

205 Gifford



A House of a Different Color

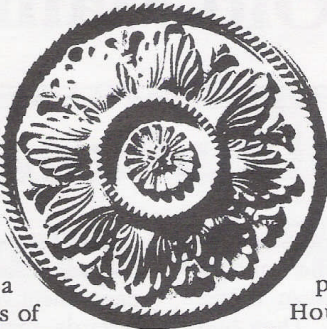
In 1882, Wesley T. Corron, a breeder of Percheron Norman draft horses, purchased the lot at 205 N. Gifford for \$900.00. He wanted a haven in the city where he could live out his retirement. He died in 1889.

His house remains, one hundred and eight years later as an appropriate memoir of the high Victorian period, in which he lived, with its cross gabled roof and Italianate detailing. The porches were an ornate architectural element, with the chamfered columns, bracketing, handrails, and overhead beams being typical of the authentic Italianate style.

The bay window was built to match

the detailing on the porches, and with its matching metal roof, blends in quite well. The airiness created by the bay window inside enhances the room and allows more light along with a more encompassing view of the side yard. The walls flanking the bay window inside have unique arched door openings, one using pocket doors and the other swing doors. Both sets of doors follow the shape of the arch.

The recessed foyer entrance is brightly lit due to the well-planned use of a glass transom and the flowing nature of the curved walls and staircase which draws the light upward.



The second floor has been furnished by Ackemanns Furniture, to give tour goers an idea of how comfortable a living space this "upstairs of a house" really can be. This apartment is designed to be easily converted back to the second story of a single-family residence.

The house is currently owned by Neighborhood Housing Services, which is a partnership between the City of Elgin, Elgin Financial Institutions, and residents of Elgin. The work of this partnership has recently flowered into the historically sensitive rehabilitation of 205 N. Gifford.

The property has served many people since Wesley Corron's retirement days. But perhaps its lowest point was just before NHS purchased the building. It was "home" for seven households, code violations and drug activity were abundant, and transients were renting by the week. Most importantly, the property was promoting disinvestment and neglect in the community.

Along with the help of the Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation and the City of Elgin, Neighborhood Housing Services has contracted the restoration/rehabilitation of this once prominent property.

The current and *temporary* use of the building is dual. The lower unit will be occupied by Neighborhood Housing Services as an office. The upper unit will be residential, until NHS completes its work in the area north of Park Street. At this time, NHS will vacate the premises to leave it as the single-family home it was intended to be. Sensitive rehabilitation will easily convert this grand building to a home which will continue to be an inspiration in the area for many years to come. Perhaps someday another Elginite will live out his retirement in style just as Wesley Corron did here a century ago.