

Fortier House

Although associated with the name Fortier, as seen on the beautiful old sign over the door, over the years, the house at 834 Hampshire was built in the 1850's by Philander Shaw, about whom little is known. It was built in "shotgun" fashion, like most workingmen's cottages of the day, with three rooms (only one heated). It had a basement with a rear entrance initially, which has been changed. Workmanship of the house indicates the house did not benefit from Quincy's highest-priced craftsmen. It's longest occupancy prior to the turn of the century was by Herman Marcks, himself a carpenter, who lived there in the 1870's and 1880's. When built, the house was east of commercial downtown Quincy which in 20 years engulfed it.

In 1891, the house was bought by Peter Fortier, a gunsmith. He had immigrated as a child from Prague, Bohemia, to St. Louis in the 1850's. He had soon come to Quincy where he worked as a gunsmith for thirty years for the Tobias Gun Shop at 636 Hampshire, where he lived in the rear of the shop. In 1885, he opened his own gun shop at 618 Hampshire, also living there.

When Fortier moved his gunsmith shop to this location, he added to the original gabled house a shed, nearly the length of the original house, and he incorporated sky lights which were used in many of the stores downtown. For security, Fortier changed the entry to his basement to the inside floor of his new addition. The basement could then be used for storage of supplies used in his business.

Established in business, then, in 1898 Fortier at age 46 married Augusta Cramer, the daughter of a prominent distillery owner on the north Bottom Road. The couple lived and worked at this location maintaining the gun shop until 1912 when Fortier died.

A daughter of the Fortier's, Vlasta, then lived in the house until her death in 1974. She taught music in the business portion of the building for 45-50 years, teaching many instruments, but excelling in stringed instruments. Many Quincy area accomplished musicians took early and advanced lessons from Vlasta Fortier. She was unmarried and lived at the residence for many years with her mother. From the time of her mother's death, Vlasta lived there alone except for her pet, a mammoth tortoise which had the run of the house and the fenced back yard. Speculations on the age of the tortoise range from 100 to 200 years, and the fate of the animal at the time of Vlasta's passing is unknown, though it is believed to have been donated to a zoo.

In recent years, the "Fortier House" has had a successful new life as a French and gourmet restaurant. The menus have been varied and exquisite, but have never included turtle stew.

Quincy Preserves!

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