

Baker House

1444 Maine Street - Italianate - 1859 - W. B. Hauworth, architect

One of the most comfortable examples of adaptive re-use of an older structure in Quincy is the James T. Baker home at 1444 Maine, which for a number of years has functioned as administrative offices of the Quincy Board of Education. Built in 1859 with the aid of architect-builder William B. Hauworth, this grand scaled Italian Villa style house was the family residence of a prominent Quincy merchant.

Having served as a family home under owners Baker, McFadon, and Gardner, the house was given to St. John Episcopal Church in the 40's and later sold to the Gardner Denver Company. The company remodeled the interior for its corporate board use, installing offices, meeting rooms on the upper floors and banquet and kitchen facilities in the basement.

Today, as one approaches, a first glance reveals unusually large scale bracketing under the soffets in one of the most ornate designs to be found. Unique rope molding surrounds the window frames on the main portion of the house. Front and rear entrance doors are flanked by the original leaded glass panels. The west wing of the house is more austere with non-ornamented lintels, window trimming, and scaled down bracketing. A curved bay west of the rear entrance is a departure from the ordinary rectangular box usually associated with the basic Italianate house.

Oak wainscoat paneling in the foyer and up the stairway, and an oak bannister with burlled insert newell post is the first feature one notices upon entering the pass-through foyer. While the paneling is original, the door trimming and doors were added during the remodeling. The principle parlor on the east now serves as the office of the Superintendent of Schools. The magnificent wood trim employed on the floor-length windows and throughout this parlor and its adjoining sitting room is pine. On the ceilings in the center of both rooms are plaster moldings, which could have been original and are French in design. Fireplace facades are Italian marble with unusual Corinthian columns. Light fixtures have been added during remodeling. All crown moldings appear to be original.

As one enters the west service wing, the same austerity as on the exterior is apparent, with scaled down windows, plain wood trim, etc.

In 1978 the entire ceiling in the foyer fell to the floor. Along with all the plaster came an ornamental plaster molding similar to those in the east parlors, and it has been saved in pieces. The School Board hopes eventually to restore this piece for the finish and grandeur it lends to the foyer.

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