

Mead House

Mead House - 1401 Hampshire Street - 1878 - Gothic Revival - architect unknown

Henry W. Mead was first a freight clerk for the CB&Q railroad and later, treasurer of the large Quincy Coal Company. Shortly after taking the coal company job, he built his dream house on the corner of 14th and Hampshire Streets, near where he had been living prior to that time. In later years, he served as the local agent of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries.

Although the architect is unknown, it is believed to have been Robert Bunce with whom Mead chose the picturesque Gothic style. Unusual with a stuccoed exterior, the Gothic theme is carried out well with open carpentry work in the gable trim (barge) boards, in the angle-arched windows around the house, in the steep slope of the roofs, and through the bracketing used under the balconied second floor rear parlor and in the ornamented trim on the rear of the house and the rear porch. No transoms of stained or bevelled glass break up the long, lean line of the windows; rather, ornamental wood lintel trim punctuates the Gothic theme. A most unusual, and unusually attractive, feature of the house is the entry and front porch which is set diagonal to the orientation of the house proper, adding still another interesting angle to this house of angles.

Upon entering the foyer, one is immediately impressed with the quality of appointments with which Mead adorned the house. A foyer floor of alternating maple and walnut boards alert one to the pleasures to be found within. While standing in the foyer, the principle feature is inescapable: the three-floor walnut and butternut stairway (the newell and bannister are black walnut, the spindles painted butternut). Doors and trim, as seen from the foyer, are of pine, are compound molded and have a beautiful brush-grained finish, an advanced art in Quincy at the time.

Of the six fireplaces in the large, luxurious family home, five are of marble, all different and all of a different ornamentation. Woodwork throughout the house (except one room) is pine, painted from the beginning. Plaster ornamental medallions in the foyer and first floor, front parlor are believed original and give further indication of the richness Mead was trying to achieve.

While the perfect shape of all interior features of the house is apparent, it should be noted that when the present owners, Mr. and Mrs. George Buffington, bought and occupied the house, a thorough top-to-bottom, rundown condition existed as the result of having been abandoned for several years and (prior to that) having been rented out as apartments for decades with no maintenance whatsoever. Around 1915, a slight adaptation of the upstairs was done to form two apartments. It was at that time that the oak woodwork in the rear west parlor was added together with the Murphy bed and closet.

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