

## A cross-cultural walking tour of the history, art and architecture of our Uptown area.

– Reno Lovison

*Duration: ~1 hour. Distance: ~2 miles round trip*



The street we call Broadway follows an ancient Native American trail that was part of a broader network of indigenous pathways that crisscrossed the region long before non-native people settled in the area.

Broadway curves and runs on an angle even though Chicago streets are laid out in a grid pattern because the street has maintained its original pathway.

It was primarily used by a confederation of nations who were members of the Potawatomi, Miami, Odawa (Ottawa), and Illinois (Illiniwek).

Potawatomi had a number of semi-permanent villages along rivers and the lakefront. This trail connecting various Native settlements, hunting grounds, and trading posts would have been a key overland route running parallel to the lake, used for travel between what are now southern Wisconsin and northern Indiana.

Uptown was originally outside of the city limits of Chicago and the native American path that became Broadway was first known as **Evanston Avenue** as it was the primary route to the small town to the north.

The area along the route was a remote outpost of scattered farms and summer houses, with a few food and drink establishments settled mostly by German and Swedish immigrants. This is how it was until a commuter train line between downtown and Evanston with station stops at Wilson and at Argyle was established. Then about 1900 the loop elevated train line was extended to Wilson and the area really began to grow.



As we travel along Broadway there are a few street names we might want to know about. Foster, Lawrence, Wilson, Argyle and most others in the area were mostly named after real estate developers, their friends and family. Broadway basically means "wide street" named in 1913 after the more famous street that runs through the theater district in New York.

Buildings erected between 1900 through the 1940s featured classically inspired revival styles with elaborate variety of decorative terra cotta facades creating a unique architectural look which conveyed a sense of elegance and prosperity.

American architect's working at the time borrowed ideas from European architecture because they wanted to convey a sense of European style which they saw as the pinnacle of good taste. They felt if our buildings looked more European it would show we were the equal of the great societies and cultures of history.

Europe had castles and great buildings for hundreds of years but in America people who grew up here had never seen anything like this.

There were a few young architects at the time such as Frank Lloyd Wright who wanted to create a new American architecture and he did have a hand in designing a portion of the Wilson elevated terminal that reflected a bit of his developing idea of a prairie style, but that part of the station has been demolished and lost to time.

**PRAIRIE STYLE ARCHITECTURE NOTE:**

We won't explore these now but Uptown Chicago has some great examples of Prairie-style architecture, though none directly designed by Frank Lloyd Wright himself. The Hutchinson Street Historic District is a hidden gem featuring Prairie-style homes designed by architects influenced by Wright. Some notable examples include:

- William H. Powell House – 757 W Hutchinson St, Chicago, IL 60613
- House at 808 West Hutchinson – 808 W Hutchinson St, Chicago, IL 60613
- Claude Seymour House – 817 W Hutchinson St, Chicago, IL 60613
- William Lake House – 826 W Hutchinson St, Chicago, IL 60613
- George Brakebush House – 839 W Hutchinson St, Chicago, IL 60613

These homes showcase the Prairie School aesthetic, with horizontal lines, natural materials, and

Chicago was the major center for the manufacture and production of terra cotta from the 1870s through the 1930s and, as a result, the material was used frequently throughout the city as a cladding material.

As we take our walk look for the terra cotta ornaments used throughout the area, fabricated in various colors and finishes, ranging from red and buff matte finishes to multicolored enamel glazes.

Also look at the brick. Much of Chicago is built from Chicago Common bricks, seen mostly on the sides and backs of buildings. They were called common because they were rougher and considered not pretty enough to be used on the street facing facade of the building. They're made from the clay dug from the Chicago River and are full of lime, iron, and tons of little stones and organic particle that create colored in spots called flashpoints, where the bricks touched in the kilns and melted or ignited the bits of material.

Brick and limestone are heavy materials that are fire resistant and portrayed a sense of permanence. They designers and builders were not just building for today they were building monuments that would last into the future, and to a great degree they achieved that goal because here we are 100 years later still using and admiring these buildings.

The years 1900 to 1930 was the largest building boom in Uptown but many newer buildings utilizing more glass and steel have been added and we will see some of those as we explore.

In the years following World War II (1945 to present) the city expanded further. The growth of new suburbs offered relatively inexpensive new homes in a less crowded environment, so a large number of residents abandoned the city.

### **Think about it.**

The Uptown area was developed because it was a suburb of the original older part of the city. It seems it was a natural progression for many people to seek more open land and escape the densely populated areas. Why do you think people wanted to get out of over crowded areas? What role do you think things like air pollution, sanitation, crime and air-conditioning, family growth, population age and job opportunities had to do with this choice to leave the city? Today people seem to be moving back into the city. Why do you think this is a growing trend?

Apartments that were popular in the 1920 and 1930 now abandoned, provided a large number of inexpensive housing units that was affordable and more accessible for recent migrants from the south and immigrants arriving from other countries.

During the 1950s and 1960s, tens of thousands of young Indigenous American Indians—some of whom were descendants of families removed from Chicago in the 1833 Indian removal—along with white Appalachians from rural areas across the country, migrated to Uptown in search of jobs and better opportunities. At the same time, African Americans, many of whom had come north as part of the Great Migration, also settled in Uptown, seeking economic opportunities and escaping racial discrimination in the South. This trend continued through the 1970s and 1980s, as Uptown became home to a diverse influx of immigrants and refugees, including Cubans, Hispanics, Africans, Koreans, Vietnamese, Cambodians, and people from the Middle East.

As a result of this changing demographic residents, business owners, community organizers and public officials all sought to protect the unique character and diversity of the area. Many organizations like South-East Asia Center were established to help immigrant families navigate a new culture in their new home.

We will take a cross-cultural artistic and historical walking tour of Broadway because it is the main street in Uptown. This is a great chance to see—up close—the places and ideas we’ve talked about.

As you walk, think about how art and architecture tell a story. Every building was created by someone with a vision, who made choices—like the design, color, and size—that affect how we experience them. What feelings do they give you? What ideas do they express?

Even though we will be seeing a lot, Uptown has so much more to explore. In the days and years ahead, pay attention to the world around you. Notice the different building styles and ask yourself: Why does it look this way? What is it used for? Was it built for function, style, or both? Do you like it? How would you change it?

By the end of this tour, I hope you see that Uptown is a special place—full of people from many backgrounds, all shaping the neighborhood in their own way. Some have made big, bold contributions, while others have added smaller, but meaningful, touches.

After today, I hope you’ll enjoy your neighborhood even more and walk with fresh eyes—seeing the buildings, the art, and the history all around you. When you walk through Uptown, you’re traveling the world, and through time!



## **Begin walking tour**

### **1. Start at 1108 Foster Ave**

This houses two of the South-East Asia Center Bridge International School's classrooms.

The area now known as Uptown and parts of Edgewater has transformed over the decades, from Native American trails to a bustling entertainment and business district.

North Broadway was originally an ancient Native American trail—part of a broader network of indigenous pathways that crisscrossed the region long before European settlement.

### **Broadway and Foster - The Native Trail Origins**

Before it was called Broadway, this road was part of a trail used by indigenous native Americans who lived here, using this as a path for travel between what is now southern Wisconsin and northern Indiana.

As we walk, imagine how this land looked hundreds of years ago—before roads, cars, and buildings.

The trail generally followed the shoreline of Lake Michigan, curving northward and inland at points to avoid marshes and lowlands. During this period this area to the east would have been sand dunes and marshy area with the Lake visible at about Kenmore or Marine drive.

### **Transformation into Broadway**

As Chicago expanded many indigenous trails were formalized into city streets. The stretch that became Broadway was first known as Evanston Avenue.

Unlike most north-south streets in Chicago that follow a strict grid, Broadway curves gently northeast, reflecting its origins as a footpath shaped by the land, not by surveyors.

### **2. The Historic "Tied House" (5120 N. Broadway)**



This is an official city landmark and one of our own South-East Asia Center buildings that was originally built in 1904 as a Schlitz Brewery-Tied House. Part of a system where breweries owned taverns that sold their beer exclusively. Look for the Schlitz's globe insignia near the roof. Silent film stars like Charlie Chaplin were known to eat here when Essanay Studios was active nearby.

Its German Renaissance Revival design features abundant ornamentation, including sculpted details like molded or carved elements around windows and doors and often featured decorative details and leaded glass windows with vibrant colors. Brick and stone are common materials as well as half-timbered designs, which were also common, especially for townhouses and rural structures.

Leaded glass was decorative but was practical because making big sheets of glasslike we have now were expensive and difficult to make. It is easier to repair or replace a small piece of glass instead of a whole window if one gets broken.

Later as the ethnicity of the neighborhood changed it was a Japanese Restaurant then Thai Restaurant until it was purchased by SEAC around 1995.

We'll learn a little more about the changing ethnicity and this area's Asian roots when we visit Argyle Street.

*[For the record the new buildings on the east side of the street are examples of Contemporary architecture build in the last 10 years or so that borrow modernist ideas like we will see at Truman College but newer buildings are likely to be aware of the environmental concerns and incorporate more use of technology and sustainable materials.]*

**2.2. Essanay Studios (1345 W. Argyle St.) [WE MIGHT SKIP THIS. The sign is interesting but it adds almost 4 blocks of walking there and back. So can talk about it from the corner and encourage them to explore on their own sometime.]**

Founded in 1907, Essanay was one of the first film studios in America. It produced silent films, including Charlie Chaplin's "The Tramp" one of the most popular movies of the time. Imagine famous actors rehearsing scenes right here, shaping the future of Hollywood!

Chaplin was born in 1889 and was one of the most famous movie actors of the silent film era. Chicago was a major influence during the silent film era and the Uptown and Edgewater neighborhoods were the very epicenter of this new technology.

### **3. Post Office at 4850 N. Broadway.**



An example of Modern Architecture that prioritizes function and efficiency. Clean and uncluttered. Geometric shapes and straight lines. Use of glass concrete and marble. Look at the eagles. Do they look like real eagles or do they look more like a more simplified idea of what an eagle might look like. Think about how this compares to the various Baroque styles we have seen and will see?

Built in 1939 the interior features murals by , completed in 1943 as part of the [New Deal Art Projects](#), depict "Carl Sandburg and Louis Sullivan" and celebrate agriculture and poetry.

Look for the corner stone with date.

The two glazed ceramic tile murals painted by Henry Varnum Poor celebrate two of Chicago's cultural icons, "Carl Sandburg - Poet" and "Louis Sullivan - Architect."

The Sullivan mural shows iron-workers and factories, with Louis Sullivan holding a model of his Carson Pirie Scott & Co. building. The legend reads "Out of the wealth and needs of Industry came a new architecture." The other mural shows Sandburg in a rural setting holding a guitar; The legend is: "From the sun and the fruits of the black soil poetry and song sprang."

This artwork was commissioned as part of a relief program for unemployed artists as part of FDR's New Deal. From that arose the Section of Fine Arts, which sponsored Post Office murals across the country.

The Post Office was chosen as a place to display art to the public because not everyone can afford to visit a museum, but post offices are available to all.

Like some the banks we will see. Post offices in this period were designed to look powerful and safe.

Look around the lobby of the post office and let's compare it later to the lobby in the bank building.



#### 4. Uptown Theater (4816 N. Broadway)

Built in 1925, this Spanish Baroque Revival theater featuring very tall narrow columns with curved arches and geometrical patterns that are reminiscent of Islamic art and architecture.

This was once the largest movie palace in the U.S. seating over 4,000 people. The luxurious, six-story grand lobby feels like you are entering a palace. It hosted silent films, live vaudeville acts, and popular concerts.

*Fun fact:* The interior was used in "Home Alone 2" to represent Duncan's Toy Chest! Though closed today, restoration efforts aim to bring it back to life.



#### 5. The Green Mill (4802 N. Broadway)

When it opened in 1907 this was on the outskirts of Chicago. At that time and originally had a huge green windmill on the roof. It also was another popular hangout for the actors from Essanay Studios.

There was outdoor seating area that got sold in the 1920s to make way for the Uptown Theater. Next door. Its distinctive neon sign seems like the little brother or little sister to the big theaters in the area trying to grab everyone's attention.





#### **6. Colored Wheel Sculpture (Broadway & Lawrence)**

A multicolored ring-shaped sculpture erected in 2019 designed by African American artist Lowell Thompson to represent Chicago's diversity.

The artist said, "When I moved to Uptown in 2005, I was immediately surprised by its colors. I loved the variety of humanity I saw. Unlike many Chicago neighborhoods, ... Uptown was the whole human spectrum...all in one place. Uptown's Colored Wheel captures and celebrates the beauty of this infinite palette of people and gives the rest of Chicago and America a vision of full-color future for which to strive".

*If you were to draw a picture or make a sculpture, how would you depict or represent the cross-cultural diversity you experience living in Uptown.*





### 7. Riviera Theater

Built in 1917 the theater seats 2500 people. Example of French Renaissance Revival. Still decorative but simpler than the very ornate Baroque style of the Uptown. Look at the orderly repeating arches and simple geometric form. Also see how the red brick acts a background color to let the white window and decorative trim stand out.



### 8. 4758 N. Racine - Bank Building

Built as the Sheridan Trust and Savings Bank in 1915. Notice that though the building is small it looks huge with its sturdy construction large arched windows, tall columns and fancy terra cotta ornaments. The fact that it is at the end of a small triangle with two streets on either side gives the illusion that this Bank is much bigger than it really is. It looks like it takes up a whole city block. In those days banks wanted to project a feeling that this was a safe place to keep your money. This is a powerful little building.

How does this compare to the newer Bank of America location? Today banks want to appear more friendly and approachable.

### **9. Clifton Avenue Street Art Gallery 4600 Block of Clifton -**

A vibrant collection of murals showcasing Uptown's diverse history and culture. Kids will love spotting different artistic styles.

### **10. Truman College**

Named in honor of Harry S. Truman, the 33rd President of the United States. Point it out across the street and note the modern glass and steel elements. The buildings primarily feature a modernist architectural style, characterized by clean lines, functional design, and the use of modern materials like glass, steel and concrete. Designed by African American architect John Moutoussamy, who studied under Mies van der Rohe at IIT (another Chicago college)

### **10. Wilson Train stop**

Originally built in 1900, this station helped Uptown grow into a busy neighborhood it became by connecting the central downtown and older part of the city with this new area of growth.

This grand Beaux-Arts station built in 1923, was designed with fancy decorations, including floral garlands and a clock as a kind of entry way in and out of the area. It signaled you were someplace special.

Over time, parts of the original station were removed, but a recent \$200 million renovation restored many historic elements while modernizing the transit hub.

Can you spot some of the older and newer elements?



### **11. Uptown Broadway Building 4709 N. Broadway**

Built in 1927, features an intricately ornamented, blue, grey, yellow and cream-colored terra cotta facade. Its Spanish Baroque Revival-style design is similar to its equally well-dressed neighbors, the Uptown Theater and Aragon Ballroom.





## 12. Bridgeview Bank Building (4753 N. Broadway)

Originally constructed in the 1920s as The Sheridan Trust and Savings Bank Building, featuring grand columns and intricate stonework. It is a 12-story terra cotta clad building featuring designs popular with the emerging art deco style that uses more simple geometric shapes with a few ornamental designs inspired by nature. It does not have all of the fancy revival elements seen in many of the other buildings.

The curved corner makes it look like a huge ship sailing into the intersection. This again provided a sense of security that you could trust this bank to keep your money and investments safe and secure.

Note the repeated roof lines. This is partly because the last

four floors at the top of the building were added four years after the initial construction. It was designed that way in case they wanted to expand the building which they did.

Peek inside to enjoy the massive lobby and ornate ceiling. Though this is currently used a remote work space take a look at the teller cages that have been retained from the original bank design.

***[Note a few strip malls along the way. These are examples of architecture from the past 50 years. In the 1980s they started to become more popular as shopping trends shifted from foot traffic toward automobile traffic. In other words, people were more likely to drive to the store rather than walk. Also national retailers wanted a more consistent look to their stores no matter where they were placed in the country.]***





**13. Argyle Street** to Kenmore, then back north to Foster

Argyle Street is known for its overall Asian influence originally Chinese including specifically more Vietnamese of Chinese descent and other Southeast Asian and Asian immigrants. Their businesses and decor add another layer to Uptown's rich cultural history.

In the early 1900s, Argyle Street had stores owned by Jewish families. But by the 1960s and 1970s, Japanese-

American business owners began to open restaurants and shops in the area. A Chinese businessman named Jimmy Wong, had an idea for a northside Chinatown much like the predominantly Chinese neighborhood on the southside. He and his friends bought a lot of the buildings near the train station and started renting them to new shop owners.

In 1975, after the Vietnam War, many people from Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and Laos moved to Uptown. They started opening restaurants, grocery stores, and bakeries. One man, Charlie Soo, worked hard to make Argyle Street even better. In 1979, he convinced the city to rebuild the Argyle train station with a Chinese-style pagoda roof to honor the neighborhood's Asian roots. That has been removed as part of the recent renovation and it is unclear how the future station will look.

Now, Argyle Street is known as *Little Saigon* or more officially as "*Asia on Argyle*," and is a great place to try Southeast Asian food, visit cool shops, and see murals that celebrate the neighborhood's history.

Every year, the community features fun events like the Lunar New Year Parade and the Argyle Night Market to celebrate the culture of the local people.

Most of the ethnic ambience is provided by signage on the stores and not much from the architecture. Many of the buildings have been either replaced or renovated to have a simpler more modern look.

You might notice the pagoda style decorations added to Furama Restaurant and Tai Nam Market nearby.

Brick pavers were put in on the street and sidewalk to give the area a more distinctive and unified look. The idea was to try and tie the whole street together so that it looked like one big shopping mall or shopping area.

[Walking along Kenmore brings us back to our starting point.]

#### **14. Goudy School**

Goudy School has been part of the Uptown neighborhood for a long time! It was named after William C. Goudy, a lawyer who was the first president of the Chicago Bar Association.

The school building was constructed in 1937, during a time when many schools in Chicago were built using brick to make them strong and long-lasting.

By 2005, the school got a new wing, adding a computer lab, science lab, library, lunchroom, and more classrooms. The empty concrete lot in front of the school was transformed into Campus Park, which now has a playground, running track, and Astro turf field.

Goudy is recognized as one of the most diverse schools in Chicago, with students speaking over 40 different languages. The school continues to thrive, earning the highest, Level 1+ rating for academic achievement.

#### **Final Stop: Back to 1108 Foster Ave**

The Bridge International School at South-East Asia Center offers a cross-cultural experience that includes daycare, pre-school and after-school programs.

The theme Understanding the World Around Us aims to connect people and cultures by understanding and celebrating commonalities.

We aim to do this by

*Promoting a Broader Global View* by understanding the effect that place, resources and natural systems have on our personal lives, communities and our global interactions.

*Promote Cross-Cultural Learning* by understanding how the limitations and opportunities related to location influences culture, conflict and alliances.

*Promote Interpersonal Relations and Self-Confidence* with humility through improved communication skills, empathy, and higher-order thinking.

*Provide practical geographical knowledge* that promotes spatial understanding of the world including how we perceive it, how we divide it, how we navigate it and what its limitations are.

In short, our Bridge International School uses cross-cultural learning on the community level to present a global context that advocates for world peace, promotes harmony and prepares students to apply their exceptional interpersonal communication skills into their personal lives, education, and whatever employment they pursue.

[Did this walk accomplish some of those goals?]

###

## VOCABULARY WORDS

**Indigenous** – People or things that originally come from a place.

**Revival Styles** – Architectural designs that bring back older styles

**Terra Cotta** – A type of baked clay used for building decorations, often reddish-brown in color.

**Limestone** – A soft, light-colored rock used in buildings and sculptures.

**Facade** – The front of a building, often designed to look impressive.

**Architecture** – The art and science of designing buildings and structures.

**Architectural** – Related to the design and style of buildings.

**Architect** – A person who designs buildings and helps plan how they are built.

**Fabricated** – Made or put together, often using different materials.

**Appalachian** – Related to the Appalachian Mountains, which stretch across the eastern U.S.

**Demographic** – A group of people with shared characteristics, like age or background.

**Migrant** – A person who moves from one place to another, often for work.

**Immigrant** – A person who moves to a new country to live there permanently.

**Grid** – A pattern of straight lines that cross each other, like city streets arranged in squares.

**Baroque** – A fancy and decorative style of art and architecture from the 1600s.

**Renaissance** – A time of great learning and creativity in Europe, especially in art and science, from the 1400s to the 1600s.

**Vaudeville** – A type of entertainment from the early 1900s with comedy, music, and acting.

**Beaux-Arts** – A grand and detailed style of architecture from the late 1800s, often used for important buildings.

**Art Deco** – A stylish and modern design from the 1920s and 1930s, with bold shapes and bright colors.

**Hispanic** - Refers to people who come from or have ancestors from Spanish-speaking countries, Latin America and Spain. Also used to describe individuals with cultural ties to Spanish speaking communities.

**Landmark** - A special place or object that helps people recognize where they are. It can be a natural feature like a mountain or river, or a man-made structure like a famous building or statue.

### People Mentioned

(look up their Wikipedia page or do further research on who they are)

Charlie Chaplin - Movie actor

Frank Lloyd Wright - Architect

Carl Sandburg - Poet

Louis Sullivan - Architect

Lowell Thompson - Artist

Henry Varnum Poor - Artist

John Moutoussamy - Architect

Mies van der Rohe - Architect

Harry S. Truman - President

William C. Goudy - Lawyer

### Geographic Places Mentioned

(find these places on a map or globe and see how far they are from Chicago)

Germany

Spain

France

Sweden

Cuba

Africa

Korea

Vietnam

Cambodia

Latin America

Middle East

Appalachia

Southern United States



