

2531 Prentiss Ave. (1840)



2531 Prentiss Avenue Vernacular Two-Thirds Double Pile House Circa 1840

Benjamin and Electa moved to the Quincy area in 1835, leaving behind their Connecticut jobs in the clock making business. Benjamin was a machinist who developed advanced clockwork mechanisms. Electa added ornamental painting to clock dials. At one time, Benjamin worked for Seth Thomas Clock Company.

- The family first lived in Round Prairie farm, near Plymouth, Illinois, but left because Benjamin wanted to assist with the Mission Institute Number Two, enroll his children in the institute and return to the clock making/machinist trade. The Mission Institute was a Congregational training school for foreign missionaries founded by Dr. Nelson in 1836.
- This house housed both the Terrel family and Mission Institute students. It was located where Madison School parking lot is today.
- The Mission Institute and this house are associated with Quincy's Underground Railroad. Whether this was an actual "stop" or not is unknown. It is conjectured that Dr. Eells was headed to the Mission Institute area when he was caught with Charlie, an escaped slave. Two spaces are purported to be slaves hiding spots—one under second story floorboards and one in the basement, accessed by a trap door. Neither spot remains today. Some wonder whether an organization known for being "a nest of dirty Abolitionists" would actually harbor slaves, or instead would orchestrate slaves' escape using other houses.
- All the changes the house has experienced in 177 years are unknown. It is known that the original scavenged tongue and grooved floor is gone. Signs of former bricked-in windows are visible the near the front roof line, and old photos show a full length porch which would have been a post 1840s addition. A non-original fireplace that divided the main floor is also gone. House history says it was remodeled in the 1930s. The existing fireplaces in the east room and the exterior were added in the 1950s. An entry hallway was removed in the 1960s.
- The front door and its surround, many windows and the newel and balusters are original. The east wing's exposed roofer board markings indicate they were sawn in 1840 or earlier. The east room is original-- whether it was an attached summer kitchen or a dormitory for Mission Institute students is unknown. Previous owners added the marble on the patio, reporting that it was from the old courthouse.
- Veteran renovation company *Houseworks, Inc.* is completing the historical project.

7/17