

FREDERICK AND CHARLES WACKER OF 1838 LINCOLN PARK WEST (FORMERLY 714 FRANKLIN, 714 NORTH PARK)

1838 N. Lincoln Park West was home to an early prominent Chicago brewer named Frederick Wacker. Born in Wurtemberg, Germany in 1830, Wacker emigrated to America as a “48’er” or one of many seeking religious freedom and economic opportunity. In 1854 after three years out East, he arrived in Chicago when he was 24 years old. The next year Wacker married Katerina Hummel, also from Wurtemberg. They had their only child, Charles, in 1856.

Wacker had apprenticed and completed brewery training in Germany, but in Chicago he initially worked in a hotel and then he rented a farm. Shortly he returned to his brewing interest and began partnering with others involved in producing beer.

Rapidly becoming a successful brew master, Wacker moved his family to 714 Franklin (today’s 1838 Lincoln Park West) in about 1870. The next year their home burned during the 1871 Fire, but by 1874 the Wackers rebuilt a fanciful, brick and frame, Swiss-chalet style home that survives on the lot today. The family also built and owned the house to the south, 1836 Lincoln Park West.

Several of Wacker’s breweries suffered fires also, but Wacker continued. Health problems interfered and he sold his prosperous business and headed to Europe in 1876 for several years. He returned to Chicago and to the beer business in 1879. Likely the house was rented out during his lengthy absence. In the 1880 U.S. Census their Franklin Street household included the three Wackers and two boarders, one of whom was a traveling salesman.

By 1882 Wacker incorporated his flourishing Wacker & Birk Brewing and Malting Co. In 1884 Wacker died in July three months after his beloved wife Katerina passed. Their son Charles became president of the brewing company. Charles would go on to be one of the youngest directors of the 1893 Columbian Exposition and Chair of the Chicago Plan Commission for seventeen years. Chicago’s Wacker Drive is named after him.

Charles sold the family home in 1897. The Wacker house has witnessed much history through its determined, enterprising father-son owners who played significant roles in early Chicago.

Diane Gonzalez, Chicago House Histories for OTTA, revised 06/18/26