

chicago park district

South Shore Cultural Center

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As one of the premier cultural centers, the mission of the Chicago Park District's South Shore Cultural Center is to provide a variety of cultural programs, professional performances, exhibits, arts oriented education, and leisure activities for the community.

The South Shore Cultural Center was originally designed as a private club, the South Shore Country Club, by the architectural firm of Marshall and Fox. The architects renowned for their hotel and apartment building designs throughout the Chicago land area, Marshall and Fox are best known for their design of the Drake and Blackstone Hotels. They constructed the original South Shore Club House in 1906 in the Italian Resort Style, resembling a summer palace. Of the original structure, the only remaining portion is the ballroom (now Paul Robeson Theatre) on the south end of the existing building. In 1916, after expansion in membership and social importance in Chicago, the old clubhouse was moved to the south section of the grounds and became the golf club house (no longer in existence). Marshall and Fox were hired again to design a new clubhouse.

For decades, the South Shore Country Club was a playground for Chicago's rich. In the 1960's the club was abandoned and fell into disrepair. Over the next few years, community activists pushed to have the club restored and in 1974, the Chicago Park District purchased the club for \$10 million. The site became listed on the National Registrar of Historic Places in 1975. In 1984, the Chicago Park District rehabilitated the club house using interior color schemes developed by the original architects, Marshall and Fox.

Today, the South Shore Cultural Center is one of the Chicago Park District's most significant historical sites. The center sits on 58 acres of land and is bounded by Lake Shore Drive on the west, 71st Street on the south and Lake Michigan on the north and east. The grounds include a nine-hole golf course, beach, nature sanctuary, butterfly garden and open space for picnics and walks. The horse stable is currently used by the Chicago Police Department. In 2004 the Cultural center was recognized as a Chicago Landmark.

The Center is a common space for banquets, weddings, receptions, community and private business meetings, art exhibits and other cultural activities. President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama selected this historic venue for their wedding reception more than a decade ago. In addition to special events, the Center offers a variety of cultural programs and classes for all ages in dance, music, art, health, culinary arts, after school, fitness and more. The Center is also home to programs offered by Washburne Culinary Institute, and Parrot Cage Restaurant, a 50-seat dining experience featuring international cuisine.



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