

By Barbara Schleppenbach

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Finding the perfect place to live can be a challenge, but some homes actually seem to choose their owners.

The Prairie-influenced Colonial Revival house at 1824 Grove Avenue was the first and the last place Lincoln and Barbara Lieber viewed when they were house-hunting in 1988. However, they didn't see its potential right away.

"Lincoln was born and raised in Quincy, and his sister was living on Jersey," Barbara says. "We were also interested in the historic district, but when we visited this one, we immediately said no."

The couple had just finished restoring a Georgian home in Galesburg and didn't feel ready to tackle a new project. Ironically, some tours of newer houses led them back to the square, white Colonial one in the heart of historic Quincy.

"I shook the banister in one of them, and it wobbled all the way to the top," Lincoln recalls. "With modern construction you may get the creature comforts, but you don't get the quality and craftsmanship."

Quality, craftsmanship and abundant sunshine are evident at 1824 Grove, and it is matched by the care with which the Liebers have redecorated and updated the home.

"It's very bright all day long, even on gray days," Barbara says.

On the west side, banks of windows fill three walls of the elegant dining room, where the original quarter-sawn oak floor is displayed to advantage. On the east, a sun porch serves as a favorite space for casual family fun.

Bringing out the best in their home did require some serious effort, however.

"We moved in September and didn't unpack until July," Barbara recalls. "Now we finally feel that we have done just about everything we wanted to do."

Large projects included changing from steam heat to gas forced-air, as well as replacing the roof and the wiring. Cracked stucco over terra cotta tiles was renewed by an application of Dryvit. Two years ago, the couple rented a hydraulic sky jack to strip and

repaint the numerous windows from the ground floor to the attic.

The former front entrance, a square brick stoop, required visitors to step back as the door opened outward. A curving, radius entryway has solved that problem, and has provided dynamic contrast to the "square and boxy" plan of the home.

The loss of a beloved maple in the center of the yard also prompted new landscaping that will "add texture and curves" to the exterior.

Built in 1925 by Dr. Charles Center, the home has had only three owners. A pair of bi-fold glass doors now residing in the attic originally separated the dining room from the rest of the house, and the Liebers have been told that Dr. Center on occasion closed off the room to see patients.



Only three families have lived in this Prairie-influenced Colonial Revival house built in 1925 at 1824 Grove Ave. It features a dining room, above, with the original quarter-sawn oak floor. The living room, top, shows off the quality and craftsmanship behind the home's construction.

H-W Photos/Michael Kipley

Years ago, Grove was a gated neighborhood, complete with a watchman who held the keys to each home. The Liebers were attracted to its safe, quiet character, and they have enjoyed raising Michael, now 13, among other young families.

The Liebers, who "used to be avid watchers of 'This Old House' with Lincoln's mom" are modest about their contributions to the renewal of the classic home. "Having the right tools makes all the difference," Lincoln says. "With the right tools, you can do anything."

On the other hand, it certainly doesn't hurt for a house to find the right owners.

"We are just the caretakers," Lincoln concludes. "We simply want to leave the home in the best condition for the people who come after us."