

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



MUDDY WATERS HOUSE 4339 SOUTH LAKE PARK AVENUE

Final Landmark Recommendation

Adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks on August 5, 2021



CITY OF CHICAGO
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

Cover Photos: Left, the home circa 2013. Upper right, Muddy Waters in the living room, 1964; Lower right, the front of the home, 1964. (Black and white photos by Raeburn Flerlage, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, ICHi-113354 and ICHi-113346.)

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

Building History before Muddy Waters 2

North Kenwood Community History 2

Muddy Waters—A Life in the Blues 5

The Blues Had a Baby and They Named It Rock and Roll 14

Success Brings Home Ownership 17

The First “House of Blues” 18

Muddy Waters Takes on Home Improvement 21

Criteria For Designation 25

Significant Historical and Architectural Features 28

Selected Bibliography 30

MUDDY WATERS HOUSE

4339 SOUTH LAKE PARK AVENUE

BUILT: 1891

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1954-1973

ARCHITECT: UNKNOWN

Introduction

Blues musician McKinley Morganfield (1913-1983), better known as "Muddy Waters," was born in rural Mississippi, the son of a sharecropper. Muddy Waters's migration from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago in the middle of the twentieth century mirrored the journey of many African Americans who left their homes to flee the Jim Crow South and to find better opportunities in northern urban centers. They brought with them their culture and traditions which enriched their newfound homes. When Muddy Waters and his contemporaries' musical heritage took root in Chicago and was amplified so it could be heard in its louder urban setting, the Chicago Blues that emerged sent the heartbeat of America's culture around the world.

The Chicago Blues, captured and marketed beyond the live venues of Chicago by independent record companies such as Chess Records by the late 1940s, initially appealed to a mostly African American audience. By the late 1950s, a burgeoning folk music revival allowed the same blues artists access to a more diverse and larger audience in the United States and abroad, giving international exposure to artists such as Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, and Sonny Boy Williamson II (aka Rice Miller). These artists influenced the sound of rock and roll as it emerged in mainstream culture in the 1950s and 1960s, as acknowledged by rock legends like Chuck Berry, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, and countless others. The Chess Records Office and Studio at 2120 South Michigan Avenue, the company's first location to include administration, distribution, and recording capabilities all in a single location, was designated a Chicago Landmark in 1990.

Muddy Waters was one of the most important figures in the development of the distinctive urbanized sound that came to be known as the Chicago Blues and is considered by many to be the "Father of Chicago Blues." Waters recorded with Chicago's Chess Records, first known as the Aristocrat label, from 1947 through 1975. Early work was released as singles and sixteen of these became hit *Billboard* R & B Chart singles (ranked in the top 20). They featured both originals and traditional songs Waters had re-worked including "I Feel Like Going Home" from 1948, "She Moves Me" from 1952, and "Mannish Boy" from 1955 as well as songs penned by fellow Chess Records performer Willie Dixon such as "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man" and "Just Make Love to Me," both from 1954. Later work was released on albums, five of which

would make the *Billboard* Top 200 from 1969 to 1981. During his lifetime, his music was recognized with six Grammys and he was an inaugural inductee of the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame in 1980. He was posthumously inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987 and chosen for the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992. Releases of his studio work and live performances continue to rank in the Top 20 of *Billboard's* U.S. Blues charts in the millennium following his time on earth.

One of the rare blues artists to have achieved a level of financial security from his craft by 1954, Muddy Waters moved into the two-flat at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue and took ownership of the home by 1956. It was the only residence the musician ever owned in the city of Chicago and became an unofficial center of artistic activity for blues musicians until he moved to the suburbs in 1973. The building was a home for him and his family as well as a place of business where rehearsals were held. Rental units on the second floor provided convenient lodging for musicians and a source of income. To the larger blues community, it was also a place of hospitality, open to those who needed a bite to eat or a place to stay.

When Waters took up residence at 4339 South Lake Park, the building appeared much as it had since its construction in 1891. In his last years there, he modernized the home, remodeling the interior while updating the exterior with work including construction of a new front porch and re-cladding of the bay window. Decades after his departure, the fundamental changes he made remain.

Building History before Muddy Waters

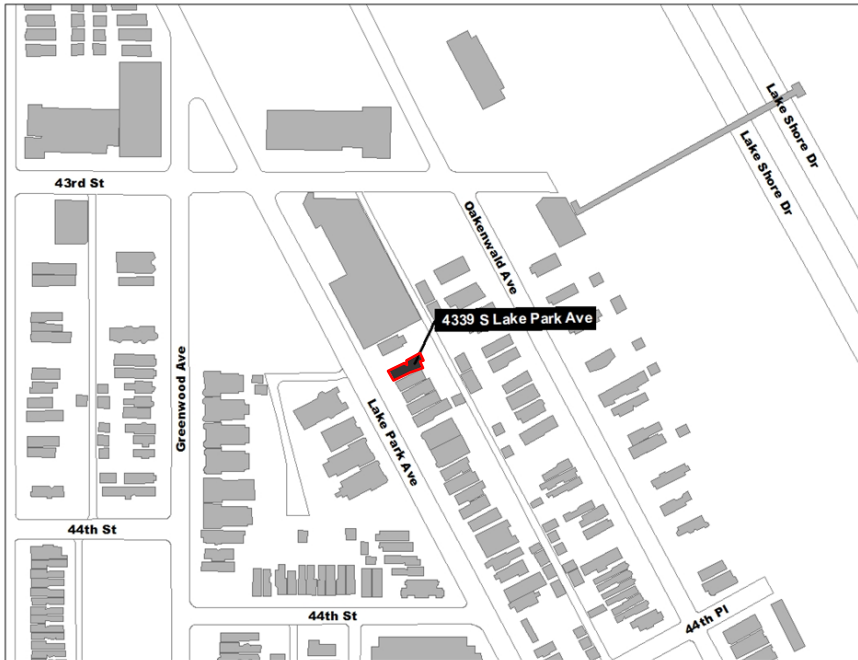
Land for the home was sold to Alex Lowden in 1885. Although much of the block had been built upon, the lot for 4339 South Lake Park Avenue was still vacant in Volume 1 of the 1890 *Rascher's Atlas of the North End of Hyde Park*. A permit was issued on the last day of that year to Mr. Lowden's wife to build a 21' x 56' x 18' two-story flats structure, and the brick "dwelling" (a residential building occupied by not more than two families) is visible on the 1891 *Rascher's Atlas of Chicago*.

The 1895 and 1925 *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps* show the same footprint for the dwelling with a detached, one-story, auto garage added at the rear of the lot in the later map. Through these years the property passed through the hands of several owners and in 1945 was sold to Dionisos Giftakis and wife. Muddy Waters moved into the home in February of 1954 and payments made by 1956 allowed ownership to be transferred via a warranty deed to him and his wife Geneva in joint tenancy in February of that year.

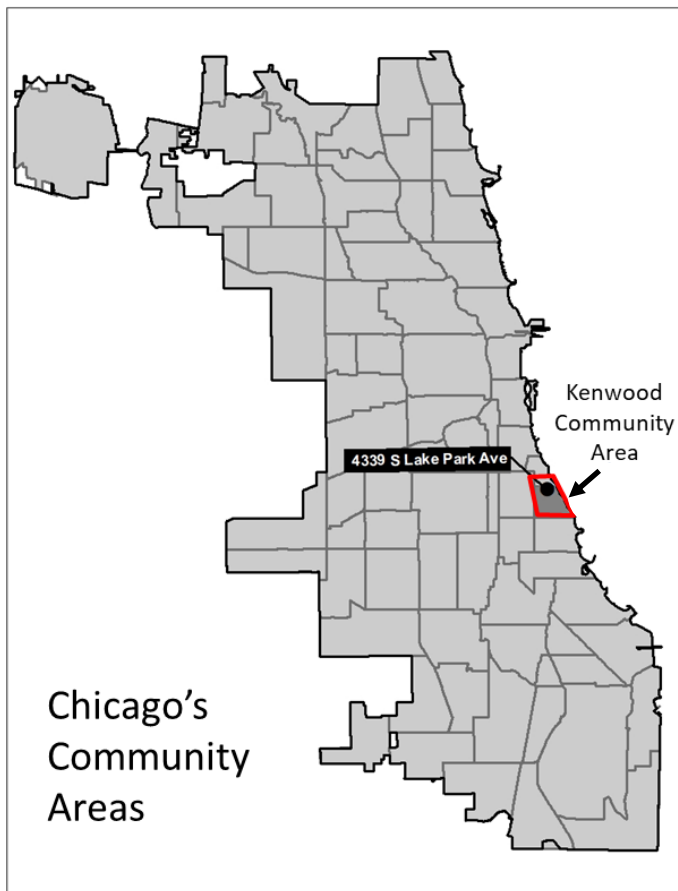
North Kenwood Community History

The Kenwood Community Area's boundaries are 43rd Street, 51st Street, Cottage Grove Avenue, and Lake Michigan. North Kenwood is the portion north of 47th Street. Immediately following World War II, a shortage of housing and federally mandated rent control encouraged owners within North Kenwood to create new units within existing properties, often doubling the number of apartments. African Americans migrating from the South in search of job opportunities provided by the city's industrial base also began to settle in North Kenwood at this

Building Location Maps



The Muddy Waters House, outlined in red, is located south of 43rd Street between Oakenwald and Greenwood Avenues in the North Kenwood neighborhood.



The Kenwood Community Area, outlined in red, is located at the eastern edge of Chicago's South Side.

time. “Racial covenants”—legally recorded documents that prohibited the ownership of property by Blacks—were much deployed and were one of the methods that had kept Chicago’s African American population largely confined to small tracts within the South and West sides of the city, often in older, substandard housing. However, with the determination of their illegality by the United States Supreme Court in 1948, neighborhood property soon changed hands as quickly departing white owners sold to new Black purchasers.

By 1950, African Americans were estimated to comprise about one-third of North Kenwood’s population. This settlement pattern continued into the 1950s such that by the census of 1960, ninety-seven percent of Kenwood’s population north of 47th Street was African American. The scale of the influx of new residents was dramatic with a sixteen percent increase in the total number of people living there despite the exodus of a significant number of residents of European and Jewish descent.

The increasing population put an enormous strain on the existing housing stock, resulting in the further conversion of buildings that had in many cases already seen their living spaces subdivided. Buildings originally designed as homes for single families were pressed into service as shelter for as many as six or eight extended families. Apartment buildings became similarly overcrowded, and an infrastructure that was built to support a few thousand people was forced to serve many times that number. With access to capital for African Americans blocked by longstanding inequities in American banking and real estate systems, and the continuance of racist practices which resulted in limited employment opportunities, residents and owners did not have the means to reverse the trend. Deterioration of all types of built resources, from shelter to infrastructure, continued.

After the closing of the Kenwood branch of the elevated line in 1958, and with the deterioration and consequential loss of significant portions of the housing stock, the population in North Kenwood decreased steadily after 1960. Less than half the number of housing units counted in North Kenwood during the census of 1960 were found to exist in the 1980 census. Over the following decades, economic disinvestment in the community due to, among other things, population migration and insensitive urban renewal projects resulted in further loss of older building stock and left vast areas of land vacant. In spite of these problems, however, many of the surviving structures retained a significant degree of their original designs and fabric, standing as a testament to the work of committed owners and residents who made a substantial effort to preserve a sense of community.

The city’s Commission on Chicago Landmarks staff identified surviving structures retaining an exceptionally high degree of integrity. The geographically dispersed structures of historic importance in North Kenwood were viewed as a whole in terms of their connected history and in 1992 the Commission designated the North Kenwood Multiple Resource District as a Chicago Landmark. Information on the earlier development of the neighborhood from its first European settlers through the middle of the twentieth century can be found in the staff report for the district.

The Muddy Waters House at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue was included in this district that aimed to protect the extant historic fabric of North Kenwood. However, the district’s period of significance is primarily focused on the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. While 4339 South Lake Park Avenue was built during this time, it is the period when Muddy Waters lived there that is the focus of this report.

Muddy Waters—A Life in the Blues

Muddy Waters would tell people he was born in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, in 1915, but 1940 census records and early legal documents put his birth year at 1913 and his birthplace at rural Issaquena County, Mississippi, several miles west of Rolling Fork, the nearest town. He was named McKinley Morganfield. His father, Ollie Morganfield, made a living as a sharecropper and played guitar on weekends. His mother, Berta Grant, died when Waters was just a few years old. The young McKinley Morganfield went to live with his grandmother, Della Grant, who would raise him. She is purported to have given him the nickname Muddy due to his "muddying" for fish in a creek at a very young age. Eventually he became known as Muddy Water. Muddy began picking cotton at the age of eight. He was only able to attend three years of school before he began farming full-time and became a sharecropper on the Stovall Plantation located eight miles northwest of Clarksdale, Mississippi, near the Arkansas border.

Music was a significant element of the cultural traditions of African Americans in the Southern United States and many people sang or played an instrument or both. Communities came together in the churches that were central to their way of life and music was part of that ritual as well. Waters attended church every Sunday and absorbed the sounds and rhythms he heard there.

He also sought out new music. When a woman who lived across the field acquired a phonograph, young Waters visited as frequently as he could, playing disc after disc of all types of popular music. His first serious musical instrument was the harmonica, but he switched to guitar in his teens. It was on the strength of his singing, however, that he began to perform with other musicians and develop his talents:

“They taken me around ‘cause from a young kid up I could sing, you know. We had a lot of little dance things we’d do, you know, but then we’d get down and play those flatfoot blues and that’s when I’d come in with my singing, you know. I made up a lot of songs myself just out of the blue sky, you know, a whole lot of songs—then I’d pinch off of some other songs I heard and all that.”

Largely a self-taught musician who learned by observation and from recordings, he travelled whenever possible to hear other performers. He studied Son House’s fingerwork to learn the slide guitar technique. He was charmed by the guitar acrobatics of Charlie Patton. Once he even saw the legendary Robert Johnson playing on the street in a nearby town but was overwhelmed by the power of his playing and the audience’s wild reactions.

Waters bought his first guitar when he was seventeen and learned to play it in a distinctive "bottleneck" style that became his trademark, using a slide to produce a smooth ringing tone. Waters became an in-demand musician as his drive for success compelled him forward:

“I had it in my mind even then to either play music or preach or do something that I would be known, that people would know me. I kept that on my mind. I wanted to be a known person. All of my life. That’s what I worked for. I wanted to be internationally known. And I worked on it, from when I was a kid up.”

When he was nineteen, Waters married his girlfriend Mabel Berry, but he soon followed in the unencumbered footsteps of the musicians he admired. As his cousin Elve Morganfield put it,



Muddy Waters with 78 rpm record, ca. 1942. Biographer Robert Gordon suggests this is the earliest known photograph of Waters, probably taken in Memphis in 1942. Likely he is holding a copy of his Fisk-Library of Congress recording. (Courtesy of the Estate of McKinley Morganfield, accessed at <https://www.wirz.de/music/waters.htm>.)

SERIAL NUMBER 1646	1. NAME (Print) MR. KINLEY — MORGANFIELD	ORDER NUMBER 1954
2. ADDRESS (Print) <i>(None)</i> STOVALL COAHOMA, MISS.		
3. TELEPHONE Clarksdale 241	4. AGE IN YEARS 27	5. PLACE OF BIRTH Rehoboth Fork
DATE OF BIRTH Apr. 10, 1913		6. COUNTRY OF CITIZENSHIP U.S.A.
7. NAME OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS Mr. JOHNNIE HOOP		8. RELATIONSHIP OF THAT PERSON <i>(None)</i>
9. ADDRESS OF THAT PERSON <i>(None)</i> STOVALL COAHOMA, MISS.		
10. EMPLOYER'S NAME Mr. Howard Stovall		
11. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS <i>(None)</i> Stovall, Coahoma, Miss.		
I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.		
REGISTRATION CARD D. S. S. Form 1		

Waters's draft card showing 1913 as the year of birth, one of many documents which show this birth year. (Courtesy of BobCorritore.com)



Muddy Waters (right) accompanied by Henry "Son" Simms, outside Clarksdale, MS, ca. 1943. Biographer Robert Gordon discovered that music professor John Work returned to Mississippi in 1943 for photos and interviews to fill in the gaps of previous work and believes this photo is from that trip. (Courtesy of the John Wesley Work III Collection of the Center for Popular Music, Middle Tennessee State University, accessed at muddywatersofficial.com.)

“Muddy loved women. Just like any other man, you supposed to love a woman. But you ain’t supposed to have all of ‘em.”

In 1941, when music professor John Work III of Fisk University and Library of Congress researcher Alan Lomax travelled through Mississippi on a quest to capture the folk music of rural southern America, word of mouth led them to Waters. Producing from their car the equipment that allowed them to record conversations and musical performances directly onto discs, Muddy Waters (as Alan Lomax would mistakenly reference him by adding an “s” in the paperwork describing the recording) sang and played a handful of songs. Lomax returned the next year to record more songs and short interviews. When Lomax played the recordings for Waters, it was like a green light to the aspiring musician, giving him a palpable sense of what life could hold for him if he pursued his dreams. Waters later said, "But when Mr. Lomax played me the record I thought, man, this boy can sing the blues."

In 1943, not long after his second marriage, relations soured with the new manager at Stovall when Waters asked for a raise. If ever there was a time to try his luck in a new place, this was it. Waters left Mississippi, heading north to Chicago where he had family and friends. He worked factory jobs to support himself while pursuing his career in music:

“I came up to Chicago on a train. Alone. With a suitcase, one suit of clothes, and a guitar. Few weeks, couple of weeks or so, I was living on the South Side, 3656 South Calumet, about a block west of King Drive—with some school kids. We’d grown up together. Then in a couple of week I found my peoples here on the West Side. I had a bunch of cousins then—and I moved over there. Before six months time I had my own four-room apartment. Ha, ha, ha. That’s luck, man...Got a job right away. Go here Saturday morning, got a job Saturday evening. Boy, luck was with me.”

His northward migration was part of a much larger demographic trend amongst African Americans who chose to abandon the limited futures offered in a mostly rural south where Jim Crow laws institutionalized segregation, racial violence was omnipresent, and sharecropping was often the only option to make a living. This exodus had begun decades earlier around the first World War and slowed during the Depression of the 1930s. Increasing mechanization of farming spurred by federal legislation was displacing African American laborers at an increasing rate by the 1940s and the second even larger wave of the Great Migration began.

The opportunities made possible by the economic engine of wartime industries offered a level of independence and upward mobility that their southern homes could not. Median annual wages for African Americans in Chicago were almost five times the average wage they would have earned in Mississippi. Waters remembered his first Chicago job at a paper mill:

“Work there eight hours a day—I never did that before. My paycheck was forty-something bucks or fifty-something bucks a week. You got to be kiddin’, you know. Soon, I put in some overtime, worked twelve hours a day and I brought a hundred and something bring-home pay. I said ‘Goodgodamighty, look at the money I got.’ I have picked cotton all the year, chop cotton all year, and I didn’t draw a hundred dollars.”

Moving in large numbers from places like the rural Mississippi Delta to Chicago, the new settlers were confronted by customs and socio-economic situations that were unfamiliar. Like other culturally unified groups who came to Chicago, African Americans attempted to mitigate the stresses of their new surroundings through participation in activities that were familiar. Blues

music was for many a comforting tradition and helped to give voice to the feelings and frustrations they experienced in acclimating to and living in their new surroundings.

Working during the day, Waters would play house parties at night for extra money but mostly to establish his musical talent in the new city and build his reputation. Eventually he received offers to play with other musicians and began playing in the bars and clubs that dotted the South and West Sides, close to where their patrons lived. The burgeoning African American population created demand for the music they knew from home and blues musicians began to eclipse the big bands and swing combos which had dominated the clubs from the 1930s into the 1940s.

One South Side club, at 39th and Cottage Grove, was called the Macomba Lounge. Owners Leonard and Phil Chess knew the live blues and jazz music they offered drew in patrons. Always on the lookout for new business opportunities, Leonard Chess began working with a fledgling independent record label, buying the original owners out within a few years. They set up a small storefront office at 2300 East 71st Street and called their fledgling company Aristocrat Records. Early releases, recorded at rented commercial studios, included mainstream dance band music and polka, but most were of jazz and blues. Major recording companies including Columbia, RCA Victor, Okeh, and Brunswick had recorded this music starting in the 1920s but began to eliminate these lines by the 1940s so independent labels like Aristocrat were springing up to meet the demand.

Muddy Waters first recorded for Aristocrat playing guitar for piano player Sunnyland Slim in 1947. By the following year, he returned to the label to record as part of a combo put together by Leonard Chess, but was able to convince Chess to record two of his own songs at the end of the session. When Aristocrat released Waters's "I Can't Be Satisfied" backed with "I Feel Like Going Home" as a single, the record became a hit, indicating demand that Chess was happy to meet. Though there was no formal contract, the mutually successful partnership between Leonard Chess and Muddy Waters was forged and Waters henceforth considered himself an artist of the Chess Brothers' label.

With name recognition, Muddy Waters's popularity in clubs began to take off. As a recording artist with Aristocrat, he also had the vehicle to make his sound known beyond the confines of the city to an audience larger than ever before. That sound had evolved since his arrival in Chicago. When he had played for John Works and Alan Lomax in Mississippi, it had been on an acoustic guitar. Playing in the city, with the constant din of automobiles, streetcars, and elevated trains plus the reverberating chatter and clinking of glasses in an enclosed bar, the acoustic was not able to be heard. In 1944 Waters's uncle had bought him his first electric guitar.

The characteristics of an electric guitar were such that it was not simply a matter of playing louder, however. It had prompted him to begin using a thumbpick and he adjusted his technique for an instrument that carried every sound forward. Using a microphone had also led him to adapt his singing and he was free to incorporate a greater range of vocalizations, confident they would be carried across the room in a way an unamplified voice could not. He had forged a new Delta country blues sound from this amplified aural universe.

As Waters played in the blues clubs of Chicago, he began to develop relationships with the different musicians he met. By the early 1950s he had put together a group of musicians who understood the sound he was after and knew how to integrate their sounds closely with his guitar and voice:



Muddy Waters with his Gretsch Synchronomatic, the guitar he bought after his first electric guitar was stolen, ca. late 1940s. At the suggestion of friend and band member Jimmy Rogers, he outfitted the Gretsch with a DeArmond FHC pickup. Waters's earliest hits for Aristocrat, "I Can't Be Satisfied" and "I Feel Like Going Home," were recorded with this guitar. (Courtesy of the Facebook group Muddy Waters Legacy.)

Big Bill Broonzy shaking Muddy Waters's hand in a Chicago club, ca. late 1940s/early 1950s. Broonzy was a country-blues singer and guitarist whose work foreshadowed the postwar Chicago Blues. He had achieved national recognition by the late 1930s and helped musicians new to Chicago. He was first to suggest Waters tour overseas after his own successful 1951 tour, an idea Waters would not act upon until years later. (From Bob Riesman's *I Feel So Good: The Life and Times of Big Bill Broonzy*, courtesy of the Yannick and Margo Bruynoghe Collection via the University of Chicago Press.)





Muddy Waters and his wife Geneva in the hallway of a South Side club, 1951. In 1948, Waters had recorded “Little Geneva” about his new girlfriend: “When I met her, even though I was a recording success, there were still people who scorned my music. Geneva encouraged me to ignore them and fight for what I wanted to accomplish. I’ll never be able to put into words the way I feel about her.” (Photo by Art Shay for *Time Magazine*, courtesy of the Chicago Blog of the University of Chicago Press.)

Muddy Waters playing the 708 Club at 708 East 47th Street, ca. 1953. (Photos by Isaac Sutton, courtesy of the *Ebony* and *Jet Magazine* Collection, accessed at <https://www.wirz.de/music/waters.htm>.)



Waters and band at Club Zanzibar at 13th and Ashland Streets, 1954. The club served as his home base from 1946 until it closed in 1954. From left, Muddy Waters, non-band member Henry Armstrong (sitting in with maracas in exchange for creating posters), Otis Spann (piano), Henry “Pot” Strong (harmonica), Elga Edmonds (drums), and Jimmy Rogers (guitar). (Courtesy of Mike Rowe’s *Chicago Blues*.)



“But I took the old-time music and brought it up to date—you’ve got to stay alive with it. You need to work. With a band I could play in clubs, for dances, concerts—anything. I am still an old-time singer, but I brought it out more.”

Music critic and historian Robert Palmer wrote that Waters “was the first popular bandleader to assemble and lead a truly electric band, a band that used amplification to make the music more ferociously physical instead of simply making it a little louder.” It began with Waters, “a vocal artist of astonishing power, range, depth, and subtlety,” noted Palmer, with “his remarkable sense of timing, his command of inflection and pitch shading, and his vocabulary of vocal sounds and effects, from the purest falsetto to grainy moaning rasps” paired with his expressive slide guitar often referenced as voice-like.

Guitarist Jimmy Rogers, one of Waters’s first friends and musical collaborators in Chicago, summed up his place in the band: “I’d just add sound—what he was singing, that was the way I’d play, and give him a feeling to it that he could really open up and come on out with it. It rang a bell.” Found by Rogers busking at nearby Maxwell Street, Little Walter revolutionized the sound of harmonica by putting it through an amp during a 1951 Waters session for Chess Records. He wove complex themes through Waters’s music, pushing the phonic possibilities of the harmonica with great technical skill. The drumming of Elga Edmonds (a.k.a. Elgin Edwards among other variations), a jazz drummer who’d switched to the increasingly popular blues idiom when he joined Waters’s band in 1950, was spare, providing just enough punch to keep feet tapping.

Initially, Waters recorded with musicians provided by the Chess brothers who had changed the name of their fledgling recording company to Chess Record Corporation by 1950 and moved to one of a succession of storefronts along Cottage Grove they would inhabit during the decade. Waters meanwhile had been petitioning Leonard Chess to allow him to record with the band he had formed. Chess relented and the results were powerful—five hit singles between 1950 and 1952.

During that period, Waters had added one more member to his band. Of piano player Otis Spann, who would become one of Waters’s closest friends, Waters biographer Robert Gordon noted “Spann’s playing is perfect—nearly invisible. He rolls under lyrics, anticipates the guitar riff, hides beneath it, bolsters the harp: he is generally all over the place without seeming to be too much of anywhere.” By 1953, Waters was able to persuade Chess to include Spann in the studio and the company was promptly rewarded with another string of hits.

Although this particular group remained together less than two years, members like Spann would be with Waters for two decades. Over the course of his career, musicians would change time and again, but Waters kept the instrumentation more or less the same. This became the classic lineup for the Chicago Blues sound.

Band members often played in multiple groups and some even headed their own. Waters had a friendly personality and felt he was among people very similar to himself, trying to make it in the music world, so he encouraged and featured their musical talents, giving them turns at soloing and singing. He had no problem with them playing in other groups and would even back them on recordings on occasion. Many of the musicians who were at one time part of his band had successful careers of their own including harmonica players Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson II, James Cotton, Paul Oscher, and Junior Wells; piano players Otis Spann and Pinetop Perkins; and guitarists Jimmy Rogers and Buddy Guy, just to mention a few.



Promotional photos of Muddy Waters for Chess Records, 1952. (Courtesy of the University of Mississippi Blues Archive.)



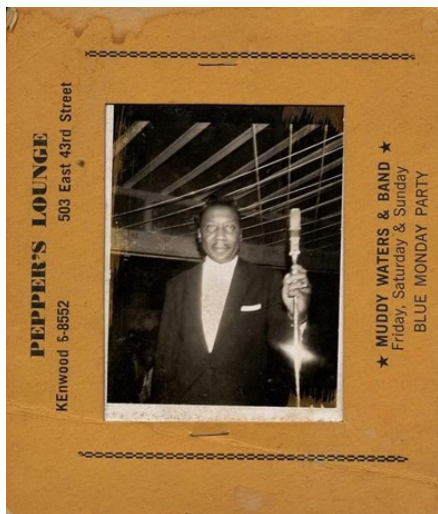
Chess Records owner and artists promoting their music on WGES, one of Chicago's first African American-oriented radio stations, ca. 1955. By the 1960s Chicago had more African American-oriented radio programming than almost any other city in the U.S. Seated: Willie Dixon (left), Leonard Chess (center), host Levi Byrd (right). Standing: Chuck Berry (left) and Muddy Waters (right). (Courtesy of the Facebook group Muddy Waters Legacy.)



Muddy Waters in front of Smitty's Corner, 35th and Indiana, where he and his band held the residency from the mid- to late 1950s. During that time, Waters also had a regular weeknight gig in Gary, Indiana. (Courtesy of BobCorritore.com.)



Pepper's Lounge at 503 East 43rd Street, 1963. Muddy Waters's Band was in residence there from 1958 through the early 1960s. Painted sign at left reads "The King of 43rd St Boss Peppers presents Otis Rush Tue Nite, The Great Muddy Waters Wed Nite Fri. Sat. Sun Nite." Neon sign at right says "503" and "Time to Visit Pepper's Lounge." (Photo by Raeburn Flerlage, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, ICHI-123397.)



Left: Pepper's Lounge, photo of Muddy Waters in paper advertisement frame for customers. (Courtesy BobCorritore.com.)

Right: Muddy Waters performing at Pepper's Lounge, 1963. (Photo by Raeburn Flerlage, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, ICHI-137128.)



The blues Waters and his bandmates recorded during the 1950s were released on singles, two songs at a time. Including Waters's 1948 hit single for Aristocrat, sixteen of these became hit *Billboard* R & B Chart singles (ranked in the top 20). They featured both original and traditional songs Waters had re-worked including "I Feel Like Going Home" from 1948, "She Moves Me" from 1952, and "Mannish Boy" from 1955 as well as songs penned by fellow Chess Records performer Willie Dixon such as "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man" and "Just Make Love to Me," both from 1954. The later songs were statement songs and helped Waters create an over-the-top, ultra-masculine image which grabbed people's imagination and helped Waters break out of the local clubs scene to gain national and ultimately international recognition.

The Blues Had a Baby and They Named It Rock and Roll

Although blues and other forms of American music had made their way across the Atlantic during World War II via American GIs, England's growing folk music revival of the 50s paved the way for blues artists such as Big Bill Broonzy to tour England. Waters first went overseas in 1958. Expecting to hear old-time acoustic blues, audiences were taken aback when Waters and pianist Otis Spann sent amplified sounds into the concert halls and clubs.

The same trend was taking hold in America. Waters shared a bill with multiple performers including Pete Seeger as part of the Folksong '59 concert at Carnegie Hall produced by Alan Lomax. When the organizer of the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival wanted to include blues music to acknowledge jazz's debt to that genre, Waters and his band showed up in smart suits with a verve and directness in their music that captivated the diverse but mostly middle-class, young-trending audience whose enthusiastic response prompted an encore. Waters's audience was expanding beyond the African American base that had first brought him success.

Remembering his previous experience overseas, when Waters was asked to tour England again in 1962, he brought his acoustic guitar and was once again thrown for a loop when audiences now demanded he play his electric guitar. Some of the most enthusiastic of his admirers were young, kids who were thrilled by his raw, powerful sound. Waters, in turn, was impressed by the level of musicianship some of them showed when he met them offstage and gave them a chance to play his guitar.

These tours contributed to the British Blues Explosion of the early 1960s. Songs recorded by Waters, including "Mannish Boy," "I Want to be Loved," and "Rollin' and Tumblin'" became part of the repertoires of the English rock and roll bands of the 1960s that followed. Among these imitators were the Rolling Stones, who recorded their own versions of a number of songs by Chicago blues musicians and who took their name from the 1950 Muddy Waters song "Rollin' Stone." These British bands did not hesitate to share their admiration for their musical heroes when given the chance. Keith Richards has said that the Rolling Stones' inspiration for creating a band "was to turn other people on to Muddy Waters."

Their music, in turn, would help awaken the mainstream white American audience to the blues as curious fans began to look into who had created the songs covered by the bands they followed:

"But my kind of music had to be exposed to 'em. And it wasn't exposed to 'em until after the Rolling Stones and the Beatles. That's a funny damn thing. Had to get somebody from

out of another country to let my white kids over here know where we stand. They're crying for bread and they've got it in their own backyard."

Naturally, when these musicians began to write their own music, it was informed by the structure and sound of the blues they had learned. Waters later acknowledged the influence of his music on rock with his recording "The Blues Had a Baby and They Named It Rock and Roll, Pt. 2" (so named because it was co-written with the man who wrote the first version of the song, Brownie McGhee).

Though Waters's popularity waned as rock and roll took over the charts, he continued to record, focusing on albums. Five of his albums would make the *Billboard* Top 200 from 1968 to 1981. Waters's contributions to the work of other musicians now came full circle as established rock musicians asked Waters to perform with them. He toured with the Allman Brothers in 1975, the same year he left the much changed and by then corporate-owned Chess Records. Texas bluesman and rock guitarist Johnny Winters brought Waters aboard his Blue Sky label in 1976, producing three of his albums which made the *Billboard* Top 200. The critically acclaimed "Hard Again" album of 1977 was followed by a tour which took Waters around the world.

While playing an extended gig in Washington, D.C. in 1978, President Jimmy Carter invited Waters and his band to play at the White House. Meanwhile, Levon Helm saw to it that Waters was one of the acts filmed for The Band's 1978 film *The Last Waltz*, directed by Martin Scorsese. Waters had not been enthusiastic about the film and was equally unimpressed when one of the musicians from it extended an invitation to join his worldwide tour as the opening act. The money was good, however, so Waters accepted, but couldn't be bothered to stay after he finished his own performance. Several nights into the tour, he did remain and was stunned by the guitarist's rendition of Chicago Blues classics including one of his signature licks. From that point on, he and Eric Clapton became good friends and Waters even asked him to be best man at his 1979 marriage to Marva Jean Brooks.

Waters continued to play clubs and tour, but his health was starting to decline. His last recorded performance was captured on video in 1981 when members of the Rolling Stones joined Waters and his band onstage at the Checkerboard Lounge in Chicago. Harmonica player and former band member Junior Wells also took the stage as did former band member and guitarist Buddy Guy. The club was owned by Buddy Guy who had been a session guitarist with Waters at Chess and on later live albums.

Waters was diagnosed with lung cancer later that year and underwent surgery and radiation treatments. His health seemed to be on the mend, but the cancer returned and he died in 1983, leaving family, friends, and fans devastated. Music critic and historian Robert Plant's *New York Times* obituary for Waters summarized the essence of his music:

His blues sounded simple, but it was so deeply rooted in the traditions of the Mississippi Delta that other singers and guitarists found it almost impossible to imitate it convincingly. "My blues looks so simple, so easy to do, but it's not," Mr. Waters said in a 1978 interview. "They say my blues is the hardest blues in the world to play."

During his lifetime, his music had been recognized with six Grammys and he was an inaugural inductee into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame in 1980. He was posthumously inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987 and chosen for the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992.



Still from film footage of the 1960 Newport Jazz Festival which captures the dynamism of the performers. Guitarist Pat Hare at left, Muddy Waters at center, and bassist Andrew Stephenson at right. Band members not pictured: Otis Spann, James Cotton, and Francis Clay. (Courtesy of the upload to YouTube.com by Huck Finn.)

Muddy Waters playing at the White House, 1978. President Jimmy Carter at left, band member Bob Margolin at center, and Muddy Waters at right. (Courtesy of the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum.)



Mick Jagger and Muddy Waters at the Checkerboard Lounge, 1981. This was the last time Waters would be recorded live. (From video "Live at the Checkerboard Lounge," courtesy of Eagle Rock Entertainment, Ltd.)

Success Brings Home Ownership

By 1954, Muddy Waters had established himself as one of the best Chicago blues artists. With several healthy-selling recordings for the Chess label under his belt and a correspondingly busy live performance schedule, he was one of the rare early Chicago blues performers to achieve relative financial success from his music. The time was right for him to realize another dream resulting from that success – a home of his own.

Likely with the help of the Chess brothers, who had experience in the ownership and management of rental properties, Waters found the two-story red brick structure at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue. It dated from 1891 and was what is known in Chicago as a “two-flat” – two large dwelling units on top of each other. To get an opinion regarding its physical condition and advice on purchasing property, Waters brought over his record producer Leonard Chess. With Chess’s opinion of soundness, Waters entered into a contract to purchase the building and moved in with his family in 1954. By 1956 a warranty deed was recorded transferring the property in joint tenancy to Waters and his wife Geneva.

Despite his national success and notoriety on the South Side, when it came to purchasing a home, Waters was subject to the same entrenched discriminatory practices other African Americans faced. Long-established policies and practices of the federal government, banks, and the real estate industry closed options off. The Federal Housing Administration issued color-coded city maps which arbitrarily “redlined” areas perceived as having the greatest lending risk, areas typically inhabited by the poor or minorities. Banks used these maps to decide who got mortgages. Those who didn’t qualify were left to fend for themselves in an unregulated secondary market.

Contract sales, like the one Waters undertook for 4339 South Lake Park, were often the only available option. Sellers would finance the purchase of the home at interest rates typically higher than those available with federally insured mortgages. Terms of the agreement allowed the seller to hold the deed to a property while the buyer agreed to pay monthly installments toward the loan. Taxes, insurance, and repairs were also the responsibility of the buyer. Any defaults would legally allow the seller to evict the occupants and keep all monies received and improvements made to the property.

Waters’s contract terms included payment of 36% of the purchase price up front and required subsequent monthly payments bringing the total payments against the principal to \$9,000 (half the purchase price) before the property was deeded over to him. Although a warranty deed was recorded at that point, in February of 1956, terms of the contract also required him to provide a trust deed to the seller. As a result of the trust deed, the purchaser lost any protections he may have had under foreclosure laws, since the seller merely had to record the trust deed in order to re-acquire title as would have been allowed had the purchaser not met the terms of the contract. Waters had the fortune to be able to meet those terms successfully and a release was filed for the trust deed by April of 1963, thereby removing the ever-present possibility of losing the home that had hung over the transaction.

The First “House of Blues”

By the early 1950s, independent record companies such as Chess, King, Vee Jay, Chance, and Parrot, and distributors like United and Bronzeville were headquartered around Cottage Grove from 47th to 50th Streets. Waters’s two-flat was located near these businesses and only a few blocks from concentrations of blues clubs on or near 43rd and 47th streets such as Pepper’s Lounge (503 East 43rd Street), the 708 Club (708 East 47th Street), and Theresa’s Lounge (4801 South Indiana Avenue). Given the frequency of Waters’s gigs, this proximity was a huge plus. The convenient location also made it a natural gathering place for other blues musicians and entertainers.

Waters and his family lived on the first floor and the basement provided additional square footage. Waters’s granddaughter Amelia Cooper, whom they called “Cookie,” was a young child when she moved into 4339. Waters and his wife took custody of her and she grew up in the home. She reflected on her time there:

“When I moved into the home full-time in 1957, Geneva’s son Charles Williams, who was about 20 years older than me, lived there. There were three bedrooms on the first floor – Muddy and Geneva’s room, Charles’s room, and my room. Muddy’s uncle had a bedroom in the basement and the rooms on the second floor always had visitors – musicians and friends who needed a place to stay. Muddy’s friends Paul Oscher, Little Walter, Otis Spann, and James Cotton stayed a lot.”

Utilizing each level of the two-flat allowed Waters and his wife to offer open-door hospitality. Waters’s relative financial security also helped by allowing his wife Geneva to quit her job so she could oversee the needs of family and friends while caring for the home full-time. Cooper described her grandmother’s role:

“She took care of everyone. She was everyone’s mother. From family members to band members, she cooked for everyone and cared for anyone when they were sick. She ran the house and she loved gardening. The front yard was always beautiful and full of flowers.”

Music colleagues were welcomed at all hours and Waters’s wife Geneva made sure visitors were well-fed. Cooper recalled:

“I watched her cook for a dozen guys at 2 or 3 in the morning when Muddy would bring them back to the house after a show. She would make eggs and homemade biscuits. This happened all the time.”

Lodging was also freely offered to musicians and others traveling to Chicago. Chess Records recording artist and fellow blues legend Howlin’ Wolf stayed there as he re-settled himself in Chicago from the South. Charles Morganfield recalled a visitor from St. Louis:

“This was the house of the blues in the fifties...We got them all, down there in the basement—B.B. [King], John Lee [Hooker], Chuck Berry. I had to get out of bed one time to get Chuck Berry down to Chess before he made ‘Maybellene.’ “

Originally designed as quarters for a single family, the second floor had been converted prior to Waters’s ownership into two units – one in front and another in back. This provided a source of



Above: Otis Spann, Geneva Morganfield, Muddy Waters with granddaughter "Cookie" Cooper in the living room at 4339, ca. 1959. (Photo courtesy of the Univ. of Mississippi Blues Archive, accessed at 2/14/18 Mojo Morganfield Twitter post.)

Right: Band members St. Louis Jimmy Oden (left) & Otis Spann (right) in 4339 basement, 1959. (Photo by Georges Adins, courtesy of *Rhythm & Blues Panorama* 30, 1964, accessed at <https://www.wirz.de/music/waters.htm>.)



photo © Georges Adins



photo © Georges Adins



photo © Georges Adins

Above: Geneva Morganfield and Muddy Waters with granddaughter Amelia "Cookie" Cooper providing late-night hospitality in the kitchen of 4339, 1959. (Photos by Georges Adins, accessed at <https://www.wirz.de/music/waters.htm>.)



Left: Otis Spann (piano) and James Cotton (harmonica) staging a rehearsal for the camera in the basement of 4339 where countless hours had been spent in band rehearsals, 1965. (Photo by Raeburn Flerlage, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, IChi-106084, accessed via ChicagoReader.com.)

income as needed. When harmonica player James Cotton was plucked from West Memphis to replace Junior Wells in 1955, he moved directly into a room on the second floor. Mutual friend and Waters's driver James Triplett lived in the front with his girlfriend and two children while drummer Elga Edmonds and his wife lived in the upstairs rear unit. Cotton paid Waters \$12.50 a week for the room and his friend Triplett let him cook in their unit's kitchen.

Another longtime occupant of a second-floor apartment was band pianist Otis Spann, who had become a good friend of Waters. In 1960, Waters welcomed visiting British blues historian Paul Oliver and his wife to stay at the home while in Chicago doing research. Oliver wrote of his experience:

“Muddy has never forgotten those who have helped him and his home is proof of it. We met the ageing Joe Brant [Muddy Waters's uncle], who was called ‘daddy’ by virtually everyone...Otis Spann and his family also lived in Muddy's house whilst in the basement lives St. Louis Jimmy. Through them we had a continuous blues session for days on end in St. Louis Jimmy's room, at which Roosevelt Sykes, Little Brother Montgomery, Sunnyland Slim, Otis Spann, Robert Lockwood, Jump Jackson, Little Walter, Jimmy Cotton, and the rest of the band with Jimmy Oden and Muddy himself of course continually dropping in to play, talk, and drink.”

Over the years, band members including Little Walter, Junior Wells, George Buford, and Paul Oscher would stay at 4339 South Lake Park.

The Lake Park Avenue building served not only as a residence, lodging for friends or as a source of income, and a place of round-the-clock hospitality to musicians, but it also served as a rehearsal space for Waters's band. The basement was fitted out as a rehearsal studio with living quarters at the rear for family or friends, band members needing a place to stay after a late-night session, or as overflow space to accommodate the constantly arriving stream of visitors. Amelia Cooper remembered Bo Bolton, a close friend of Waters from the Stovall Plantation, and James Warren, both of whom served as drivers for Waters and the band, occupied the basement. The basement was easily accessed via lower-level doors at the front and side of the home, both of which were in existence when Waters purchased the home.

On warm summer days, rehearsal sessions would sometimes move outside to the front yard, treating the entire neighborhood to impromptu live performances. Cooper said:

“The neighbors loved it. And it was normal to come home from school and find musicians playing on the front porch, in the yard, or in the basement.”

Musical inspiration was not confined to the basement. Harmonica player Willie Foster, who occasionally accompanied Waters on the road in 1954, went to Waters's house and was greeted by Willie Dixon at the door. Waters, in the bathroom shaving, called to Foster, “Are you ready?” He replied, “Ready as anybody can be.” Waters stepped out of the bathroom and said to Dixon, “Willie, are you thinking about what I'm thinking about? Let's make a song out of it.” According to Foster, “We sat up there, I don't know how long, trying to figure out what to put on it, you know. It took [Dixon] three days, I think, to finish it out.” Later that year, “I'm Ready” reached number four in the *Billboard* charts.

The larger blues community saw the home as visible proof of what you could achieve as a blues musician. When a young performer named Buddy Guy first arrived in Chicago and was play-

ing at the nearby 708 Club, Waters heard about him and drove over to the club. Guy made his way outside where Waters was waiting in the front seat of a station wagon. Sandwich in hand, Waters invited Guy to help himself to bread and cold cuts. Happy to find his idol was so down-to-earth, it was the beginning of their lifelong friendship. In later interviews, Guy referenced Waters's home and stated that his desire to pursue a living based on his music was partially out of respect and admiration for Waters and the fact that he was able to purchase a home through his music. Other musicians brought up the house in a similar context.

“That house was Muddy and Geneva’s prized possession,” according to Amelia Cooper. It symbolized what Waters had accomplished. As his great granddaughter Chandra Cooper observed:

“Think about it. Muddy came to Chicago in 1943 and ten years later he owned his own house. There weren’t many people who came from the South, a sharecropper from Mississippi, who accomplished that.”

For the first sixteen years at the Lake Park Avenue house, Waters did little to alter its original 1891 appearance. The wooden covered porch was a typical example of late nineteenth-century wood filigree and the facade’s wood bay window was decorated with ornamental sheet metal as the cornice may still have been. Changes during that time were only cosmetic. The facade was painted white and custom-made aluminum storm doors were installed at the double-door entry. These eye-catching doors were cast aluminum and featured elegant crane-like birds (and therefore lovingly called the “flamingo” doors), his name, and the house number “4339.” Cooper recalled about her grandmother Geneva:

“I remember when she found the flamingo screen doors. She was so excited. Everyone else had black gates on their doors and she found these beautiful screen doors. She was so proud of them.”

The doors were special-ordered. Perhaps through error of the manufacturer, the doors had Waters’s name in reverse order as “Waters Muddy.” Inside, the house retained its original woodwork with fluted moldings, ornamental corner blocks, and decorative wood and tile fireplaces.

Frequently on the road for out-of-town performances, Waters and his band traveled from gig to gig by car. In October 1969, another vehicle crashed head-on into the car which was transporting Waters along with two band members near Urbana, Illinois. The driver, James Warren, was killed, and Waters along with band members Pee Wee Madison and Pinetop Perkins were seriously injured. Waters sustained the most severe injuries and remained in a local hospital for almost three months before he was in good enough condition to be moved back to Chicago. The ordinarily active performer was frustrated by having to spend an extended period confined to his Lake Park Avenue home to facilitate what proved to be a long and painful recovery. It was during this period in 1970 that he made the decision to modernize his home.

Muddy Waters Takes on Home Improvement

On the front facade, the wood stairs and covered wood porch with nineteenth-century ornamental detailing were replaced with a simple concrete porch and stairs in the same location. Con-



Left: special-ordered “flamingo” storm doors at the entrance to 4339 S. Lake Park.



Top right: Muddy Waters and his granddaughter Cookie in the living room of 4339 S. Lake Park.



Above right: Granddaughter Cookie watches television in the living room of 4339 S. Lake Park.

Lower left: mantel in the living room of 4339 S. Lake Park.



Lower right: Muddy Waters being interviewed by Michael Bloomfield (sitting at left side of sofa) in his living room with granddaughter Amelia Cooper.

(All photos this page from 1964 by Raeburn Flerlage, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, ICHi-113343, ICHi-139163, ICHi-113350, ICHi-113349, and ICHi-113359.)



temporary metal railings with single, centered 'S' scrolls in each section were installed at the sides of the stairs and landing. Open corner posts featuring stacked 'S' scrolls were inserted at the corners of the landing to support a new, red, concave canopy made of overlapping aluminum slats. The canopy had closed sides and was finished with contrasting white scalloped edging and a single white stripe at either side of the top surface curving to the front fascia.

Ornamental sheet metal cladding was removed from the bay window and replaced with flat sheet metal or wood. One interview suggests red and off-white composition shingles may have been added at the top and base to coordinate with the new canopy though evidence has not been found to support this. Any remnants of the original cornice were removed and this location was parged over to create a flat surface. The brick of the façade was painted red and stone detailing was covered in cream paint.

Inside the main floor, wood baseboards, doors, and window trim were removed. Fireplaces were taken out. Plywood paneling with simulated vertical boards was installed on the walls. Wood floors were covered with carpeting or linoleum. At least one interior wall was removed to create a larger state-of-the-art kitchen with plenty of room for people to gather and converse.

It was not long after these improvements, however, that Waters decided to leave 4339. In several home-based interviews, Waters lamented changes occurring in the neighborhood in terms of safety. The growing number of abandoned homes nearby was both a reflection of and contributing factor to the disinvestment which was occurring. It was his wife Geneva's death in 1973, however, that finally compelled him to leave. After formally adopting several of his biological children who had become wards of the state, Waters bought a home in suburban Westmont and moved there with his family in 1973. He continued to own the home at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue and rented it out, the first of the new tenants being drummer Willie "Big Eyes" Smith who was part of Waters's band from the late 1960s through 1980.

On the left in this image is 4339 South Lake Park Avenue, captured during the Illinois Historic Structures Survey taken between 1971 and 1975. It shows the flat cladding of the bay window and the flat profile at the location of the cornice, alterations made by Waters. (Courtesy of the Illinois Historic Preservation Agency.)



The Muddy Waters House, ca. 2010. (Courtesy of the Muddy Waters MO-JO Museum.)



Norman L. Hunter

Family Affair: Hobbling about on crutches as a result of a near-fatal auto accident last October, blues singer Muddy Waters admires one-month-old granddaughter, Chandra Yvonne Cooper, in Chicago, as wire, Geneva, cradles infant. He expects to "return to work" in May.

Morganfields with great granddaughter Chandra Cooper (erroneously captioned as granddaughter) in the living room of 4339 S. Lake Park. (Photo by Norman L. Hunter, courtesy of Chandra Cooper, from *Jet* Vol. XXXVIII #3, April 16, 1970, p. 39.)



Geneva and McKinley Morganfield (Muddy Waters) in the re-paneled living room of 4339 S. Lake Park (identified by Amelia Cooper), 1970. (Photo by Norman L. Hunter, courtesy of *Jet* Vol. XLIV #2, April 5, 1973, p. 55.)

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of Landmark designation for a building, structure, object, or district if the Commission determines that it meets two or more of the stated "Criteria for Designation," as well as possesses a significant degree of historic design integrity. The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Muddy Waters House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criteria 1: Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Blues musician McKinley Morganfield (1913-1983), better known as "Muddy Waters," was born in rural Mississippi, the son of a sharecropper. Muddy Waters's migration from the Mississippi Delta to Chicago in the middle of the twentieth century mirrored the journey of many African Americans who left their homes to flee the Jim Crow South and to find better opportunities in northern urban centers. They brought with them their culture and traditions which enriched their newfound homes. When Muddy Waters and his contemporaries' musical heritage took root in Chicago and was amplified so it could be heard in its louder urban setting, the Chicago Blues that emerged sent the heartbeat of America's culture around the world.
- The Chicago Blues created by musicians Muddy Waters, Willie Dixon, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Sonny Boy Williamson II, and others initially found success with an almost exclusively African American audience in the 1940s and early 1950s. Like the musicians who created this music, their audience was largely based in the Southern United States and the large urban centers of the Midwest to which much of this population had migrated and where this music served as an element of shared culture. Due in large part to the revival of interest in folk music starting in the early 1950s, by the end of that decade the audience for Chicago Blues had diversified and expanded, even extending beyond the borders of the United States to Europe. These blues masters influenced the sound of rock and roll as it emerged in mainstream culture in the 1950s and 1960s, as acknowledged by rock legends like Chuck Berry, Mick Jagger, Keith Richards, Eric Clapton, Jimi Hendrix, and countless others.
- By the early 1950s, independent record companies such as Chess, King, Vee Jay, Chance, and Parrot, and distributors like United and Bronzeville were headquartered around Cottage Grove from 47th to 50th Streets. Muddy Waters's home at 4339 South Lake Park Avenue was located near these businesses and the concentrations of South Side blues clubs on or near 43rd and 47th streets such as Pepper's Lounge (503 East 43rd Street), the 708 Club (708 East 47th Street), and Theresa's Lounge (4801 South Indiana Avenue). In such close proximity to these blues corridors, Muddy Waters's home turned into a gathering place for other blues musicians and entertainers.

Criteria 3: Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.



(Courtesy of the University of Mississippi Blues Archive.)

Chicago Blues greats Muddy Waters (left), Howlin' Wolf (center left), Willie Dixon (bottom left), Little Walter (below), and Sonny Boy Williamson II (bottom right).



(Courtesy of Delmark Records.)



(Courtesy of Pictorial Press Ltd.)



(Courtesy of BobCorritore.com.)



(Courtesy of AmericanBluesScene.com.)

- Muddy Waters offered open-door hospitality at his 4339 South Lake Park Avenue home where he lived from 1954 to 1973. It was the only residence the musician ever owned in the city of Chicago and became an unofficial center of artistic activity for blues musicians. Rehearsals were held in the basement and new songs were created and shaped at the home. Musicians were welcomed at all hours. At different points, band members including Otis Spann, James Cotton, Little Walter, Junior Wells, and Paul Oscher stayed at the two-flat, ready to play at a moment's notice. Not only food and drink, but lodging was offered to musicians who had traveled to Chicago. Fellow blues legend Howlin' Wolf stayed there as he re-settled himself in Chicago. Chuck Berry, befriended by Waters, stayed at his home while in town to record at Chess Records. Waters's friends B.B. King, John Lee Hooker, and Buddy Guy visited. Willie Dixon, Roosevelt Sykes, Little Brother Montgomery, Sunnyland Slim, Robert Lockwood, Jump Jackson, St. Louis Jimmy, Pinetop Perkins, and countless others played music in the basement, spilling outside to the yard and front porch on warm days.
- Considered by many to be the "Father of Chicago Blues," Muddy Waters was one of the most important figures in the development of the distinctive electrified sound. Muddy Waters skillfully married the raw acoustic Delta blues he learned in Mississippi with amplification to create a powerful new urban sound that could be heard in the loudest of Chicago's clubs and beyond.
- Muddy Waters's 1958 and 1962 tours of England contributed to the British Blues Explosion of the early 1960s. Songs recorded by Waters, including "Mannish Boy," "I Want to be Loved," and "Rollin' and Tumblin' " became part of the repertoires of English rock and roll bands. Among these imitators were the Rolling Stones, who recorded their own versions of songs by Waters and other Chicago blues musicians and who took their name from the 1950 Muddy Waters song titled "Rollin' Stone." Their music, in turn, would help awaken the mainstream white American audience to the blues in their backyard.
- Muddy Waters recorded with Chicago's Chess Records, first known as the Aristocrat label, from 1947 through 1975. Early work was released as singles and sixteen of these became *Billboard* R & B Chart hits (ranked in the top 20). They featured both originals and traditional songs Waters had re-worked including "I Feel Like Going Home" from 1948, "She Moves Me" from 1952, and "Mannish Boy" from 1955 as well as songs penned by fellow Chess Records performer Willie Dixon such as "I'm Your Hoochie Coochie Man" and "Just Make Love to Me," both from 1954. Later work was released on albums, five of which would make the *Billboard* Top 200 from 1969 to 1981. During his lifetime, his music was recognized with six Grammys and he was an inaugural inductee of the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame in 1980. He was posthumously inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in 1987 and chosen for the Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1992. Releases of his studio work and live performances continue to rank in the Top 20 of *Billboard's* U.S. Blues charts in the millennium following his time on earth.

Integrity Criterion:

Interior improvements Muddy Waters made are no longer in place. However, on the exterior, the concrete porch with metal railings, supports, and canopy remain. Plywood panels in place on the bay window have deteriorated but the underlying structure remains. The decorative

“flamingo” storm doors are gone, and windows and doors have been replaced. These changes are reversible, and the home maintains the basic form and appearance displayed during the period of significance while Muddy Waters lived there.

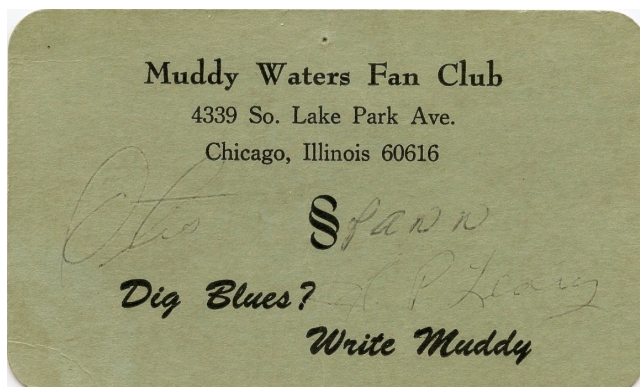
Significant Historical and Architectural Features

Whenever a building, structure, object, or district is under consideration for Landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the significant historical and architectural features of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered the most important to preserve the historic and architectural character of the proposed Landmark. Based on its evaluation of the Muddy Waters House, the Commission staff recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the Building; and
- The non-original basement entrance at the front facade which existed during Muddy Waters's initial residence and subsequent ownership of the Building (1954-1973) as documented in existing historic photographs; and
- Exterior alterations to the Building which are known to have been made by Muddy Waters, specifically the concrete porch with its metal railings, supports, and canopy; the flat exterior cladding of the bay window at the front facade; and the flat profile at the location of the original cornice; and
- Any new storm doors at the front elevation should be designed to match the customized pair of “flamingo” storm doors installed by Muddy Waters which are no longer extant, but which are documented in historic photographs; and
- Other exterior alterations to the Building made by Muddy Waters that can be documented.



Bandmates posing for a snapshot ca. 1959. Though sources state this was taken in the basement of 4339 South Lake Park Avenue, the finished walls and door opening suggest it may have been a different location than the unfinished basement of 4339. Left to right: James Cotton, Sonny Boy Williamson II (aka Rice Miller), Jimmy Rogers, Muddy Waters, and Otis Spann. (Photo by Georges Adins, courtesy of *Block* magazine, the Netherlands, accessed via BobCorritore.com.)



Fan club business card with 4339 South Lake Park Avenue address, signed by pianist Otis Spann and S.P. Leary who was a drummer in Waters's band in the late 1960s. (Courtesy of BobCorritore.com.)

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Unless identified otherwise in the text, block quotations were taken from James Rooney’s *Boss-men*, Robert Gordon’s *Can’t Be Satisfied*, Christiane Bird’s *Jazz and Blues Lovers Guide to the U.S.*, and Lisa DiChiera’s “Conversation with Chandra Cooper and Amelia Cooper.”



Muddy Waters (right) with James Cotton (left) performing at Chicago's Civic Opera House for a TV program called "International Hour—American Jazz," May 1963. (Photos by Raeburn Flerlage, courtesy of the Chicago History Museum, ICHi-137748, ICHi-137764, ICHi-137762, and ICHi-137740.)

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This landmark report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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