

December 2002/January 2003

from house to HOME

A Quad City Home & Lifestyle Magazine

*Celebrate
the Season*

Lighting Up the Holidays

Impress Your Guests



Majestic Styling from the

Turn-of-the-Century

by Jay Crump
Photography by Boyd-Fitzgerald

Floral arrangements provided by
Staack Florist Ltd.

It's one of the finest examples of Arts & Crafts styling in the Quad Cities. Built in the years between 1907 and 1910, this Davenport home sits atop some of the most scenic bluffs overlooking the great Mississippi.

Taking a step back in time

As you wind up the scenic driveway, you can't escape the aura of splendor from the historic mansions of the area. They're just simply amazing. Pulling up to the main house, you're immediately taken back to a time when horse-drawn buggies were welcomed under the porte-cochere. You can almost hear the quiet crunch of snow under buggy wheels, as

the sounds of children excitedly rush out to welcome visitors to the grand Christmas Eve party.

The Foyer

Upon entering the immense stucco house, you're drawn immediately to the warm patina of the quarter-sawn oak floors and walnut, raised-paneled walls. Your eye follows the intricate detailing to the equally impressive, high decorative ceilings.

The foyer is large enough to accommodate over 50 people, and is the hub of the great house. It serves as the entry point to the mansion and is the gathering place to welcome visitors. Just ahead, off the foyer, is the library/study. Again, you notice the intricate detailing and craftsmanship of the raised panels. This is old-world charm at its finest. Large picture windows afford the occupant a fantastic view of the Mississippi Valley below. In addition, the library features a hidden pocket door to keep favorite books privately out of view. The walls are complete with colorful fabric wall covering.

As you stand within the foyer and look about the immense hall, small details begin to fill the senses: leaded and stained glass windows, original period lights, door fixtures, and a lot more ... but above all you can't help notice the immensity of the house. It is a reminder of the opulence of another time.

Dining elegance

The formal dining room with its incredible crystal chandelier and antique dining table is a few paces to the right of the foyer. The dining room table can comfortably serve up to 14 guests. Again, this room features many large picture windows that allow its occupants a tremendous, unfettered view. The Summer Dining Room, with a beautiful hand-painted mural, is adjacent to the formal dining room. "We've hung several small birdhouses along the wall to add dimension to the mural," the homeowner says. "It gives a unique dimension to the room."

Turn-of-the-century authenticity

Maintaining the authenticity of the era, the homeowners have retained many of the original features of the house. For example, all of the antique doorknobs, fixtures, and heating elements are authentic and original to the house when it was built in the last century. All of the mechanicals and electricals have, over the years, been updated, however. The mansion still retains its orig-





inal warmth and charm. An interesting facet of the house is its heating mechanism: It still has and uses the original boiler—a monster of a unit located in the cellar. According to the owner, the steam heat works “wonderfully.”

Another interesting and unique feature of the home is the servant call box located in the kitchen. “This was used by the original owners, who had servants living in the house, as a call box. Each room has a button that activates a small bell on the box. A small flag in the box indicates which room where the call was made. As a matter of fact the call box still has the original labels on it. That’s where we get the names of the different rooms from,” the homeowner explains.

Unique to manors of the time, servants could move about the house, specifically the kitchen, washrooms, and servant’s quarters, without being intrusive. A hidden hallway behind the dining room leads from the kitchen to foyer, while, a separate staircase, leads to the servant’s quarters on the upper level. The home’s many pocket doors can be closed to allow privacy to the individual rooms.

The proper and exquisitely carved oak staircase leads up to the second level. The staircase is indicative of the Arts & Crafts styling of the home. Built from solid oak it is elegant without being overwhelming.

Just beyond the grand staircase, on the main level, is the Winter Living Room. Splendid ceiling-to-floor walnut paneling continues to define the walls and the character of this great room. A large green-marbled fireplace warms the room. Built-in bookcases, again indicative of the Arts & Crafts styling, flank the massive fireplace. The restored ceiling features articulate paneled detailing that creates dimension to the room belying its true height.

Venturing a little farther, through the warmth of Winter Living Room lies the Summer Living Room. Originally used as a summer three-seasons room, the homeowners had a fireplace installed. “We wanted to be able to use this room year round so we had a fireplace built in, with one stipulation ... it had to be removable and leave the integrity of the room intact.” Maintaining the integrity of the century home is important to the homeowners, so they had the builder install the fireplace in such a way that it can be removed without damaging the current structure. Twentieth Century engineering meets Nineteenth Century craftsmanship—the final result, fantastic.

The room also features a working wall fountain that harkens back to the room’s original use as a patio room. The fountain still has the original hand-painted tiles that were shipped from a small company located in Pennsylvania.

The second story

The upper-level of the mansion is a continuation of the elegance of the main level — you’ll find the master’s quarters, children’s and guest bedrooms, and the former servant’s quarters. Care has been taken to maintain



the character of the original home. “We have a total of seven bedrooms in the house. Originally there were 10, however, we have converted three of them to common rooms for everyday use,” explains the homeowner.

In conclusion

The magnificence of this mansion is not only in its obvious splendor and opulence, but rather, that it is a living, breathing, family home. The house comes alive during the holiday season. Children, parents, grandparents, and families gather to enjoy good cheer, a seasonal dinner with all of the trimmings, and Christmas gifts ... all of this and more within the walls of the perfect Norman Rockwell house. ❧

