

Robert Gardner House

613 Broadway - Second Empire & Italianate Styles - c. 1870 - Architect unknown

One of Quincy's finest examples of adaptive re-use is a family home at 613 Broadway, empty for decades and finally restored by William Klinger for executive and engineering offices of Wm. Klinger & Associates.

The house was constructed sometime in the 1870's by Robert W. Gardner. Both the architect and the builder remain unknown. Generally eclectic in character, the ten room manse most closely appears French Second Empire in style with high windows, central tower giving a feeling of height, and the circular windows protruding from the roof. However, Italian Villa features can be found also in the wide eaves, round arched windows on the sides and rear of the house, the grouping of windows in threes, and the general shape of the tower and eave brackets.

Walls of the structure are four bricks in thickness with plaster applied directly to the innermost course...a total of 18 inches! Window lintels are stone on the south wall and brick, in a semi-arched pattern on the other walls. Wood is used sparingly, except for the porch, decorative brackets and the windows. The steps to the entry are the original carved stone bordered by cast iron rails with brass ball finials. The moderately carved doors are also original, the geometric patterns found repeated throughout the house. Knobs in the entry are cast of Greek soldier figures; all the brass hardware in the house is original. It is interesting to note that much of the hardware found in the razed First Congregational Church, also built in the 1870's, matched the hardware in the Gardner House.

The lovely mosaic floor of the vestibule is a feature typical of the period in similar homes. Most of the glass in the house appears very old, and thus original, because of the wavy nature of the panes. Most of the windows are one pane over one pane, although a few are four panes over four panes.

The perfectly restored foundation reveals a large steampipe protruding from one of the walls. Reportedly, this pipe was a part of a central heating system that once served not only the Gardner House but also the two houses immediately east as well as the house immediately west.

The main hall has parlors on either side and features an interesting walnut staircase with a neo-Greek bust carved in the newell post. The circular carvings present on the side of the banister suggest an Eastlake influence. The parlor on the east side features a cherry mantel and a door on the east wall with a leaded glass window. Research has established that the two items are later additions (circa 1890). Immediately north of this room is the dining room; the mantel is missing. Please note the most interesting sink with painted sides located north of the closet under the stair. The northern most room was the kitchen. All of the interior woodwork is original and has been refinished (it had been covered with black enamel), save the mantels which are unretouched.

The upstairs consists of a major hall, four rooms in the main section of the house and three in the north wing. The rooms in the north wing have white porcelain door knobs while the hardware on the doors of the main wing are of brass. Some of the hardware here was missing and was replaced with pieces from other old buildings. The two major rooms to the east include fireplaces with mantels. A "G" is carved on the mantels which are of butternut. The large eastern room contains a fireplace but the mantel is gone. All of the rooms on this floor contain large walk-in closets except the room in the northeast corner.

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