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Chicago's Gold Coast (Images of America)

Wilbert Jones, Kathleen Willis-Morton, Maureen O'Brien, and foreword by Richard Driehaus

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What was once described as an undesirable swampland has been transformed into one of the most beautiful and wealthiest neighborhoods in America. Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood, developed in the late 1800s, was first called the Astor Street District. It was named after one of the first multimillionaires in the United States, John Jacob Astor--even though Astor never lived in Chicago. In 1885, Astor Street District's first mansion was built. Potter Palmer, a dry goods merchant and owner of the Palmer House Hotel, built his palatial, castle-like residence on the corner of Lake Shore Drive and Banks Street; inside the Palmer mansion were 42 lavishly furnished rooms, which required 26 servants to maintain. Many wealthy Chicagoans followed Palmer's lead and built mansions in the neighborhood. Several homes took up an entire city block and, as time progressed, the name Gold Coast was adopted. On January 30, 1978, the entire Gold Coast district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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