

Historic Preservation Commission

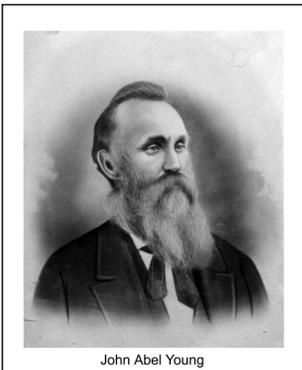
Property of the Season – Winter 2012

205 South Main Street



Home of Mrs. Margaret Young Feb 7, 1912 Photo: Dwight S. Young

The “Hardhead” house located at 205 South Main Street is the Oswego Historic Preservation Commission’s Winter Property of the Season. This recently renovated home was built in the shingle style popular in the late 19th century, and includes several interesting architectural items, including one unique feature - its “eyebrow” window protruding through the roofline on the north side of the home. Other notable architectural details include two oriel windows on the front and side of the home, a tower column anchoring the south edge of the structure, and a large hardhead stone porch.



John Abel Young

Built in 1897 for John and Margaret Philip(s) Young, the home was constructed of rounded boulders called hardheads, pulled locally from the DuPage River. The lot, originally platted by Lewis Judson in 1846, was deeded to Margaret Philip(s) in 1868 by James C. Shepard. The Philip(s) family was one of the early settlers to the area. Margaret was born October 10, 1833 in Sullivan County, New York and arrived with her family in 1838 at the age of five. Her father originally settled in Kane County for a short time before moving the family to Kendall County. Margaret’s

father William lived with her and John for several years before his death in 1884.

John and Margaret were married in May of 1853, and went on to have eight children. The two youngest daughters died at a young age. The oldest daughter, Helen, moved to Davenport, Iowa after her marriage, but the other surviving five children remained in the Kendall County area, where John and Margaret’s descendants still live today.

John Young was a successful blacksmith in town known for his horseshoes. As his business expanded, John brought in his sons as partners and together they built a new shop at the corner of Madison and Tyler Streets in 1880. In July 1885, a severe lightning storm

caused minor damage to exterior boards and window casings. The storm even knocked the four horses inside to their knees as they were waiting to be shod. The proprietors were dazed by the strike, but luckily no one was injured. The business continued to thrive throughout the years and after John’s death a feed mill was added. It was eventually sold to Charles Weber in September, 1904.

John died around 1898. It is unclear whether the home was finished before or after his death. A newspaper account in the Kendall County Record from October 1897 states the “John Young residence will be the most unique and attract the most attention.” Margaret, while visiting family back in New York, fell on some ice in 1894. She never fully recovered and lived in constant pain the remainder of her life. Margaret lived in the home with her son Lester until the time of her death, July 30, 1922 at the age of 88.

The house remained in the Young family until 1924. The home transferred hands a few more times eventually falling into disrepair. The current owners, Bruce and Donna Stanley, bought the home in 2008 and spent the last three years meticulously renovating the home from the inside-out, returning it to its 19th Century grandeur, but including 21st Century necessities.



The home originally boasted an urban barn that sat down a steep slope on the north side of the home, and was used for storing a horse and carriage. That steep slope near the Young’s property was very popular in winter months, often being pressed into service as the local toboggan hill. The Kendall County Record in February 1887 proclaimed, “Tobogganing was the rage last week; there was quite a good natural slide down Benton Street from John Young’s and crowds of old and young would gather there to engage in the fun or at least witness it.”

(All historic photos courtesy of the Little White School Museum) ❖

