



# City of Geneva, Illinois

Local Historic District & Landmarks  
Property Inventory Survey

## GENERAL PROPERTY INFORMATION:

**HISTORIC NAME:** Skipwith-Fritts-Lance House

**COMMON NAME:** n/a

**DATE OF CONSTRUCTION:** Circa 1856

**SIGNIFICANT ALTERATION DATES:** c. 1880-1882, c. 1956-1973

**ARCHITECT:** n/a

**BUILDER:** n/a

WILSON BROTHERS: ☐ AUGUST ☐ OSCAR ☐ BOTH

## ARCHITECTURAL DATA:

**ARCHITECTURAL STYLE:** Single-Pen

**OVERALL PLAN SHAPE:** Rectangular

**NUMBER OF STORIES:** 1

**FOUNDATION MATERIAL:** Poured Concrete / Parged Limestone

**PRIMARY WALL MATERIAL(S):** Clapboard, Shingle

**FRONT PORCH:** No

**VISIBLE SIDE PORCH:** No

**ENTRY DOOR(S):** Non-historic

**WINDOW MATERIAL:** Wood

**WINDOW STYLE:** 1/1 Double-hung, Fixed

**PRIMARY ROOF FORM:** Gable

**PRIMARY ROOF MATERIAL:** Asphalt

**VISIBLE CHIMNEY:** Yes

**CHIMNEY MATERIAL:** Brick

**OTHER SIGNIFICANT ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:**

## PROPERTY ADDRESS:

**311 North First Street**

## PARCEL IDENTIFICATION NUMBER (PIN):

12-03-280-005



## 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:

In 1853, Lots 10 and 11 of Block 18 were acquired from Kane County by Luther Dearborn (then, Sheriff) for the sum of \$1.00. Dearborn sold both lots to William Burman in November 1854.

William Burman's stepson, George John Skipwith, Jr., moved to Geneva around 1846-1847 and was an early Geneva settler, working as a tailor. William and Sarah Burman and their son, Fred, moved from Ontario, Canada to Buffalo, New York in 1851 and, by 1853, to Geneva, Illinois. (see: 301 and 305 North First Street; the three properties have an intertwined history).

William Burman, a carpenter who built the houses at 301 and 305 North First Street, sold the north 50 feet of Lots 10 and 11 of Block 18 in 1855 to his stepson, Frederick "Fred" Richard Skipwith (1834-1902), who married Catherine "Kate" Carr (1837- ca. 1899) in Kane County, Illinois in November 1855. F. R. Skipwith may have worked as a butcher in Geneva.

The following year, F. R. Skipwith secured a mortgage from his brother, George John Skipwith, Jr., who was living in Geneva and working as a tailor as early as 1847. William Burman likely built a modest house on this property for his stepson (which is the south portion that stands in 2020).

In March 1857, Frederick and Catherine (Carr) Skipwith sold the property to local banker William B. West for \$500.00 (KCLR Book 48, p 346). By 1858, the Skipwith brothers and their families had moved to southwestern Illinois (Perry County).

William B. West sold the 311 North First Street property in 1857 to Prudence Sacridier, who sold the property to Samuel Fritts in 1867. Fritts apparently erected a two-story wing to the north side of the original house (as depicted in the 1869 Bird's Eye View of Geneva illustration).

In 1868, Samuel Fritts sold the property to Rebecca Jennings, who apparently never lived at the property but rented it to tenants. In 1877, Jennings sold the property to Charles K. and Mary (Wright) Millard.

Three years later, Millard - a house painter - sold the property to Elida Hagaman (see: 301 North First Street), who in 1880 sold the entire parcel and portion of Lot 9 to the Geneva Grape Sugar Co. for the construction of the St. Charles spur line. The company retained the right-of-way but sold the balance of the parcel to George Strong in 1882.

It is unclear if the entire F. R. Skipwith House was razed or if only the north section (as depicted in 1869) was removed between 1880 and 1882. The massing of the existing south section appears to be a mid-19th-century house (physical investigation of the property required to determine the age of the south portion of the existing house in 2020).

Strong sold the property within a short period to Emily Chambers, who sold the property to Samuel J. Lance before her death in 1895.

Samuel J. Lance (the son of the early, Geneva grocery merchant Jacob C. Lance) moved with his wife, Dora (Thorsen) Lance, to New Orleans, Louisiana around 1903; Lance died a year later, leaving the property to his divorced sister, Emaline "Emma" (Lance) Gooley, who lived on River Street.



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Mr Frank Hanson lived in the house from at least 1937 to his death in 1966; his wife Violet remained until her death in 1975.

The property has been altered over time. As early as 1923, a full-width front porch extended across the First Street (front/west) facade of the existing south section of the house. The porch remained through 1945 but was removed between 1956 and 1973 when the home was remodeled and the two-bay, attached garage was constructed at the north side of the house.

Although heavily altered, the property is a rare example of mid-19th-century working-class housing, associated with an early, documented carpenter.

This property has been identified as the area of Geneva where many residents of Italian descent settled after 1925, particularly when Kate Raftery began her Beautification effort along River Lane, which had been known as "the Sicilian Colony."

The property is notable within a context of Italian properties and for its association with one or more significant persons, architecture, and community development—specifically the Early Settlement Period of Geneva (1837-1857).

## SOURCES:

GHPC Case Studies; 2016 North Geneva NRHP Update; 1869 Bird's Eye View of Geneva; Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps; Kane County Recorder's Office Land Records; The Founders and Early History of Geneva, Kane County, Illinois (Gibbons, p. 601); Ancestry.com



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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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