

1443 Maine Street -- 1867 -- Italian Villa --
SELMES HOUSE -- Architect Unknown

The austere and grand Italian villa standing since 1867 at 1443 Maine has survived with a remarkable amount of its original woodwork and some late 19th century accretions intact. Italianate moldings frame the nobly-proportioned archways and full length windows of the formal rooms. The original frames of the door transoms remain, but the glass has been removed from some of them and replaced with other materials. The classical wooden fireplace mantel in the parlor and the terra cotta fireplace with dark oak mantel in the sitting room of the east wing as well as the oak floors, probably date from the late 19th century. The east wing library has fine victorian walnut bookcases, later additions, but perfectly suited to the proportions of the house. The kitchen has been remodeled to suit the needs of a modern family but an early plate warmer remains in the old butler's pantry. The original ice box remains, built into the masonry of the basement's south wall. Before the front porch, dating from the turn of the century, was built, a hatchway, operated by a pulley from the basement, allowed great blocks of ice to be lowered into the huge box. Traces of this apparatus still remain. The prairie-style front porch extends to the east wing and is a surprisingly harmonious addition to the Italianate house.

Quincy attorney Tilden Selmes and his wife Sarah built this well-known home and, in 1880, it was sold to the Reverend Alexander Burgess, Episcopal Bishop of Quincy. In 1885, its ownership passed from the Burgess family to Jim Bishop, the mayor of Quincy and his wife, Elizabeth. The reverend Samuel Hopkins Emery, pastor of the First Congregational Church, bought the house in 1894. Descended from a close friend of George Washington, Reverend Emery was a man distinguished for his charity and courage. During the Civil War, President Lincoln gave Emery a special pass that enabled him to go anywhere in the Union lines on his errands of mercy. He traveled into the Confederacy carrying medicine, food, and clothing to the prison camps. Reverend Emery was also a founder of The Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County, one of the oldest Historical Societies in the United States. His descendents lived at 1443 Maine Street until 1937 when Constance Emery Ellis and her husband, Alfred, sold the house to Edgar and Ruth Ferris Schaefer. A graduate of the University of Illinois and a World War I aviator, Quincyan Edgar Schaefer returned to his home town and a career at the Gardner-Denver Company of which he eventually became President. Ruth Ferris Schaefer, his wife, was a highly respected English teacher, remembered with respect and affection by generations of graduates of Quincy High School. After Mrs. Schaefer's death in 1981, the house was sold to Ron and Sandy Frillman who came to Quincy from Shawnee, Kansas. These new owners of 1443 Maine are restoring their historically and architecturally significant Quincy home.

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