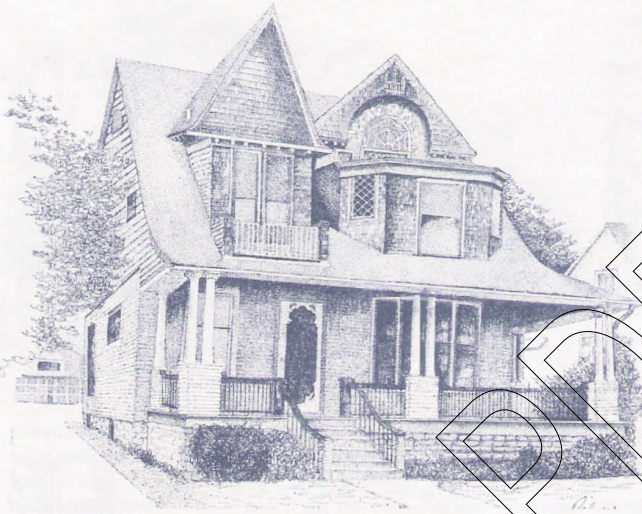


115 Hill Avenue



A Touch of Glass

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ixing elements of Colonial Revival with Shingle Style, we arrive at what is known as "Eclectic," the style of the house at 115 Hill Avenue.

Built in 1903, it was the original home of Judge Frank J. Shopen, who was born on a farm near Lily Lake in 1869. Strangely enough, the house is listed under the name of his first wife, Gertrude, in the Elgin Daily Courier listing of 1903. Judge Shopen grew up in Kane County, and upon finishing his schooling, went to work for a prominent Elgin lawyer, R. M. Ireland. In 1895, he passed the bar, and continued working with Mr. Ireland until his death, at which time Mr. Shopen continued to practice on his own. The business did well, and expanded from two rooms in the Home Bank Building to five rooms, and then larger still, and at one time accommodated three other attorneys, as well as Shopen.

He was an active man in the community for any cause that served the progress of the City of Elgin. He was a very popular public speaker, and in 1919, became presi-

dent of the Old People's Society of Elgin. By that time, he was 50, so either they liked to have young presidents for the Old People's Society, or 50 was considered old.

A widower by then, he must have been young at heart, because the next year, he married Mary Pearson, and she resided with him at 115 Hill Avenue.

The west elevation of their house is a collection of three differently detailed dormer types. The north side of the house features six different styles and shapes of window or louvered openings placed in seemingly random pattern. The south elevation is a collage of detailed gable-end elements, shown off nicely by the multi-colored paint job. The highly stylized, elongated brackets play a leading role in the interesting composition of this side of the house. Originally, the house had a shingle roof stained the same color as the face shingles, giving the entire upper half of the house the look of one large expanse without so much as an eave or soffit to break the continuity. The architecture is classically derived, and yet imaginatively interpreted -- showing a designer of unusual talent.

And speaking of talent, Bill & Cathy McDonald, the current owners, have only been here since October, and they have already taken on the overwhelming project of rebuilding the front porch. As true preservationists, they dismantled the

old porch, stripping and repairing what they could, and rebuilt from what already existed. But, during their first summer in their new old house, there was no porch floor, and not being able to use the front entrance, they couldn't even enjoy the lovely verandah.

There is a lot more to this house to enjoy besides the porch, though. As you enter, you'll notice the intricately patterned leaded glass door, which leads you into a foyer filled with rich wood tones in quarter-sawn oak. Stained glass windows sparkling with ribbony patterns in greens and browns catch your eye at the staircase. There were probably French doors separating the foyer from the parlor at one time.

The working fireplace in the parlor, the floors, and the mouldings are all of quarter-sawn oak. There was once a door leading to the back porch from the right of the fireplace, which has been closed up and walled over. And the two sections of the parlor were probably at one time divided by columns or half walls, but those too, have been eliminated.

The McDonalds have been collecting antiques for 20 years, and are proud to show off their old upright piano in the parlor as well as the old photographs you see framed on the walls, which are all of family members.

The house has a homey, Victorian feel to it, from the use of color, to the warmth of the oak wood trim, to the deep tones and picture rail in the dining room.

The owners have graciously allowed us to tour the second floor of their house, although they have not completed all the restoration and decorating they have planned for it. The second floor is abundant in southern yellow pine, from the mouldings to the built-in linen closet. All the bedrooms have built-in dressers in the closet, except for one, which is built into the wall of the room itself. There are intriguing curved plaster walls in the upstairs hall, and a tiny sleeping porch in the back.

The kitchen was remodeled by the previous owners, and is situated nicely, with a butler's pantry, and an adjoining sunroom. Cathy and Bill plan some further remodeling, but with two teenaged daughters, they will take the projects one at a time, as the budget allows. And speaking of budget, that's probably what Judge and Gertrude Shoppe had to keep in mind when they paid \$4,500.00 for this house back in 1903.

Along the Way

Nextdoor at 109 Hill is the original home of William and Lena Bultmann. William was the production superintendent of a local piano and organ factory. Lena's brother, Henry Ackemann, lived at 110 Hill. The Ackemann family was quite prominent in early Elgin, having begun the Ackemann Department Store.

Before you continue down Hill Avenue, you might consider taking a short stroll in the other direction, south to Division, and then east to Porter Street.

33 North Porter is an example of Shingle style, with a Queen Anne porch. It was built for \$4,300.00 in 1892 for Frank Cornell, manager of the Creamery Package Manufacturing Company.

34 North Porter, an example of Colonial Revival, was designed by David Postle. This large home was built in 1899 at a cost of \$7,000.00 for Charles Cornell, brother of Frank, across the street. Charles, also in the creamery business, was an alderman and city water commissioner.

21 North Porter was built in 1888 for Almira Tuck. It was in sad shape nearly 100 years later when the Gifford Park Association took on the job of rehabbing it. The renovation included removing aluminum siding, demolishing an unsightly and unsound rear addition, and returning the interior to a single family floorplan. It now houses a happy family of five, complete with dog and picket fence, a new multi-colored paint job, and a much more appropriate rear addition.

116 Porter (next block north) was built in 1892 for Fred and Christie Ackemann, and was recently the winner of the Chicago Paint Coating Association's Contest. It has 18 carved friezes gracing the exterior and 11 examples of stained glass which have survived it's 101 year history.