

Dr. Richard Eells House 415 Jersey St.

Quincy is fortunate to have one of the most important Underground Railroad sites in the United States, the Dr. Richard Eells' house. The house and Dr. Eells' activities are important because the nature of the Underground Railroad was always secretive. "Conductors" hid and helped slaves move north toward Canada from slave

states such as Missouri. Little was ever written about such actions, therefore accounts are often oral stories difficult to trace or prove, and individuals who helped slaves were mostly unknown. Both state and federal laws forbade helping runaway slaves and Dr. Eells was caught helping the slave Charley escape. He was arrested in 1842, found guilty and fined. Eells' case was appealed to the Illinois Supreme Court and the U.S. Supreme Court, but the cases were lost in both venues. Despite the legal ramifications, Eells helped slaves to freedom, and was a leader in the Adams County Anti-Slavery Society.



The architecture of the Eells' house today reflects several changes from the once small Greek Revival home that Eells and his wife Jane constructed in the 1830s. Particularly notable of the remaining Greek Revival details are the horizontal frieze band windows in the attic. Primary windows are six-over-six double-hung and both the windows and the entry have both stone window sills and lintels. The entry is to one side and has stone steps. Italianate decorative details were added in the early 1870s such as the dentil course, and paired brackets at the cornice. At this time the roof was also modified with a new medium overhang. The interior of the home has intact Greek Revival details such as pedimented doors and windows, formal parlor with fireplace, narrow halls and stairs and high ceilings. The property has had several additions. In 1841 the Eells enlarged the house when they adopted two children. After the Eells left the house, it was again altered in the 1850s, and then again in the early 1870s when the Italianate details were added. The property has a carriage house at the rear. As a physician, Eells would have had a medicinal herb garden behind the house, and his front yard would have been mostly any kind of plant. Yards of the period were not maintained - mowing and yard maintenance did not become popular until after the Civil War.

Dr. Eells died October, 1846, on a trip four short years after his arrest. After her husband died, Jane moved away from Quincy. After the Eells left, the house became rental property and at times a boarding house.

The Friends of the Dr. Richard Eells House purchased the house in 1992 and have since rehabilitated and restored the house, inside and out, with the guidance of experts. They also created a period landscape and opened the house as a museum. The Friends have been challenged recently with new needed repairs when the July 13 storm blew a tree down and damaged the back wall of a rear one-story addition. The main house also needs a new roof. Thus the Friends welcome the financial support of the public in maintaining this unique and important property.

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