

LORENZO BULL HOUSE

1550 MAINE STREET, QUINCY, ILLINOIS

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT UNKNOWN, 1850

ITALIANATE STYLE

The house at 1550 Maine Street was built in 1850 for prominent Quincy business man Lorenzo Bull. The original architect of the house is not known, although the house may have been designed and constructed by any one of several prominent master builders active in Quincy at the time. The house was designed and constructed in the Italianate Style, one of the popular styles of the time.

The Italianate Style, or Italian Villa Style, is historically based on the design of 13th and 14th century north Italian farm houses constructed by landowners as semi-fortified residences from which to operate vast holdings of agricultural land. The houses were particularly characterized by towers from which the surrounding landscape could be surveyed. The popularity of Italianate Style in American residential architecture is partly the result of the popularization of the styles by Andrew Jackson Downing in books that recommended the styles that were most appropriate for various landscape settings as part of a broad movement in interest in the picturesque. The Italianate Style is characterized by buildings that consist of well-defined rectilinear blocks symmetrically grouped, although elevations may or may not be symmetrical; by roofs of gentle pitch, either hipped or gabled; by an eave of extreme projection elaborated as a cornice supported by brackets, usually in pairs; by windows that are round-headed or arched, with elaborate window hoods in later examples; by bay windows balustraded balconies and verandahs or porches; and by a prominent tower or cupola. The Lorenzo Bull exhibits all of the characteristics of the Italianate Style except the elaboration of window openings and the use of a cupola. Instead, the Lorenzo Bull House is crowned by a handsome railing that encloses the flat deck of the roof and recall the treatment of houses of the Federal Period immediately following the American Revolution.

The plan of the Lorenzo Bull House is typical of houses in the Italianate Style. The front door of the house gives access to a central hall that crosses the house from front to back on both floors to give access to all parts of the house as well as insure cross-ventilation within the house. The central hall divides the house into equal parts that are balanced across the hall. The east side of the Lorenzo Bull house contains a large double parlor and the west side of the house contains the dining room and an elaborate library. The second floor of the house generally reflects the plan of the first floor. The kitchen, servants rooms and other service spaces were contained in an "el" addition to the house to the west and south.

The interior of the Lorenzo Bull house is generally simple but elegant in appearance. The vestibule is elaborated with delicate leaded sidelights and transoms framing the doorways and the floor is tiled with terra cotta tile. The central hall features a paneled wainscoting and a stairway with a handrail of turned spindles and carved newel posts. The east double parlor contains handsome woodwork and cornice and both parlors are extended outward by bay windows. The fireplace mantle in the double parlor probably dates from the late 19th century and is not original. The west dining room, also extended by a bay window that affords brilliant natural light, contains a handsome chandelier in cut glass and crystal. The library is easily the most elaborate room in the Bull house and it probably represents a remodeling completed during the last half of the 1870's. The simple woodwork found in the rest of the house has been replaced by an elaborate example of the late 19th century cabinet maker's art. The woodwork includes details such as the fluted pilasters of the door frames, the slender clustered columns of the bookcases and the arched pediment of the bay window that are classically inspired. The west one-third of the room was originally a porch that balanced the east porch of the house, completing the symmetry of the front, although the porches were not originally joined to each other.

The Lorenzo Bull house is now the headquarters of the Quincy Women's City Club, which has occupied the building since 1932.