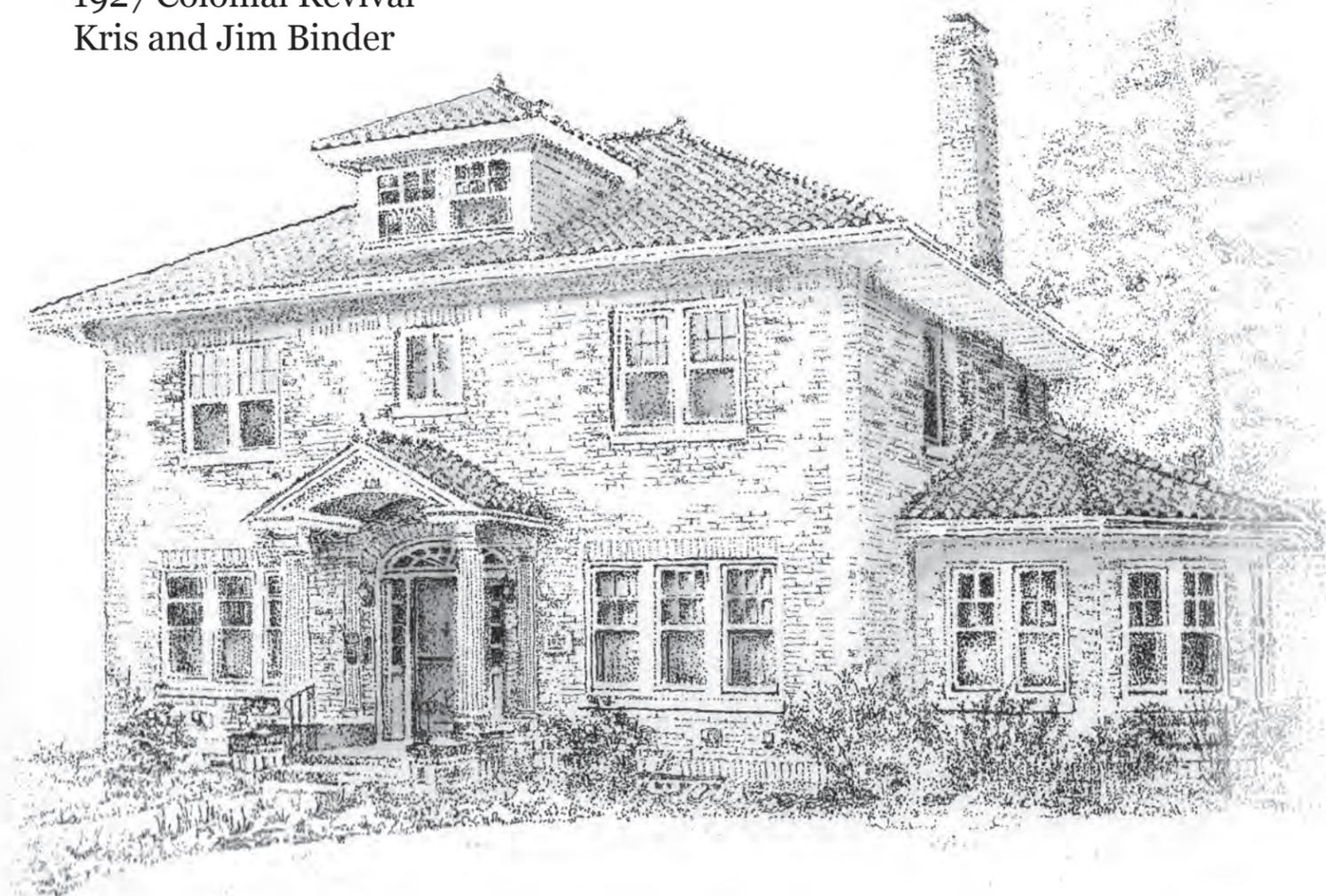




101 Hamilton Avenue

1927 Colonial Revival
Kris and Jim Binder



Elgin continued its expansion west across the Fox River with the Crighton Park Addition in 1888. The heirs to William J. Crighton, a Scottish immigrant to the area, named the property, bounded by Highland and Larkin avenues to the north, Worth Avenue to the west, Union Street on the east and several lots south of Pennsylvania Avenue to the south. The lot including 101 Hamilton and 102 Crighton (immediately to the east of 101 Hamilton) was sold at auction May 12, 1888, to John Seapy.

Home building began in 1891 in the Addition on Crighton Avenue. Seapy sold the property to farmer Fred Lemon, whose son Sidney owned Lemon Coal Company in Elgin. Fred's heirs sold the 101 Hamilton part of the lot to Martin and Frances Skok. The Elgin City Directory

first lists 101 Hamilton in 1929-30, and the house was built shortly before 1929. Its current owners are only the third family to live in it.

Martin Skok immigrated to Elgin from Czechoslovakia in 1918. Hardworking and with little formal education, he started a business making automobile piston pins in 1919. In 1927, he built the Elgin Manufacturing Company at 412 N. State St. (Route 31) and became very successful, supplying auto parts to more than 3,000 jobbers by 1965. He revived the Elgin Road Races in 1933, and entered his Elgin Piston Pin Special race car in the Indianapolis 500 and other races between 1927 and 1954. He served on the board of the Elgin Community Chest Association. Chicago native Frances served various organizations at St. Laurence Catholic Church

and St. Joseph Hospital. She died in 1958; Martin, in 1964. Son Martin Skok Jr. survived his parents.

Martin Jr. sold 101 Hamilton in 1968 to Donald and Patricia Quillman. Donald was an assistant principal at several Elgin schools, including Elgin High School. In 2002 he came out of retirement to serve as District U-46's interim superintendent. Patricia was a co-corporate manager of Elgin's State Street Market, a collection of shops still at 701 N. State St. The Quillmans lived at 101 Hamilton until 2005.

Jim and Kris Binder were both raised in 1970s tract houses. Jim grew up in several Chicago suburbs, while Kris' family first lived elsewhere in the Midwest and West. The couple met during high school in St. Charles and began dating at Northern Illinois University.

They grew to love old houses while renting a nicely appointed apartment in a Victorian-style two-flat during graduate school at NIU, and next at their 1908 first house, also in DeKalb. They also have lived outside New York City and in Chicago in several apartments.

This experience led them to seek an "older home with character" when moving to Chicago for Jim's new job. Elgin drew them after they learned of its urban sensibility and diversity. At 101 Hamilton, they found themselves "quite taken with the place"—along with the neighborhood and its proximity to the train. They closed on 101 Hamilton Oct. 31, 2005—getting a warm welcome by handing out Halloween candy to trick-or-treaters.

Before moving in in December, the couple pulled up wall-to-wall carpeting on the first floor to reveal red oak floors and vintage linoleum. They hired someone to restore the floors; as Kris says, "We know our limits." Jim is director of public relations at Options Clearing Corporation in Chicago. Kris is a freelance editor for Guilford Press in New York.

Jim and Kris had the powder room's Crane porcelain sink with integral spout reglazed in its original orchid pink. Outside they took down metal awnings, and renovated the sidewalk and patio. They landscaped the entire yard, but say it's "still a work in progress."

Some features Kris and Jim love are the tile roof, interior arches, woodwork, built-ins, and the many intact original details. They enjoy the view of the old oaks looking south on Hamilton, which they say "are beautiful year-round, but especially after the first snow."

They love the Golden Skillet—a local joint we can walk to for breakfast—as well as nearby Ralph's Barber Shop. In downtown Elgin, they enjoy Al's Café, Toom Toom Thai, Martini Room and Elgin Public House, and belong to the Centre of Elgin gym.

Future plans include restoring the sunroom linoleum and remodeling the kitchen in a 1920s-inspired style.

Architectural Notes

Colonial Revival-Style houses have two stories, with symmetrical window placement and a central main entrance usually trimmed with classically inspired details. This home has a distinguished portico, with a curved ceiling supported by fluted round columns and square pilasters. The doorway features an elliptical arch window above and flanking side-light windows.

The inspiration for these homes comes from those built in the Northeast from about 1700 to 1850. The style returned to popularity after 1900. Variations in detailing have resulted in similar-appearing homes with different style names, such as Georgian, Federal and Adam. In Elgin, the Colonial Revival Style was especially popular after 1910. By the late 1920s many local examples, such as this one, were incorporating elements from other styles.

One such element of another style is this home's hipped roof, constructed of green clay tiles instead of the traditional shingles. The five-sided, one-story bay on the south side is another departure from traditional design. These features, along with a brick veneer facade, hint at the prosperity of the original owners and evolving architectural fashions of the 1920s.

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