

# THE REBEATS DRIVING TOUR OF CHICAGO'S HISTORIC PERCUSSION SITES

by Rob Cook

An overview of Chicago's Highways:

Chicago is a very easy town to get around. Like any large city, it's important to have a map and not a bad idea to plan your driving around the morning and late afternoon weekday rush hour traffic. Local radio stations regularly report the driving time required to and from downtown and the far corners of the city.

Be prepared for unexpected adjustments to the directions given here. Streets are sometimes closed for construction, two-way streets become one-way, etc.

It helps to orient yourself to the lake and remember that toward the lake is east, away from the lake is west. As you're traveling west, if you turn right you are driving north. Most of the tall buildings that form Chicago's skyline are in the vicinity of the "Loop," the downtown area named for the loop traveled by the "L," or elevated train public transit. At the heart of the loop is the corner of Madison and State streets.

The dividing line between north and south in the street numbering system is Madison Street.

The dividing line between east and west in the street numbering system is State Street. Since State Street is so close to the lake, the vast majority of E-W street addresses are W.-something. The larger the number, the further west you are. (Ashland Avenue, for example, runs north and south at 1600 west; 1.6 miles west of State St.

Familiarize yourself with the major highways and note that 294 is a (toll) beltway around the city. Think of 294 as a wheel, with spokes made up of highways 290, 94, 90, and 55, all of which converge near the middle of town (the hub of the wheel.)

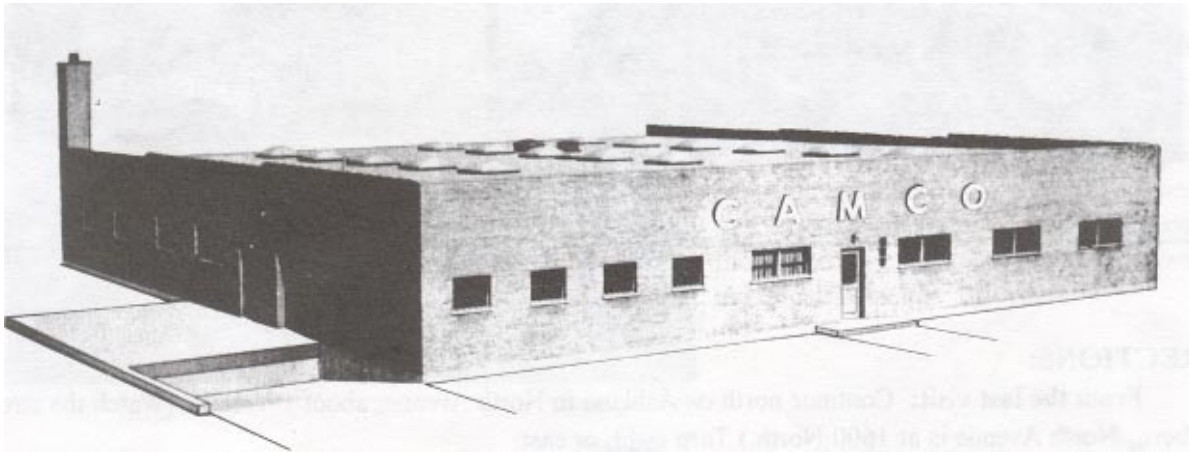
# CAMCO

9221 S. Kilpatrick, Oak Lawn

**Directions:** Take I-294 to the 95th St. exit, which is also Rte 12/20. Go east on 95th. When you've gone about 2 1/2 miles you'll cross Central Avenue. Begin to watch the right side of the street for a commuter train station, just past Tulley Avenue. Go about four more blocks to Cicero Avenue, also known as Rte 50. Turn left (north) on Cicero/50. After about a quarter mile you'll cross Southwest Highway. Turn right (east) at the second corner after Southwest Highway, 91st Street. Go two blocks to Kilpatrick and turn right (south.) Watch for the building pictured below on the left side of the street.

**History:** Remember the commuter train station off 95th? It is almost exactly at the original location of the Camco Screw Mchine company. The only catalogs that have turned up with the Tulley Avenue address list hardware only, no drums. There is also a Kilpatrick Avenue catalog which contains no drums, so apparently the move from Tulley to Kilpatrick was made before the advent of the famous "Oak Lawn Camco" drums.

**Current Status:** Note that the building has been expanded since the Camco drum days. It is in good repair and is currently occupied by the Taylor Spring Company.



**From an early '60s Camco Catalog. The building as is appears here was 10,000 square feet.**



**9221 S. Kilpatrick, 1996**

# GENE KRUPA'S GRAVESITE

Holy Cross Cemetary; Calumet City

## Directions:

**From the last visit (Camco):** Go North on Kilpatrick to 91st Street. Turn left (west) on 91st and proceed to Cicero Avenue (Route 50.) Turn left (south) on Cicero and proceed to 95th Street. Turn right (west) on 95th back to I-294. Take 294 East (or South) toward Indiana. Follow the signs to I-94 west (or North) and follow the directions below.

**From the highways:** Take I-94 to the (East) Sibley Avenue exit (three miles north of the I-294 Tri-Sate Tollway.) Take Sibley Avenue east one mile to Torrence. Turn right (south) on Torrence and go about 3/4 mile to Michigan City Road. Turn left on Michigan City Road. Continue on Michigan City Road about a mile– you'll see the cemetary on the right side of the road before you reach the main gate.

**In the cemetary:** Drive very slowly! After entering the main gate, continue past the cemetary office building on your right. After you pass the office, turn left at the second opportunity. Continue on this road, watching for the signs that identify the different sections of the cemetary. Within 100 yards or so you'll see the Immaculata section on the right. In about the middle of this section you'll be able to see a large monument quite near the road, with the name Sadowski (picture below.) The Krupa family is buried right behind this stone.

Since the Krupa family headstones are all flush with the ground, any snow cover obscures them quite quickly. The monument pictured here is the easiest way to find the Krupa stones.



# LUDWIG

Homestead, 1026 West 20th St.

**Directions:**

**From the last visit:** When you leave the cemetery, turn left on Michigan City Road and proceed back to Torrence. Turn right on Torrence and proceed about 3/4 mile to Sibley. Turn left on Sibley. Take Sibley back to I-94 where you will get on Northbound I-94.

**From the highways:** Take I-94 to the Cermak exit, just north of the I-94/I-55 intersection. Travel west on Cermak about one mile to Racine. Turn right (north) on Racine. Go three short blocks and turn right on Cullerton. Go two blocks on Cullerton to Carpenter. Turn right on Carpenter. Begin looking for a parking place; your destination is one block up where you will turn left on 20th. The house is about the third house on the left (north) side of the street.

**History:** This is where Wm. F. Ludwig Sr. lived as a young man and where he and brother Theo began assembling their first drum pedals. They soon outgrew the basement and used a small barn (smaller photo.) The address of the barn and whether or not it still stands is not known.



# SLINGERLAND

## West Side Conservatory of Music, 105 Ashland

### Directions:

**From the last visit:** Take Carpenter Street north to 18th street (5 blocks from 20th.) Turn left (west) on 18th. One mile past Racine you come to Ashland, where you will turn right (north). Proceed to 105 Ashland.

**From the highways:** Ashland is a major North-South artery 2 1/2 miles west of the lake, or 1 mile west of the I-94/I-290 interchange. Ashland has it's own exit off I-290. Take that exit and travel north; it's only a few blocks north to 105; watch for the building shown below on the right side of the road.

**History:** The Slingerland family got it's start in the music business through employment at teaching studios. A big part of the business was mail-order music lessons. Although a number of addresses in different parts of the city were listed over a period of about 8 years, this is probably the largest and one of (if not *the*) last.



Now



West Side Conservatory of Music  
105 ASHLAND BOULEVARD  
TEACHERS IN ALL BRANCHES AND MUSIC INSTRUMENTS, PIANO, VIOLA and  
LIVATION. PRIZES, STIPENDS, HONORARY DEGREE.  
HALL-VERY SPACIOUS.

Then

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## 1815 Orchard

### Directions:

**From the last visit:** Continue north on Ashland to North Avenue, about 1 3/4 mile. (Watch the street numbers—North Avenue is at 1600 North.) Turn right, or east.

**From the highways:** Take I-90/I-94 to the North Avenue exit, about 2 miles north of downtown. Take North Avenue east from your exit.

**Continue east on North Avenue**, watching street numbers as you go. You're almost there when you reach Halsted (800 West.) Turn left (north) on Orchard which is the second street after Halsted. The buildings to watch for are on the right and clearly numbered.

**History:** The Slingerland family purchased a building at 1815 Orchard in 1923 to house the rapidly growing stringed instrument business. Neighboring buildings were purchased, and soon the Slingerland address became 1815-17-19 Orchard. By the mid 1920s Slingerland had grown at this location to become what they claimed was the largest (and best-equipped) manufacturer of banjos in the world, with over 1700 dealers.

**Current Status:** Condominiums, inhabited.

# SLINGERLAND

1325 Belden Avenue (Southeast corner, Belden & Wayne)

## Directions:

**From the last stop:** Continue north on Orchard one block to Armitage. Turn left (west) on Armitage, go two blocks to Halsted. Turn right (north) on Halsted and continue 4 blocks to Fullerton. Turn left (west) on Fullerton and continue about 3/4 mile to Wayne. Turn left (south) on Wayne; it's one block to Belden.

**From the highways:** Take I-90/I-94 to the North Avenue exit. Take North Avenue west to Ashland, which is the first major street, just two very short blocks from the highway. Turn right (north) on Ashland, and go one mile to Fullerton. Turn right (east) on Fullerton, go six blocks to Southport, one block past Wayne. Turn right (south) on Southport; it's one block to Belden.

-check this with mapquest or map!!!-

**History:** By the time Slingerland began its drum manufacturing, they had hopelessly outgrown the facilities on Orchard Street. The first drum catalog published (in 1928) listed the company address as "Belden and Ward," as did the next few catalogs up until 1938. In about 1937 the street name was changed from Ward to Wayne. This is the facility where the Radio King was born, the facility where all Slingerland drums were built for over 30 years, from 1927 through 1960.

**Current Status:** The first time I visited this building in 1995, I walked down the alley to get a look at the rear of the building. I found a dumpster with the name "Slingerland Condo Assoc." stenciled on it. The Slingerland family has no financial interest in the building; the name is simply in memoriam. The building is fully occupied by condo owners and kept in good repair.



## 1325 Belden, as shown in Slingerland Catalogs of the 1920s

It is presumed that "Factory No. 3" was painted on the side of the building because Slingerland was still using the facility on Orchard Street plus had a tanning facility near the stockyards, for the processing of calfskins into drumheads.



## The building in 1995

While the street-side of the building looks pretty much the same as in photos from the 1930s, the back (which is enclosed by a private courtyard) has had a major facelift, taking on the appearance of a contemporary condo.

# LUDWIG

1611-27 N Wolcott

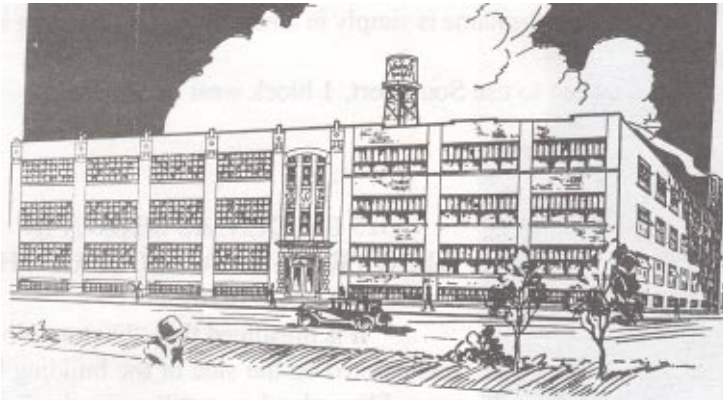
## Directions:

**From the last visit:** Take Wayne Street 1 block north to Fullerton. Turn left (west) on Fullerton, and go five blocks to Ashland. Turn left (south) on Ashland and go one mile to North Avenue. Turn right (west) on North Avenue.

## From the highways:

**Continue west on North Avenue** and count the streets as you go; after Ashland, Wolcott will be the sixth street to the right. Turn right and look for a parking spot immediately, as the building is on the right as soon as you turn the corner. (You may have to park down the block or even go around the block looking for a space.)

**History:** For practical reasons, this was the first Ludwig drum factory. As mentioned in earlier stages of the tour, the first Ludwig manufacturing was done in the basement of the Ludwig home and in a nearby barn. The first real business location for the Ludwig brothers (William F. and Theo) was an upstairs sales office/drum shop near the loop at 134 East Van Buren, Room 606. (That location is no longer in existence. The street names and numbering system have changed making it very difficult to even determine exactly where it was, but it is believed the site is now in a city park. In 1913 manufacturing was moved from the barn workshop to the Danly Die Shop on the second floor of 2427 W. 14th St. The Ludwig & Ludwig Drum Company was on the third floor. (That site is now a vacant lot.) This site was operational by 1918. At the time, the street name was Lincoln, so the address listed in 1918 was 1611-13-15 North Lincoln. In 1927 it was 1611-1621, and from 1928 through 1940 it was 1611-27. It's quite easy as you look at the front entrance to see which part of the main building is older and which was added on later.



The building's depiction in a 1920s Ludwig catalog

Drum manufacturing at this location ceased when the Conn company bought Ludwig in 1929 and moved manufacturing to Elkhart. Ludwig business offices remained here, however, until WWII. The Ludwig family reacquired the building eventually and used it in the 1970s when they ran out of room on Damen. (It was dubbed the "L&L Building" at that time.)



The water tower on top of the building today is the same one that was originally painted to resemble a giant drum.



Parts of the building are in use today, as offices, studios, and condos.

# LUDWIG

1728 N Damen Avenue

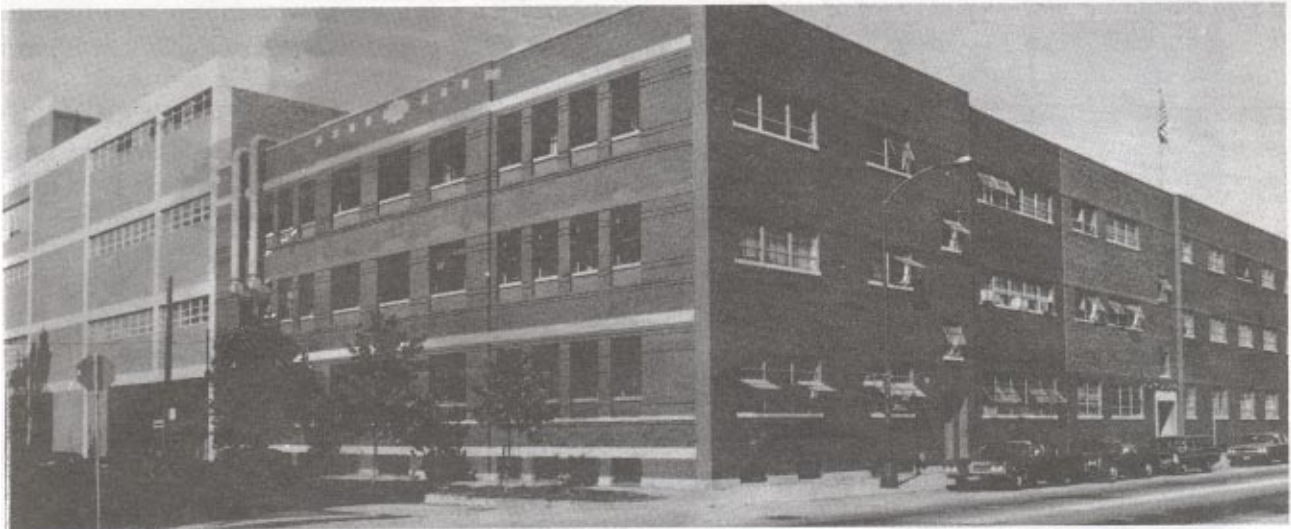
## Directions:

**From the last visit:** It is probably easier to just leave your vehicle parked and walk from 1611 N Wolcott to 1728 N Damen. Go north on Wolcott to the next corner, turn left (west) and go two short blocks to Damen Avenue. Turn right (north) you will see the former Ludwig factory down the street on the left.

**From the highways:** Take I-90/I-94 to the North Avenue exit. Go west on North Avenue 1/2 mile past Ashland to Damen Avenue. Turn right on Damen. The former Ludwig factory is about 2 blocks down on the right.

**History:** This is where William F. Ludwig Sr. and Wm. F. Ludwig Jr. set up shop when they went into the drum business in 1937. They could not use the Ludwig name because of the sale of the company in 1929 in Conn, so they used their initials, WFL, until 1955 when they bought the family name back from Conn. This was at one time the largest drum factory in the world, with 24-hour shifts working during the drum boom of the late 1960s.

**Current Status:** Living and working spaces; condominiums, offices, studios.



1728 N. Damen, in its heyday (photo from 1974 Ludwig catalog)



1728 N. Damen Condos and offices

It's worth taking the time to walk all the way around the building, as this is the largest and most significant site of the tour. It's fairly easy to see where this facility was built in stages.



# DEAGAN

1770 W. Berteau

## Directions:

**From the last visit:** Go back south on Damen to North Avenue. Turn left (east) on North Avenue, and go 1/2 mile to Ashland. Turn left (north) on Ashland. You'll travel a little over three miles north on Ashland. You'll know you're just about there when you pass Irving Park Road (Rte 19.) After you pass Irving Park Rd, continue two blocks to Berteau and turn left (west.) Watch for the building pictured below on the right (north) side of the street.

**From the highways:** Take I-90/I-94 to the Irving Park Road exit. Travel east on Irving Park three miles to Ashland. Turn left (south) on Ashland. Go two blocks to Berteau and turn left (west.) Watch for the building pictured below on the right (north) side of the street.

**History:** Though this building was not built by Deagan, it is the building once 100% occupied by Deagan. During the early part of this century when Deagan instruments were found in every major manufacturer's catalog (except Leedy), this is where everything was made. Plating, tuning, assembly, and shipping of everything from orchestra bells to church carillons. When Slingerland purchased Deagan in the 1970s, they attempted to save money by moving Deagan from this building and cramming it into a corner of the Niles factory. Deagan all but died in the process. What was left of the company was eventually sold to Yamaha.

**Current Status:** The building is owned by a manufacturer of saw blades, which occupies most of the building. One floor, however, is still devoted to the Deagan tradition; Century Mallet.



You may have to stand back in the parking lot across the street to get a look at the bell tower atop the building.

When Deagan was moved out to the Slingerland factory in Niles, Deagan employee Gilberto Serna stayed on in the building on Berteau and started his own business, Century Mallet, which is still there. Gilberto was eventually able to accumulate many of the Deagan historical archives as well as many rare Deagan instruments. He works daily in a virtual museum, reconditioning instruments for a who's who of the percussion world.



# SLINGERLAND

6633 N Milwaukee Ave., Niles

## Directions:

**From the last visit:** Go back east on Berteau to Ashland. Turn right (south) on Ashland, go two blocks to Irving Park Road. Turn right (west) on Irving Park Road. After about 2 1/2 miles you'll come to a freeway interchange. Get on I-90/I-94 headed north (a right turn,) and follow the instructions below.

**From the highways:** Headed north out of the city on I-90/I-94, watch the signs carefully after you pass Irving Park Rd; the freeway splits and you want to stay on I-90, not I-94. (Follow airport signs.) Continue on I-90 to the Harlem Avenue exit. Go north on Harlem two miles to Touhy. Turn right (east) on Touhy and go a little over a quarter mile to Milwaukee Ave. Turn right on Milwaukee. Watch for the cemetery on the right, the former Slingerland building as pictured below on the left.

**History:** Bud Slingerland built this building in 1960. When the old farmhouse that had previously stood here was razed, a jazz trio entertained the firemen controlling the blaze. After ten years of family ownership (and a couple expansions,) the building was sold with the business in 1970. As Slingerland's business fortunes suffered, the building was eventually split from the business and in the mid 1980s Slingerland vacated these premises.

**Current status:** Home of Hesco Janitorial Supplies.



**Hesco Janitorial Supplies, 1996**

# MUSIC ROW

South Wabash in the loop was once home to many of the country's foremost music retail operations. There really is not much to see there now, though you might want to take a walk just so you can say you were there. The former entrance to Franks Drum Shop is at 226 S. Wabash. The pub next door was once the Heidelberg where Frank Gault held annual drummer get-togethers.

Continue south to the corner of Wabash and Jackson. The four corners of this intersection once boasted four different piano assembly plants/showrooms; Kimball, Steger, Baldwin, and Mason & Hamlin.

Go west on Jackson and you'll see a big yellow building with reddish trim on your left. This was once Goldblatt's Department Store. It now is the DePaul Music Mart; an effort by DePaul to reestablish a kind of Music Row downtown; it is filled with retail musical instrument shops, offices, etc.

Finally, go back toward the lake on Jackson. One block past Wabash, turn right (south) on Michigan Avenue. You can still sort of feel what it was like to visit the famous Franks Drum Shop by visiting Steve Maxwell Pro Percussion at 410 S. Michigan. It is the same kind of rickety elevator ride that takes you up to a marvelous one-of-a-kind shop filled with rare custom and vintage drums. (Be sure to check their hours against your schedule.)

Steve Maxwell Pro Percussion  
410 S Michigan Ave Suite 802  
Chicago, IL 60605 312-360-9881



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