

# NIELSON HOUSE

125 EAST AVENUE, QUINCY, ILLINOIS

ERNEST M. WOOD, ARCHITECT, 1897

*Late* QUEEN ANNE STYLE

The house at 125 East Avenue was built in 1897 for James G. Neilson, the son-in-law of Theodore C. Poling, one of the developers of the Lawndale neighborhood of Quincy. The house was designed by Quincy architect Ernest M. Wood and is in the Queen Anne Style.

The Queen Anne Style is historically based on the work of English architect Richard Norman Shaw, active in England during the 1860's and 1870's. Shaw's work was revivalist in character and he drew his inspiration from the architecture of the period of Queen Anne in the 17th century. The first important buildings in the Queen Anne Style constructed in the United States were the British Government Buildings erected in Philadelphia for the Centennial Exhibition of 1876.

The characteristics of the Queen Anne Style that are in evidence in the Neilson House are the strong picturesque quality of the house; the complex form of the house, created by the use of many roof forms, dormers and porches; and the use of several construction materials together, including stone, shingles and decorative wood trim. Decorative architectural detail, when present on Queen Anne Style houses, is usually small in scale and is almost always classically inspired. The columns of the front porch of the Neilson House are a good example of this kind of architectural elaboration. However, the dormer on the roof of the house facing East Avenue is subdivided with muntins that recall patterns of Gothic tracery and the pattern is repeated in the leaded glass of the bay window on the north side of the house. The use of Gothic motifs in the Neilson House recalls the design of Wood's own house at 1843 Grove Avenue in the same year and is probably indicative of a broad interest in the historic styles at this early point in Wood's architectural practice.

The plan of the James G. Neilson House is similar to contemporary late nineteenth century houses in its suite arrangement of stair hall, parlor and dining room. The front door of the house leads from the broad front porch directly to a large stair hall that gives access to the second floor of the house. The stair hall is an important feature in the spatial development of the house in that the vertical space of the stairway unites the first and second floors of the house. The stair hall is open to the main parlor of the house through a broad arch, although evidence suggests that a wall with sliding doors probably once separated the two rooms. The main parlor is arranged at a right angle to the hall and is terminated in a bay window with a fireplace. The dining room is joined to the main parlor by large sliding doors and there is a sun porch/den that was added to the house some years after the initial construction of the house. The service area of the house, not open for this tour, includes a breakfast area now converted to a pantry and a powder room, the kitchen with its original cabinets and a semi-detached summer kitchen. The second floor of the house basically repeats the plan of the first floor, including a sleeping porch over the sun room, and there is a full basement.

The interior of the James G. Neilson House is basically simple in appearance and architectural elaboration is concentrated on prominently located elements. The stair hall is dominated by the stairway, with its elaborate handrail with turned spindles and massive newel posts, and has a bay window seat on a landing with leaded glass windows. The main parlor has an unusual bay window where angled windows and window seats flank a fireplace with a surround of square tile and wooden mantle. The fireplace is repeated in the master bedroom on the second floor. The dining room is restrained in design and the woodwork is oak throughout the stair hall, parlor and dining room of the first floor of the house. Butternut was used extensively on the second floor. Original bronze hardware throughout the house is known to have been manufactured after 1893. An important architectural feature of the interior of the Neilson house is the use of a broad pointed Tudor arch in the main parlor and elsewhere in the house. The Tudor arch was named for the royal house of King Henry VIII and Queen Elizabeth I, and is a characteristic of late English Gothic architecture of the 16th century.