

The Eiff House is typical of the many near-northside residences that Quincy architect Frank Tubessing designed for well to do businessmen. Tubessing's early work echoed that of his mentor, Robert Bunce. But by the late 1880s it had begun to acquire the distinctive characteristics it would carry for the next twenty years: monumental dormer gables, usually highly ornamented and rising straight up from the front wall; several hints of Romanesque Revival, particularly in the use of round-headed windows; a decorated neoclassical pediment announcing the entry to the porch; and a bold faceted or (in the more expensive designs such as this) semicircular bay on one side. That lateral bay, which is also one of the nicest interior features, always rises the full height of the building, often bursting through the eaves to form a tower.

Tubessing was also fond of that most fragile of late Queen Anne features, a wrap-around porch. The Eiff house has held onto its full porch, though the current owners have had to replace its millwork. The new turned columns are very much like those that Tubessing preferred, while the sawn brackets are a fanciful addition.

Joseph Eiff was a plastering contractor, born in Quincy of parents who emigrated from Holland. By the time he came to build his house on 14th Street, he had been a contractor for fifteen years after the usual beginning as laborer and tradesman. His house testifies to his success, for it has the standard "extras" supplied by architects and contractors to clients with deep pockets: stained glass transom lights, quarter-sawn white oak interiors, and ornamental fireplaces. Tubessing's hand is particularly evident in the design of the front parlor fireplace, whose subtly curved and modeled wood surfaces are of a piece with the house's exterior. A smaller fireplace in the sitting room is equally appropriate to the house but likely of stock design.

Several original art glass transom lights use designs based on stylized lilies and honeysuckles, which are part of an ancient architectural vocabulary. Tubessing could likely also have chosen something like the twining rose pattern in the other front windows had he been a more progressive designer, though they are in fact of recent manufacture. The owners have also added etched glass panels to the vestibule doors and installed an overmantel ornament above the front fireplace.



Joseph G. and Mary Eiff House
605 N. 14th Street
Late Queen Anne Style, 1896
attributed to Frank Tubessing, architect

current owner: Robert Leake

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
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