

RETICKER HOUSE

330 EAST AVENUE, QUINCY, ILLINOIS

MARTIN GEISE, ARCHITECT, circa 1915

PRAIRIE STYLE

The house at 330 East Avenue was built about 1915 for John K. Reticker of Quincy. The designer of the house was Quincy architect Martin Geise and the style of the house is the Prairie Style, recalling the influence of the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

The first houses of the type known as the Prairie House were designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and constructed in Kankakee, Illinois, in 1900. The decade which followed produced a series of houses, including the famous Frederick Robie House in Chicago and the Susan Lawrence Dana House in Springfield, that were characterized by gently sloping gable or hip roofs, low horizontal proportions, simple forms, broad central chimneys, sheltering overhangs, windows organized in groups, geometric ornament, a minimum of construction materials boldly used and extensions in the form of terraces, walls or porches that helped to join the houses to the landscape around them. All of these characteristics are apparent in the John K. Reticker House.

The Reticker House is, in fact, indirectly related to a design by Frank Lloyd Wright. Frank Lloyd Wright was commissioned by the Curtis Publishing Company in 1907 to design a small house for publication as part of a series then appearing in the Ladies Home Journal Magazine. Wright's design for a cube-shaped "Fire-proof House for \$5,000" was to have been constructed of reinforced concrete. Wright himself built two wood-frame-and-stucco variations of the Ladies Home Journal house, but it was also copied by many people who were influenced by his work and by his own former assistants. Walter Burley Griffin, who had worked with Wright until 1906 and who later won an international competition for the design of the new capital of Australia at Canberra, designed a house for Harry Gunn in Chicago about 1911. The house for Harry Gunn, with massive cornerpieces characteristic of Griffin's architectural work, was published the following year and was the direct ancestor of the Reticker House.

The plan of the Reticker House is similar to the plans of both the designs by Frank Lloyd Wright and Walter Burley Griffin. The living room, no longer a 'parlor,' occupies one half of the first floor; the dining room occupies the third quarter of the first floor and the kitchen and service spaces occupy the remaining fourth quarter of the floor. The living room and dining room are actually one large space subdivided by the massive chimney around which the space moves. The fireplace, with its Roman brick face and hearth and cube-shaped limestone edge pieces, exactly duplicates fireplaces designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. However, the beamed ceiling and the built-in bookshelves in the corner of the living room and the buffet in the corner of the dining room recall the design by Walter Burley Griffin. The sun porch, originally finished with a dark red tile floor, is an effective extension of both the living and dining rooms. The entry, located in a corner pier, is the only major deviation from the designs by Wright and Griffin, where the entrance was part of one of the groups of windows on one of the four sides of the house.

The woodwork throughout the house is oak, which the present owner of the house polishes annually. Architectural details to note include the use of wood strips