



# City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks  
Property Inventory Survey

## GENERAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

**HISTORIC NAME:** Benjamin Wilson House

**COMMON NAME:** n/a

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:** Circa 1845-1848

**SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION DATES:** 1894, Ca. 1920, Ca. 1955

**ARCHITECT:** n/a

**BUILDER:** Eben Conant (possibly), Robert Long (1894)

WILSON BROTHERS: ☐ AUGUST ☐ OSCAR ☐ BOTH

## ARCHITECTURAL DATA:

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:** Side Hall Plan, Greek Revival, Italianate

**OVERALL PLAN SHAPE:** L-Plan

**NUMBER OF STORIES:** 2

**FOUNDATION MATERIAL:** Parged

**PRIMARY WALL MATERIAL(S):** Stucco over limestone and frame

**FRONT PORCH:** No

**VISIBLE SIDE PORCH:** No

**ENTRY DOOR(S):** Unknown

**WINDOW MATERIAL:** Wood (replacement)

**WINDOW STYLE:** Double-hung (6/6)

**PRIMARY ROOF FORM:** Hip

**PRIMARY ROOF MATERIAL:** Asphalt

**VISIBLE CHIMNEY:** Yes (circa 1920)

**CHIMNEY MATERIAL:** Brick

## OTHER SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:

North addition added between 1912 and 1923 as a one-story addition; enlarged to two stories after 1945 (probably between 1964 and 1977). Stucco installed between 1912 and 1923 along with replacement windows (3/1); exposed chimney at south elevation; and small addition at rear (east). Front porch was constructed between 1923 and 1930. Original garage removed before 1912; present garage is second garage, circa 1980. Double-hung windows (6/6) installed in 1999 and 2006.

## PROPERTY ADDRESS:

**227 South Fifth Street**

## PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN):

12-03-454-006



## LOCAL SIGNIFICANCE RATING:

- ☒ Significant
- ☐ Contributing
- ☐ Non-Contributing – Built After 1987
- ☐ Non-Contributing – Reversible Alterations
- ☐ Non-Contributing – Irreversible Alterations

## HISTORIC DISTRICT LOCATION:

- ☒ Central Geneva NRHD
- ☐ North Geneva NRHD
- ☒ Local Geneva HD
- ☐ Not in HD / Individual Historic Landmark

## NR DISTRICT SIGNIFICANCE RATING:

- ☒ Contributing
- ☐ Non-Contributing
- ☐ Not Applicable / Not in NR District



# City of Geneva, Illinois

## Local Historic District & Landmarks Property Inventory Survey

### PROPERTY ADDRESS:

227 South Fifth Street

### ADDITIONAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

#### BRIEF HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

Block 67 was purchased in 1845 by Benjamin Wilson, who commissioned the two-story, Greek Revival house between 1845 and 1848. It has a similar construction type to other works by George Westgarth, an English stone mason, such as the limestone construction of the 1849 Westgarth (Crary) House at 416 Hamilton Street (Villa Verone in 2022). However, Westgarth did not arrive in Geneva until 1849 according to historical records. Therefore, Westgarth's Hamilton Street residence may have been patterned after the Benjamin Wilson House.

Benjamin Wilson, a biblical scholar and printer from Halifax, England, was the founder of Geneva's first newspaper, The Western Mercury, the forerunner of the Geneva Republican. Wilson arrived in Geneva with three brothers and established the Disciples of Christ Church (see 420 Campbell Street). Benjamin Wilson wrote and printed a bilingual, annotated translation of the New Testament, The Emphatic Diaglott, which was used by the Watch Tower Society as late as 1985. Wilson also commissioned the house at 207 S. Fifth Street in 1849 or 1850 (per a newspaper fragment discovered during the remodel) for Joseph Cockroft, the first resident of the house, whose construction is attributed to George Westgarth. In 1859, Wilson transferred 207 S. Fifth Street to Cockroft.

In 1871, Benjamin Wilson moved to California and sold the property at 227 S. Fifth Street to the Isaiah Thatcher family. The house was built in the Greek Revival style but was likely altered to reflect the Italianate style during the tenure of the Thatcher family. Isaiah Thatcher sold the property to Mrs. Laura Fessenden (1883), who sold it to Benjamin W. Dodson (1894). Carpenter Robert Long and his crew converted the stone house (then owned by Dodson and occupied by the Stockton family) into a "modern dwelling with a furnace, hot and cold water, etc." We have no clear record of the extent of remodeling of either the exterior or interior but believe that exterior alterations were minimal.

The marble fireplace likely dates to the Thatcher-Fessenden era. It is unclear when the window east of the exposed chimney breast at the south elevation was widened; that window is no longer consistent with the proportions of other windows in the original house. The house likely had exterior shutters and interior blinds at the windows until the early 20th century.

The 227 S. Fifth Street property was purchased in 1921 by Dr. Major H. and Amy (Burton) Worthington, who completed renovations between 1922 and 1935. Dr. Worthington (1879-1944) was a dentist and manager (later, superintendent) of the Illinois Research and Educational Hospital of the University of Illinois at Chicago. The couple maintained an apartment at the hospital and spent weekends at the Fifth Street property between 1929 and 1942. The circa 1922-1935 renovations likely resulted in the stucco exterior as well as the first of the frame additions (one-story north wing) and the construction of the present garage.

In 1942, Carl W. Wester acquired the 227 S. Fifth Street property, selling in 1945 to David A. and Ruth Preston; Mr. Preston was an advertising manager for the Chicago Tribune newspaper. Edward Ruark owned the property between 1964 and 1977 and, likely, constructed the north wing's second-floor, the east mud room addition, added the open porch that encircled the east and north sides of the east wing, and remodeled the detached garage. In 1988, the property was purchased by David and Kathy Phyfer, who replaced the windows installed by Dr. and Mrs. Worthington. Since 2012, the property has been owned by Michael A. Cramer; around 2014, the open porch around the east wing was enclosed. The existing, front door is not original to the house.

Geneva History Museum Plaque - n.d.



# City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks  
Property Inventory Survey

## PROPERTY ADDRESS:

**227 South Fifth Street**

## ADDITIONAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

The property is significant for its association with one or more notable persons (including occupants and contractors/builders), architecture, and community development—specifically the Early Settlement Period of Geneva (1837-1857).

## SOURCES:

GHPC Case History; GHM Archives; 2016 Central Geneva NRHP Update; 1869 Bird's Eye View of Geneva; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Kane County Recorder's Office Land Records; Geneva, Illinois: 150 Reminders of 150 Years



# City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks  
Property Inventory Survey

## PROPERTY ADDRESS:

227 South Fifth Street

## CONTRIBUTING ACCESSORY STRUCTURES:

### AS1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

n/a

### AS2 GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

n/a

## CONTRIBUTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

n/a

## HPC ACTION:

☐

Demolition Approved: n/a

### Other HPC Action:

4.27.99 Window and Door; 4.18.06 - Window; 11.18.14 Window and  
Rear Porch Enclosure







# City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks  
Property Inventory Survey

**PROPERTY ADDRESS:**

**227 South Fifth Street**



1999

