

Community Area #64

## Clearing

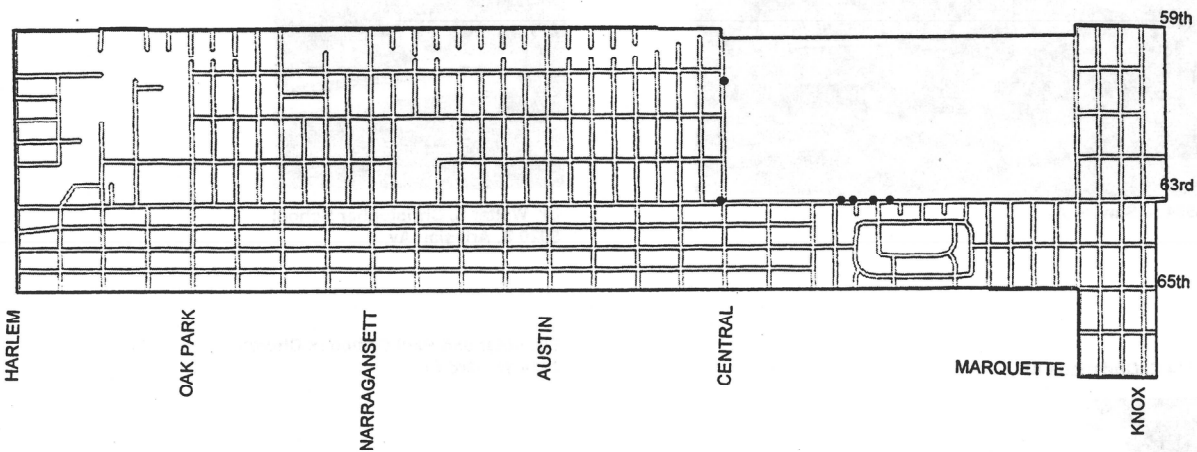
Population: 21,490

Number of Structures: 6,224

Avg. Date of Construction: 1953

Significant Structures: 6

Source: 1990 Census, Harris File, CHRS



(Dots show approximate, rather than specific, locations of significant structures.)  
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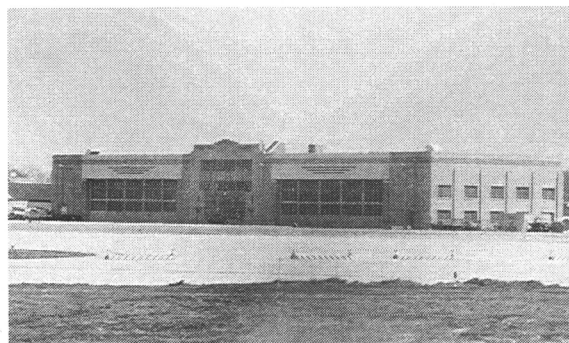
Clearing is one of Chicago's newest community areas in terms of its physical development, having remained open prairie and farmland until 1900. Despite the presence of a few truck farmers, the land was largely vacant in 1891 when railroad executive A.B. Stickney bought land between 63rd and 79th Streets, from Cicero Avenue to Harlem Avenue. Stickney believed that Chicago, the world's largest railroad junction, needed a major railroad clearing yard, so he laid tracks in a huge circle south of 65th Street for the use of the 13 railroad lines that converged on Chicago. The "Stickney Circle" quickly became "Stickney's Folly" when the Panic of 1893 killed the enterprise. The tracks were bought by Henry Porter for the Chicago Union Transfer Company in 1898 and began operating in 1901.

The Clearing community area at this time was divided between two suburban municipalities. The eastern portion of the community area, between Austin and Cicero, became part of the larger Village of Clearing upon its incorporation in 1901, while the western section, between Austin and Harlem, was part of the Town of Stickney. By 1905 there were just 10 houses in the community area, but industrial development on the Southwest Side of Chicago encouraged the development of working-class housing in Clearing. Streetcars on 63rd Street reached Central Avenue in 1902. In 1911 the Bartlett Realty Company bought and subdivided land between 63rd and 65th streets, west of Austin Avenue. At the same time, the Clearing Company was developing lots and homes east of Austin Avenue.



Aerial view looking northwest of Chicago Aero Park (later Midway airport), 1926

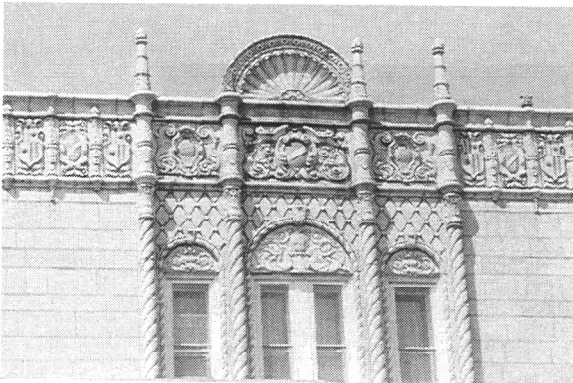
Illinois National Guard Armory, Midway Airport  
5324 W. 63rd St.



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In 1915, the village of Clearing was annexed to Chicago. The area immediately west from Austin to Narragansett Avenues was annexed in 1917, followed by the section west from Narragansett to Harlem Avenue in 1923.

The 1920s witnessed a massive construction boom that more than doubled the population. The community area was built up with brick bungalows and frame cottages, although large sections of open land remained in the western edge of the community area. Growing industries in the Clearing Industrial District, developed on land formerly part of Stickney's railroad clearing yard scheme, contributed to the boom.



5600 W. 63rd St.

The high point of community development came with the opening of Midway Airport in 1926 on Chicago Board of Education-owned land between Central and Cicero Avenues, from 55th to 63rd Streets. Early airline buildings at Midway include the Army Air Corps hangar at 6013 S. Central (demolished) and the Illinois National Guard Armory, a handsome Art Deco building at 5324 W. 63rd St. A commercial district grew up along 63rd Street, just west of the airport, including the commercial / residential building (1927, Edward McClellan) at 5600 W. 63rd.

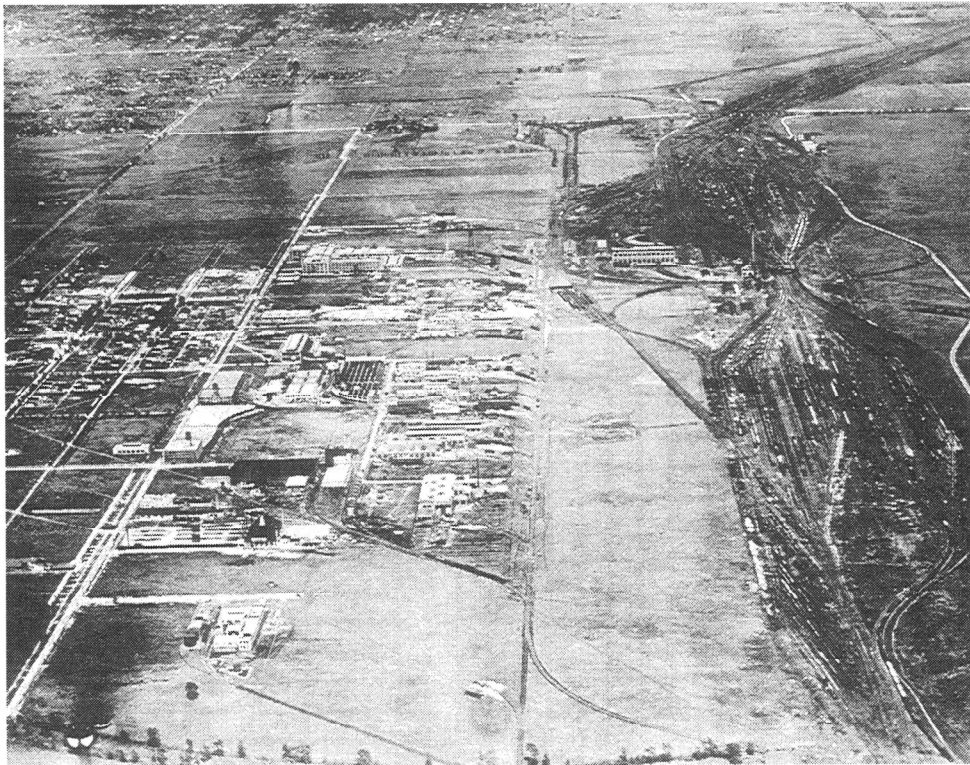
The community continued to develop in the 1930s, although Midway's growth into the world's busiest airport was a disincentive to some new residents. Following World War II, a spurt of new construction resulted in the last vacant parcels being developed for housing for workers in nearby, growing industrial districts, including Bedford Park and Clearing.

*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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Address	Date	Architect	Building Style	Survey		Building Code Type	PIN	Form #
				LM	IS			
5214 W 63 ST				N	Y	GN	1916100002	641326002
5240 W 63 ST				N	Y	GN	1916100002	641326003
5300 W 63 ST				N	Y	GN	1916100002	641326004
5324 W 63 ST	1927		ART DECO	N	Y	OR	1916100002	641326001
5600 W 63 ST	1927	MCCLELLAN, EDWA		N	Y	OR	1917431039	641327001
6013 S CENTRAL AV	1924			N	Y	GN	1916100002	641326005



Aerial view of the Clearing Industrial Yards, looking east, mid-1920s.