



'Gem City' House Sparkles Again

This Queen Anne house, built in Quincy in 1888, originally belonged to DeLafayette Musselman, founder of Gem City Business College. Contractors worked from historic photographs to rebuild the wraparound porch and to reproduce decorative details on the balusters and porch.

As a child, how many times and how many teachers urged you to write neatly? Good penmanship did pay off for DeLafayette Musselman, who founded Quincy's Gem City Business College and used the profits in 1888 to build a magnificent Queen Anne home on Maine Street. One hundred years later, the new owner began rehabilitating the three-story house under provisions of a federal tax incentive program that provides a twenty percent tax credit for income-producing historic buildings.

DeLafayette Musselman was one of the self-made men who prospered during the post-Civil War growth of Illinois. Born in a log cabin in Fulton County, Illinois, in 1842, Musselman attended the Fulton County Seminary before enlisting in the Eighty-fifth Illinois Volunteer Infantry when the Civil War broke out. Following the war, he attended a Chicago business college and soon took up teaching at Eastman's Business College in Chicago.

After teaching courses in penmanship at the Bryant, Stratton, and Bell Business College in Springfield and Quincy, and later at Quincy English and German College, Musselman in 1870 opened his own

Gem City Business College. By then, DeLafayette Musselman was one of the leading penmen in the United States and the winner of many state and national competitions. Enrollment at his college was small at first, but grew steadily. The curriculum included bookkeeping, arithmetic, spelling, English, as well as penmanship—in those days all records were kept in longhand, and bookkeepers prided themselves on their ability to execute shaded characters and flourishes.

Enrollment at Gem City had grown so much by 1892 that the school moved to larger quarters, a five-story Romanesque structure that Musselman erected on the corner of Seventh and Hampshire streets. It cost \$100,000, and the 1905 Adams County history hailed it as "the largest and most elegant edifice erected in the United States for business college work." Gem City soon dominated the commercial training field in the Midwest, and even students from foreign countries sought business education there. By 1907 the enrollment numbered fourteen hundred students annually. After DeLafayette Musselman's death in 1910, his three sons assumed operation of the college, which thrives today.

Musselman in 1888 constructed his fashionable Queen Anne house on Maine Street, a thoroughfare flanked by the mansions of the local elite. The house's three stories placed it among the street's largest, and its design and detailing identified it as a house appropriate to a man of Musselman's means. The structure's exterior was a lively combination of brick, terra cotta, and stone. A tower, several porches, and a slate roof added picture-book detailing, while a fancy two-story wraparound porch dominated the street facade.

But the house suffered in the years following Musselman's death. It was divided into apartments, and the massive front porch was removed. Paint obscured the varied detailing, leaving only hints of the house's nineteenth-century beauty. Owner John Varnier began his rehabilitation of the house in 1988—the Musselman house's centennial. The wraparound porch was rebuilt with the aid of a historic photograph that the contractor used to match stone for the new porch foundation. Decorative details on the wooden porch steps, floor, ceiling, and balusters were painted in contrasting colors to match the features revealed in the photos.



to reveal the natural wood finish.

Work on the house was completed as a certified historic rehabilitation, which qualified the owner for a twenty percent income tax credit. Because the house was a two-apartment building, it met the program requirement that it be income producing. The owner and contractor followed the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings*, and Illinois Historic Preservation Agency architects monitored the project and recommended it for approval to the National Park Service, which makes the final determination for the tax credit.

The difference in the rehabilitated house's appearance could hardly be more dramatic. Its unappealing, foreshortened front facade has been replaced by a lively variety of surfaces enhanced by a handsome curving porch. Like the shading and flourishes that distinguished DeLafayette Musselman's award-winning handwriting, the restored detail of his former house identifies it as an outstanding example of Quincy architecture.

David Newton
Staff Writer

Many layers of white paint were removed with chemicals and water sprayed under low pressure. (Sandblasting is not an approved method for removing paint from historic buildings.) The brick was then cleaned of residue and sealed. All of the wood exterior trim was scraped, primed, and repainted. The aluminum storm windows were painted to match the trim. Built-in gutters and downspouts were repaired, and some repointing was done with mortar that matched the original. Warped stained-glass windows were also repaired.

Extensive work was completed inside as well. Workers stripped and refinished the butternut, walnut, cherry, and oak trim on the second floor. Woodwork on six carved-wood fireplaces decorated with either marble or glazed tile was also refinished. The upstairs ceilings were covered with canvas and painted, and the walls were painted. Downstairs, a false wall added to the foyer when the house was converted to apartments was removed. The unobstructed foyer showcases the handsome parquet floor and recreates the elegant entrance to the first floor. Construction crews then added a separate entrance to the second-floor apartment on the west side by cutting through a window and adding an exterior stairway. Multiple coats of paint were stripped from the double-door entrance



The reconstructed porch and historic paint scheme revived the century-old Musselman house. Because the restoration was completed under federal guidelines, the owner qualified for a twenty percent income tax credit.

SECOND PRIZE EXTERIOR REHABILITATION

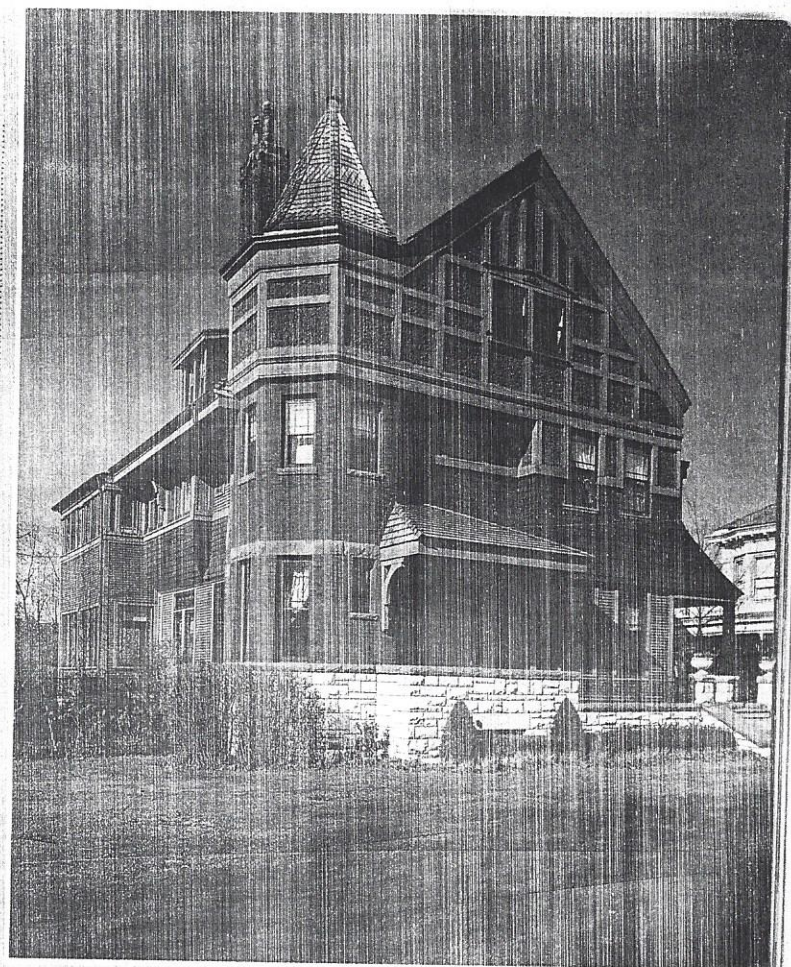
John D. Varnier
De Lafayette Musselman House
Quincy, Illinois

John Varnier had done hands-on remodelings before, but the De Lafayette Musselman House was his first attempt at restoration. He lived next door to the house and became increasingly worried as he watched it fall apart. "I was concerned about the deteriorating structure affecting the value of properties in the area," says Varnier. A little research on his part showed that the Musselman House had some historical significance. The Queen Anne residence, built in a combination of brick, terra-cotta, and stone, was designed in 1888 by then prominent architect John Batschy for De Lafayette Musselman, the founder of what is now the Bell Business College in Quincy and Springfield, Illinois.

Key to Varnier's task was his discovery of a good photograph of the house taken in 1906. "I just kept blowing it up, and from that we could see how it had looked

and that a wraparound veranda and a decorative second-floor balcony had been removed." Not long afterward Varnier noticed that the August sun was "turning the grass brown in a definite configuration." With a little digging, he found that the burnt grass marked the foundation of the missing veranda. That discovery allowed him to actively begin construction and rehabilitating from the photograph.

Varnier obtained the needed materials "from wherever they could be found." He had to go to Kansas City for the veranda pillars, for instance, and found the needed pink stone for the above-grade veranda foundation in the remains of a local church that was being demolished. Such necessary replications as spindles and balustrades, meanwhile, were fabricated by his contractor or jobbed out to a milling shop. The contractor completed the restoration sixteen months after finding the photograph that revealed the original design of the house. Since then, Varnier, who had for years watched the Musselman house decay as its neighbor, has happily made it his home.



THIRD PRIZE, EXTERIOR REHABILITATION: *Before rehabilitation aluminum siding obliterated all detail and sense of scale from the late-Victorian house.*

THIRD PRIZE EXTERIOR REHABILITATION

**Polly Hawkins Crocker
& Jack Crocker**
Evanston, Illinois

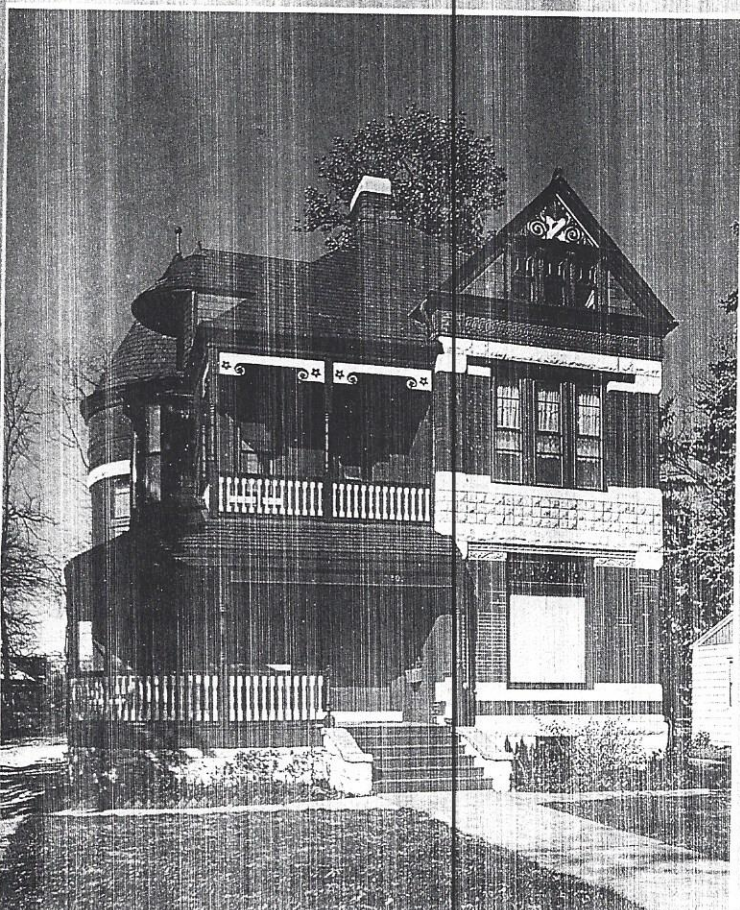
Shortly after they were married, architect Polly Hawkins Crocker and realtor Jack Crocker went in search of a house "with a lot of architecture that wouldn't cost a lot of money." Because Polly's practice largely consisted of restorations and sympathetic additions and Jack was becoming a skilled finish carpenter, the couple asked their realtor to show them properties that other people would be afraid of. According to Polly, the late-Victorian 1888 house that they bought was "wild-looking because it was covered with exceptionally wide aluminum siding. You could sense that it was large, but there was no detail to give it scale."

Aided by a 1940s photograph,

the Crockers began by removing the siding, then removed a rotting front porch and rebuilt it. They carved away a poorly built 1960s breakfast room that was visually out of character and replaced it with a new room in the shape of a half octagon. This they wrapped in wood shakes and outfitted with windows replicating those existing in the residence.

"We took this house completely apart, numbered it, and put it back together again," says Polly. They replaced anything that had rotted with a new but matching item. The replication of the hardware, alone, cost them \$2,000. Jack replaced every window sill and remade window headers, and the couple stuccoed their dwelling's third story, shingled its second, and beveled the siding of the first. They completed their task by painting their house in a three-color scheme typical of late-Victorian houses.

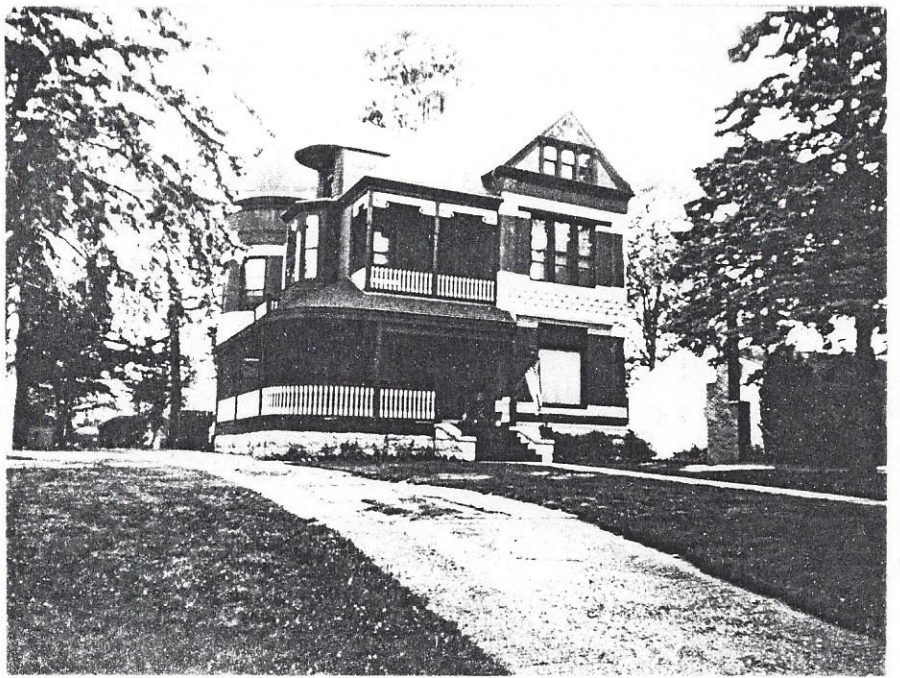
SECOND PRIZE, EXTERIOR REHABILITATION: *Burnt grass revealed the location of the missing veranda. A 1906 photograph was blown up to reveal details.*



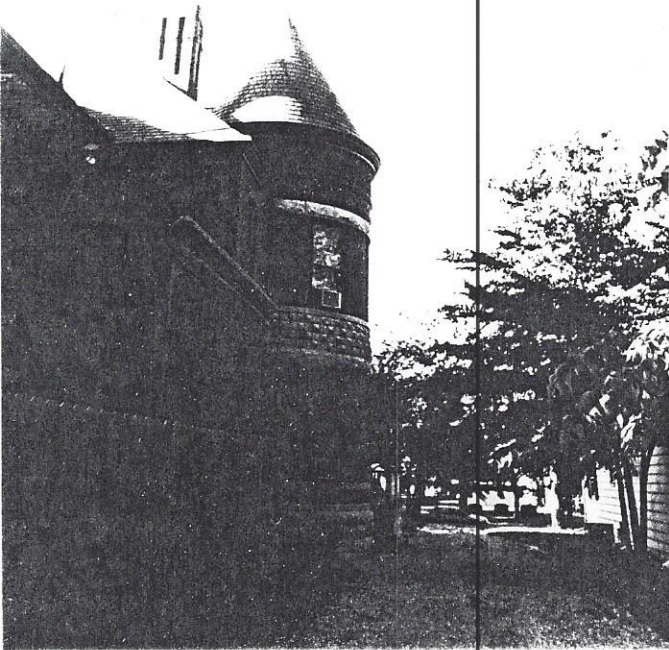
Historic Preservation
Jan-Feb 1992

2203 MAINE

FRONT



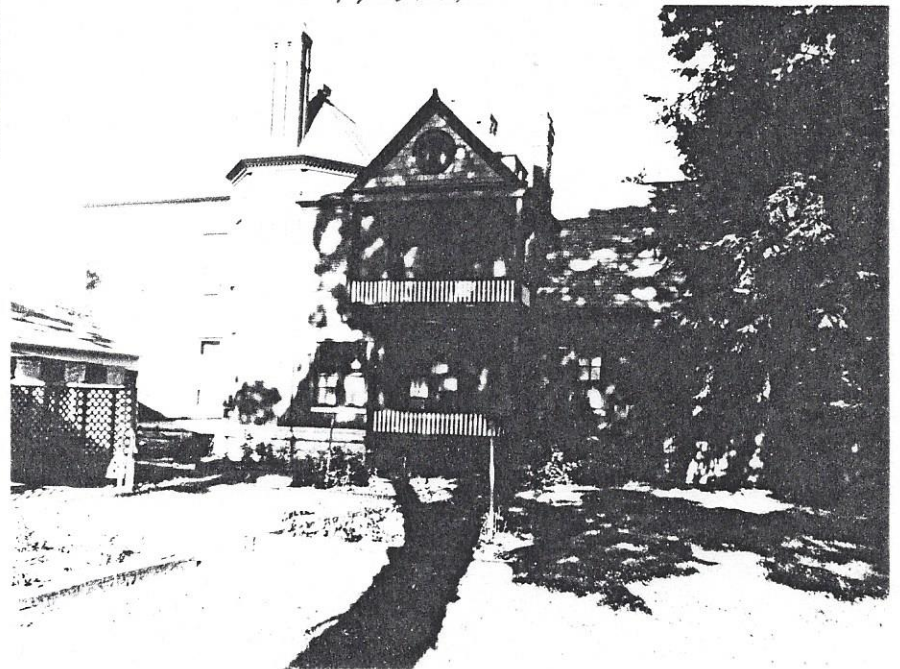
WEST SIDE
LOOKING SOUTH



BACK



FRONT



EAST

**NOTICE OF
PUBLIC HEARING**

The public is invited to attend a Public Hearing to be held by the Quincy Preservation Commission on Thursday, August 20, 1992, at 4:30 P.M. in the Meeting Room of the Quincy Public Library, on the proposed Local Historic Landmark Designations for the following properties in Quincy: 1656 Maine (The Dr. Gant Irwin House); 1477 Maine (The D. W. Miller House & Carriage House); 613 Broadway (The Robt. Gardner House); 317 College (The Poelsh House); 2203 Maine (The Musselman House); 1627 Maine (The Rogers House); 333 East Avenue (The Geo. Behrensmeier Residence); 1401 Maine (The Wilms House). The purpose of the hearing is to explain the criteria for designation, the effect of designation, the review process for changes affecting the exterior architectural appearance, to review specific standards for exterior alterations, to review any economic incentives available, and to hear testimony on the proposed designation.

JANET CONOVER, Chairman
Quincy Preservation Commission
C-12119, Aug. 13.

8-13-92

QUINCY PRESERVATION COMMISSION
730 Maine Street - #206
Quincy, IL 62301
217/228-4514

August 6, 1992

Mr. John D. Varnier
2203 Maine
Quincy, IL 62301

Dear Jack,

We are writing to let you know that, contrary to the date given in a letter sent you last month, the Quincy Preservation Commission will hold a Public Hearing concerning the designation of your property at 2203 Maine as a Quincy Local Landmark on Thursday, August 20, 1992, at 4:30 P.M. in the Quincy Public Library.

While it is not mandatory for you to attend this Hearing, you are certainly most welcome to do so.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Janet", with a stylized flourish extending to the left.

Janet Conover,
Chairman
Quincy Preservation Commission

QUINCY PRESERVATION COMMISSION
200 N. 8th St.-#102
Quincy, IL 62301
217/228-4514

July 2, 1992

Mr. John D. Varnier
2203 Maine
Quincy, IL 62301

Dear Jack,

Thank you for allowing the Quincy Preservation Commission to consider nominating your property at 2203 Maine for Local Landmark designation.

The "Preliminary Review" on this application will take place July 7, 1992 at 4:30 PM in the Meeting Room of the Quincy Public Library. It is not mandatory for you to attend, but we wanted you to be notified.

A preliminary copy of the application for your property will be available at the meeting next Tuesday. If you are unable to attend, it will be mailed to you.

Yours truly,



Phil Germann,
Chairman, Local Landmark Committee
Quincy Preservation Commission