

FIGGEN HOUSE

1605 HAMPSHIRE STREET

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT UNKNOWN, circa 1895
GEORGE P. BEHRENSMEYER (?), ARCHITECT FOR REMODELING, circa 1915

QUEEN ANNE (SHINGLE) STYLE

The house at 1605 Hampshire Street is believed to have been built about 1895 for a Mr. William Figgen; the architect of the house at the time of construction is not known. The house was designed in what is known as the Queen Anne Style, although the extensive use of shingles as a surfacing material qualifies it as an example of the Shingle Style, a second stage in the development of the Queen Anne Style.

The Queen Anne Style is historically based on the work of English architect Richard Norman Shaw, active in England during the 1860's and the 1870's. Shaw's work was revivalist in character and he drew his inspiration from the architecture of the period of Queen Anne in the 17th Century. The first important buildings in the Queen Anne Style constructed in the United States were the British Government Buildings erected in Philadelphia for the Centennial Exhibition of 1876.

The characteristics of the Queen Anne Style that are in evidence in the Figgen House are the strong picturesque quality of the house; the complex form of the house created by the use of many roof forms, dormers, bay windows, balconies and chimneys; the use of several construction materials together, including stone, shingles, brick and decorative wooden trim; and the use of small-scale classically inspired ornamental details such as the porch columns, the fluted pilasters of the second story bay window over the porch and the decorative swag on the east front bay window.

The plan of the William Figgen House recalls contemporary nineteenth century houses in its suite arrangement of large parlors that can be joined or separated by large sliding doors. The front door of the Figgen House leads first to an entry and stair hall that joins a reception room-library along the west side of the house that has its own entrance from the covered driveway or porte-cochere. The east side of the house contains a front parlor, a dining room, a butler's pantry and the kitchen. A wall has been removed joining the parlor and dining room, and a bathroom now occupies the former pantry. The second floor of the Figgen House is arranged in a way that is similar to the first floor, with suites of rooms joined by sliding doors.

The interior of the William Figgen House is unexpectedly simple in appearance. Several fireplaces have apparently been removed. The woodwork of the pantry and kitchen, not on view on this tour, is marked by vertical flutings and moldings suggestive of classical columns and cornices and is similar in appearance to the pilasters of the exterior of the second floor bay window above the entrance porch. The simplicity of the woodwork throughout the rest of the house and its dissimilarity to the woodwork in the kitchen area suggest that the interior has been modified, possibly by George P. Behrensmeyer, a Quincy architect who is believed to have done residential work of some kind for the Urban family. Gustav A. Urban occupied this house from about 1910 until about 1935, a time during which Behrensmeyer was a prominent Quincy architect. The simple linear form of the woodwork suggests the Prairie School, an architectural movement with which Behrensmeyer was in complete sympathy.

The woodwork throughout the house is oak. Decorative details to note include the wrought-iron hinges of the front door, the acid etched glass of the stairway windows, the remaining beveled glass of the front parlor window and various kinds of architectural ornament on the exterior of the house.