

Lake Forest Preservation Foundation
Annual Meeting visit, April 30, 2023, afternoon

The Homestead, Devillo R. and Ellen Hubbard Holt Residence

1860, attributed to Asher Carter
570 N. Sheridan Rd., Lake Forest

Chicago lumber merchant Devillo R. Holt, a prominent Presbyterian, and married to a relation of Chicago founder Gurdon S. Hubbard, Ellen Hubbard Holt who arrived in Chicago in 1836, had this house built in 1860. Its design follows the form of a “regular” or square, hipped roof Italian villa, as described and promulgated by Andrew Jackson Downing in his 1850 book on *Country Houses*. Holt’s lumber came down Lake Michigan from Oconto, Wisconsin, where he possessed a large timber concession on Green Bay. The house is of brick with concrete fireproof floors, though clad in first-cut clapboard, painstakingly restored by the current owners in recent years.

Architect Asher Carter arrived in Chicago in 1849, carrying James Renwick’s plans for the 1851 Second Presbyterian Church, Chicago. He designed the 1858 Lake Forest Hotel, Triangle Park (moved, demol.). Carter & Drake designed the 1859, 1865 expanded Lake Forest Academy (burned 1879), southeast corner, Deerpath and Sheridan. This house and 660 N. Sheridan are attributed to Carter as well for elements similar to those on the Academy building’s 1865 state.

The Holt’s impact on the community was a large one, continuing into the mid 20th century when Miss Ellen Holt (1870-1960) played a prominent role, including providing recollections for Edward Arpee’s early 1960s local history, still a vital—if undocumented—source. D.R. Holt had insisted in 1860 that he would not build on his lot after all, if there were any businesses east of the tracks. This led to moving the general store west to the southwest corner of Western and Deerpath. This soon shifted to the northwest corner, the Anderson store by 1867, and replaced by the extant Anderson Block, 1903, with Walgreens today. Holt was a witness in the heresy trial, Chicago, against the Rev. David Swing, a Lake Forest University trustee, that de facto led to the gradual secularization locally from stricter Presbyterianism, and by 1876 to the re-launch of 1857-founded Lake Forest University’s Collegiate Dept., this time coeducational, by 1903 known as Lake Forest College.

Various Holt youngsters attended the local prep schools and College, including daughter Anna, ca. 1880, whose growing attachment to Arthur Wheeler, another student, led to his rustication for a year. He returned then, engaging with Anna, and working toward a bar exam in the Chicago law firm of Charles Holt, the modern Sidley & Austin, etc. firm. As a partner Wheeler became president of the Chicago Telephone Co. and Western Electric, taking these into AT&T, 1908, and building in 1909 the house for Anna and himself at 565 E. Deerpath.

The Holt boys, three in all, made a trip around the world in 1879, perhaps following U.S. Grant’s rough itinerary at the time, with photos they collected deposited in the College’s archives—Egypt, Japan, etc. One son, Arthur Holt, married, married Lily Reid, daughter of Simon S. and Martha McWilliams Reid, whose 1872 *Lilacs* house was south across the street (demolished ca. 1971). Both Arthur and Lily were victims of tuberculosis in their early adulthood, with Mrs. Reid

donating the 1900-completed Frost & Granger designed Lily Reid Holt Chapel, Lake Forest College, in their memory.

Daughter Ellen was a backer of the Chicago settlement Association House, and she donated a summer camp at Diamond Lake west of Lake Forest, now Mundelein. Joining her in this work was Harry C. Durand, 506 E. Illinois nearby, a president of Association House.

The *Homestead* itself, handsomely maintained, has an orderly central hall plan of its main block: the hall with its straight stair to the second floor, a parlor on the right or north and study/library on the left or south. A small conservatory bow window feature animates the exterior on that side. The study displays perhaps later bookshelves with carved Eastlake details and naturalistic leaf forms. The dining room is west of the parlor. An east facing front porch in the 1870s looked over a landscape by F.L. Olmsted, 1868, according to a statement by Miss Holt. Service space behind dining room, to the west, was replaced by the current owners in the 1990s. The grounds originally filled the southern half of the block, with the gardener's cottage and outbuilding from the 1860 period extant opposite the History Center at 595 N. Washington Rd. The Wheeler property was beyond to the north.

The 1860 *Homestead* house's style was complementary to the 1861 H.M. Thompson house, 660 N. Sheridan, an "irregular" A.J. Downing villa, with its north side Chinese pagoda. Downing saw these two styles for contrasting personality types, the regular house for an orderly sort of client with the irregular, more picturesque type for a more imaginative, artistic, and expressive sort of person. The *Homestead's* solid construction certainly underscores the reliable, prudent 1860 clients for the residence, the D.R. Holts. Today a colonial revival compatible residence stands between these two originally neighboring exemplars of their Italianate style, added in 1988 on former Holt property.

Sources:

Edward Arpee, *Lake Forest: History and Reminiscences, 1861-1961* (LF: Rotary, 1963), see index in 1991 *Supplement*.

Christine Chakoian, [history of First Presbyt. Church] (LF: Church, 2012), pp. 37, 44-46, and 54 and *passim*.

Kim Coventry, Daniel Meyer, and Arthur H. Miller, *Classic Country Estates of Lake Forest...* (NY: Norton, 2003), pp. 40-45 and *passim*.

A.J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (NY: Dover, 1969, reprint of 1850), pp. 262-63 and *passim*.

Arthur H. Miller, *Architectural Lake Forest...* (LF: LFPF, 2022), pp. 15, 41, 67, 68, and 69.

_____ and Shirley M. Paddock, *Lake Forest: Estates, People and Culture* (Arcadia, 2000), 17-18, 20-21, and 38.

Franz Schulze, Rosemary Cowler, and Arthur H. Miller, *30 Miles North, A History of Lake Forest College...* (2000), see index for Holts.

Arthur Miller, ahmiller169@gmail.com