



Henry C. and Augusta Pfeiffer House
1217 Park Place
Queen Anne Style, 1890
attributed to John Batschy, architect

current owners: Jon and Judy Koenig

As the principal architect of Park Place during its first decade, Quincy architect John Batschy had ample opportunity to pull from that extraordinary grab-bag of architectural extravagances known as the High Queen Anne style. The Pfeiffer House's melange of fanciful stonework, piled-up geometrical solids, and meandering contours not only typifies the style but also shows the rather eccentric individual stamp of Batschy's work during the halcyon years of his practice. Particularly noteworthy are the springstones of the landing window arch on the west side, which are in the shape of a quarter-circle, and the flared lintel above the picture window on the front, which is carved to suggest an arch complete with ornamental tympanum beneath.

An architect's hand is also apparent in the interior, especially in the design of the main staircase. Elaborately turned spindles are assembled into a complex diagonal grid, and the whole structure is anchored by newel posts designed in clear conformity to exterior ornament. The entry hall is also distinguished by a wood and tile fireplace surround filled with examples of the late Victorian trick of "quoting" architectural features with inexpensive materials. The diaper pattern in the woodwork is derived from designs for built-up stone or brickwork, with tiny mirrors inlaid into the side panels to emphasize how unstructural it all really is. The columns and frieze illustrated on the tiles also suggest a fanciful structure belied by the thinness of the tiles themselves.

The architect's detailed design input clearly lessens beyond the entry hall, but the other rooms also have a number of strong period touches. Figurative tilework surrounding the living room fireplace depicts a pastoral scene with loosely clad women striking "Greek" poses, much in the manner of theatrical and "art" dancing styles popular at the turn of the century. A criss-cross pattern in the living room floor, created by inlays of walnut, carries into the parlor and perhaps into the dining room as well, though the latter has been covered over. Art glass transom lights mix glass jewels with beveled glass, bottle glass, and rippled stained glass.

Several modern alterations reflect the evolution of living styles since 1890. A bathroom has been inserted into the south part of the kitchen porch, and the butler's pantry has been converted to a laundry. The main staircase is now closed in at the end to accommodate the house's recent use as a duplex, while pocket doors originally opening from the hall into the living room now lie within plaster walls. The Koenigs are considering reversing some of these alterations, while others are likely to become lasting parts of the house's history.