

<http://www.chicagoimagegate.com>

W

oodlawn

A mostly residential area on the South Side, [Woodlawn](#) is a little less affluent than Hyde Park, its northerly neighbor. However, Woodlawn has a pleasant lakefront within Jackson Park, with a marina, lagoons, an island, and a golf course. This was the site of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and is the "walk around and see what you can see" part of Woodlawn. The "drive around and see what you can see" bit is inland.

To access the lakefront I parked along South Promontory Drive, near [La Rabida Children's Hospital](#). From there you can walk along the rock-lined fringe of [Lake Michigan](#), and then around the yacht harbor and South Lagoon. All of this is within Jackson Park. The [harbor](#) is a popular spot for local anglers. To the south is a well kept [golf course](#). As you walk around the South Lagoon, at its northwest corner there is a surprise: "The Republic", a gilded statue that was cast in 1918, although it is based on a much larger sculpture from 1893. With hands raised skywards, the "golden lady" is supposed to symbolize progress. Continuing to walk around South Lagoon to the west, along East Hayes Drive, you arrive at a sandy beach and a large concrete bathhouse built in 1919: the Jackson Park Beach House. Returning to "The Republic", a little further to the east along East Hayes Drive there is a footpath that goes north to Wooded Island, which is surrounded by another lagoon. The northern tip of the island, with its beautiful [Japanese Garden](#), is strictly speaking in [Hyde Park](#), beyond the Woodlawn boundary. If you still have some energy, returning to East Hayes Drive you can walk further west to Stony Island Avenue which marks the inland boundary of Jackson park. A hundred yards along the avenue to the north you will find an impressive piece of vintage architecture with a neoclassical facade: [Hyde Park School](#) (presently called Hyde Park Academy) which, despite its name, really is in Woodlawn.

After exploring Jackson Park on foot, I was happy to explore the rest of Woodlawn by car, starting with South Woodlawn Avenue. Driving northwards, there are many vintage houses which are mostly in good repair, and include some nice [Victorian Greystones](#). There are also some impressive churches, the most notable being the "[Institute of Christ the King and Saint Clara School](#)" and the "[St. John Baptist Temple](#)" with its distinctive metallic dome. Further north, as you near Midway Plaisance at the northern boundary, you begin to penetrate into the University of Chicago campus, or at least its overflow from Hyde Park into Woodlawn.

After exploring South Woodlawn Avenue I drove up and down the various parallel streets, which are mostly more-of-the-same vintage residential roads. At some point on this snake-like journey I drove along 64th Street, and past the [Mount Carmel High School](#) (formerly St. Cyril High School). The main building dates from 1924, and is a good example of school architecture from this period. Driving further along 64th street I came to Cottage Grove Avenue. There is an impressively ornate nineteen-twenties style corner shop at the intersection of 64th Street and [Cottage Grove Avenue](#), and some interesting [vintage commercial architecture](#) along the avenue between 64th Street and the Cottage Grove EL Station at 63rd Street.

Finally, as I drove around the various back streets I noted quite a few open wasteland areas in Woodlawn that perhaps formerly had houses on them, but no longer. It would be interesting to return in a few decades to see if these areas grow, or perhaps contract as Hyde Park affluence expands south.

Copyright 2010 Steve Geer. All Rights Reserved. Disclaimer: The views expressed in this article represent the impressions of the author at the time of his visit. The author accepts no liability for the accuracy of these views.