. Slender pilasters frame the openings. These windows light the front parlor (also known as the north salon). There are rectangular wood panels beneath all windows. Surface-mounted wall sconces frame the entrance doors.

The second floor of the north façade is two bays wide. The east bay contains a Palladian Window, with a center pane of glass flanked by double-hung windows. There is a leaded arched opening with a pointed top over the center opening. Above the window grouping are panels that contain applied wood wreaths in the lower panels, which are on either side of the window, and applied wood swags in the four upper panels. There are four slender pilasters separating the three sections of windows. A decorative pointed wood keystone, similar to the pilaster capitals, marks the center of the leaded transom. The west bay

consists of two wood double-hung windows topped by a leaded glass semi-circular fanlight. Pointed wood keystone blocks, matching the pilaster capitals, also adorn these two windows.

A hipped roof with a bracketed cornice caps the front-facing dormer at the third floor level. The window treatment in the dormer mimics that of the window in the second-floor east bay, except that there are no swags in the upper panels and the light over the center pane is rounded not pointed. Slender pilasters, set under the brackets, separate the windows from one another.

### East Façade

The east facade of the house contains three dormers: the original dormer in the center of the facade was enlarged and now has five wood casement windows; the dormer that was added at the northeast corner has wood casement windows; and the southeast roof has a dormer over the kitchen/service area that was built-out and extends around to the south elevation, cutting into the gable end of the third floor.

The east façade consists of five bays. Bay one on the north side consists of the front porch with curved ashlar masonry walls topped by wood columns and the porch roof. Bay two, which is part of the main house, includes a single wood window on the first floor. It is tall with a triple-hung sash. A panel with a swag tops the window and slender pilasters flank it. A wood deck cantilevers over the window. On the second floor of bay two, there is a single door directly over the first floor window. It, too, is topped by a panel with a swag and flanked by narrow pilasters. Bay three, to the south, is a projecting side porch and bay window at the first floor level and a squared extension at the second floor. The porch is similar to the main porch. It has a raised, rough-faced ashlar stone foundation with fluted Corinthian columns resting on stone bases flanking the staircase. There is a pair of columns on the north side of the stairs and three on the south side. The columns support a simple entablature with bracketed roof eaves. There is a row of dentils under the cornice. A single fluted Corinthian column rests on a stone base against the wall on the north side of the porch while on the south side a projecting bay window meets the porch stairs. The porch leads to a north-facing single wide, wood-paneled, door that has a glazed upper panel and a mail slot. This door opens into what is today the east salon and would have been the location where the coach would pick up and drop off family members and visitors. The stairs are stone and are flanked by rough-faced ashlar stone side walls that are stepped. There is wood latticework extending from the porch floor to grade. The porch railing is made up of delicate turned spindles at the north side of the porch. A simple 2-1/2" diameter pipe-railing is attached to the stepped-stone porch wall beneath each column base and terminates at the ground in front of the first stair.

Adjacent to the porch is bay three, the east salon bay window that has a single double hung window per bay. Each window has wood surrounds topped by a panel that contains a swag and is flanked by narrow pilasters. Bay three at the second floor has one wood,



double-hung window and one door opening. The window is located south of the door and is topped by a panel containing a swag and flanked by narrow pilasters. The door has a wood surround and is topped by a panel containing a swag.

Bay four at the first level has a three-part window with triple-hung wood sash that lights the dining room. A panel with a swag tops each window and slender pilasters flank them. Bay four on the second floor has two sets of windows, with the northern most very tall and slender with a double hung wood sash and upper window panel that is void of decoration, but slender columns still flank each side. Just to the south of that window there are two wood, double-hung window openings that each light an office.

Bay five on the east façade, at the south end of the building, is set back from the wall plane of the other bay to accommodate the south porch stair. The porch base is composed of ashlar masonry that is a continuation of the main structure's foundation wall. The south porch is only one level and is enclosed. It has single-pane, wood clerestory windows, approximately, two feet in height. At the kitchen wall, one fixed-pane picture window has a simple wood profile. One single solid wood door with a window cut out and a brass doorknob is used to enter the porch that leads into the dining room. One surface-mounted light fixture is located above this door. A single rough-faced stone ashlar base supports a simple, Doric column that is not fluted. The column holds up the porch roof, which is no longer used as a deck as it did when the roof was surrounded by a railing. There are six stone treads, with one wooden tread at the landing. The second floor contains a single fifteen-lite door. The third floor of bay five has a modified extended dormer above the bracketed eave. There are four sets of paired wood casement windows topped by a mansard cedar roof. Horizontal wood siding continues beneath the window openings but terminates at flat, unadorned corners.

### West Façade

The west facade of the house, which originally had one small dormer centered over the 11' wide projecting bay window at the stair tower, now contains a 40' wide dormer stretching the width of the Foursquare at the third floor roofline; the original, simple dormer was enlarged to now have seven window openings of disparate sizes. The north window is a horizontal single-sash glazed opening; the middle windows are paired casement windows; the second dormer window from the end is a three-sash set of casements; and finally, the last window has a paired casement with wood sashes. To the south of the long dormer there are three fixed windows. Further south behind a parapet wall is a single door that accesses the roof of the addition (the two-story addition, located on the southwest of the original house, is described in detail in its own section, at the end of the south façade section).

The west façade is made up of six non-regular bays. Bay one, on the south side of the house is the 1950's addition, discussed later in this report. Bay two is 8' wide and is the

inset light well between the two buildings. There is a small, 18"-wide bathroom window at the first level and two, side-by-side bathroom windows at the third level.

Bays three, four, and five of the west facade, which have 3"-wide horizontal wood siding, are part of the Foursquare. They have decorative features that match those seen in the bays on the front and east facades of the Foursquare: an ashlar stone raised foundation, wood roof eaves with brackets and a dentil course. Bay three has two windows per floor at the west salon and at the second floor. These windows are wood, double-hung sashes with elongated side pilasters and flat wood panels above containing decorative swags. Bay four includes the prominent projecting Palladian window bay. The basement level has a horizontal, metal basement access door and stairs directly to the west of the bay. Narrow sidelites flank the doors where it connects at the wall. The 3' wide bay has slightly flared corners at the raised base. A tripartite squared opening has a large center sash with narrow sashes to either side on the first floor. This window is balanced with the arched Palladian window above it, on the second story. Along with the slender wood pilasters and rectangular flat wood panels with swags above the single glazed sashes, there is a thin wooden keystone wedge at center of the top arch. A flat roof with bracketed eaves and a fascia with a dentil course top the projecting rectangular bay. Bay five, the northern bay of the Foursquare, contains two windows. They are not directly over each other but rather react to the rise of the staircase. The first floor window is 3' wide and centered on the bay. It has a simple surround and an unadorned top panel. The second floor window in bay five is offset to the north and has a vertical fixed sash. This window does not have the elongated pilasters, but does have the swag decoration in the flat wood panel above. The roofline is cut just below the northwest dormer and may be a remnant from the location of where a fire escape was formerly attached. Bay six, on the north end of the facade, consists of the front porch and stair with curved ashlar walls, wood columns, and the porch entablature and roof.

### South Façade

The south façade is composed of two wide bays. The east end consists of a three story gable end of the original building. It has a broken pediment with brackets and a fascia topped by dentils. The west end consists of the two story addition that is discussed in detail at the end of this section. The roofline of the east bay has a section of the box-like dormer projecting above the eave on the third floor. The south-facing dormer end has three wood, casement windows. The south-facing bay of the original kitchen section has narrow, horizontal clapboard siding at the gable end façade. The first floor has a centrally-located large picture window, opening into the kitchen area, with a simple wood surround. Two tall, fixed wood sash windows with simple-profiled surrounds and an unadorned flat upper panel are found at the second level. The third floor of this bay has a centrally located single-pane fixed window. A vent with wood shutters is above this window and penetrates the wall slightly off-center. One exterior door is located on this original bay just west of the first floor picture window. It is accessed from a concrete stair, facing east, with a simple wood railing. The window openings to the east (the

original building) are narrower, having only two single casement windows with four lights per casement.

### 1950s Addition

The 25' by 17' addition connects at the southwest of the original service wing of the house, adjacent to the back stair tower. The wing is flush with the south elevation of the house and projects 17' to the west. It is a rectangular, two-story wing with raised basement and a mansard roof. The foundation is concrete block and the walls are wood-framed. The exterior walls are finished in 14" wide horizontal composite weatherboard.

The west façade of the addition has three windows openings. The second floor window to the north, has a pair of two-foot-wide casement windows. The first floor windows include one opening on the south side that is a 4' wide window with simple wood surrounds. To the north, there is a 6' wide fixed lite with two adjacent wood four-lite casement sashes. Between the first floor windows on this façade, there is one single, exterior door with a small viewport. It is offset to the north of the centerline and has five steps leading up to the first floor kitchen wing. Two lower-level basement windows flank this single exterior door.

The north façade of the addition is similar to the addition's west façade. There are two windows at the second floor: a single four lite casement on the west side and two four-lite casements towards the east side. The first floor has an opening at the west with a 6' wide fixed lite with two adjacent wood casement sashes with four-lites. A single casement with four-lites is located to the east.

The south façade of the addition is flush with the south façade of the original structure. The exterior walls of the two sections meet beneath the original west eave. The mansard roof of the addition attaches beneath the broken pediment of the gable end. The addition appears to be symmetrical, having two lower windows and two upper windows, but the west windows are slightly larger than the east windows. The two first floor windows have a fixed, single sash with simple wood surrounds. The second floor windows vary, with the west opening made up of three casements with four lights per casement and to the east, the opening has two four-lite casements. Below the siding, there is basement access by way of short double doors below the first floor windows.

## **Interior**

### First Floor

The first floor of the house has five formal rooms: the 18' x 17' entry hall, the 19' x 16' north salon, the 23' x 17' east salon, the 18' x 13' west salon and the 21' x 15' dining room. There is a small 11' x 9' cloakroom between the entry hall and the west salon. The

service area and addition, located to the south of the formal rooms, contain three rooms-- a kitchen and two small rooms. There are two small bathrooms on the first floor. A small hall just south of the entry hall connects that space with the cloakroom and the east salon. Circulation to other levels is by way of the grand stair to the second floor only, and a service stair by the kitchen. The first floor rooms are large, having 13' high ceilings in the major public spaces.

The house is entered from a pair of single glazed double entrance doors that have a large transom above. They lead from the front porch into a large entry hall, which has a grand staircase with quarter turns. The stair has two landings, with the upper landing having a built-in oak bench set across from a large Palladian window that faces west. The stair ascends from a curved set of stairs lined by a curving paneled wall. All trim in the room, including window and door casings, is of quarter-sawn oak. Oak strip flooring is found in this room and the other major public spaces. The door and window casings all terminate in a small cornice with a thin strip of egg and dart molding beneath it. Windows in the porch bay have transoms with leaded glass in a pattern of intersecting arcs of circles. The room, including the space surrounding the open staircase, has paneled wainscoting, approximately 3-1/2' in height. Delicate turned spindles line the staircase, which has a first-floor newel post consisting of four turned balusters. These balusters, like those adjacent to it on top of the curving wall, are more substantial than the spindles lining the stairs. They resemble small Doric columns. The other newel posts on the staircase are square with a paneled base and overhanging cap. The upper walls are plaster.

The hall space has two eight-foot entrances to other rooms. The opening to the east accesses the north salon. It has pocket doors, with ornamental bronze beaded hardware. Pairs of Doric columns that are similar to those on the first floor of the staircase, yet at a grander scale, flank the opening. The capitals are topped by a band of delicate turned spindles. At the top of the entrance there is a simple entablature with a slender cornice that has egg and dart molding beneath it. The second entrance opens into the small hallway between the cloakroom and the east salon. It has two short Doric columns resting on wing walls that flank the opening. The top of the opening consists of a shallow arch and a simple entablature resembling that on the other opening. In the center is a pointed wood strap that resembles the vertical keystone member in the window lintels on the exterior of the house. The opening into the hallway frames a mirrored structure that has Composite columns springing from a projecting paneled base. The columns support an arched mirror that is capped by a wood strap that also resembles a vertical keystone.

To the east of the stair hall is the north salon. It has paneled wainscoting that is shorter than that in the entry hall, approximately, 2' in height. The north wall has a curved bow window with two fixed sashes and leaded transoms that resemble those in the main entry hall's bay window. The wood trim in this room is also quarter-sawn oak.

There are pocket doors between the north and east salons. The east salon has a projecting five-sided bay, with a north-facing entrance door. The door has two narrow lower panels, a bronze mail slot above, and four horizontal glazed panels at the top. This door connects

to the east side porch. There is a fireplace opposite the bay, in the center of the west wall. It has an oak-paneled mantel with beaded details, a modern cream-colored stone surround and hearth and a mirrored overmantel. Elongated fluted columns with acanthus leaf capitals extend from the hearth beyond the bracketed wood mantle shelf to support the entablature. Remnants of mosaic tiles, with a raised "Greek Key" pattern, are covered by the stone hearth. The cream-colored infill panel surrounds a historic decorative bronze fire screen that frames the fireplace opening. This room also has low paneled wainscoting, approximately 2' in height. The door surrounds in this room don't have cornices. The east and west salon are separated by fifteen-lite French doors that are topped by a six-lite transom.

The west salon has oak baseboards and crown molding. There are wood, five-paneled doors leading to the cloakroom and a closet. They have ornamental hardware. There are pocket doors between the east salon and the dining room that also have ornamental hardware.

The dining room has oak baseboards. The wood tongue and groove flooring in this room has a mixture of wood types and finishes that create a simple border pattern around the perimeter of the room. A tripartite window with one-over-one double hung sashes is located in the east wall.

The three former kitchen rooms are fairly non-descript, having simple wood tongue and groove flooring, plaster and wallboard walls, 6" simple wood baseboards and no crown molding. The windows have some flat wood surrounds. All kitchen appliances, counters, and shelves have been removed, but there is a remaining custom built oak hutch that matches the woodwork in the entry hall. It has upper glazed doors and engaged columns with acanthus leaf capitals and floral trim. The rear hall has exposed plywood subfloors. The two rooms in the addition have horizontal blond wood wainscoting with a projecting horizontal cap.

## Second Floor

The second floor has nine rooms, two bathrooms, a 3-1/2'-wide central hallway and three staircases, including the grand stair that terminates at the north end of the second floor. The hallway is reached from the entry hall through partition glass fire-doors and runs north-south for the length of the house to the service staircase. The third staircase, adjacent to the grand stair, is a dog-leg stair, 3'-wide with a simple newel post that has an oval ball and smooth 2" diameter wood, surface mounted rail. The hallway walls are composed of painted drywall with a 3-1/2" simple wood baseboard, a flat chair rail, and decorative, applied wood strip panels located below the chair rail. The hall ceiling is a 2' x 4' drop ceiling with 12" square recessed lighting. Seven of the rooms and the two bathrooms are accessed from the hallway; the southwest and southeast rooms are accessed by an 11'-long enclosed hall and a pass-through vestibule. The two north rooms of the Foursquare have plaster walls, a chair rail, simple 10"-wide profiled baseboards

and crown molding. Plywood covers all of the room floors on the second level. The doors are solid wood six-panel doors with updated brass knobs. A three-part window in a Palladian configuration lights the northeast corner bedroom. The center sash is fixed and the side windows are double hung. The central fixed pane is topped by a panel that surrounds a leaded fanlight topped by a shallow pointed arch. Shallow cornices top all three sashes. The northwest corner bedroom is lit by two double-hung windows. They have simple flat moldings surrounding them. Each is double hung topped by a flat panel surrounding leaded fanlights.

### Third Floor

The third floor has a similar layout to the second floor, with a centrally-located hallway. It accesses seven rooms. The finishes include a simple chair rail, wood baseboard and surface-mounted 1' x 4' fluorescent fixtures. There are two staircases, one irregularly-shaped bathroom, one 6' x 6' storage room and five small closets located within rooms. Access to the addition and roof and mechanical equipment is through a stairhall at the south end of the third floor. There are no historic ornamental treatments on this floor.

### Basement

The basement is typical of an 1898 wood frame home with many of the spaces unfinished. Its main purpose was to accommodate food and other storage and to house mechanical equipment. Most of the spaces directly relate to the floorplan of the first floor above. There are eight rooms and crawlspaces under the north porch and the 1950's addition. There are two access points for the basement: the south service stair and the cellar utility double doors on the west side near the entry hall. The walls of the basement are plaster in the section under the main house and service section and are concrete block in the southwest addition. The floors are a mixture of concrete and dirt.

## **INTEGRITY STATEMENT**

This Classical Revival Foursquare, has excellent integrity on the major elevations and in the interior major public spaces. The formal spaces of the house have changed little since John Robertson died in 1918. Changes that were made to the building at the east and west roofline, to the porch railings, to the kitchen, to the second floor rooms, to the third floor ballroom, and including the construction of the 1950s addition, were alterations that do not substantially affect the significant facades nor the primary formal rooms of the house.

Over the years, the alterations to the John Robertson, Jr. house were largely to accommodate changes in ownership and use. It first served as a single family house from the time it was constructed in 1898 until 1918, when John Robertson Jr. died.

Immediately following Robertson's death, the house, which stood empty, was used to hospitalize victims of the influenza pandemic of 1918. From 1926 to 1945 it served as home to the Robert Mickey family; for a short time the Mickey's ran a public tearoom on the first floor. After World War II, in the late 1940s, the house was altered for use as a nursing home, around 1952, a 17' x 25' two-story, wood frame addition was constructed west of the kitchen and service area, at the rear.<sup>2</sup> From the late 1960s through 2005, the building was converted to offices, resulting in modifications to the roofline. No change was made to the historic front dormer facing Main Street. Dormers on the east and west facades of the main house, however, were enlarged and windows were added. Although the porches are largely intact, they originally had ornamental balcony railings that have been removed. It is not known exactly when the railings were removed. Interior changes occurred on the second floor; walls were added and acoustical dropped ceilings were installed. The third floor ballroom was converted into offices by adding walls and by adding dormers. The entry hall staircase was separated from the second floor hallway with full-height wood and glass partition walls constructed behind the existing railing. A fire occurred in the early 1970s, causing some, but minimal, damage to the woodwork in the first floor entry hall. The fire and the mitigation of the fire have left the ornate detailing in fair condition, but it remains clearly detailed and is a valuable asset to the overall design of the house. Looking much as it did in 1898, the John Robertson, Jr. House has sufficient integrity for listing on the National Register.

**Statement of Significance, Applicable National Register Criteria:** C - Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

**Areas of Significance:** Architecture

**Period of Significance:** 1898-1918

**Significant Dates:** 1898

**Architect/Builder:** Fred Lines

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph:**

The John Robertson, Jr. House is locally significant and is eligible for listing on the National Register under criterion C as an excellent example of Classical Revival architecture and the only example in Barrington whose basic form is a Foursquare with classical detailing. The house is imposing, with ornamentation on the exterior that is more elaborate than that on any other house with classical elements in Barrington. The comparable houses tend to be predominantly Colonial Revival or Queen Anne,

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<sup>2</sup> In September 2014, during rehabilitation work, newspapers dated May 1952 were found inside the walls of the addition. It is believed the addition was constructed at that time.

incorporating classical detailing, very different from the Robertson House. In 1898, John Robertson, Jr. hired Fred Lines, a talented and highly-regarded local carpenter to build a large beautiful home for himself and his wife at 145 W. Main Street-- prominently located in the center of town. Featuring an extensive array of classical details, including slender fluted Corinthian columns and Palladian windows, the Robertson House expresses a level of artistry befitting the stature of the family who lived there.

The house is located within the boundaries of the "Barrington Historic District," a National Register District. In Section 7 on Page 21, it is included in the inventory as 145 W. Main, Neo-Classical, c. 1890, Commercial. In Section 8, "John Robertson" (not described as "Junior") is mentioned, along with John Plagge, as "very influential in the economic development of the community during this period..." The National Register nomination for the district was completed in 1986, almost 30 years ago. The date is incorrect and the information is sparse on this very significant house. There is no discussion of the importance of its architecture. To update and correct the information, the John Robertson, Jr. House is being individually nominated to the Register. The Village of Barrington currently owns it, and plans have been drawn by Johnson Lasky Architects for its restoration.

The John Robertson Jr. House is associated with John Robertson Jr. Even though the house is not eligible for listing on the National Register under criterion B, because Robertson's banking contributions were fairly common for the time, information on Robertson and his family are included in this document. Robertson served as bank president, owned an extensive amount of land and served as a member of the Village Board and as president of the School of Education Board. He came to Barrington in 1887 and participated in business and civic changes that shaped the town. In 1898, he had a highly regarded local carpenter build a new home for himself and his wife at 145 Main Street, prominently located in the center of town. Robertson invested in the community, was socially influential, and served the community during the early years of Barrington's growth.

## **Narrative Statement of Significance:**

### **HISTORY**

#### **Barrington**

The Village of Barrington, where John, Jr. built his house at 145 W. Main Street, was platted, July 16, 1855. It was laid out straddling the Lake and Cook County lines, in both Cuba Township in Lake County and Barrington Township in Cook County.<sup>3</sup> The town, township, and post office were named after the town of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, where many of Barrington's early settlers had come from. After the land was platted,

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<sup>3</sup> Barrington Village Plat dated July 16, 1855, May 18, 1867, June 15, 1882, and June 8, 1897.



there were only two buildings that were already part of the landscape: a farmhouse and a barn. Many structures were then moved into town from various locations, including places in Ela Township, where John Robertson, Jr. was born.<sup>4</sup> In 1863, the Barrington Station landholders voted to incorporate and the town of Barrington Station was organized. Due to the outbreak of the Civil War, the paperwork was not completed until 1865. At that time, the town had a population of approximately 300 persons. On the Cuba Township side of town only twelve houses were constructed, while the section in Barrington Township held a post office, drug store, tavern, blacksmith shop and several stores. A schoolhouse had been built in 1846, and in 1855 and 1868 two more were built to supplant the first building. A promotional handbill was issued by a Citizen's Committee in 1872 to promote the town to prospective buyers, it promised "...Beautiful lots are for sale on clean streets...two good lumber yards are ready to fill any orders for building material. The streets are broad and clean, fringed with beautiful maples, planted years ago, making a charming shady protection from the summer sun."<sup>5</sup>

By 1894, the population of Barrington was 1100 persons. As the 1890s progressed, Barrington began to acquire the amenities of an urban center. The first electric light plant in Barrington was constructed in 1897. In 1898, the water system was installed; a fire department was organized, and a telephone system was introduced. That was the same year John, Jr. and Julia built their new house.

### **John Robertson, Jr.**

John Robertson Jr. (1844-1918) who became an influential and well-respected citizen of Barrington, moved his family there in 1887, at a time when the village was developing from a train stop of 300 inhabitants to a bustling town.<sup>6</sup>

Robertson came from a wealthy farming family, one that had settled Lake County in the 1830s and, by 1861, owned 1,120 acres of land in Ela Township--from Lake Zurich south to the Cook County line.<sup>7</sup> John Robertson Sr. (1810-1877) was a pioneer who came to Illinois in 1837 from New Hampshire and purchased land grants in Lake County from 1843 up to 1848. He owned land within seven sections in Ela Township and was instrumental in organizing the Township--elected to numerous township offices over the years. He served several terms each as Supervisor, as the Highway Commissioner, as Justice of the Peace and as overseer of the poor.<sup>8</sup> Those who first settled in the vicinity of Barrington established the local towns named Miller's Grove, Barrington Center, Cuba Station (also known as Langenheim), Rand, and Deer Grove. It was on April 2, 1850, that

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<sup>4</sup> Ela Township is located in Lake County, just east of Cuba Township.

<sup>5</sup> Reprint of handbill, *Tales of Old Barrington*, page 21.

<sup>6</sup> "John Robertson", *Portrait and Biographical Record of DuPage and Cook Counties, IL*, Chicago: Lake City Publishing Co., 1894), page 329-330.

<sup>7</sup> 1861 Lake County Plat map and 1907 Map of Ela Township. John Robertson Sr. owned property in Ela Township in Sections 17, 20, 21, 28, 29, 33, and 32.

<sup>8</sup> Ela Township Records. <http://elatownship.org/wp-content/uploads/1850+elected-officials.pdf>

the early settlers organized and began electing officials in Barrington, Cuba, Ela, and Palatine Townships.

John Robertson Jr., the firstborn son of John Robertson Sr. (1810-1877) and Charlotte Sutherland Robertson (1824-1875), grew up during the time that his family was purchasing and improving land near what would become the Village of Barrington. His formative years were spent near the town of Deer Grove in Ela Township, assisting his father on the family farm and on the additional property they owned in the township. This occurred during a time of significant change and development, and he experienced firsthand the civic accomplishments of his father.

The Village of Barrington, where Robertson, Jr. was to spend his later years was first planned to be located at the Deer Grove settlement where the Illinois & Wisconsin Railroad depot had been established in 1852. Unfortunately for the railroad, farmers Ezekial Cady and Barney Elfrink refused to sell their land for a town that would license saloons, which they believed would have a bad influence on youth. So Robert C. Campbell, the railroad civil engineer, is said to have searched farther northwest of that location and bought forty acres from Benjamin Felter who sold his farm outright as he did not wish to have a railroad going through his property.<sup>9</sup> The land purchased was hilly and full of ponds, creeks and sloughs.

In 1866, John Jr. married Julia E. Parker and they resided and farmed near Deer Grove. By 1870, two of their five children had been born.<sup>10</sup> In 1877, when John, Sr. died suddenly, John Jr. moved his growing family to Lake Zurich, where his mother and father had lived, into his parents' large home. John Jr. had inherited much of his father's land.<sup>11</sup> Robertson then followed other family members who had relocated to Barrington from Deer Grove and Lake Zurich.<sup>12</sup> He was one of many early resident farmers who could afford to move to established towns where comforts and shops were readily available.

When John Robertson, Jr. moved to Barrington in 1887, he rented out the Lake Zurich farm and purchased a small existing home at 212 S. Cook Street, the former Dell Loomis

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<sup>9</sup> Arnett Lines, *A History of Barrington*.

<sup>10</sup> Lake County Vital Records, #092M1086, U. S. Census, 1870.

<sup>11</sup> John's father was murdered. On September 8<sup>th</sup>, 1877, John Sr. was shot and killed by resident farmer, John Davidson, the culmination of an ongoing disagreement over road and property rights. John Sr. was attending to his duty as Ela Road Commissioner when the death occurred. The trial was followed and reported in detail in the *Chicago Tribune*. John's wife, Charlotte was already deceased and John Jr.'s sister, Alida Robertson, age nine, moved to Palatine and was raised by another sister. John's brother, Silas (1847-1906), was elected Ela Township constable in 1877, but moved to Barrington and held positions on the Village Board starting in 1903. Aside from Silas, none of the Robertson family held Ela Township positions after 1877. The family moved away from farming in Ela Township and relocated to the towns of Barrington and Palatine.

<sup>12</sup> John Robertson, Jr.'s brother Silas retired in Barrington, and his sister Cordelia married a Lake Zurich neighbor, Edward Clark, who served as Barrington Township Supervisor from 1866-1894. Clark moved to Barrington in 1884. Arnett Lines, *A History of Barrington*.

House.<sup>13</sup> During this time, he and Julia were raising their five children: Cora, Albert, Emma, Frank and Lydia. The house has been extensively remodeled over the years. Today it serves as the Egg Harbor Restaurant.

Robertson Jr. became a banker in 1895. Four years earlier his son Albert was made cashier of the banking institution that grew out of Barrington's first bank--established in 1889 by out-of-towners and named Dwigging, Starbuck and Company. The first bank was bought out in 1891 by locals E. R. Clark, C. H. Austin, J. C. Plagge, M. B. McIntosh, H. C. P. Sandman and renamed McIntosh, Sandman and Company.<sup>14</sup> Albert became the cashier at that time. By 1895, John and Albert were able to purchase Edward Clark's interest in the bank, which was then renamed the Barrington Bank of Sandman & Company. Robertson became president. After 1908, the bank name was again changed--from the Barrington Bank of Sandman & Co. to the Barrington Bank of Robertson, Plagge & Company--with John Robertson, Jr. President, J. C. Plagge Vice President, and John's son Albert, cashier.<sup>15</sup> In 1913, the bank became known as the First State Bank of Barrington. Upon John Robertson Jr.'s death in 1918, his son Albert became president. Robertson was in banking in Barrington for 23 years and Albert for 41 years.

In addition to his professional career, John Robertson, Jr. became involved in civic affairs in Barrington. He was president of the Board of Education for two years, around 1895, and from 1895 through 1911 served on the Village Board.<sup>16</sup> Robertson family members also held local offices: son Albert was Village Secretary in 1901 and served as a director of the Barrington Electric Light and Power Company in 1902; son, Frank, was the 1901 Legal Counsel; John's brother, Silas, was Alderman in 1903.<sup>17</sup>

Even before Robertson built his house, in 1898, he was described as a highly successful and respected resident of the community. The 1895 *Barrington Review* wrote an article on local businesses calling out John Robertson, Jr.'s accomplishments:

Mr. John Robertson, the president of this institution (The Barrington Bank of Sandman & Co.), is a member of the village board, which position he has held for several years. In public and social circles Mr. Robertson has long been highly honored and esteemed. He has ever given a public spirited support to all measures best calculated to advance the material welfare of Barrington, and to

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<sup>13</sup> Ruth Munson letter to Barbara Benson, undated and *Barrington Review* news accounts. Arnett Lines *History of Barrington*, Part 1 and July 14, 1986 Letter from Lucile Robertson to Barbara Benson. In 1891, Loomis would build 216 Lake Street, one of a pair of Victorian Gothic homes built side by side for the Hawley sisters. Robertson held onto the property on South Cook Street well after 1908, when he had it renovated for his widowed daughter-in-law, Nellie Robertson, wife of Frank, and her two children, Julia and Lucile. *The Daily Herald*, October 22, 1909. For many years Lucile ran a boarding house and Lucile operated a restaurant out of it called, "Julia's Tavern."

<sup>14</sup> *Barrington Review*, January 10, 1891.

<sup>15</sup> Goodspeed, *History of Cook County, Illinois*, 1909. p. 811-12 and Munson, Barrington, Postcard History Series, p. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Record Book of the Village of Barrington*, various years.

<sup>17</sup> *Barrington Review*, May 18, 1895, bank advertisement, page 1.

the honest and economical administration of her municipal affairs. As regards business ability and true enterprise, coupled with conservative and reliable financial methods, he has achieved the highest of reputations and is in every respect a thorough exponent of the true principles governing banking and finance.<sup>18</sup>

In 1898, Robertson, Jr. and his wife Julia built their new house at 145 W. Main Street, with all the conveniences of the day. When they purchased the land on Main Street there were only a few lots available in the immediate center of Barrington that were of substantial size, compared to the small platted lots east of Hough and west of Hawley Streets. Robertson conducted business in downtown Barrington and when he had a new home built, he made sure it was on a large lot, had modern conveniences, and was located near the downtown area.

The Robertson's house on Main Street, substantially larger than others in town and architecturally important, reflected their success and status in the community. Both were active in the social life of Barrington and belonged to several organizations, often holding leadership positions. John was a member of the Masonic Order and the Modern Woodmen of American. Julia was a charter member of the Local Order of the Eastern Star and a member of the Thomas W. Sweeney Woman's Relief Corps No. 85. She was a "prominent member" of the Woman's Thursday Club, a social group founded in 1894 "composed of (a limit of twenty of) the leading women of the village" with a mission of "promoting a social spirit among the women of Barrington and also to take up a course in reading and literary work"<sup>19</sup> The club held its eleventh anniversary celebration in March of 1905 at the Robertson house, and the next day an entire front page of the *Barrington Review* was dedicated to reporting on the event: "The reception and banquet, proved one of the most enjoyable ever held by the club and great credit is due the gracious hostess for so pleasant an evening." A picture of the home was prominently printed, showing very detailed architectural elements. In a letter, Julia's granddaughter, Lucile Robertson, recalled the house and Julia:

Grandmother Julia in her heyday, no doubt fancied herself the village social queen with the biggest house in town, the biggest car in town (a lumbering 7-passenger Olds touring car—they were all touring cars back then, with flapping side curtains) and 'twas told that she insisted her laundress hang sheets on the line the long way, so she would have the biggest wash in town.<sup>20</sup>

John Robertson Jr. is associated with two houses in Barrington, the small and simple house at 212 S. Cook Street and the large and prominent Classical Revival house at 145 W. Main Street. In contrast to the house on South Cook Street, the house on Main Street, substantially larger and architecturally significant, built in 1898 by Fred Lines, reflects

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<sup>18</sup> "The Barrington Bank of Sandman & Co." *Barrington Review*, January 12, 1895.

<sup>19</sup> John Robertson Obituary, *Barrington Review*, September 12, 1918 and Julia Robertson Obituary, *Barrington Review*, April 19, 1917. Arnett Lines, p. 114.

<sup>20</sup> Lucile Robertson letter to Barbara Benson, July 14, 1986.

Robertson's success as a banker and the Robertson's role in the civic and social life of Barrington.

The Robertsons lived in their grand house on Main Street twenty years, until their deaths. Julia Roberson passed away in April 1917 and John, Jr. in 1918. The house stayed in the family until September 1921, when it was sold to Henry C. Bass. Title then transferred to Robert and Ella Mickey and, upon their deaths, to their children. It remained a single family home until 1945.<sup>21</sup> The Mickey's operated a tearoom on the first floor, during their ownership. After they sold the property, the house served as a nursing home and offices.

### **Prominent Contemporaries of John Robertson, Jr.**

There are a handful of contemporaries of John Robertson, Jr. who are comparable to him in stature<sup>22</sup>. All lived in handsome houses, but none of their homes are as imposing. None are Classical Revival, comparable in design sophistication to the house built for John and Julia Robertson by Fred Lines.

John C. Plagge (309 Cook Street) was born in 1855. He started out in the retail business, owning a general store in 1878, later "Plagge & Co. Merchandising Company." In January 1891, he became a partner of the newly-formed Barrington Bank of McIntosh, Sandman and Company, which in 1913 became the First State Bank of Barrington. Robertson was president, and Plagge vice president. Plagge continued in banking, forming the First National Bank of Barrington in 1918--after Robertson's death. Like Robertson, he was a prominent civic and business leader. He served as Township Assessor and Supervisor, Postmaster, Village Trustee and president of the Board of Education. Plagge died in 1936. Plagge's house is older than Robertson's and is stylistically considerably different. Until 1992, when it was altered by the addition of a corner tower and a wrap around porch that replaced two porches that were demolished, it was clearly Italianate, likely dating from the 1870s. Paired brackets in the gables and in the projecting bays on the front and side of the house remain. It's integrity, however, has been significantly compromised by the recent alterations, making it appear more Queen Anne than Italianate. It does not look the way it did when Plagge lived there.

Jerome Kingsley, (114 W. Lake Street), was also a prominent Barrington citizen. He was an early settler, arriving in Barrington Township from Berkshire County, Massachusetts, in about 1883. Kingsley purchased his lot from Milius B. McIntosh (Fred Lines' father-in-law) and, in 1891, built his house. Kingsley served as a Village President as well as a Village Trustee during the 1880s. Stylistically, Kingsley's home was Queen Anne. Although it has paired brackets, a vestige of the earlier Italianate style, its major features

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<sup>21</sup> Cook County Recorder of Deeds, Documents #2670135, #2968322, #6660821, and #7295757. In 2012 the property was combined with others on the block to become 5 lots of the "Barrington Village Center Subdivision," Document #1312029083.

<sup>22</sup> This list was provided by Barbara Benson, former Director of the Barrington Area Historical Society.

include a broad two story corner tower and a small tower with a polygonal roof that is part of the one-story entrance porch.

Sanford Peck (135 W. Lake Street) Another Queen Anne house, just down the block from Kingley's, belonged to Peck, a successful realtor. He brought the first buyers who built country-side estate properties out from Chicago to the area. In 1898, he served as a Village Trustee. Peck's house is a Queen Anne, characterized by a variation of a "horseshoe" gable on the front with a diamond-shaped extension. This feature was frequently found in mass-market architectural pattern books.<sup>23</sup> The broad square porch extending across the front of the house resembles those on typical Foursquares, but the massing is considerably different. A pediment marks its entrance, but that is the only Classical detail.

Michael Lamey (423 N. Hough Street) was another prominent Barrington businessman. He began publishing and editing the *Barrington Review* in 1885, serving in that capacity until his death in 1930. He also served as a County Supervisor, Insurance Agent, Village Clerk and Village President. His house was a cottage with a gambrel front. In the gambrel is an elongated Palladian window. Slender Doric columns support the roof of the front porch. It is a modest house that appears to have been changed little. Although it contains simple Classical references, it does not compare in stature--despite the importance of the owner--to the Robertson House.

Dr. Cort Kendall (541 S. Hough Street) lived in a beautiful Queen Anne house. This highly regarded Barrington doctor practiced medicine in the community from 1879 until his death in 1904. His home is an asymmetrical house with a front-facing gable set over a projecting oriel. It has a wraparound porch supported by Doric columns and a shallow pediment that contains decorative scrollwork. It references Classicism, but to a modest degree.

John C. Plagge and John Robertson, Jr. are the Barrington Citizens who seem to have had the greatest prominence during the time period that the Robertson's lived in their house on Main Street. Both were wealthy and successful; both were active in the community. It appears that the Robertson's were more "social," given newspaper reports. Their house is said to have been the largest in town<sup>24</sup> at the time it was built; it was certainly the most impressive--reflecting the importance of its owners.

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<sup>23</sup> James C Massey and Shirley Maxwell. "Coralling 'Horseshoe' Gables", *Old House Journal*, November/December, 1995.

<sup>24</sup> Letter from Lucile Robertson to Barbara Benson, July 14, 1986. Lucile was Julia and John Robertson Jr.'s granddaughter who lived in their house at 212 S. Cook Street.

## **ARCHITECTURE**

### **The Classical Revival Style**

The John Robertson, Jr., House is an excellent example of Classical Revival architecture. It is the most elaborate residential example of the style in Barrington, and the only example whose form is a Foursquare.

Classical Revival architecture became popular after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition that was held in Chicago's Jackson Park. Often referred to as the "White City"<sup>25</sup>, the Exposition's main fair grounds were largely composed of monumental classical buildings, structures that were visited and photographed by thousands of people from all over the United States. Many of the smaller pavilions that were built to resemble houses, such as those representing Kentucky, Ohio, Utah and Nebraska were also inspired by classical architecture.

Very likely as a result of the popularity and the mass exposure to the fair, Classical Revival commercial and institutional buildings dominated architecture for several decades--through the 1920s and, in a more limited way, into the 1930s. It was a style particularly well suited to buildings such as banks, schools and art museums, as well as synagogues and Christian Science churches, where projecting an imposing image of timelessness, stability and monumentality was important.

Because of its monumental scale, which was appropriate for large structures, the full-blown Classical Revival style, typified by a temple front, with a pediment supported by two-story Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian columns, was less commonly applied to houses. When it was, classical details were often creatively handled and reserved for large stately houses, incorporated to enhance the importance of the design. In the Robertson House, swags and garlands grace stylishly-detailed Palladian<sup>26</sup> openings. These windows, however, didn't slavishly follow classical precedent. Proportions shifted, depending on

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<sup>25</sup> The major buildings at the Columbian Exposition were white to simulate marble. Daniel Burnham, along with his friend Charles Follen McKim, of the New York firm McKim, Mead and White, assembled the roster of architects invited to design buildings for the fair and was responsible for the decision that all of the principal buildings would be Classical in style. The centerpiece of the fair, the "White City", was the ensemble of Classical buildings (commonly associated with the Columbian Exposition) called the Court of Honor. The overall planning scheme for the fair and the formal grandeur of the Court of Honor are generally acknowledged as having been the impetus for the City Beautiful Movement that brought Burnham important urban design and planning commissions for Chicago, Washington, D.C., Cleveland, San Francisco, Baltimore, and Manila. No doubt, Burnham's success helped perpetuate the popularity and the importance of Classical architecture locally and nationally.

<sup>26</sup> The Palladian window, which is composed of three parts--a large arched central section flanked by two narrower and shorter side sections having square tops--became popular in 17th- and 18th-century English architecture. It was inspired by the three-part openings featured in the villas designed by the 16th-century Italian architect, Andrea Palladio (1508-1580), who practiced in the area around Venice, particularly in the town of Vicenza.

their location. The Palladian openings on the front of the house are broad and part of more elaborate compositions; the center opening of the second floor Palladian window on the front of the house is topped by a pointed, not the typical rounded, arch. The Palladian window on the side of the house, lighting the staircase, is more slender, fitting into a square bay and positioned over another tripartite window opening.

Classical elements were often appropriated and applied to a house in the form of front porches with classical columns or pilasters, in gable roofs that resemble a pediment or by incorporating a classical dentiled cornice. The Robertson House has a broad front porch that stands a single story but stretches across the front of the house and is topped by a deep molded cornice supported by deep brackets (modillions), with a row of dentils beneath the cornice. A similar cornice supports the roof of the house. The porch projects, framing the broad front entrance to the house. Fluted Corinthian columns, distributed in groups of three, support a deep but simple entablature surrounding the porch. Although not strictly symmetrical, as many Classical Revival buildings are, the front of the house has a large central dormer characterized by a carefully thought out sense of balance. The roof of the Robertson House is pyramidal with a steep pitch. From the front, its proportion of height to width is comparable to that of a pediment that would top a building with a full blown temple front. Because of the height of the front porch, which is accessed by a steep staircase, the house is imposing, projecting a presence comparable to that of commercial and institutional Classical Revival buildings. Classical architecture, with its familiarity, simple beauty, formality and stately image clearly had considerable appeal to the Robertsons.

Although Colonial Revival style buildings usually contain classical elements, such as porches with roofs supported by columns that have detailing characteristic of classical orders, pilasters and cornices with modillions and dentils, the Robertson House isn't Colonial Revival. It does not have other typical characteristics of Colonial Revival houses, such as shuttered double-hung windows with multipane glazing, bay windows, and front entrances with paneled doors topped by a fanlight and flanked by sidelights. Porches on Colonial Revival houses are frequently modest, standing a single story and only surrounding the front entrance.

It is unknown whether the builder, Fred Lines, or the Robertson's ever attended the Columbian Exposition, where he would have experienced the best of Classical Revival architecture first hand, it is entirely possible given the popularity of the fair and the ease of transportation into the City from Barrington. Classical detailing was attractive to Chicago builders and homeowners, many of whom had indeed visited the Fair.



The Classic Revival style that was popularized by the World's Columbian Exposition initiated a return to the classical forms of Greece and Rome, which were characterized by order, symmetry and restraint. It developed as a reaction to the elaborately ornamented and picturesque styles of the Victorian period—in particular, Queen Anne architecture. The Foursquare is not a style, but is a building type or form, that also developed as a reaction against the exuberance of Victorian period architecture; it is this general form that the Classical Revival John Robertson, Jr. House takes.

The Foursquare is generally associated with vernacular not high style architecture and most often is found in simple farmhouses or suburban development houses. There are, however, more stylistically sophisticated examples, clothed in Classical, Colonial or Arts and Crafts detailing and the Robertson House is one of them.

Unlike the highly individualized and extensively ornamented Queen Anne houses that were characterized by a picturesque footprint, the Foursquare (also known as the American Foursquare) is a simple residential building type that stands two stories, has a square (sometimes rectangular) footprint and is topped by a hipped roof with a central front dormer and often side dormers. All have generally flat wall planes. One of the most defining features of a Foursquare is the inclusion of a wide, one-story raised porch extending across the entire front of the house. A large porch (like that on the Robertson House) was desirable, providing additional living space with the porch often acting as a three-season living/reception room used to greet visitors and neighbors.<sup>27</sup> For a family as social as the Robertson's, this was a desirable feature.

The name Foursquare is derived from the predominant interior floor plan arrangement, consisting of four rooms on the first floor and four rooms on the second, lending a cubical shape to the residence. This shape proved to be the most economic as it provides the most house area while requiring the least ground area. The original first floor plan of the Robertson House, which is larger than the typical Foursquare, consisted of a large front stairhall, a front and rear parlor, a third parlor, a dining room and a cloakroom, with a powder room opening off it. To the rear are service areas and the addition, built after World War II, in the early 1950s.

The interior is reached from an entrance on the side of the front facade, into a stairhall--typical of a Foursquare plan. This space, in the Robertson House, is grander and more formal. As would be expected, the level of detail found in the house is higher than that found in the typical Foursquare. Windows of various sizes flood the interior with light; some have leaded transoms or are topped by fanlights. Trim, including hall wainscoting, is of quarter sawn oak. Pocket doors separate the major public rooms. Those between the front entrance hall and front parlor are ornamented with paired columns and spindle work. There is a shallow hallway, with a built in bench topped by an arched mirror, set

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27 Alan Gowans. *The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture, 1890-1930*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986, p. 28.

behind an opening flanked by columns. Casings are topped by slender molded cornices that have egg & dart molding. Classical details abound on the interior as they do on the exterior.

Foursquares were constructed nationally from the mid-1890s through the 1920s, when the style began to wane in popularity; almost all construction of Foursquares ceased in the 1930s. One of the earliest examples of a Foursquare surfaced with the publication, in 1891, of Denver architect, Frank E. Kidder's, design for his own residence in the magazine *Architecture and Building*.<sup>28</sup> Because the architect was educated on the East Coast and did work nationally, his plan was picked up by other publications. His modern attitude towards home life was initially received and emulated by the wealthy; however, the building type soon achieved mass popularity with the publication, in 1895, of a full set of drawings for a completed Denver Foursquare in *Carpentry and Building*, a widely read building magazine.<sup>29</sup> By the turn of the century, all publications that dealt with home life, from ladies' magazines to architectural journals and pattern books, were advocating extreme simplification, resulting in acceptance of the style through all economic levels.<sup>30</sup> The Foursquare continued to be widely published in carpentry and building magazines through the 1920s.

In addition to the publication of drawings and critical writings within architectural journals, house magazines, and newspapers, builders or homeowners--through trade catalogs or mail order companies--could purchase complete plans for Foursquare residences. Contractors or builders could then either build as specified or adjust the plans on-site to meet the needs of potential homeowners. The sheer number and availability of these publications, advances in the standardization of windows, doorways, millwork, and balloon frame construction, combined with an extensive national train network that could carry precut lumber and finishes throughout the country, permitted the successful construction of sound and stylish residences without the assistance of a trained architect.<sup>31</sup> Foursquare plans were particularly adaptable to popular styles. Often, the owner or builder would begin by selecting the interior plan and porch arrangement and then applying an ornamental finish to the exterior. Talented builders would be comfortable with applying decorative treatments that resembled Classical Revival, Colonial or Arts & Crafts finishes. A skilled carpenter like Fred Lines did not need an architect to design a sophisticated Classical Revival residence for prestigious clients like the Robertson's.

Fred Lines was a highly regarded carpenter, said by his son, historian Arnett Lines, to "have built many houses in Barrington on contract".<sup>32</sup> His granddaughter, Jean Box,

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<sup>28</sup> Thomas W Hanchett. "Abstract: The Four Square Type in the United States." *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, Volume 1*. Annapolis: Vernacular Architecture Forum, p. 51.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> Gwendolyn Wright. *Moralism and the Model Home: Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago, 1873-1913*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, p. 231.

<sup>31</sup> Gowans. p. 41.

<sup>32</sup> This information was taken from notes on the Lines family tree, handwritten by Arnett C. Lines in his personal notebook, which was provided by Tim Dunn, great nephew of Arnett. C. Lines.

recalls that he only built two houses in Barrington, his own, and the Robertson's. Barbara Benson, former Director of the Barrington Historical Society, remembers handwritten notes taken when Fred Lines' daughter Jennie was interviewed and noted that Jerome Kingsley's house at 114 W. Lake Street and Sanford Peck's house at 135 West Lake Street were also built by Lines.<sup>33</sup> Both were prominent residents. Kingsley served terms as Village President and Trustee. Peck was a successful realtor. Although their houses were built in the Queen Anne style, on the Peck house a classical pediment marks the front porch.

Fred Lines was born March 29, 1849, in Linn Township, Walworth County, Wisconsin.<sup>34</sup> He married Emma Jane McIntosh, who was born in 1855 in Northfield, Illinois. Her father, M.B. (Milius B.) McIntosh<sup>35</sup> was a prominent Barrington resident-- a successful real estate developer, banker, Postmaster and Police Magistrate. M.B. owned one of two lumber yards in Barrington. After Fred and Emma were married, they moved to Mackinaw, Illinois, where three of their five children were born.<sup>36</sup> Jean Box remembered that in order to draw them back to Barrington, Emma's mother said that they would find the young couple the wood to build a house.<sup>37</sup> Once in Barrington, Lines set about building houses. Both the 1872 Barrington handbill, and the 1900 and 1910 Census have Lines' vocation listed as "carpenter."<sup>38</sup> Jean Box recalls that his carpentry shop was in the back yard of his Lake Street home. Fred died January 15, 1918.<sup>39</sup> His son, Arnett, wrote *A History of Barrington, Illinois* in 1962<sup>40</sup> and is considered the community's most important early historian.

Carpenter Fred Lines designed a stately home for John and Julia Robertson. Ms. Benson notes that Lines reached the epitome of his work as a builder and carpenter in the Robertson House.<sup>41</sup> It makes sense that he would select the popular form of the Foursquare as a starting point. It also makes equal sense that he would choose classical architecture as the preferred style. Classicism had always been associated with imposing

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<sup>33</sup> . Ken Munson, in an e-mail dated March 21, 2014, stated that when his mother, Ruth Munson, served as archivist at the Barrington Area Historical Society (now the Barrington History Museum). He recalls seeing at least a partial list of homes built by Lines that she compiled. He thought there were three or four or maybe more. Information from Jean Box, age 89, who lives in Oak Ridge, Tennessee, came from a phone interview with Susan Benjamin, March 21, 2014. She is Fred Lines granddaughter.

<sup>34</sup> The first Lines settler in the area, Lines, came to Illinois from Connecticut via New York, where he met his wife and where his first two children were born. He then moved to Lynn Township in Walworth County, Wisconsin, where Fred Lines was born. This information was also taken from notes on the Lines family tree.

<sup>35</sup> Milius is sometimes spelled Millius. He was generally known as M.B. McIntosh in his political, professional and personal life. Whenever Arnett references his father in law it is always as M.B. McIntosh.

<sup>36</sup> Fred Lines Obituary, *Barrington Review*, January 17, 1918 and Peer Lyke, historian.

<sup>37</sup> Interview Jean Box.

<sup>38</sup> Fred Lines 1900, 1910 United States Census. Ancestry.com.

<sup>39</sup> Jean Box interview and Fred Lines Obituary, *Barrington Review*, January 17, 1918.

<sup>40</sup> A copy of this document is located in the Barrington Public Library.

<sup>41</sup> Historian Barbara Benson, forwarded to Susan Benjamin information from an article she had written in the *Barrington Courier Review* in the early 1980s in which she discussed the development of elegant houses in Barrington in the 1880s and 1890s, many built by Fred lines, noting that "in 1898, he was to reach the epitome of his work as builder and carpenter."

architecture, and Lines set out to build the grandest house in town. The Foursquare was a building type that was more "up to date" than the Queen Anne, which was beginning to decline in popularity. Adding elegant classical detailing and siting the Robertson's house prominently on Barrington's main street ensured its distinction in the community.

Contemporary writing substantiates that the Robertson House was indeed viewed as very special. On September 6, 1898, Emaline Hawley Brown wrote to her daughter about the construction taking place on Main Street, "John Robertson is building a grand mansion on our street, it is magnificent, you will hardly know our street...."<sup>42</sup> Jennie Lines, the daughter of the house's builder, Fred Lines, later provided the following account of the property:

That was the showplace of Barrington. It was twelve large rooms and sixty eight windows...and it was just two old people that built that house, and they didn't need twelve rooms. But, Mrs. Robertson had said that in her younger days she'd always wanted a big house, a nice big house. But, they couldn't afford it when they were bringing up children...that was the showplace of Barrington.<sup>43</sup>

### **Comparable Barrington Buildings**

At the time that the Robertson House was built, in 1898, there were no other Classical Revival houses comparable to it. There were houses with classical detailing and subsequent houses built with classical references. Still none have extensive enough characteristic classical details for the house to be categorized as "Classical Revival." Most would be described as Colonial Revival, a style that incorporated classical detailing.

The houses with classical detailing that appear to be the earliest in Barrington date from the 1860s and 1870s. The house at 536 North Avenue has a plaque installed by the Barrington Area Historical Society dating the house from C. 1870. Although it has been altered with Colonial Revival detailing consisting of shuttered multipane double-hung windows and sidelights flanking the front door, the two story section of the house, with its open pediment, likely dates from before 1870, when Greek Revival farmhouses were being constructed throughout the Chicago area. The two-story section of the house located at 603 S. Cook, which also has Colonial detailing, may have been contemporary with the house at 536 North Avenue. It, too, has an open pediment and its proportions are similar to those of upright and wing houses built in the 1860s. The Colonial Revival remodeling, which was done by noted architect Robert Work<sup>44</sup>, consists of slender fluted pilasters flanking a recessed front entrance door topped by a fanlight.

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<sup>42</sup> Barbara Benson, from "The Octagon House Letters" series.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with Jennie Lines, Fred Lines daughter, Barrington Area Historical Society, Lines Files.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Work was architect David Adler's partner from 1917 until 1928, when Adler became licensed. Their practice consisted primarily of designing country houses for prominent Chicago area families. Both trained under Howard Van Doren Shaw. Ruth and Robert Work were residents of Barrington.

There are four houses in Barrington that very likely date from the late 1890s or early 1900s. All are modestly sized and simply ornamented compared to the Robertson House; all have very few classical details. The one that stylistically appears to be earliest is located at 513 South Grove Avenue. With a two-story bay and a rectangular wrap-around porch, it has vestiges of the earlier Queen Anne style. Its pyramidal roof and centered front dormer are elements characteristic of Foursquares. The only classical details are Ionic columns supporting the porch roof and dentils under the porch roofline. There is a gable front cottage at 301 North Avenue. Doric columns support the roof of its front porch and there is a simple cornice over the front entrance door. A shallow pediment supported by the columns frames the front door. The other two houses, located at 508 South Cook Street and at 428 North Avenue, are Foursquares. They very likely date from 1905-1910. Neither has any stylistic detailing other than simple Doric columns that support the porch roof.

All of the other houses with classical detailing comparable to the Robertson House are predominantly Colonial Revival, a style characterized by the incorporation of classical references. They tend to be symmetrical, clapboard or red brick, with shuttered double-hung windows. Typically they have small front porches with classical detailing. Some date from the 1920s, when Colonial-inspired architecture was particularly popular. Some date from later.

The 1920s Colonial Revival houses include a gambrel roof Dutch Colonial Revival Sears house, located at 239 West Russell Street, built in 1929. It has a small classical front entrance porch topped by a pediment supported by slender Doric columns. Two houses are red brick with small central front entrance porches that have pediments supported by slender Doric columns. They are located at 113 Elm Road and 707 Magnolia Road. There is a large clapboard Colonial Revival house, with shuttered multipane windows and a center entrance topped by a fanlight, located at 525 South Grove; it was designed by Robert Work in 1930. It has simple pediments over the windows. A classical front porch that replicates the original door surround has been added. There is an unusual clapboard house, with a broken pediment topping its front entrance porch, located at 240 Elm, that very likely was built in the 1920s, but has undergone remodeling.

One Colonial Revival House, located at 655 South Grove Avenue, has more elaborate Classical Revival detailing than any of the rest. It was built in 1939, considerably later than the Robertson House, and the architects were the firm of Mittelbush and Tourtelot. The house features a pediment topping the main block of the house, a small entrance porch with a pediment supported by a pair of Doric columns, and dentils underneath the cornice of the pediments and the major wing adjacent to the main block.

Several Post World War II Colonial Revival houses also incorporate classical detailing. One, located at 204 Elm Road, is a Cape Cod with wings. It has classical pilasters flanking the front entrance door. Another is a Ranch house, which has a full-blown temple front. It is located at 217 Sycamore Road. Finally, there is a two story brick and clapboard house, a modification of a Garrison Colonial. Located at 640 Elm Road, it has

the commonly-found small front porch. There is another two-story Colonial Revival house, located at 210 Liberty Street. It is clapboard, with an entrance porch topped by a broken pediment.

The rest of the buildings in Barrington that have classical details are commercial or institutional. They include the Christian Science Church at 417 E. Main. Built in 1945; it has a temple front. The Community Church at 411 Lincoln by Robert Work is Colonial Revival with classical detailing. The other two buildings are banks. The First National Bank, built in the late 1920s, and the First State Bank of Barrington, built in 1916.

The house at 145 W. Main Street, where Julia and John Robertson, Jr. spent the last two decades of their lives, is significant for its architecture. As an excellent example of Classical Revival house in the form of a Foursquare, there is none other like it in Barrington. Prominently sited on Main Street, it continues to reflect the stature of its owners.

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**Primary Location of additional data:** Barrington Public Library

**Acreage of Property:** .465

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:** Lat 42.153861/Long. -88.138083

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

Lot 1 in Barrington Village Center Subdivision, being a subdivision of part of County Clerk's Re-division recorded April 7, 1898 as document 2669569 and part of assessor's division recorded November 21, 1872 as document 69470, in the northwest ¼ of Section 1, Township 42 North, Range 9, east of the Third Principal Meridian, according to the plat thereof recorded April 30, 2013 as document 1312029083, in Cook County, Illinois.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundary contains the house and property historically associated with it.

**Nomination Prepared By:** Susan Benjamin & Laura Knapp of Benjamin Historic Certifications, LLC, 710 Marion Avenue, Highland park, IL 60035, ssbenjamin@sbcglobal.net, (847) 432-1865.

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