

I found your web album by the simple device of performing a Google search on Adella Knight, just on a hunch that I might find something. I have been doing research on the history of the apartment building I live in for many years, and she was key in its construction. Your album added valuable information about her early years.

The house in the album--and I agree it was probably where she grew up--is in a somewhat distant part of Chicago from where our apartment building was constructed. The apartment building is in Evanston, first suburb to the north of Chicago along Lake Michigan, and home to Northwestern University. Her house was on the South Side of Chicago, at the border between the Oakland and Kenwood communities, and also close to the Lake. I called up her address on Google Earth, and photographic views of the street at the Berkeley Avenue address given in her album (which she seems to have somehow misspelled) indicate that the house has been demolished. This is not surprising, as the Oakland community suffered during the 1950s and 1960s and much building demolition took place. But in the days of the album, it was just about at its peak. Incidentally, according to the book Streetwise Chicago, Berkeley Avenue was named after the more famous street with the same name in Boston, in gratitude to a Bostonian who apparently donated \$10,000 to Chicago after the great Fire in 1871.

In 1907 the South Side Elevated Railroad Company opened a new "E" line which terminated within about a block of the Berkeley Avenue house. Although the immediate effect was to greatly improve transportation to downtown, the ultimate effect was not entirely positive, as the original character of the neighborhood changed from single family houses and townhouses to various forms of multi-family housing. This in itself was fine, and happened many places in the city. But during the depression and World War II a significant number of the old homes were divided into apartments, sometimes without regard for proper remodeling and construction techniques. During the depression this was because fewer and fewer families could afford to maintain large homes. In World War II the reason was a very acute housing shortage. Unfortunately, for this 15 year period 1930-45, maintenance in many cases could not be kept up properly, and in this lay the seeds of the neighborhood's subsequent troubles.

But by this time, Adella Knight was long gone. In 1912--the apparent year of the album-- she was quite young, but by the early 1920s she had become an adult, and had a successful career. Information I have gathered indicates that it was in the insurance industry. She was also a member of the Christian Science Church. In 1922, she and a group of church friends bought 3 adjacent lots in Evanston and constructed a 24 apartment co-operative apartment building which was completed in 1924. It is located at 548-606 Michigan Avenue, about a block and a half from the Lake. She lived there the rest of her life, and in effect also ran the building, serving for many years as the co-operative board president, and later as its building manager. Her two sisters, Rose and Helen, lived with her. I do not know if she had other siblings. To the best of my knowledge, none of the three sisters ever married. She died in 1975, about a year before I moved in.

Her monument in the building she and her friends built, which I think is a beautiful one.

I am relatively certain that the Adella E. Knight in your album and the Adella E. Knight who built our building are the same person. First, it is not a very common first name, and the middle initial narrows the possibility of confusion even further. Second, examination of her

printing indicates that it conforms closely to documents containing her printing here at the building, especially with reference to the flat tops on her "n"s. The album appears to be written in white ink, a logical choice given the black pages. She usually used a distinctive green ink when writing here at the building.

I hope this information helps you, and if you have any other questions I would be glad to answer them if I can. Thank you very much for posting the album on the internet, which has been a wonderful thing for me to find.

Sincerely,

John McElroy