



George and Sarah Wells House
224 S. 20th • c. 1911
Harvey Chatten, architect

This was the retirement home of George Wells, son of one of Quincy's pioneering families. Born in the city in 1846, Wells became one of Quincy's leading mortgage bankers. His wife Sarah was of equal local prominence. Born a Castle in England, she was an early president of the Round Table, a Quincy women's literary club.

Chatten's design for the Wells' home was perfectly suited to their social station and life style. Sited well back from the street on an arching drive, its approach is reminiscent of the grand 18th century manor houses of England. In style also it is more English than American Georgian, though it has its share of turn-of-the-century Americanisms. The intricately detailed modillions that line the eaves, like the capitals atop the portico columns, are not carved of wood but cast of a composition material. The art glass that surrounds the entry is in the Craftsman style, with a strong central floral motif (a stylized tulip) set off by a complex rectangular grid with strong Prairie School overtones. Even the face bricks, with their irregular surfaces and glazes, show the Craftsman predilection for machine produced objects that look hand-made.

Just inside the entry a vast stair hall provides evidence of the frequent social uses for which the house was designed. This hall is also the most elaborately ornamented room in the house, thanks to intricately modeled ceiling covings and a grand staircase. By contrast the living room to the left is a masterpiece of understatement. Oriented during the day to the outside through its long panel of south windows and during the night to its simple west end fireplace, it contains no ornament that is not integral to its construction. A small sitting room across from the living room is similarly simple but for a ceiling strikingly contoured in a semi-elliptical shape. The dining room and study beyond have beamed ceilings, but the effect is more of intimacy than grandeur. A large garage to the rear of the property probably once housed the chauffeur; it too is in the Georgian style brought up to date.

After Sarah Wells' death in 1921, George's daughter Harriet and her husband D. L. Musselman, president of Gem City Business College, moved in from their relatively humble home just to the south to provide Wells with some company. When George died in 1934, they moved back into their own house, which has since burned.

current owners: Ted and Dianna Pollock

*BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
 OCTOBER 16, 1993*