

ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: John R. Case Cherry Farm

Early in Elmhurst's history, when it was known as Cottage Hill, the town was the site of a prominent orchard. Known today as Cherry Farm Subdivision, the farm was one of the first fruit orchards in the Chicago area. In 1851, an early Chicago settler named John R. Case purchased a large piece of property on the southeast corner of St. Charles Road and York Street, stretching southwards to what is today known as South Street. Acquired in the purchase of this land was Bingham's Tavern, a teamsters stop on St. Charles Road, just east of York Street. The Case family had a general store on State Street in Chicago, but used the former tavern as a summer home until 1860, when they tired of the city and settled permanently in Cottage Hill for a farmer's life.

In the 1860s, Case's land was still a windswept prairie. He planted both a cherry orchard and an apple orchard, though the farm became renowned for its cherries. Case's son, John R. Case, Jr., mused that the apple trees likely served as a wind barrier for the cherry orchard. John, Jr. recalled that the orchard "consisted of one thousand and one trees," and was in its prime in the 1870s and 1880s:

"At blossom time it looked like a snow bank. People came from miles to see it. At cherry-picking time (kirschen pflucken) it was full of German women who came with their children and babies and spent the whole day picking at 50 cents a bushel and some made good wages. All day long the orchard resounded with the German vocabulary."



1936 illustration of Bingham's Tavern, built in the 1840s as a rest stop on St. Charles Road and acquired by Case in 1851, M2014.1.895



Cherry Farm House circa 1900, M92.11.5

John R. Case, Sr. died in 1877, leaving the orchard to his son. By the late 1880s, the cherry trees began to grow old and die, and the orchard was no longer profitable. In 1888, Case moved the old tavern house to the southwest part of his property. On the original tavern site at 174 E. St. Charles Road, he built a large estate home and named it Cherry Farm House. In 1891, Case purchased the Clover Lawn estate house, formerly known as Hill Cottage Tavern, on the corner of St. Charles Road and Cottage Hill and had it relocated to the apple orchard on his property.

He dubbed it Orchard House. Originally built in 1843 by Gerry Bates as a stagecoach stop and post office, the storied house still stands today at 413 S. York as the oldest building in Elmhurst.

This Subdivision

WE naturally think the best at Elmhurst, and we think you will say so too when you become familiar with the town. We have gone to much pains and expense to make it the BEST. We get a class of buyers who will keep up its high standing. We add new improvements each year; work is always going on to make it even better than it now is. Building lines and building restrictions on each lot give secure protection to every buyer.

ELMHURST
Is a growing village of 3000 people, 15 miles west of and 125 feet above Chicago

Four Railroads:
Aurora, Elgin & Chicago Electric
Chicago & North Western
Illinois Central (Freeport Division)
Chicago Great Western
24 to 40 minutes to city.
Commutation Monthly Ticket, \$5.70.

To See These Lots and Houses
Take Aurora-Elgin Trains leaving depot, Fifth Avenue and Jackson Boulevard, on the hour and half hour. Get off at Elmhurst, walk one block north and two blocks east to office of subdivision.

Or take C. & N. W. Railway to Elmhurst, walk south on York St. about ten minutes walk to St. Charles Road, then go one block south and two blocks east to office of subdivision.

This Property Has
Macadamized Streets
Sidewalks
Best of Water
Best of Drainage
Gas and Electricity
Trees on Every Lot
Hedges on Every Lot
New Houses, sold same as rent.

JOHN R. CASE
ROOMS 609 & 610, 115 DEARBORN STREET
TELEPHONE CENTRAL 2256
RESIDENCE, ELMHURST
ON THIS PROPERTY

This plot shows only the western part of the Cherry Farm addition — *about one third of the whole addition*

The Case family lived at Cherry Farm House until 1904, at which point the family left Elmhurst for California and began selling off lots on the cherry farm property. In 1907, Case laid out streets and sidewalks on his old Elmhurst land and created the Cherry Farm Addition to Elmhurst. The development was the first planned subdivision in Elmhurst, and contains several of Elmhurst's most historic homes.

At the time of John R. Case, Jr.'s written reminiscences in the late 1930s, there were still apple trees standing from the original orchard, but the old tavern and estate home from Cherry Farm had long since been demolished. The last building left from the Cherry Farm days, a brick house that had been the home of a tenant farmer at 384 S. Hill, was demolished in 2019.

Cherry Farm Subdivision advertisement
circa 1907, M2014.1.513

By Daniel Lund, Elmhurst History Museum Staff, September 2021