

Relaxing and Rewarding

Hard work on his house at 401 S. 12th pays off for Troy Dawson

By Ruth Hultz

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Troy Dawson had just moved back to Quincy from Nashville, Tenn., and was searching for just the right house.

The house he wanted had to meet three criteria: The house had to “catch my fancy,” be affordable and need a lot of work.

It took two years of searching but Dawson finally found his house at 401 S. 12th.

Today the charming house that is perched on a hill at 12th and Kentucky still holds his fancy and he has definitely put in a lot of work on the two-family house.

With the help of friends, family, books and the Gardner Museum of Architecture and Design, Dawson has redone many rooms in the house. The house has some expensive features and is a mixture of styles.

An especially expensive interior feature is the many cuts, or profiles, on the door and window trim. The aprons on the bay windows are a combination of seven or more moldings and are 10 inches wide.

The staircase has beautiful millwork in a geometric design and an elegant starting newel post with rosettes, beaded trim, distressed wood and a carved leaf-motif. The original foyer had panels with applied molding.

Sprucing up the house is hard, messy work but Dawson finds it relaxing and rewarding.

“It is a good mixture between working in the office all day — the manual labor relieves stress,” Dawson said. “You get a lot of self-satisfaction out of it. It makes you feel good standing back and knowing you did it yourself.”

Dawson lived in the downstairs apartment for four years while working on the picturesque house. He



worked every weekend and many weeknights. He said he just adjusted to living with the inconvenience and constant upheaval.

“I took a lot of time doing it the way it is supposed to be done,” Dawson said.

AT A GLANCE

❑ **Original Owner:** William and Louisa Konantz. Konantz was one of 13 children of Anton and Harriet Konantz who immigrated to Quincy from Germany. William Konantz owned a shop at 326 Maine that manufactured whips, horse clothing and harnesses for carriages and buggies.

❑ **Date of Construction:** 1880.

❑ **Architectural Features:** Gothic-style shaped windows in front gable, incised carvings in upper window crowns, drip-mold window crowns on front first floor to ceiling windows, carved brackets at eaves, bay window with dentils on the cornice, side porch with quadrifoil patterned brackets, front porch with Doric columns (not original).

When his friends or family didn't have the expertise to help with a project, he researched the topic.

Dawson stripped the exterior trim to bare wood with a heat gun and putty knife, primed all the wood and painted a final coat. He researched period paint colors before deciding on tan and green.

An interesting project was the front room.

He planned to replace the worn carpeting but when he lifted a corner and saw the designed oak floor he knew he wanted to refinish it. He did some research, rented some equipment and resurrected the patterned floor.

Dawson had no experience with renovating an old house, and he said he learned many lessons while completing all his projects — repairing the front porch roof, remodeling the kitchen, smoothing out rough walls, and replacing side porch screens.

The biggest lesson Dawson learned was: Have the proper angle on your ladder.

One summer day, Dawson didn't have such a good angle and the ladder fell, leaving him stranded on the roof for several hot hours. He had to yell at passers-by before someone finally spotted him and helped him out.