

briefly during Prohibition, but later reclaimed it, and the tavern business was his livelihood until the time of his death in 1953. He made front-page headlines in the Elgin papers when he suffered a fatal heart attack while driving, and crashed into a Percy Street apartment building.

His grandmother, Julia Tatge, died in 1927. In her final will, the house on Liberty Street was formally transferred to her daughter, Alma. Alma and her husband Edward Reed, an Elgin Watch Factory employee, lived in the Tatge house their entire married life and raised their daughter there. Edward died in 1956, and Alma remained in the house 14 more years until her daughter, Helen Reed Morton, moved her to Bowes Nursing Home. Helen assumed ownership of her parents' home and lived there with her husband, George. Alma Tatge Reed died on November 17, 1972 at the age of 90. Within a year, George and Helen sold the home on Liberty Street, ending 60 years of Tatge family ownership.


The house changed hands several times and eventually became investment property for an out-of-state landlord, who in the late 1990s, cleared out the tenants and put the house on the market. Jim and Regina Bracewell had begun searching for a vintage home after attending the Historic Elgin House Tour, and when they saw the For Sale sign on Liberty Street, they couldn't get inside fast enough. They peeked in the windows, and saw exactly what they were looking for.

The house suffered major water damage when it was left empty and unheated during an unexpected early cold spell. By the time the Bracewells moved in, they had a project house on their hands. The water problem was confined to the back of the house, where an upstairs bathroom pipe had burst, damaging the bathroom and the two rooms underneath - the kitchen and dining room.

The kitchen and bath have been updated and tastefully modernized, but it's difficult to tell that the dining room is not all original. A close look will reveal slightly different trim in this room than in the others, but the room maintains a classic period look with two original sets of triple windows and a curious patterned crown in the ceiling, from which hangs four identical vintage-style lights. For purposes of privacy or even heat conservation, the dining room can be separated from the expansive parlor with a stunning pair of leaded glass pocket doors.

The second story of the house still has many old original details intact. There are glass doorknobs and other decorative door hardware, a laundry chute, fully functioning antique wall sconce lights, and even unusual hinges on many doors and cabinets. There are quirky features as well, such as the window in the closet of the front bedroom, and the tiny balcony off the rear bedroom.

The entry hall in the house is most impressive, with its elongated built-in bench seat, stained glass windows, and elegant staircase. This is the only staircase in the house, but it splits off at the landing, for practical access to and from the kitchen.

Their children grown, the Bracewells have followed in the example of Julia Weber Tatge, buying a house big enough in their empty nest years to house children and grandchildren alike. It's what they wanted, and their love for this old foursquare shows in every detail. 

ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

The house is an excellent example of the American Foursquare style. Characteristics of this building type are a low-pitched roof, usually hipped with wide overhanging eaves, cornices and

facade in geometric detailing emphasizing horizontal lines, and massive porch supports.

The exterior of the house is clad in stucco, giving it a very simple and clean finish. The only ornamental features visible on the exterior of the house are the sculptural pieces recently added by the current owners. The porch piers, the second floor windows, and the attic dormer windows create the axis of symmetry for the front façade.

The front porch extends across the entire front elevation, with large overhanging eaves, typical of this type of structure. The porch is divided into two bays and supported on heavy stucco-clad piers. The headers of the porch are tapered towards the center, which give the porch some interest, and allow for a larger span to be supported.

The second floor of the front elevation is simple, consisting of a single smaller window flanked by two double hung windows. The dormer in the attic completes the symmetry of the front elevation, with its two smaller double hung windows. Wood trim on the windows is used uniformly throughout the exterior design.