

Wells House

1825 Jersey Street • Transitional • c. 1904 • Harvey Chatten, architect

The house at 1807 Jersey Street was built for J. Russell Wells by Quincy architect Harvey Chatten. Although the plans are dated 1904, the house is thought to have been built slightly later.

The imposing structure shows influences from various styles of architecture. From the Queen Anne style is the brick and the gambrel roof is a feature frequently found in the Shingle style. This style is much simpler than Queen Anne, with more emphasis on the horizontal, as seen in the extending porches. Several elements such as the outward thrust of the single-story service wing seem to point toward the Prairie style. Also notable is the classical detailing under the eaves.

Edward Wells came from the East to settle in Quincy in 1834. A prominent Quincy citizen, he was founder of the Unitarian church and politically active, acquainted with the leading politicians of the day including Lincoln and Douglas and was instrumental in getting the railroad bridge built over the Mississippi. The family lived at 408 Jersey St. and later built the house at 421 Jersey St., which is occupied at present by the YWCA. The grandson, Russell Wells, was born in 1872 and from his boyhood showed a strong interest in the arts. From the age of 14 on, he attended private schools in Massachusetts. He entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with the class of 1895, studying architecture. Later he transferred to the Boston Art School where he spent two years working in decorative design. After a summer abroad he returned to Quincy and with his wife built the house at 1807 Jersey St. where the family lived until 1960 when the house was sold.

The Wells House is situated perpendicularly to Jersey St. with entrances on the east and west. The main entrance on the west opens on a small vestibule with tile floor. To the right is a reception room and straight ahead the large open reception hall. To the left of the main hall is the dining room which connects with the kitchen and extensive service areas. Off the main hall to the right is the living room which occupies the southern end of the house and includes a secluded fireplace nook with a raised hearth, which is flanked by two bottle-glass windows. The porch on the east side gave access to the Wells' elaborate iris gardens. In 1925 the porch was enclosed and the second story added.

The floors throughout the Wells House are of oak, as is the painted woodwork. Also of particular interest are the delicate plaster mouldings in the vestibule and the reception room, as well as the tiled fireplace in the reception hall and in the living room nook.

The essentially formal character of the interior as seen in the arrangement and function of the rooms is balanced by a feeling of lightness and openness. There is no sense of constriction or confinement. The spaces seem to flow into one another, all elements lending an air of warmth and charm which contribute to the unique character of the house.

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