



Sophia Weis House

421 S. 14th Street

Classicized Queen Anne Style, c. 1892

architect unknown

Little is known of Sophia (or Sophie) Weis (also spelled Wise) other than that she was at one time married and rented this house from an F. Bierman from the time of its construction until she purchased it from his estate in 1902. In style, the house is a good local example of late vernacular Queen Anne design influenced by classical tastes. Its diagonally sheathed gables, segmental-arched window openings, wrap-around veranda (since replaced), and stained glass transom lights are all marks of the style during its final flowering. The fret-sawn tympanum inserted into the space between the arch and head of each window is particularly characteristic of late Queen Anne design in this area.

Two unusual exterior details for a house of this late date are the bracket and pendant finishing off the side facets of the south bay and the dressed upper margin of the limestone foundation. Both are common features of architect-designed houses of a decade earlier, and may in fact express the attempt of a builder to implant a couple design pieces from high style architecture. The only other "fancy" feature of the exterior was the veranda; the house to the south has a perfect mirror image of what the Weis house once had.

Two quite distinctive remodelings have occurred inside. In the 1920s a Craftsman fireplace was installed in the front parlor, and the opening between front and rear parlors was widened to accommodate the column-and-bookcase units that had become a staple of "Mission" interiors. At this time, each of the parlors was also carpeted wall-to-wall with a Chinese rug. The Vodaks have complemented the Craftsman look with Mission Revival furniture grouped around the fireplace. But the remainder of the Craftsman remodeling disappeared in the 1950s, rugs and all. Since that time the parlors have been a single large living room with no architectural elements to indicate their original division.

Mrs. Weis' personal stamp on the plan of the house is apparent in the absence of a butler's pantry, which is unusual in a house of this size and period. The neck between dining room and kitchen is instead reduced to a simple alcove with a built-in-buffet. The implications for house management are obvious: the one who cooked also sat at the table and ate.

A massive front staircase leads to a radially planned second floor. The landing at the top branches immediately into a sewing room, a linen closet, a front bedroom, an upstairs parlor (now the master bedroom), and a hall to other bedrooms and the bathroom. All of this suggests either a rooming house or a house for a single parent with children.

current owners: Tom and Nancy Vodak