

Gardner House is at 228 S. 18th Street.

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Walt and Diane Giesing's home is big, old and beautiful. It's ...



A 'wondrous' house

By Jim Lenz

Herald-Examiner Staff Writer

A new home always feels a little strange at first. But it took the Giesing family some time to adjust to their home at 228 S. 18th.

The house, built around 1892, has more than 7,000 square feet of floor space. That made it far bigger and far older than the modern houses the family had previously lived in.

A creaking door here and a darkened room there set the adolescent imaginations of the Giesing children — Frank, Mike and Gina — running wild.

But after nearly eight years of ownership, Walt and Diane Giesing wouldn't think of selling their big, old home. And now, when their eldest child Frank comes home from college, he tells Walt and Diane what a great house the family has.

The house was built by John Willis Gardner and his wife, the former Helen Gifford. Gardner was the son of R.W. Gardner, founder of Gardner Governor Works, which is now Gardner-Denver Co.

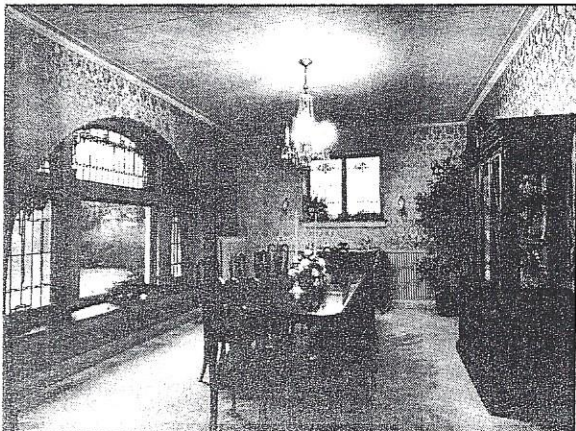
J.W. Gardner worked full time for the company starting in 1881 and became the company's president when his father died in 1907.

The house probably was designed by Harvey Chatten. It has Victorian touches, but each owner since Gardner has modified the house.

For instance, the library has built-in bookshelves with stained wood. At some point, the bases were painted white. Another unusual feature of the room is a small elevator to the second floor.

On the south side of the house, the living room was expanded from the original floor plan and a balcony was added above it. The balcony is supported by a 12-inch thick concrete floor and steel I-beams.

Rooms in the Giesing home can best be described as spacious. At left is the dining room, and right, the foyer and parlor area.



H-W Photos/
Michael Kipley



AT A GLANCE

Original name: John Willis and Helen Gardner

Architect or builder: Harvey Chatten

Date of construction: circa 1892

Style: Shingle

Outstanding features:

- Stone lower level with wood shingle wall cladding above.
- Wrap-around porch with classical column supports that is enclosed on the south side to make a sunroom.
- Irregular, steeply pitched roof line with cross

gables.

- Palladian window in front at the upper level.
- Single door front entry.
- Balconies on the south side of the second and third level.
- Curved leaded glass window north of the front door in the entry.
- Arched, leaded glass window with art nouveau grape cluster theme in the dining room.
- Tower on the south side.

The Giesing family has done its part to put a signature on the home. Mrs. Giesing usually plans the renovations and her husband gives substance to the plans. He and the children completely renovated the third floor. Each of the boys did the wiring in his own room. Gina helped with plastering and other tasks.

After a blistering hot summer during their first year in the house, the Giesings added heat pumps and air conditioning. Giesing hid the ductwork on the third floor under window boxes.

They also have redecorated several bedrooms, the foyer and the sunroom, which is part of the old wrap-around front porch.

The kitchen is the next major target. It is large, but not efficiently arranged. Mrs. Giesing says she wants to add counter space.

The kitchen has a large breakfast nook, and the butler's pantry has unusual glass sliding doors over its cabi-

nets.

When they were looking for a home, the Giesings didn't target an older house. But Mrs. Giesing said they were won over by the "charm of it."

She was struck by the description of Nancy Parke, the previous owner. "It's a wondrous house," Mrs. Parke said. Mrs. Giesing said she knows how Mrs. Parke felt.

"There were so many things I wanted to do (when they first moved in) but didn't get to do because we didn't have the money. Now I'm glad I didn't (do them)," she says.

Whether they are creeping through a crawl space or enjoying a night by the fireplace, the Giesings have made the home their very own.

This is another in a series on home of historical or architectural significance as identified by Quincy Preserves.