Community Area #48
Calumet Heights

Population: 17,453
Number of Structures: 5,124
Avg. Date of Construction: 1946

Significant Structures: 1

Source: 1990 Census, Harris File, CHRS
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Like its neighbors Burnside and Avalon Park, Calumet Heights is a community area surrounded by railroads. Originally part of a low-lying swamp surrounding the Stony Island Ridge, Calumet Heights includes the Ridge itself, a glacial island located east of Stony Island, between 92nd and 93rd Streets. The community was traversed by the Chicago-Michigan Post Road, which ran atop the ancient ridge as early as the 1830s. Another road was built near 92nd Street in the 1850s, but there was no permanent settlement in the community until the 1880s, by which time the ridge had been purchased by the Calumet and Chicago Canal and Dock Company. One of the earliest settlements was Judd, located on the community’s western edge near the New York and St. Louis railroad yards and named for Chicago attorney and politician Norman P. Judd. Another 1880s settlement, from which no buildings survive, grew up along the Stony Island Ridge itself near a quarry at 92nd Street.

Annexed to Chicago in 1889, Calumet Heights grew slowly as an almost rural island separated from the city by railroad tracks to the south, east and west. The Calumet Heights name came into use in the 1890s for a settlement of frame buildings, cottages and two-flats in the eastern section of the community area, built by steelworkers employed in neighboring South Chicago. A home from the 1890s survives at 9235 S. Merrill Avenue.

A building boom following World War I brought a rush of new development to Calumet Heights in the form of brick single-family homes, although apartment buildings were constructed in the area.
west of Stony Island Avenue, between 87th and 91st. The Depression halted construction in the area during the 1930s, and full development of the community area did not take place until the late 1940s, when another building boom brought Calumet Heights to residential maturity.

The post-World War II building boom included the development of the old Stony Island Ridge with new suburban-style ranch houses and eclectic revival homes. One portion of this area became known as "Pill Hill," referring to the many doctors who lived in homes built atop the ancient glacial island. The nearby South Shore Community Hospital was a community institution that employed many of its residents. To the east, Stony Island Heights has more modest brick homes. Overall, Calumet Heights is a prosperous, middle-class community, typified by single-family homes and almost devoid of industrial and commercial development.

The focus of the Chicago Historic Resources Survey was on buildings erected prior to 1940. Buildings and developments erected after that date generally are not included in the inventory.
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An 1890 map of Chicago's south side.
The community area of Calumet Heights is located in the center of the map.

Survey information for this community area was accurate at the time it was first surveyed in August 1987.
For an explanation of column headings, see page III-1.

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