

= Washington Square Park (Chicago) =

Washington Square , also known as Washington Square Park , is a park in Chicago , Illinois . A registered historic landmark that is better known by its nickname Bughouse Square (derived from the slang of bughouse referring to mental health facilities) , it was the most celebrated open air free @-@ speech center in the country as well as a popular Chicago tourist attraction . It is located across Walton Street from Newberry Library at 901 N. Clark Street in the Near North Side community area of Chicago , Illinois , USA . It is Chicago 's oldest existing small park . It is one of four Chicago Park District parks named after persons surnamed Washington (the others being Washington Park , Harold Washington Park , and Dinah Washington Park) . It was added to the National Register of Historic Places on May 20 , 1991 .

= = Origin = =

On September 4 , 1842 , the city received a 3 @-@ acre (12 @,@ 000 m2) parcel that was donated by the members of the American Land Company for use as a public park . The property had once been a cow path with a well for farmers to water their cattle . The donors stipulated the name Washington Square . Between 1869 and the 1890s , the city improved Washington Square with lawn , trees , bisecting diagonal walks , limestone coping , picket fencing , and an attractive Victorian fountain . By the time Alderman McCormick became President of Drainage Board in 1906 , the fountain had been razed and the park had deteriorated . Alderman McCormick devoted his aldermanic salary to improving the park . He donated a \$ 600 fountain , and the city allocated an additional \$ 10 @,@ 000 to rehabilitate the park . By the 1910s , the neighborhood surrounding Washington Square had become more diverse .

= = History = =

The original purpose of the neighborhood park was as a place of assembly to discuss community issues . Chicago has a long storied history of public speeches both for entertainment and educational purposes . The Haymarket Riot first started as an anarchist workers rally . Daniel Burnham ' s March 27 , 1897 lecture for the Commercial Club of Chicago inspired the club to provide \$ 80 @,@ 000 to publish the Burnham Plan .

Washington Square Park has been the geographic center of Chicago public speeches . By the 1890s the park acquired its Bughouse Square moniker . Soapbox orators waxed on topics ranging from gender relations to Communism . It served as a home for soapbox orators on warm @-@ weather evenings from the 1910s to the mid @-@ 1960s . Like Speakers ' Corner in London 's Hyde Park , Washington Square became a popular spot for soap box orators . Artists , writers , political radicals , and hobos pontificated , lectured , recited poetry , ranted , and raved . A group of regulars formed " The Dil Pickle Club , " devoted to free expression . For years Washington Square orators appointed their own honorary " king . " In its heyday in the 1920s and 1930s , revolutionary left soapboxers were occasionally joined by poets , religionists , and cranks . In 1959 , the city transferred Washington Square to the Chicago Park District . In 1964 , Life featured an article saying that it was a meeting place for cottaging among homosexuals . Six years later , it played host to Chicago 's first Gay Pride March .

= = Washington Square Historic District = =

Washington Square Historic District is a historic district in Chicago , Illinois that includes Washington Square Park , Chicago . The district was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 21 , 2003 . The Washington Square District was declared a Chicago Landmark on May 16 , 1990 . The original 1990 Washington Square Park District Chicago Landmark designation included the park , Newberry Library , 60 West Walton Street and 915 to 929 North Dearborn Street . The first Chicago Landmark district extension on July 10 , 2002 included 22 @-@ 28 and 27 @-@

31 West Chestnut Street and 802 @-@ 818 , 827 @-@ 867 , 1012 , 1023 @-@ 1029 , and 1150 @-@ 1154 North Dearborn Street . The May 11 , 2005 extension added the Isaac Maynard Row Houses located at 119 @-@ 123 West Delaware Place . The National Register of Historic Places included Washington Square as well as North Dearborn Street from West Walton Street to West Chicago Avenue .

= = Today = =

Every July , the Bughouse Square Committee continues to oversee the annual Bughouse Square Debates free speech gathering in conjunction with the Newberry Library ? s annual book sale . The debates are part of an annual festival to recreate the atmosphere of speeches and debates by soap box orators that once flourished in the park .

Although Alderman McCormick 's fountain was removed in the 1970s , in the late 1990s , the park district , the city , and neighborhood organizations agreed on a restoration plan for Washington Square . Improvements include a reconstructed historic fountain , period lighting , fencing , and new plantings . In the west part of the park , there is a memorial tablet designating the park as " Chicago 's Premier Free Speech Forum . "

= = Related Fora = =

Jack Jones ? s Dill Pickle Club , also known as the indoor Bughouse Square .
Washington Park forum , also known as the Bug Club .