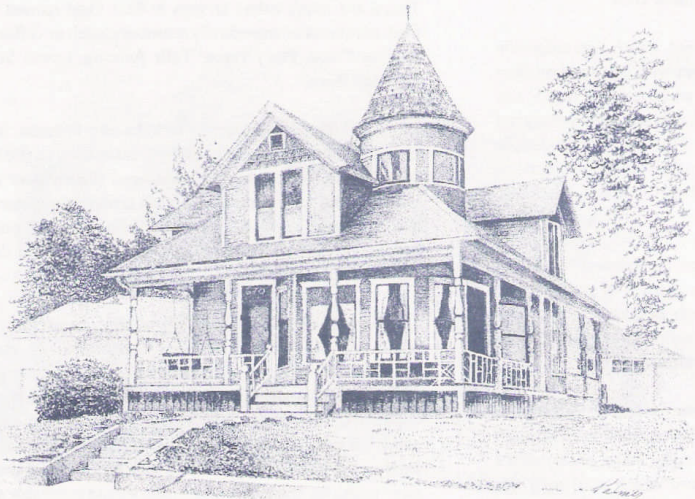


670 Lillie Street



A Dollhouse of a Dream House

Figuring out the history of this house is almost as complex as its exterior architectural forms. A spindlework Queen Anne study in greens, with hipped roof and cross gables, this property was purchased in 1892 at a court sale by Thomas and Emma Webb. Thomas was a janitor at Sheridan School on Franklin Boulevard. The first record of him residing at 670 Lillie comes in 1897 -- perhaps the lot stood empty for a few years before he built the house and moved in -- but then he apparently moved and didn't live there again until 1907. One of the interim dwellers was David Walker, who was a park custodian and later with the Lords Park Police.

Thomas Webb then sold the property in 1908 to Fred Traub, the owner of 625 Lillie (also featured on this House Tour) for \$2,400. Most probably, Traub bought the property as an investment. He sold it in 1919 to William Parker, and the house was in the Parker family until 1988 when Dave and Heather Hunt bought it.

By then, the house was suffering from mid-20th century remuddling, having been used as rental property

for many years, and the Hunts took on the task of restoring the house, including the multi-color exterior paint scheme. When they were finished, they sold it to the current owners, Michael and Sue Milliken.

In conversations with members of the Parker family, it was learned that shortly after the house was purchased from the Traubs, a violent storm blew off the top portion of the turret. Mr. Parker, who was giving the details, had just turned 90, and this storm had taken place 70 years earlier, but he said he did remember the turret being quite a bit taller. The house stands just one and one-half stories tall, though perhaps this was not always the case. Gable end dormers project through the hipped roof and create the interesting arrangements of bedrooms on the upper level, which compliment the complexity of the exterior style of the house. It is theorized that the turret, previous to the storm, had full double-hung windows in the upper portion, parts of which were salvaged to make the casements with operable curved glass that are now there.

The large wall dormer over the driveway cantilevers slightly to extend its roof peak above the ridge line, in what appears to be a rare concession to function -- a comfortably large upstairs bedroom. Actually, function being a 20th Century thing, we must confess this bedroom is an enlargement of the original plan.

Although the builder is unknown, it seems possible that construction of this house was somehow tied in with surplus materials from Lords Park Pavilion. Though small by Victorian standards, it is really quite extravagant on the exterior. This house sits on what was at one time the city limits, and overlooked the land that would become Lords Park.

The interior is quite cozy and inviting. The front door welcomes you with an addressed transom. A small floorplan nonetheless sports richness in arched wood trim on the first floor, and bullseyes on the upper level. The second parlor is especially charming with a beautiful tiled fireplace, and the stained glass window is original to the house. The kitchen has been attractively and logically remodeled, with a small bathroom off the kitchen added where once there was a staircase to the basement.

Interestingly, Michael and Sue are friends with Will and Maureen Alexander (625 Lillie), who alerted them when this house went on the market. The Alexanders moved to Lillie Street first, and when Michael and Sue visited, they'd dream of living in the little green Victorian down the street. When it went up for sale, though, they didn't get too excited, since they were sure they could never afford it. But housing in Elgin being such a bargain, they were surprised at the price, and put an offer on the it immediately. And now they are living in their dream house, which the neighborhood affectionately refers to as the doll house, simply because of its quaintness and charm.

The Millikens are adding some personal touches to a basically already restored house, such as the Winnie The Pooh and birdhouse murals you see upstairs. They are still baffled by the strange layout of the second floor with its narrow hall and labyrinth of old and new rooms, but they don't have any plans to start knocking down walls and changing it.

Sue, a production coordinator for a large printing company, is concentrating on the landscaping at home, and spending more time relaxing now that her husband is finished with school. He recently completed his teaching degree in secondary education, although he works as a restaurant manager at Lou Malnati's in Wilmette, which, by the way, is where Michael and Sue met.

And they are living happily ever after in their dream house on this quiet little street nestled against Lords Park.

By the Way . . .

David Walker, who lived at 670 Lillie for a time, was a custodian for Lords Park for many years. One of his jobs was

to feed the bears in the Lords Park Zoo. The first two black bears, Jack and Juno, donated by Dr. Joseph Tefft, arrived there in 1895, followed later by two more bears, Frank and Kitty.

David, or Davey, as he was called, trained the bears to do tricks, such as standing on their hind legs and kissing him on the cheek. He became quite popular at the zoo, and at bear-feeding time, there was always a large crowd around the cage, watching the entertaining show. There is even a story that he one time let some of the children who were watching into the bear cage to ride on the back of the bear, but that story may have just grown taller with years.

A native of Scotland, Davey Walker had always dreamed of returning to his homeland. He could not afford to travel there, but he had become such a popular figure that it was decided there would be a benefit at Lords Park to raise money for the "David Walker Travel Fund."

This was a carnival type of thing, with rides and cakes and such, and the City Council took the task of selling soda pop at their booth. Mayor Price showed up inebriated, as was customary for him, but in his condition, he couldn't help but get worked up over any person who passed by and wouldn't buy a soda pop to help his friend Davey Walker. He began shouting and throwing bottles at people, and he was hustled out of the carnival, but not before a reporter for the Courier witnessed what had happened. The next day, the story of the drunken mayor was on the front page. Mayor Price, who by now had a hefty hangover, was so angry, he went down to the Courier office and decked the reporter on sight. Unfortunately, he clobbered the wrong man. He had punched a real estate man who happened to be there. He apologized profusely, insisting he would clobber a newspaper editor, but never a real estate man!

