

# 156 S. GIFFORD

Italianate  
Built 1872



The home at 156 S. Gifford St. was on the Gifford Park Association Historic Elgin House Tour in 2006; its new porch, reconstructed from an old photograph, has brought it onto the tour for 2011.

In the estate of early Elgin settler James T. Gifford, son-in-law Orlando Davidson and wife Caroline acquired Gifford Street between Prairie and Villa streets. Davidson sold lot 2 of the property, which contained 156 S. Gifford, in 1872 to Charles L. Bigsby.

The 1871 Elgin City Directory lists Bigsby as living on Gifford between Prairie and Villa, but conflicts with the deed from Davidson showing Bigsby's acquisition as occurring in summer 1872. The 1871 directory may have covered more than one year, but it seems fair to say that Bigsby's house was built in 1872.

Charles L. Bigsby, a mason and plastering contractor, came to Elgin from New York state. His wife, Cynthia, died in 1893; the couple had

no children. Bigsby remarried Mary Ellen Morgan in 1897 and they had two sons. In 1878, Bigsby sold the house to Benjamin Burritt. Burritt's son, Dr. Josiah Burritt, and his wife, Ellen, lived there a short time, but then moved and rented out the house. Ellen Burritt died in 1919, and the house was sold to George Haseman, who was employed in the piano business with his brother and at Elgin Sweeper Co.

Current owners Chris and Rebekah Berry bought the house in 2003 and had lots of work to do. The Northwest suburbs' prices were too high for what they wanted. Chris, a systems architect with Cancer Treatment Centers of America, suggested Elgin, where he grew up and helped his parents renovate homes.

Rebekah, a certified financial planner with Robert W. Baird & Co. in Chicago, grew up near Eau Claire, Wis. She agreed to look in Elgin, and within a few days found their house. Chris called it a "diamond in the rough," and was thrilled by the challenge of restoring it. In

