

Quincy - architecture
Manson House

1636 Maine Street • Victorian • 1876 • architect unknown

Many of the houses that line Maine Street in Quincy from Fourteenth St. east, were erected during the days of spectacular wealth and spending, built in an era marked by servants, ballrooms, carriage houses, a multitude of rooms and spacious grounds. The houses stand today as symbols of the aristocratic style of living enjoyed during the late 19th century by Quincy's leading businessmen and industrialists. During the same period in which these grandiose mansions were built, other residences, on a less grand scale but still gracious and well-designed, were being constructed on neighboring grounds. One of these outstanding "smaller" houses is the Manson House at 1636 Maine Street.

The brick house, with its tall, narrow windows, its handsomely carved woodwork, its attractive double front doors and its exterior grillwork, was built in 1876 by Mr. and Mrs. F. Manson. The house was purchased in 1903 by Mr. and Mrs. E. K. Stone, and some member of the Stone family has occupied the home for over 65 years.

Like all mansions built during this era, the Manson House reflects the expert workmanship of that day. The woodwork is most unusual, being of walnut on the first floor and chestnut on the second. It is intricately carved and etched and marked by medallions above the arch of each window and doorway. The walnut staircase is distinguished by a newell post which holds a tall bronze statue. Although many of the original fire-places have since been closed, several are still in use and, like the woodwork, are reminiscent of this period of skilled carpentry. The double front doors, which are exceptionally notable, are handsomely carved on the exterior and topped by a wide transom which is bordered by wide walnut woodwork. Double doors, so characteristic of houses built in the last century, were reputedly installed to accomodate funerals and the admission of the casket into the building.

In older homes, the first room to the left of the entrance was distinguished as the formal parlor, and the room directly behind was the informal parlor, or living room. The "back parlor" of the Manson House opens in turn both into the dining room and the kitchen. On the east side of the house, opening also off the living room, is a large square conservatory with floor-to-ceiling windows. In the early years this room was never used for furniture, but rather housed an indoor greenhouse, and plants of many descriptions grew in the plentiful east sunlight.

The second floor of the Manson House (not open to the public) houses six bedrooms and a bath. Three bedrooms span the front and east wing and were connecting rooms, with one being particularly small, probably once used as a nursery adjoining the master bedroom. Another bedroom is located further along the hall. Down several steps are two small separate back bedrooms which open onto a wide landing at the head of the back staircase. These rooms probably were used originally as servants' quarters.

Years ago there was a barn for the horses to the rear of the property, but this was removed and a garage erected in its place. The Manson House, perhaps less grandiose than some others built in this era, nevertheless stands today as an excellent example of a building suited to its role of modern living.

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