

HUFFMAN HOUSE

1469 MAINE STREET, QUINCY, ILLINOIS

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT UNKNOWN, 1881

SECOND EMPIRE STYLE

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The house at 1469 Maine Street was built in 1881 for Matthias Huffman, prominent Quincy jeweler. The original architect of the house is not known, but it has been said that Huffman built the house as a wedding present for his French-Canadian bride. That legend may explain the choice of the French Second Empire Style for the design of the house. The Huffmans had no children but occupied the house for many years.

The Second Empire Style takes its name from the French Second Empire, the reign of Emperor Napoleon III (1852-1870). One of the first great public building projects of the Second Empire was the construction of a vast extension of the Palace of the Louvre in Paris in 1852-1857. The New Louvre, heavier and more sculptural than the seventeenth century parts of the palace, was the central important building of the Second Empire Style. However, its influence on American architectural work was indirect. Designs inspired by it were published and circulated much more extensively than the Louvre itself and were consequently imitated more frequently in such examples as the State, War and Navy Building (now Executive Office Building) in Washington, D. C.; the Philadelphia City Hall; and the Old Post Office Building in St. Louis, Missouri.

In general, buildings of the Second Empire Style are tall in appearance, boldly modeled and emphatically three-dimensional in effect. The chief characteristic of the second Empire Style in domestic architecture is the use of the mansard roof, a roof form of steep pitch with a second lower pitch to a ridge or a flat deck. The mansard roof is named for French architect Francois Mansart, who invented it, but it assumed a new importance during the French Second Empire as a way of gaining an additional story above the fixed cornice line height established during the reconstruction of Paris by Napoleon III and Baron Haussmann. The mansard roof is often seen in variations that are straight or are either curved inward or bowed outward slightly. The Second Empire Style with the characteristic mansard roof is often referred to as the "General Grant Style" in American domestic architecture because of its popularity during his presidency. It is the mansard roof that is the chief distinguishing characteristic that places the Huffman House in the Second Empire Style.

Architectural ornament in non-domestic Second Empire Style buildings is usually classical and frequent use was made of heroic sculptured figures in classical pose and dress. The more common kind of ornament found in houses of the Second Empire Style consists of incised lines, often gilded, in woodwork and other carved ornaments such as rosettes and leaf-life forms. This kind of ornament is based on ornament introduced to American architecture by Richard Morris Hunt in the 1870's and is directly related to the French Neo-Grec (New Greek) Style that recalled such classical themes as the anthemion, or honey-suckle blossom. The interior architectural ornament of the Huffman House is of this type. However, the rich variety of ornamental forms and the rich polychromy of two-colored slate roof, red brick and pale gray limestone of the exterior of the house is derived from the late Victorian Gothic Style of the last third of the nineteenth century.

Decorative details to note inside the Huffman House include the extensive use of fine wood, the carved newel post of the stairway in the front hall, the marble mantles in the two parlors, the shutters in the bay windows and the very elaborate original hardware on all doors. The house is furnished with fine Victorian parlor pieces and crystal chandeliers grace several rooms.