

315 N. COMMONWEALTH

Tudor Revival
Built 1933



Most people find their homes by shopping for them - by sifting through a plethora of choices before selecting “just the right one.” Other people just seem to “grow up” with a house, in the sense that they had a long acquaintance with it before actually owning it. Such is the case when a house was in the family, or “down the block,” allowing the prospective buyer to be familiar with it long before actually owning it. Then, occasionally, people find a home when their life path intersects with it in a random and unexpected way. These chance meetings can be like an unexpected love affair - one in which each partner, tentatively at first, embraces but soon find that they have enriched one another in ways that makes life a better experience for both.

The later may be the scenario which describes how Martha “Marty” Pilcher came to be the owner of 315 N. Commonwealth Ave. She grew

up in West Dundee, married and became a schoolteacher. The couple settled into a home about six blocks away. The location was close to work, family and friends. The years passed, but when the marriage ended, Marty needed a new home - and quickly. She began shopping for one by searching real estate listings and accompanying Realtors to prospective sites. Then, on her own, she happened upon a house simply listed as “For Sale by Owner.” It was cute enough on the outside to make her inquire. The look inside was intriguing enough to - just maybe - hold some promise.

Later that same day, while strolling through an antique store, she saw a dining room buffet. “Just the right size for that house,” she thought. So she immediately bought it, even without knowing if she would eventually own the house she had just seen. It was a leap of faith but one soon rewarded. Marty moved into

her new home on the day after Christmas, 2004.

The house was built in 1933 for Edwin Higgins, a postal worker, and his wife, Elizabeth. They owned it for about seven years. The next owner had it about twice as long. In 1954, Alfred and Leora Wolff purchased the home. It passed down to their son Mike, remaining in the family for 50 years!

Since assuming ownership of the house, Marty has undertaken several projects. She refinished the floors and woodwork, re-plastered and painted several rooms, remodeled the kitchen, turned the attic space into a dramatic master bedroom suite, installed the patio and landscaped the backyard. The house has become her creation. Small wonder that it shows her considerable domestic skills, for she is a family and consumer science instructor at Dundee-Crown High School.

For the last few years, Jeff Spoden has enjoyed the house with Marty. The two first met in the early 1990s, when they were both competing in country-style dancing at the Cadillac Ranch. About four years ago their lives intersected again. Just as with finding the house, Marty's re-connecting with Jeff was one of life's random and unexpected intersections. Since then, they have enriched one another's lives and made living in the house a better experience for each other.

Jeff's interest in sailing is reflected in the some of the furnishings. His handiwork has helped Marty bring out the best in the wonderful home.

Architectural Notes

Tudor Revival style became particularly popular in the 1920s when this home was built. The name is a bit of a misnomer since few revival examples closely resemble buildings of early 16th-century Tudor England. The design motifs that are usually retained in the revival versions are steeply pitched roofs, multiple front-facing gables, patterned stone or brickwork, and

arched front doors. High-style homes will often feature half-timbering, large and elaborate chimneys, and multi-pane casement windows - often in a diamond pattern. Homes for the middle-class market tended to scale down all these elements. This house has touches of just about every feature, all skillfully arranged to suggest the Tudor Style.

Inside, the house and furnishings are more Arts and Crafts in style, which was also popular at the time this house was constructed.

The backyard landscape plan has extended the living space to the outdoors. When Marty purchased the home, the yard was a grassy hill dropping away from the house to the back property line. While it may have been exciting for small children to play on, the space was of little use to adults for relaxing, entertaining or gardening. The well-designed patio turned the top of the hill into an "outdoor room." The lower area became garden space, and now is a wonderful sight for the homeowners and neighbors to enjoy.



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