

In 1864 the Lemley brothers, Robert and Joseph, opened a dry goods store in Quincy. They must have gotten along well, for eight years later they put up identical houses next to each other on Hampshire. In the mid 1880s, Joseph moved into a larger and more fashionable house a block away at 1601 Vermont. Not to be outdone, Robert hired an architect to update his own, creating the strange mix of Late Italianate and High Queen Anne that we see today.

The Italianate portion of the Lemley House is typical of master-builder designs of the 1870s. Quite possibly it is the work of Frederick Reinecker, whose own house was built around the same time just a block away. The Queen Anne remodeling, on the other hand, carries a definite architect's stamp. The melding of the two halves of the house is masterfully handled, with the set-out entry bay providing a clear break between old and new and the verandah tying it all back together. But the architect was also respectful of the older building, as the fret-sawn bracketing was allowed to remain in spite of its contrast to the unadorned clipped eaves of the addition.

A number of quirks in the design point to Harvey Chatten as the likely architect: the opposition of massive square piers to bulging columns and finely turned balusters in the porch; the insertion of delicate iron grillwork in the balcony over the porch; and above all, the introduction of Romanesque detail to the interior. All the interiors were redone with the Queen Anne remodeling, changing some of the room configurations and replacing pine woodwork with cherry in the parlor, oak in the vestibule, and butternut in the dining room. Examples of fine craftsmanship abound in the stained glass entry transom light, the complex tilework of the vestibule floor, the boldly sculpted fireplaces (both with some references to Romanesque patternwork), and the elaborate staircase with its paneled sides and interlace carvings.

The church at 16th and Hampshire is the fourth meeting house of the Unitarian congregation in the city. Founded in 1840 as the Second Congregational Church, it was the third congregation of Unitarians to be established in Illinois. The church has a history of distinguished leadership, beginning with Washington University founder W. G. Eliot and continuing through the pastorate of eminent Dante scholar Lyman Greenman, who was the first to preach in the new building.

The Unitarian Church building is distinguished by superb masonry design and craftsmanship. The ashlar blocks resemble rubble in individual shape, but closer inspection reveals very careful cutting and fitting in order to create an effect of broken courses rather than purely random arrangement. Particularly fine examples of the stone-cutter's art can be seen in the fitting of the vousoirs into flat arches above the doors and windows.

Like most Craftsman churches, this one vaguely recalls the country parish churches of late medieval England. A squat, unsteeped lateral tower, prominent gables, and broadly glazed walls were all distinguishing marks of the last phase of Gothicism in rural England. But the detailing of the tower also harks back to Chatten's Queen Anne residential work. Its corner turrets, clerestory windows, and witch's hat roof can all be found in East End houses of twenty years earlier.

In plan, however, the church is strictly a twentieth century American invention. According to church records it grew out of trips to Unitarian churches in Kansas City and Champaign. The auditorium stretches the length of the building on the the west, while immediately in front of the tower vestibule is a parlor, complete with stone fireplace and leaded glass doors. The windows are also free of strictly religious associations. The street-facing chancel window, dedicated to the founders of the church and donated by their descendants, depicts a scene in Indian Mounds Park. Windows in the parlor recall events that shaped America: the Pilgrims signing a covenant aboard the Mayflower and the treaty between William Penn and the Delaware Indians in 1682.

The church still enjoys use of the organ installed in its third building in 1875. Now the oldest remaining organ in Quincy, it was built by the Steere Organ Company in Springfield, Massachusetts, and modified only to permit operation of the blower by an electric motor.