



NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES
326 EAST CHICAGO STREET

This residence was constructed in 1897 for James and Sarah Palmer. James Palmer was born in Howard, New York. He was captured by Confederate soldiers during the Civil War in the battle at Shiloh in 1862. In 1873, James Palmer settled in Elgin and became a partner in the firm of Palmer and Hinsdell, furniture dealers and undertakers. The firm's name changed several times and, by 1900, James Palmer was in the business of selling art goods and undertaking.

The exterior of this house has been entirely restored. Prior to restoration, all the shingles and clapboard, as well as the two-story front porch, had been removed. The funding for this exterior restoration was provided by the State of Illinois, Department of Conservation and the City of Elgin. The local architectural firm of Burnidge, Cassell & Associates planned the restoration and the Hunt Construction Company executed it.

The interior of the second floor was rehabilitated through volunteer efforts in 1981. When entering the house, note the large entry door. This door had been removed and sold to another Elgin resident and stored in a basement. When articles appeared in the local papers regarding the restoration of the building, the owner of the door contacted the Neighborhood Housing Services offering to sell back the original oversized front door.

The community is extremely proud of this restoration, located in the heart of the Elgin Historic District.

THE NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING SERVICES PROGRAM

The Elgin Neighborhood Housing Services (NHS), incorporated in June of 1981, is a privately funded organization serving the greater part of the Historic District. Local lending institutions along with business and industry, are committed to raising the operating budget which provides for the professional three-member staff.

The NHS program provides flexible interest and flexible term loans for owner-occupants living in the target area. But more importantly, the Program is committed to restoring pride in our neighborhood and in the community as a whole.

The City of Elgin, another partner in the NHS, provides their own expertise, along with dollars for the Revolving Loan Fund and additional monies for capital improvement projects.

The residents represent the final partner and also the greater number on the Board of Directors. The residents bring to the partnership an awareness of their neighborhood, their commitment to rehabilitation of their properties, and a willingness to serve on the NHS committees along with representatives from each of the other partners.

Located in the heart of the Gifford Park area, the residents and members of the Gifford Park Association play a strong role in the future of the NHS.

ALONG THE WAY

416 EAST CHICAGO

Moses H. Thompson, a civil engineer, was employed in the Galena and Dubuque lead mines, on government surveys, and on the early railroad lines west of the Mississippi. He later engaged in map publishing, a business which extended over several Midwestern states. His gazeteers are now much in demand as collectors' items.

Thompson became secretary and manager of the Elgin Gas Light Company, which explains why his home, built in 1870, was the first in the city to be gas-lit. He also helped organize the Elgin National Bank, serving as its first president. The large barn at the rear of the property was erected in 1887.

428 EAST CHICAGO

Seven experienced watch makers arrived from Waltham, Massachusetts, in 1864 to start up the first watch factory in the West. Each was paid a bonus and given a five years' contract and a half acre near the factory as a homestead. One of them, Otis Hoyt, was in charge of making pinions. He had this home built in 1881.