

Meriam House

601 Spring Street • Victorian • 1882 • architect unknown

Albert S. Meriam was born in Brandon, Vermont in 1847 and came to Quincy in 1875, establishing a lumber business on the corner of Fifth and Vermont. The Meriam House at Sixth and Spring Streets displays vividly the access Meriam had to fine wood and those able to work well with it. Meriam served several terms on the City Council where he had the reputation of being very fair-minded and having a great warmth for Quincy and its people.

The outer walls of the house are a solid eighteen inches of Quincy stone still showing the chisel marks from the quarry, and the inner walls are eighteen inches thick and of brick. One of the features of this house rarely seen in other residences is an inch of poured concrete between the sub-flooring and the main flooring. This was done in the 1900's when new floors were laid, as a fire guard. F. W. Menke of Quincy undoubtedly did all or most of the decorative stone work, as his name is chiseled just outside the front door. All around the upper part of the building are very ornate stone inserts, some having eroded away due to weather and the years, but many are still as beautiful as the day when they were installed. One of the very few exterior changes through the years has been the lowering of the chimneys for the sake of safety. Originally they were all approximately 20 feet in height to offer better draft.

The large arch in the entry hall and the one in the front parlor are of carved cherry, as are the three fireplaces still intact on the first floor. The wood for these pieces was reportedly personally chosen by Mr. Meriam and floated down the Mississippi in log rafts from the north of Quincy. The woodwork and wainscoting in the entry hall and staircase are of solid walnut. The office has a planked ceiling, giving the feeling of a captain's cabin, and is done in three types of oak. The wood on the second floor is entirely butternut.

The large bay windows on the front of the building are done in rounded glass. One of the very interesting features is the arrangements of leaded stained glass used over the tops of windows, each room having its own pattern and being just slightly different than its neighboring area. Each window was originally built with shutters that fold back into pockets but were removed some time in past years. The present owners found these stored in the attic and have reinstalled them. All of the hardware used on the shutters and doors is of solid engraved brass.

An interesting feature of the Meriam House is the pipe organ which was installed when the building was used for a time as a funeral home. The pipes are located on the second floor and the console was originally in the entrance hall. However, the console has been moved recently to the second floor to show better the fine woodwork of the entrance.

In 1893 the Meriam House was purchased by J. H. Duker and became the center of much social activity. A. W. Daugherty took possession of the residence in 1923 and it was during this time that it was used as a funeral home. The present owners have had the house since May, 1969, and have done much work in the restoration of the building.

An unusual note are the old street lights which surround the building. They were at one time scheduled to be removed but through the kindness of the City Council they have been permitted to remain so that one of Quincy's fine old homes can still preserve its original atmosphere.

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