

Duker House

Duker House – 166 North 18th Street – Prairie – 1911 – Geo. Behrensmeyer, architect

The massive limestone home with the tile roof on the southeast corner of 18th & Hampshire Streets was constructed to last, and last, and last. So too were the W.T. Duker department store business and the Quincy National Bank. William T. Duker, who had the stylish Prairie home built was president of both businesses; but while both businesses have disappeared from the Quincy scene, the home of Dr. and Mrs. Richard Ravel and their two sons is still one of the most unique and interesting built in this city of interesting architecture.

One of Quincy's most successful merchants, Mr. Duker was born in Quincy in 1861; his father was later to become very successful in the wholesale liquor business. William's first ownership of a business was in partnership in 1883 with H.B. Menke in general merchandise. The partnership flourished and grew at 704 Maine, later in expanded quarters at 711 Maine. In 1893, Duker dissolved the partnership and finally in 1919 took over and remodeled the hugh Doerr building at 6th & Maine Streets.

His financial success in business accounted for his being named president of Quincy National Bank. He was also a partner in the building of the Quincy Hotel.

The classic Prairie orientation of the Duker house is all the more interesting for at least two fascinating features. A massive stone arch invites one to the center-roofed entry to the wrap-around porch. The arch is reminiscent of those frequently found on Romanesque structures throughout the country and gives the house a transitional flavor. Most unusual, however, is the radical pitch of the stone surfacing on three sides of the house.

A number of years ago George Vonderhaar, original masonry contractor on the house recounted having made three starts on the house; the first start was when half the first floor was laid up. Duker returning from a trip insisted the stone be taken down and pitched more than Vonderhaar's men had done; again after taking down what had been built and rebuilding the entire first floor, Duker returned from a cruise, looked at the stone and demanded it be taken down entirely and more pitch be added to the stone face before it was laid up again.

The verdant plantings on the grounds are recent additions to the site and are lovingly cared for by the Ravels.

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