



City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks
Property Inventory Survey

GENERAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

HISTORIC NAME: Agnes Hoyt House

COMMON NAME: P. D. Hoyt House

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1906

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION DATES: 1918, 1976, 2012-2015

ARCHITECT: Frank Lloyd Wright and studio associates

BUILDER: Wilson Brothers

WILSON BROTHERS: ☐ AUGUST ☐ OSCAR ☒ BOTH

ARCHITECTURAL DATA:

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Prairie

OVERALL PLAN SHAPE: Rectangular

NUMBER OF STORIES: 2

FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Poured Concrete

PRIMARY WALL MATERIAL(S): Stucco

FRONT PORCH: Yes (Reconstruction)

VISIBLE SIDE PORCH: No

ENTRY DOOR(S): Historic Replication

WINDOW MATERIAL: Wood

WINDOW STYLE: Casement, Prairie

PRIMARY ROOF FORM: Hip

PRIMARY ROOF MATERIAL: Asphalt

VISIBLE CHIMNEY: Yes

CHIMNEY MATERIAL: Brick

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:

n/a

PROPERTY ADDRESS:

318 South Fifth Street

PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN):

12-03-384-007



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:

In 1904 or 1905, Mrs. P. D. (Agnes) Hoyt commissioned this Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house and garage. Built by the Wilson Bros in 1906, the construction was well documented in local newspapers: foundation excavated in July 1906 (Twice-A-Week Republican); house to be completed in early November (24 October 1906 Geneva Republican); N.P. Eck and men are oiling, staining, and painting the interior.... (Geneva Republican). Agnes (Ormsbee) Hoyt (1847-1922) and her son, Harrie (1881-1962), moved from the family home at Third and Hamilton streets to the completed Fifth Street house during the week of December 12, 1906 (Twice-A-Week Republican).

Pearl DeWolff Hoyt (1843 -1903) and Agnes Ormsbee were both natives of Vermont. Before their 1871 marriage, P. D. Hoyt was a glucose and starch manufacturer, and Agnes Ormsbee was a schoolteacher. Although Agnes had moved to Geneva in 1863, the newlyweds lived briefly in Milwaukee, Wisconsin before settling in Geneva in 1880. The couple raised two sons: William Mason Hoyt (1879-1951) and Harrie Doane Hoyt (1881-1962). At the time of his death, P. D. Hoyt was a traveling salesman.

Following her husband's death, Agnes Hoyt--who was active in many civic organizations--was introduced to Frank Lloyd Wright by the local Gridley family. Mrs. A. W. Gridley also had commissioned a new house, designed by Wright and built between Geneva and Batavia in 1906. The following year, Col. George Fabyan commissioned Wright to design two projects in Geneva: an addition to a former Italianate house that became the clubhouse of the Fox River Country Club, and a major remodeling of the Fabyan home across Batavia Avenue.

The Frank Lloyd Wright Trust states: "The Hoyt house is a small, square-shaped structure finished in stucco. Unlike many of Wright's buildings from this period, in which entrances are often indirectly accessed, the entrance to the Hoyt house is conspicuously placed at the center of the front elevation. The entrance opens directly into the living room rather than a hall. The unconventional entryway and frank symmetry that governs the design may indicate that one of Wright's junior staff was involved in its conception."

Based on other homes of the era produced by Wright's studio, it is likely that Walter Burley Griffin, an associate of Wright, may have significantly influenced the Hoyt House design. Griffin--who passed the new Illinois licensing examination in 1901--was not an actual partner of Frank Lloyd Wright but had a greater role in all phases of Wright's practice than his associates. Griffin served as the project supervisor for some of Wright's most important buildings between 1902 and 1905. Between February and May 1905, Griffin took charge of the entire Oak Park, Illinois studio while Wright traveled through Japan. Griffin and Wright had a falling out over events following Mr. Wright's first overseas trip. Upset at the extent of liberties that Griffin had taken with several projects, Wright told Griffin that he had overstepped his responsibilities, especially when substituting his building designs.

To add to the mounting frustrations between the two architects, Wright had borrowed money from Griffin to pay for his travels abroad but tried to pay off his debts to Griffin with prints Wright had acquired in Japan. It became clear to Griffin that Wright did not intend to make Griffin a partner in the architectural firm. In 1906, Walter Burley Griffin resigned from his position at Wright's studio and established his own practice.

An additional associate that was likely involved with the project was Marion Mahony, Illinois' first female licensed architect. She was significantly involved in this era of work at the Wright studio, developing the rendering style that helped to popularize his work. Years later, she and Griffin married, having met during this period.



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The architectural designs completed for Mrs. A. W. Gridley and Colonel Fabyan are strikingly characteristic of Wright's design work in the first decade of the 20th century; however, the Hoyt House is a stylistic departure from Wright's work of that era. One of the characteristic design elements of the Hoyt House, attributed to Griffin, is the pronounced and uncharacteristic-for-Wright, H-shaped, muntins in many of the windows.

After only a decade, Agnes and Harrie Hoyt moved from the Fifth Street house to a house on Shady Avenue, where she died in July 1922.

The next owner of the Fifth Street property, Bruce Farson, added an entry porch to the front of the house in 1918 (removed by the MacLachlans). Mr. Farson sold the property to Dr. Robert C. and Leola Hetherington in February 1931 (Geneva Republican).

Dr. Hetherington (1902-1978) was born in Leavenworth, Washington, graduated from high school in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, and came to Geneva in 1928. Dr. Hetherington occupied the house as late as 1959 but retired to Port Charlotte, Florida in 1961. In November 1961, the property was sold by the Hetheringtons to Chas. I. Bates, Jr. and his wife, Frances. James (Jim) and Patricia "Trish" MacLachlan purchased the Hoyt House in December 1976 and removed the "uninspired" front porch and erected the brick and block wall at the perimeter of the property (approved by City of Geneva Building Commissioner Gregg Gabel to "the consternation of neighbors"). A fire in the early morning of August 3, 2012, resulted in a multi-year restoration by the MacLachlans.

The property is notable for its association with architecture—specifically the Prairie School style—and for its association with architect Frank Lloyd Wright and his studio associates, including Walter Burley Griffin.

SOURCES:

Geneva Republican, Wilson Brothers - Contractors & Builders, 1905-1931 by Donald Wilson (2002); Beyond Architecture: Marion Mahony and Walter Burley Griffin: America, Australia, India. Sydney: University of Illinois Press (ISBN 1863170685); <http://www.wbgriffinsociety.org/griffins-bio.html>; <https://www.pbs.org/wbgriffin/kruty2.htm>; <https://flwright.org/researchexplore/wrightbuildings/hoythouse>



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CONTRIBUTING ACCESSORY STRUCTURES:

AS1 GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

Although the original, vehicular doors have been removed and replaced with a single, overhead door, the garage was designed in a similar style of the house and is directly associated with the significant development of the property.



CONTRIBUTING LANDSCAPE FEATURES:

GENERAL DESCRIPTION:

n/a



HPC ACTION:

☐

Demolition Approved: n/a

Other HPC Action:

9.25.15 Shed Renovation





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1999