

# LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



## **Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable**

**3015 West Division Street**

**Preliminary Landmark recommendation approved by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, June 7, 2007**

**CITY OF CHICAGO  
Richard M. Daley, Mayor**

**Department of Planning and Development  
Arnold L. Randall, Commissioner**

*The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks, which protects them by law.*

*The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.*

*This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within the designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.*

**Cover, clockwise from upper right: Window detail on the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable (now the Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture), 3015 W. Division Street, completed in 1896. Lower right: Roof detail on the building which housed landscape architect Jens Jensen's office, then Humboldt Park's Superintendent. Left: View from inside the building courtyard, facing east towards Humboldt Drive. (Photos by Susan Perry)**

# HUMBOLDT PARK RECEPTORY BUILDING AND STABLE

(NOW THE INSTITUTE OF PUERTO RICAN ARTS AND CULTURE)

3015 W. DIVISION STREET

**BUILT: 1895-96**

**ARCHITECTS: FROMMANN & JEBSEN**

Chicago's parks are among the city's most important historic resources with their abundance of historically and architecturally significant landscapes and buildings. Humboldt Park, located on Chicago's Near Northwest Side, possesses one of the city's most unusual examples of a 19th-century utilitarian building in the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable. Built in 1895 to house horses, wagons, and landscaping tools, the Receptory and Stable also served as the office of the Humboldt Park superintendent, who at the time of the building's completion was the noted landscape architect Jens Jensen. As the oldest building surviving in Humboldt Park, the Receptory Building and Stable exemplify the park's early stage of development as a grandly-scaled "pastoral" park in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century picturesque park tradition.

The Receptory Building and Stable's appearance, described as of the "old German style of country house architecture" when it was constructed, is very unusual in the context of Chicago architecture. The two-story building, designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Frommann & Jepsen, utilizes a variety of different building materials and forms to create a vividly picturesque appearance within the greenery of Humboldt Park. Configured around an open courtyard, it is constructed of red pressed brick with a foundation of rusticated field stones and pink brick and wood half-timbering on its second story, while the building's plethora of steeply-pitched, cross-gable roofs and dormers are clad in glazed and unglazed roof tiles. A pair of turrets with carved limestone accents further embellishes the building's roofline.



**Top: The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable in its original pastoral setting in 1912. The West Chicago Park Commission bi-sected the park with its extension of Division Street to Kedzie Ave. in the 1920s. Bottom: Historic view taken around 1900.**



## THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF HUMBOLDT PARK

From its founding in 1833 as a small trading village on the edge of the American frontier to the 1880s when it became second only to New York among American cities, Chicago amazed both its citizens and outside observers with its dynamic growth and commercial vitality—largely due to private development and unabashed free-market capitalism. At the same time, however, Chicagoans recognized the importance of physical improvements such as public parkland. As early as 1839, a portion of the Lake Michigan shoreline east of Michigan Avenue was dedicated to open space, labeled as “public ground, forever to remain vacant of building” on a subdivision map, and called for many years “Lake Park.” The land bounded by Michigan, Washington Street, Randolph Street, and Garland Court was also set aside as Dearborn Park. (Lake Park is now part of Grant Park, while the Chicago Cultural Center is located on the site of Dearborn Park.)

In an effort to encourage sales and to provide a physical amenity for newly platted residential neighborhoods, Chicago real estate developers set aside small tracts of land for parks in several neighborhoods intended for upper-income houses. The first of these parks, Washington Square, was donated to the City in 1842 by the American Land Company, which was subdividing the surrounding Near North Side area. Other parks acquired in the next 30 years by the City through gifts of land from developers included Union Park and Vernon Park on Chicago’s West Side and Ellis Park on the city’s South Side. These parks were relatively modest in size and intended for strolling and passive recreation by nearby residents. In overall form and use they resembled small residential parks or “squares” found both in European cities as well in older American cities such as Boston, Philadelphia, and New York.

The value of parks as enhancements to real estate development and civic life continued to be recognized in the years after the Civil War. In 1869 the Illinois state legislature established three new governmental agencies to oversee the development and maintenance of new parks in Chicago and neighboring suburban townships. The creation of the South Park, West Park, and Lincoln Park Commissions brought about the enhancement of the already created Lincoln Park on the city’s north lakefront and the creation of five additional large parks, connected by landscaped boulevards, on the city’s West and South sides.

These parks—Lincoln, Humboldt, Garfield, Douglas, Washington, and Jackson Parks—were designed as large-scale “pastoral” landscapes of picturesque meadows, encircling woodlands, curvilinear ponds and meandering bridal paths. They were meant to both encourage nearby real estate development and to provide recreational opportunities for people living throughout the Chicago area. Their designs were influenced by the naturalistic English landscape tradition of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and the mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century development of large, park-like cemeteries such as Boston’s Mount Auburn Cemetery and Chicago’s Graceland Cemetery. The two South Park Commission’s parks, Washington and Jackson, were the creation of Frederick Law Olmstead, America’s leading 19<sup>th</sup>-century



Top: After the West Chicago Park District was established in 1869, William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907) was elected Architect and Chief Engineer for the District.



Middle: An 1889 map of Humboldt Park. The Chicago Fire slowed development of the park that when it officially opened in 1877, only the eastern 80 acres was completed.

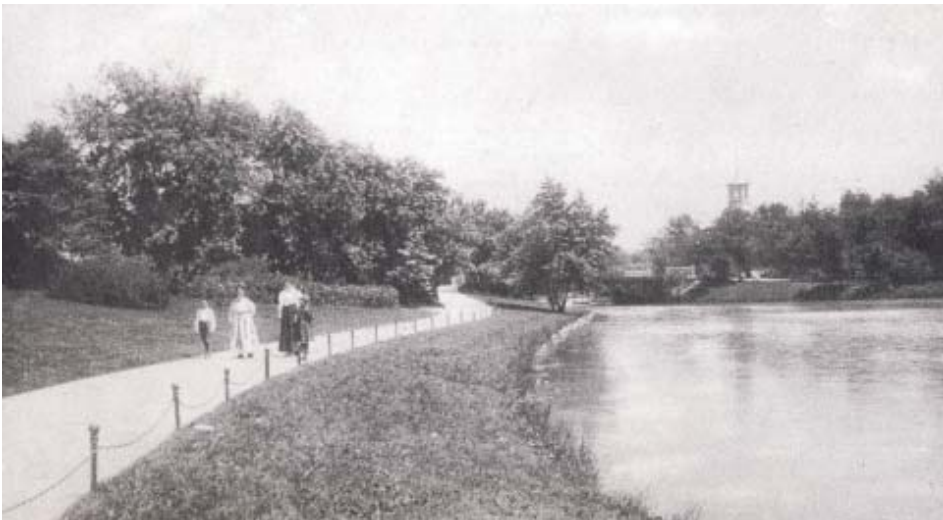
Bottom: A view of Humboldt Park in 1895.



**Top: The park was named after the renowned German naturalist, author and statesman Baron Alexander von Humboldt, and acknowledged the largely German-born population that surrounded the park in the 19th and early-20th centuries.**

**Middle: As one of Chicago's earliest parks, Humboldt Park (shown here in 1900) was designed as a large-scale pastoral landscape used for "passive" recreation.**

**Bottom: A picturesque view of the Humboldt Park Conservatory and gardens in 1897. Built in 1885 by architects Frommann & Jepsen, it was razed in 1912 as part of Jens Jensen's park improvement plan.**





**Top: Rendering of the Proposed Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable in 1895.**

**Middle: The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable shortly after its completion in 1896. Humboldt Park Superintendent Jens Jensen's office was located in the pavilion with the attached turret on the left.**



**Bottom Left and Right: Jens Jensen in 1897. During his tenure with the park from 1895-1900, he was instrumental in designing more naturalistic park settings like the lily pond and rustic stone bridge shown below.**





landscape architect. Olmstead's earlier designs for New York's Central Park (begun in 1857) and Prospect Park (begun in 1865) were widely admired and were prototypes for Chicago's large-scale parks.

Situated near handsome middle- and upper-income neighborhoods, Chicago's great 19<sup>th</sup>-century parks were destinations for Chicago's citizens. Relatively passive recreations such as strolling, horseback riding, and carriage rides were popular ways of experiencing the parks. Pastoral parks such as these were seen as beneficial to Chicagoans because they served as the "lungs" of the city, providing places of natural beauty and relaxation that contrasted sharply with the city's rapidly expanding urban streetscapes. As noted by architectural historian Daniel Bluestone, Victorian-era Americans believed that parks offered psychological benefits to city dwellers through their separation from "artificial" scenes of commerce and contact with nature. Parks were also seen as cultivators of culture and democracy in an increasingly capitalistic and class-oriented society. Parks were also seen as cultivators of culture and democracy in an increasingly capitalistic and class-oriented society.

Humboldt Park, one of these original large-scale parks, occupies a 206-acre site on Chicago's Northwest Side. The land for North Park (as it was originally referred) was established in 1869 as one of three parks that made up the West Chicago Park District, as legislated by the State of Illinois. The following year, noted Chicago architect William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907) was elected Architect and Chief Engineer for the District.

Influenced by French landscape architecture and the work of Frederick Law Olmsted, the designer of New York's Central Park, Jenney spent the first years of his tenure designing the infrastructure for the now renamed Humboldt Park. (The new name both honored the renowned German naturalist, author and statesman Baron Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), while acknowledging the largely German-born population of surrounding neighborhoods.) The aftermath of the Chicago Fire, however, so slowed the development of the park that when it officially opened in 1877, only the eastern 80 acres were completed. That same year Oscar F. Dubuis (1849-1906), who had been draftsman for the District under Jenney, was appointed Engineer, where he remained until 1893.

During Dubuis' tenure, several major building projects were undertaken. A three-story Pavilion and bandstand, designed by architect George N. Frommann in 1879, was completed after the architect's death by his son, Emil H. Frommann and his partner Ernst Jebsen. In 1885, Frommann & Jebsen was selected to build a 15,000-square-foot Conservatory and its Rose House addition in 1891. Both the Pavilion and Conservatory buildings were later razed in 1912 as part of Jens Jensen's park improvement plan.

Between 1893 and 1896, George W. Dorr was appointed West Parks Engineer, and although few park improvements took place during his tenure, one very important improvement was the construction of the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable. Completed in 1896, the Receptory Building and Stable was both the last Frommann & Jebsen building built in Humboldt Park and the first improvement in the southwestern section of the park.



**Top: 629 W. Fullerton Parkway (1889), part of the Mid-North Chicago Landmark District, is one of the early Queen Anne buildings produced by the architectural firm of Frommann & Jepsen.**

**Bottom Left and Right: Schubas Tavern at 3159 N. Southport (1903) is a fine example of Frommann & Jepsen's many tavern designs for the Schlitz Co. Brewery, built to appeal to Chicago's German working-class population.**



The Chicago architectural firm of Frommann & Jepsen was founded in 1882 by **Emil Henry Frommann (1860-1950)** and **Ernst Jepsen (1850-1917)**. The son of German-born architect George N. Frommann, Emil and his family were moved from Peoria to Chicago in 1871 so that the elder Frommann could take advantage of the city's rebuilding after the Chicago Fire. In the late 1870s, Emil apprenticed with his father's firm as a draftsman until 1880, when he left for Boston to study architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His education was cut short upon his father's death in 1881, but he continued to practice architecture by assuming his father's business responsibilities with the help of architect Ernst Jepsen. Although few biographical records of Jepsen remain, it is known that Jepsen suffered a facial disfigurement which prevented him from client interaction, which allowed Frommann to be primarily responsible for creative direction and client relations.

The firm of Frommann & Jepsen continued to achieve success and was awarded many commissions for residential, commercial and public buildings. Early works were done in the popular Queen Anne style, such as the residence at 629 W. Fullerton (1889), part of the Mid-North Chicago Landmark District. During the 1890s-1900s, much of their time was dedicated to the design of many of the Schlitz Co. Brewery's corner taverns. Built to appeal to Chicago's German working-class population, a fine example is Schubas Tavern at 3159 N. Southport (1903).

The Humboldt Park Receptory and Stable is a visually-striking fusion of both building types: the visually-rich and diverse Queen Anne architectural style, combined with the "old German style of country house architecture," as initially described in the West Park Commission's *Annual Report*. The building is exemplified by its picturesque setting in an open green space in Humboldt Park, its asymmetric form, multiple rooflines; and Medieval and Romanesque details made from eclectic building materials and textures. It is one of the most notable buildings produced by the firm of Frommann & Jepsen during this period of its career.

The Receptory Building and Stable measures 127 x 152 feet, configured around a square open courtyard. Historically, the east (front) portion of the building, known as the Receptory Building, was the main building on the Humboldt Park grounds, comparable to the modern-day visitor center. Visitors would use the facility to park their carriages, arrange to have their horses tended to, or rent canoes while enjoying the park's landscapes, gardens and lagoons. The Receptory Building also housed the Superintendent's office, restrooms, tool-rooms, carpentry shop, and storerooms. The west (rear) portion of the building, known as the Stable, had stalls for 16 horses and a hay and feed loft on the second floor. The north and south portions, which complete the courtyard, were used as additional storage.

Facing east towards Humboldt Drive, and more ornate than the west portion, the Receptory portion of the building is constructed of red pressed brick with a foundation of rusticated fieldstones on the first story. Round-arch windows with carved wood mullions punctuate the walls. The building's second story is constructed of pink pressed brick combined with wood half-timbering and corbelling; and pierced with pointed-arch windows with diamond-pane sash. Some of the woodwork is chamfered and notched with an arrowhead motif.



**Top: Southeast pavilion and attached turret, formerly the office of Humboldt Park Superintendent, Jens Jensen**



**Middle Left: Detail of the pavilion's decorative wrought iron railing and its rusticated field stone porch.**

**Middle Right: Detail of the pavilion's glossy clay tile roof and cut limestone window mullions.**





**Top: The northeast pavilion of the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable.**

**Bottom: The entrance to the northeast pavilion has an oversized roof-covered porch with rusticated field stone banisters.**



Centered on the façade is the building's main entrance inside an engaged tower and a large Richardsonian-Romanesque-style porte-cochere made with field stones. Each end of the Receptory has a pavilion with an attached outer turret. Most prominent is the south pavilion which formerly housed Jen's Jensen's office (as Humboldt Park's Superintendent in 1896, he was the building's first occupant after its completion.) It has a porch with curvilinear limestone stair rails with decorative wrought-iron accents and carved limestone window mullions.

One of the Receptory's more unusual features is its plethora of steeply-pitched, cross-gable roofs, spires and dormers with diamond-pane windows. The roof is clad with unglazed light-red clay tiles, while the end pavilions and turrets have glossy glazed tiles that are reddish-brown in color. The roof's spires are also accented with decorative finials and a weather vane; and atop the southeast pavilion is a carved wagon-wheel-and-horse-head motif.

The Stable, facing west onto the parking lot, is similar to the Receptory portion of the building in its overall picturesque Central-European visual style, yet less ornate. It has rusticated field stones at its foundation, while its walls are made from red pressed brick with carved limestone buttresses. The building's roof has numerous dormers and a spire; and an engaged tower attached to its north pavilion. A bay on the south pavilion mimics the decorative elements used on the east façade, with pink pressed brick and wood half-timbering on the second story level. A centrally-located and brick porte-cochere provides direct access to the courtyard. Additional field stones and carved limestone adorn this façade.

The building's elaborate design carries into the courtyard, with its dormers, round-arched windows, and wood half-timbering. A large smokestack is attached to the porte-cochere on the east wall of the courtyard; and red pressed brick with rusticated field stones is used throughout. On the south wall is a larger entrance to the stable, with a pair of doors to a former hayloft on the second-story level. The loft is decorated with wood half-timbering and supported by carved limestone buttresses.

## **LATER HISTORY**

In 1905, Illinois Governor Charles S. Deneen brought political reform to the West Park Commission as a first step towards new park development. As part of this reform, Deneen installed Jens Jensen as the West Park's general superintendent and landscape architect. In his newly-appointed position, Jensen went about the task of revitalizing the existing parks of the West Park Commission, including Humboldt Park, as well as designing new neighborhood parks. Jensen disliked the picturesque artificiality of the typical buildings erected in public parks during the late-19th century, and he ordered the demolition of most of the existing 19<sup>th</sup>-century buildings in Humboldt Park. However, the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable, which had housed his office during his 1895-1900 tenure as Humboldt Park superintendent, was spared.



**Top Left: Historical views of the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable in 1900. The lower photo shows the landscapers' wagons parked in the courtyard.**

**Top Right: Courtyard view of the east porte-cochere and smokestack.**

**Bottom: Courtyard view of the Stable and hay loft in the south portion of the building.**





**Top: Historic view of the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable, ca. 1900.  
Bottom: A recent view of the building, ca. 1998.**





In 1990 the Chicago Park District commissioned plans for the restoration of the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable, which by that time had sat vacant for a number of years. Two years later, work was started on the building. Sadly, a fire in July 1992 damaged a large portion of the building's second floor and roof. With state and federal grants, the picturesque roof was reconstructed and clad with tile (which had been replaced with asphalt shingles long before the fire), and a wholesale exterior restoration of the building was completed in 1997. The Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture is currently rehabilitating the building for use as a cultural center and museum, to open in Fall 2007.

The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is identified as "red," the highest rating, in the Chicago Historic Resources Survey.

## **CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION**

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Sect. 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a final recommendation of landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated "criteria for landmark designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of its historic design integrity.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

### ***Criterion 1: Critical Part of the City's History***

*Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois or the United States.*

- The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is an important, rare-surviving park structure that exemplifies the early 19<sup>th</sup>-century history of Chicago's grandly-scaled regional parks, including Humboldt Park.
- The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is a fine and unusual example of the picturesque park buildings that were prominent in Chicago and the United States in the late-19th century.

#### ***Criterion 4: Important Architecture***

*Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.*

- The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is a visually exuberant structure built in a picturesque architectural style that reflects the influence of popular revivalist styles as well as Central-European, “old German” country architecture reflecting the surrounding area’s immigrant population, and is noteworthy due to the overall excellence of its design and craftsmanship.
- The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is distinguished by its overall high quality of building materials and craftsmanship, exemplified by its decorative brickwork, half-timbering, rusticated field stone foundation; and its plethora of roofs, dormers and spires in matte and glazed clay tiles.
- The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is one of the best designs by the Chicago architectural firm of Frommann & Jebsen and is the last known remaining Chicago park building designed by the firm.

#### ***Criterion 7: Unique Visual Feature***

*Its unique location or distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Chicago.*

- Located in the green open space of Humboldt Park, and situated near the prominent intersection of Division and Sacramento, the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable is an established and familiar visual feature of the Humboldt Park community.

#### ***Integrity Criteria***

*The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architectural or aesthetic interest or value.*

The Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable possesses excellent physical integrity, displayed through its overall design and its historic relationship to the park. It retains its historic exterior form, and the majority of its historic materials and detailing.

A significant change to the roof of the Receptory Building and Stable occurred after a portion of the roof was destroyed by fire in 1992. Earlier, the roof’s original clay tile had been replaced with asphalt shingling. Funding was secured following the fire to completely repair and reconstruct the building’s multi-dormered roof using clay tile. The restoration was completed in 1998.

The open storage space seen only from inside the courtyard, were originally used for visitors to tether their horses, or later for workers to park their maintenance vehicles. These areas are being enclosed and converted into useable space. Doors and ramps were also created on the southwest pavilion from former window openings for ADA-accessibility purposes. These modifications are part of the reuse of the building for the Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture and have been sensitively planned.

## **SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES**

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based on its evaluation of the Humboldt Park Receptory Building and Stable, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including courtyard elevations and all rooflines, of the building.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Special thanks to Julia Bachrach at the Chicago Park District; Gunny Harboe, AIA, of Harboe Architects, PC; and Jackie Reyes at the Institute of Puerto Rican Arts and Culture (IPRAC), for their assistance in the research for this report.

#### **Illustrations**

Chicago Bar Project (website): p. 10 (bot.).

Chicago Park District, Special Collections: pp.4 (top), 6 (mid.), 8 (bot. left).

Commission on Chicago Landmarks: Cover, pp. 10 (top), 12-13, 15 (top rt., bot.).

Graf, John. *Chicago's Parks*: pp. 4 (bot.), 7 (top, mid.), 16 (top).

Charlie Mayer Photography for Harboe Architects, PC: p. 16 (bot.).

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West Chicago Park Commissioners. *Annual Report, 1895-1900*: pp. 6 (bot.), 7 (bot.), 8 (top, mid., bot. rt.), 15 (top left).

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*Printed June 2007; Revised and Reprinted November 2007*