

Wm. Bull House

222 South 16th Street - Queen Anne Style - 1888 - Joseph Lyman Silsbee, architect

The house on the southwest corner of Jersey and 16th Streets was built in 1888 for William Bull who was the son of Lorenzo Bull. The elder Bull built the large frame house on the southwest corner of Maine and 16th Streets which is today the home of the Women's City Club.

The Bull family came to Quincy in the late 1830's from New York state and very soon became prominent in the economic and cultural life of the community. They were in such diverse businesses as the development of the city water works, the horse-drawn streetcar system, and various other projects. The Bulls were active and founding members of the Quincy Conservatory of Music and the Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County. During the Civil War they engaged in banking and continued successfully in this field. A brother of Lorenzo Bull, C. H. Bull (William Bull's uncle) built the imposing brick Italianate Style house at 1651 Maine.

The architect of the Wm. Bull house was the Chicago designer, Joseph Lyman Silsbee. Silsbee was also the architect for the Warfield house on the southeast corner of Maine and 16th Streets. Frank Lloyd Wright, then just starting in the profession, worked for Silsbee in the late '80's and it is believed that he might have worked on the design of the Wm. Bull house.

The Queen Anne Style is historically based on the work of the English architect Richard Norman Shaw, active in England during the 1860's and '70's. Shaw's work was revivalist in character and he drew his inspiration from the architecture of the period of Queen Anne in the 17th Century. The first important buildings in the Queen Anne Style constructed in the United States were the British Government Buildings erected in Philadelphia for the Centennial Exhibition of 1876. These were two half-timbered buildings to provide living quarters for the British Executive Commissioner and his staff. The American Builder, which recognized that despite the accepted designation that they were "essentially Elizabethan in character", said that they were "the most impressive and by far the most conspicuous and costly buildings erected by any foreign government on the Centennial grounds." From our present-day distance we can see that the Queen Anne Style... whatever its practical advantages, actual or imagined... represented a reaction against High Victorian "reality" and a renewed interest in picturesque qualities. It conjured up a period of the past that was just distant enough to appear rosy in the eyes of an America that had lost so much of its confidence in the future during the financial panic of 1873.

The characteristics of the Queen Anne Style that are in evidence in the Wm. Bull house emphasize the strong romantic quality of the building: the complex form of the exterior created by the use of the many roof forms, dormers, bay windows, balconies and chimneys, the use of several construction materials including brick, shingles and decorative wood trim used together, and the inclusion of small scale details such as the porch columns. The Queen Anne Style developed in its second stage to the Shingle Style and, although there are shingles on the second story of the Bull house, the other details are still classic enough to maintain its style in the more pure Queen Anne.

The plan of the Bull house recalls contemporary Nineteenth Century houses in its arrangement of suites of large parlors that can be joined or separated by large sliding doors. Woodwork throughout the house is especially noteworthy.

An early publication featuring the houses of Quincy describes this particular house as a "Tour de force" against the sky!

Quincy Preserves!

An independent community organization working to preserve Quincy's architectural and historic present