



City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks
Property Inventory Survey

GENERAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

HISTORIC NAME: J. Niles and Francis Wheeler House

COMMON NAME: n/a

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1909

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION DATES: 1957

ARCHITECT: n/a

BUILDER: n/a

WILSON BROTHERS: ☐ AUGUST ☐ OSCAR ☐ BOTH

ARCHITECTURAL DATA:

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Dutch Colonial Revival

OVERALL PLAN SHAPE: Rectangular

NUMBER OF STORIES: 2.5

FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Parged

PRIMARY WALL MATERIAL(S): Stucco

FRONT PORCH: Yes

VISIBLE SIDE PORCH: No

ENTRY DOOR(S): Historic

WINDOW MATERIAL: Wood

WINDOW STYLE: Double-hung (6/1, 2/1 at attic),

PRIMARY ROOF FORM: Gambrel

PRIMARY ROOF MATERIAL: Asphalt

VISIBLE CHIMNEY: Yes (2)

CHIMNEY MATERIAL: Brick

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:

Home is constructed of concrete blocks with a stucco finish; original windows, doors and porch; chimneys at north and south (protrude thru roof plane); decorative, small windows at attic gables.

PROPERTY ADDRESS:

228 South Fifth Street

PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN):

12-03-382-005



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



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ADDITIONAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

BRIEF HISTORICAL DESCRIPTION:

The Joel Niles and Francis (Baker) Wheeler House was built with cement blocks with a stucco finish (04 August 1909 Geneva Republican).

J. Niles Wheeler (1853-1927) served as the owner/editor of the Elgin Daily Leader - established in 1881 - and, later, as the owner/editor of The Patrol newspaper, established in 1884, both in the interest of prohibition. Wheeler hired Forrest Crissey (who became a noted author in his own right) to work for Wheeler's newspaper. In 1888, he formed a stock company for The Patrol, and, later that year, resigned as its manager and editor.

In the 1880s, J. Niles Wheeler mined gravel from the old Danford Farm at the north edge of the city.

In 1896, Wheeler established the Wheeler Screen Co., which produced an adjustable window and door screen in Holland, Michigan. Wheeler brought the company to Geneva the following year. By 1910, the industry was also operating as the Geneva Manufacturing Co. (GEMCO), and by 1912, occupied an entire block along Stevens Street between Fourth and Fifth streets, employing dozens of residents.

In 1909, this home was constructed for the Wheeler family. The exterior walls were constructed of concrete blocks which were parged with stucco. This is an early example of concrete block construction in a residential application.

Francis Wheeler (1854-1939) was "for many years a leader in civic, social and club organizations" at Geneva and served on the first Board of Directors of the Colonial Hospital (established in 1911). Mr. Wheeler acquired the former Danford Quarry property in 1915 and pledged to return it to a natural state, filling the quarry at his own expense over decades.

At the time of J. Niles Wheeler's death, his son, Leon, took over his father's company and operated it until 1962, when the company was sold. In 1950, industrialist and philanthropist Leon Wheeler deeded the reclaimed quarry property to the City of Geneva; the property was renamed Wheeler Park.

Over 60 years, the Fifth Street house passed from J. Niles and Francis Wheeler to their son, Leon, and his wife, Helen, and, then, to their son, Haynes J. Wheeler, who owned the property as late as 1967.

A later, two-car, clapboard-sided garage was constructed after 1945 - possibly the alterations identified in May 1957 (Geneva Republican).

The property is notable for its association with one or more significant persons and architecture—specifically methods of construction.

SOURCES:

GHPC Case History; GHM Archives; 2016 Central Geneva NRHP Update; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Geneva Republican; Kane County Recorder's Office Land Records; Geneva, Illinois: A History of Its Times and Places



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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:

n/a





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