



City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks
Property Inventory Survey

GENERAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

HISTORIC NAME: Plato-Harvey House

COMMON NAME: n/a

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1854-1857

SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION DATES: Ca. 1865-70, Ca. 1927-35, 1977

ARCHITECT: n/a

BUILDER: n/a

WILSON BROTHERS: ☐ AUGUST ☐ OSCAR ☐ BOTH

ARCHITECTURAL DATA:

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Greek Revival / Italianate

OVERALL PLAN SHAPE: Rectangular

NUMBER OF STORIES: 2

FOUNDATION MATERIAL: Limestone

PRIMARY WALL MATERIAL(S): Limestone

FRONT PORCH: Yes (east 1854-57; west ca. 1927-1935)

VISIBLE SIDE PORCH: No

ENTRY DOOR(S): Unknown

WINDOW MATERIAL: Wood, Clad (additions)

WINDOW STYLE: Double-hung (6/6), Casement (multi-lite)

PRIMARY ROOF FORM: Hip

PRIMARY ROOF MATERIAL: Asphalt

VISIBLE CHIMNEY: Yes

CHIMNEY MATERIAL: Brick (3 total, one paraged below eave)

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:

n/a

PROPERTY ADDRESS:

415 South Fifth Street

PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN):

12-10-201-001



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:

This historic home is located on the former Judge William B. Plato Estate, which occupied the entirety of Block 85 in the Original Town of Geneva. The limestone Plato House was built circa 1854-1855 and—in 2020—still stands in the center of the block.

A tailor, William Plato married Elizabeth Stears in New York before moving to Aurora, Illinois in 1839, where he studied law around 1841. The couple had three children: Julia (1836-1918), John (1842-1881), and Helen (1846-1934). Elizabeth Plato died around the time that the Plato family moved to Geneva in 1848. Judge Plato and his second wife, Almira, were married in 1850 in Stephenson County, Illinois.

Judge William Byron Plato (1810-1874) was a prominent attorney in Geneva beginning in 1848. He formed a partnership with Judge Isaac Wilson in Geneva and developed a reputation as "an exceedingly able lawyer, an eloquent speaker, and possessed a reputation second to that of no lawyer in the State." As a member of the Free-Soil Party, he served three terms in the Illinois Senate (1848-1855), and in 1857, he was appointed by the Governor to serve on the committee established to construct a new state penitentiary in Joliet, Illinois in 1858. Between 1859 and 1861, Plato served as the Kane County Representative in the Illinois General Assembly, before returning to live full-time at his Geneva home. Plato Township in Kane County is named in his honor.

The prominent belvedere at the Plato House was likely added between 1865 and 1868 as an update to the residence. The exterior architecture (excluding the original east porch) was transformed from the Greek Revival style to the then-more-fashionable Italianate style. Second-floor windows may have been lengthened at this time as well. If not the original finish, the stucco exterior was installed between 1880-1920, possibly as a result of window and door modifications made during the 1865-1868 remodeling.

After the death of Almira Plato in 1895, the property was passed down to Julia Plato, who—in 1858—married Joel D. Harvey (1836-1911). Julia (Plato) and Joel D. Harvey had two children: Phillip (b. 1868) and Henry Blodgett Harvey (b. 1875). Julia Plato Harvey was one of the original organizers of the Geneva Improvement Association (GIA), and when residing in Chicago, was a founder of the Chicago Women's Club.

In 1912, Henry B. Harvey and Dorothea Dudley were married in Chicago, where Henry was employed as an advertising agent and copywriter. Harvey and his family moved to his mother's home during the last years of her life. After the death of his mother, Henry Harvey and his family moved to New York City but retained the Plato-Harvey Estate in Geneva as a rental property.

The north wing of the frame construction was added before 1923, but automobiles were stored in a separate barn/garage along Fulton Street.

The property was rented in late 1924 or early 1925 to Col. Loren C. Grieves (ret.) and his wife, Elizabeth Pearson (Paulding) Grieves. The Grieves and their sons, William and Loren Jr., initially made their home in the former Plato-Harvey House. Once settled, Mrs. Grieves quickly became involved in the community and was a member of several social organizations, including the Geneva Women's Club.



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ADDITIONAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

Apparently, in anticipation of acquiring the Plato-Harvey property, Col. and Mrs. Grieves engaged Oscar and August "Gus" Wilson to build a new home along the Fulton Street frontage (428 Fulton Street) of the former Plato-Harvey Estate: "Wilson Brothers are rushing work on the new residence of Col. Loren Grieve (sic) At (sic) the corner of Fulton and Fifth streets. The new Grieve (sic) home is to be a large one and is the first to be built on the block which for many years was known as the Harvey property." (Geneva Republican 30 July 1926). In the late winter of 1926, Henry and Dorothea Harvey concluded a sale of the Geneva property to Elizabeth Pearson (Paulding) Grieves.

In the spring of 1927, Col. and Mrs. Grieves sold the former Plato-Harvey House and a large portion of the block to Norman B. Parker. A single-car garage was attached to the 1920s-era frame addition by 1930 (either by the Grieves or Parkers).

Between December 1929 and April 1933, the Grieves family sold three lots, fronting on Fourth Street, for the construction of new homes. The construction of the new homes obscured the original, front façade of the Plato-Harvey House. Norman Parker remodeled the house by 1935, transforming the former rear (west) elevation (facing Fifth Street) of the Plato-Harvey House to become the new front façade.

Harry and Eugenia Harper bought the Plato-Harvey House around 1936. The attached, two-car garage was likely constructed by the Harpers to replace the earlier garage.

After Mrs. Harper's death, the property was purchased by Terry and Laurette Grove in 1977. The Groves removed the stucco (which may have been the original, intended wall finish since the imposing house is constructed of roughly-coursed limestone, and the details of the porch are classically detailed).

Despite its lack of visibility from the east, the Plato-Harvey House is significant for its association with a notable person as well as for architecture and community development of city estate properties, which included the purchase of entire city blocks as estate properties: Block 66 - Henry A. Towner; Block 76 - W. H. Sampson; Block 77 - H. Burr; Block 84 - E. P. Allis; and Block 85 - W. B. Plato. Block 83 was held by a single owner, P. Kearney; however, unlike those who bought entire blocks as estates, Mr. Kearney acquired his land over time.

Geneva History Museum Plaque - n.d.

The property is notable for its association with one or more notable persons, architecture—specifically the Greek Revival and Italianate styles—and community development—specifically full block estates.

SOURCES:

GHM Archives; 2016 Central Geneva NRHP Update; 1869 Bird's Eye View of Geneva; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Kane County Land Records; Geneva, Illinois: A History of Its Times and Places; Geneva, Illinois: 150 Reminders of 150 Years



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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:

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Demolition Approved: n/a

Other HPC Action:

n/a





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