VILLAGE OF DOWNERS GROVE  
REPORT FOR THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN REVIEW BOARD  
MARCH 26, 2009 AGENDA

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| ADRB-01-09  
4943 Highland Avenue | Designation of a Historic Landmark | Stan Popovich, AICP  
Planner |

REQUEST
The petitioner is requesting the property at 4943 Highland Avenue be designated a landmark based on the criteria that the house is a good example of Victorian architecture and identifies with Mr. Gustav H. Bunge, the developer of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel, a founding father of the Downers Grove Sanitary District and a former Village of Downers Grove attorney and trustee.

NOTICE
The application has been filed in conformance with applicable procedural and public notice requirements.

GENERAL INFORMATION

OWNER/APPLICANT: Lea C. Wayne  
4943 Highland Avenue  
Downers Grove, IL 60515

PROPERTY INFORMATION

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: Victorian  
BUILDING DATE: circa 1883  
HISTORICAL BUILDING USE: Single Family Residence  
EXISTING BUILDING USE: Single Family Residence  
PROPERTY SIZE: 8,451 square feet (0.194 acres)  
PIN: 09-08-118-008

ANALYSIS

SUBMITTALS
This report is based on the following documents, which are on file with the Department of Community Development:

1. Application/Petition for Public Hearing  
2. Project Summary  
3. Owner Consent Form  
4. Certificate of Acknowledgement Form  
5. Significant Architectural Features Form  
6. Photographs
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The petition is to designate the property at 4943 Highland Avenue a historic landmark under criteria a, b, c, e, and h of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Section 12.400). These applicable criteria, listed below, are based on the architectural character of the house and its significance associated with a person who significantly contributed to the development of the community. The house is a good example of Victorian architecture and was home to Mr. Gustav H. Bunge, the developer and original owner of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel.

The three-story Victorian house with a basement was the Bunge family home and was originally located at the northeast corner of Highland and Warren Avenues. According to the Downers Grove Reporter, the construction of the Tivoli Theater led to the house being relocated to 4943 Highland Avenue circa 1927. Based on city directories, the Bunge family lived at the 4943 Highland location for approximately a decade before moving back into the Tivoli building.

Mr. Bunge was the developer and original owner of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel. Mr. Bunge also served two terms as a Village trustee, was the Village attorney for a number of years, was a founding member of the Downers Grove Sanitary District and served as the Sanitary District’s attorney from its founding in 1921 through 1927. (Downers Grove Reporter, 1941)

The three-story Victorian house with a basement is constructed on a concrete and concrete block foundation. Original wood siding has been covered with vinyl siding. Many of the original windows have been replaced by modern windows. Asphalt shingles are affixed to the cross-gable roof.

The front (west) façade is a classic Victorian façade. A porch extends across the entire front façade and is detailed with dentils. The detailed front door is on the north side of the façade adjacent to the three-sided two-story bay. Transom windows on the first floor remain while transom windows on the second floor have been replaced. A small second story balcony is also located on the main façade. The triangular section at the top of the front gable is extended forward and is articulated with a Palladian style window. The front gable is adorned with shingle siding.

The south façade also includes a two-story bay. The windows on this façade are less detailed, although the primary window on the bay includes a dining room stained glass transom window portraying a meal with a pig, fruits and vegetables. The side gable is detailed with shingles curving into a recessed Palladian style window. Cornice brackets have been covered with modern siding.

The north façade includes a cantilevered wall extension where a window seat is located. The side gable is articulated as well, with shingles and a window row. An octagonal window provides additional detail at the top of the gable. The rear (east) façade is unadorned, but a turret does protrude from the rear roof line.

Many original interior features of the house remain. These features include original five-panel doors with transoms and elaborate door plates and knobs, intricately detailed staircase carvings, detailed floor radiators, detailed fireplace mantles and original wood flooring.

COMPLIANCE WITH HISTORIC PRESERVATION ORDINANCE

The petitioner has outlined the request in the attached narrative letter and photographs. The petitioner will further address the proposal and justification to support the requested landmark designation at the public hearing.

Landmark designations require evaluation based on Section 12.400 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Landmark Designation Criteria. Nominations have to meet at least one of the criteria to
apply for landmark status. Staff believes the request complies with Landmark Designation Criteria a, b, c, e and h as described below.

a. **Significant value as part of the historic, heritage or cultural characteristics of the community, county, State or Nation;**
The house has significant cultural value in the Village as it was Mr. Bunge’s home for a decade at this location. Mr. Bunge enhanced the culture of the Village by being the developer and original owner of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel. Staff believes this criteria has been met.

b. **Identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community, county, State or Nation;**
Staff believes the house is historic based on its association with Mr. Gustav H. Bunge who significantly contributed to the development of Downers Grove through the construction of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel, his association with the Village as a trustee and attorney and his status as a founder and attorney of the Downers Grove Sanitary District.

A 1941 *Downers Grove Reporter* article notes that Mr. Bunge was born in Melzow, Germany on February 22, 1865. He immigrated to Chicago in 1872 with his parents and lived on a farm in Henry County. Mr. Bunge moved to Downers Grove in 1891 to serve as a station agent for the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy Railroad Company and began practicing law in 1899 in Downers Grove. It is unknown when he took up residence at 9 Highland Avenue at the northeast corner of Highland and Warren Avenues but Sanborn maps and phone directories identify him living at this location by 1905.

Mr. Bunge lived at this corner until circa 1927 when construction began on the Tivoli Theater and Hotel. A *Downers Grove Reporter* article from November 18, 1927 notes that “Mr. Bunge’s residence is now being moved from the site.” Records from the Downers Grove Township Assessor’s office and the Downers Grove Historical Society indicate the house at 4943 Highland Avenue was originally located where the Tivoli building stands. Mr. Bunge appears to have lived in the house at 4943 Highland Avenue for approximately a decade beginning in 1927 or 1928. In 1938, phone directories list his home address as 5015 Highland Avenue, the Tivoli Theater and Hotel.

Mr. Bunge hired Van Gunten and Van Gunten architects of Chicago to design the Tivoli and J.T. Schless & Company to construct the building. The entire building project was estimated to cost $500,000 (approximately $5.9M in 2009 dollars) and was noted as the single largest development in the Village at the time. (*Downers Grove Reporter*, 1927) It was hoped the theater would attract people to Downers Grove while the hotel was seen as a needed Village amenity.

When the Tivoli Theater opened on Christmas Day 1928 it was billed as “The Wonder Theater of Suburban Chicago.” The second theater in the United States to be designed and built for talking movies had an estimated opening day crowd of more than 4,000 people. (*Downers Grove Reporter*, 1928) The Tivoli continues to be one of the most recognized buildings in the Village today.

In addition to building the Tivoli, Mr. Bunge was active in the Village as he served as a member of the Board of Trustees. According to newspaper reports, Mr. Bunge was a leader in extending storm and sanitary sewers and sidewalks within the Village. When it was determined that the Village could not continue providing sanitary services, Mr. Bunge worked to organize the Downers Grove Sanitary District. Downers Grove was one of the first municipalities to organize a sanitary district.

c. **Representative of the distinguishing characteristics of architecture inherently valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction or use of indigenous materials;**
The house at 4943 Highland Avenue is representative of the distinguishing characteristics of a Victorian home. The characteristics include a full-width front porch with dentils, two-story bays on
both the south and east façade, a cantilevered wall extension on the north façade and gable end detailing with shingles, curved recesses, and Palladian style windows. Staff believes this standard has been met.

d. Notable work of a master builder, designer, architect or artist whose individual work has influenced the development of the community, county, State or Nation;
   Staff does not believe this criterion applies.

e. Unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature;
   The house is a good example of a Victorian house. The overall massing and detailing are in line with established Victorian styles. Staff believes the house meets this criterion.

f. Character as a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure, including but not limited to farmhouses, gas stations, or other commercial structures, with a high level of integrity or architectural significance;
   Staff does not believe this criterion applies.

g. Area that has yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.
   Staff does not believe this criterion applies.

h. A source of civic pride or identity for the community.
   Mr. Bunge was the original developer and owner of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel. The Tivoli was a source of civic pride when it opened and continues to be a source of civic pride today. Mr. Bunge’s contributions to the development of the Village through his work as a trustee and attorney, in addition to his contributions to the establishment of the Downers Grove Sanitary District also are a source of civic pride. Staff believes the house is a source of civic pride.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENT
   Staff has not received any written neighborhood comment regarding the proposal at this time.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff believes the proposal complies with criteria a, b, c, e and h for Landmark Designation listed above. The house is a good example of Victorian period architecture and given Mr. Bunge’s involvement as the developer and original owner of the Tivoli Theater and Hotel, one of the most recognizable and historic buildings in the Village, staff believes the house at 4943 Highland Avenue should be designated a historic landmark.

Based on the findings above, staff recommends the Architectural Design Review Board make a positive recommendation to the Village Council for landmark status of 4943 Highland Avenue.

Staff Report Approved By:

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Tom Dabareiner, AICP
Director of Community Development

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REFERENCES

Bill Bunge, written correspondence to Downers Grove Historical Society, date unknown.


Downers Grove Reporter, “Mrs. G.H. Bunge, 52-Year resident, is buried Monday,” 1945.

Downers Grove Reporter, “Term lease of Bunge Theatre is over $300,000,” November 18, 1927.

Downers Grove Reporter, “Tivoli Theater here Christmas.” December 28, 1928

Downers Grove Township Assessor, personal communication to Stan Popovich, March 4, 2009.
February 2009

Dear Board Members

I am the owner of 4943 Highland Avenue. I would like to respectfully request that this home be designated as a Historic Landmark.

To the best of my knowledge, the home was built in 1883. The original owner was George Bunge – who with his son was the builder/owner of the Tivoli Movie Theater. I have been told that the house originally stood where the Tivoli is today – and was moved to its current site in 1927. Originally the land also included the lot to the south – today’s plot 09-08-118-09.

Many of the original architectural features are still present and make this home unique.

The front door is wood and leaded glass and is approximately 3” thick. It is hung with decorative brass hinges. The front foyer has quarter sawn oak paneling. All of the first level floors are also quarter sawn oak.

One working fireplace remains in the front parlor with the original tile surrounding the face of the fireplace and what appears to be the original ornamental grate. Originally the fireplace burned coal and the coal doors are still present on the side of the house going into the basement.

The first floor has two leaded glass windows in the front two parlors, a stained glass window in the dining room, and a unique “3D”, two part stained glass window in the foyer.

The front open staircase to the third floor is adorned with double turned spindles and has beautifully carved newel posts. Between the first and second floor there is a small window seat. There is also a back staircase from the first floor to the second floor.

All of the doors are the raised 5 panel style with working transoms above each door. The door knobs and plates are ornate brass which were electroplated with copper- the more “upscale” metal of the day. There are two swinging doors from the kitchen: one to the dining room and one to the front foyer.

There are 4 bedrooms on the second floor and one has a stained glass window. Second floor hallways have quarter sawn oak flooring.

The third floor also has original oak floors and a “turret” ceiling in the sitting area. The home is heated with hot water heat and has many ornamental radiators.

Many of these features are shown in the attached pictures.

This home is a wonderful example of Victorian Architecture and design and would be a beautiful addition to the Downers Grove Historic Landmarks, preserving it for years to come.

Respectfully Submitted –

[Signature]

Lea C. Wayne
Figure 7. Staircase

Figure 8. Newel post detailing

Figure 9. Five panel door

Figure 10. Door knob and plate detailing

Figure 11. Dining room window

Figure 13. Foyer window