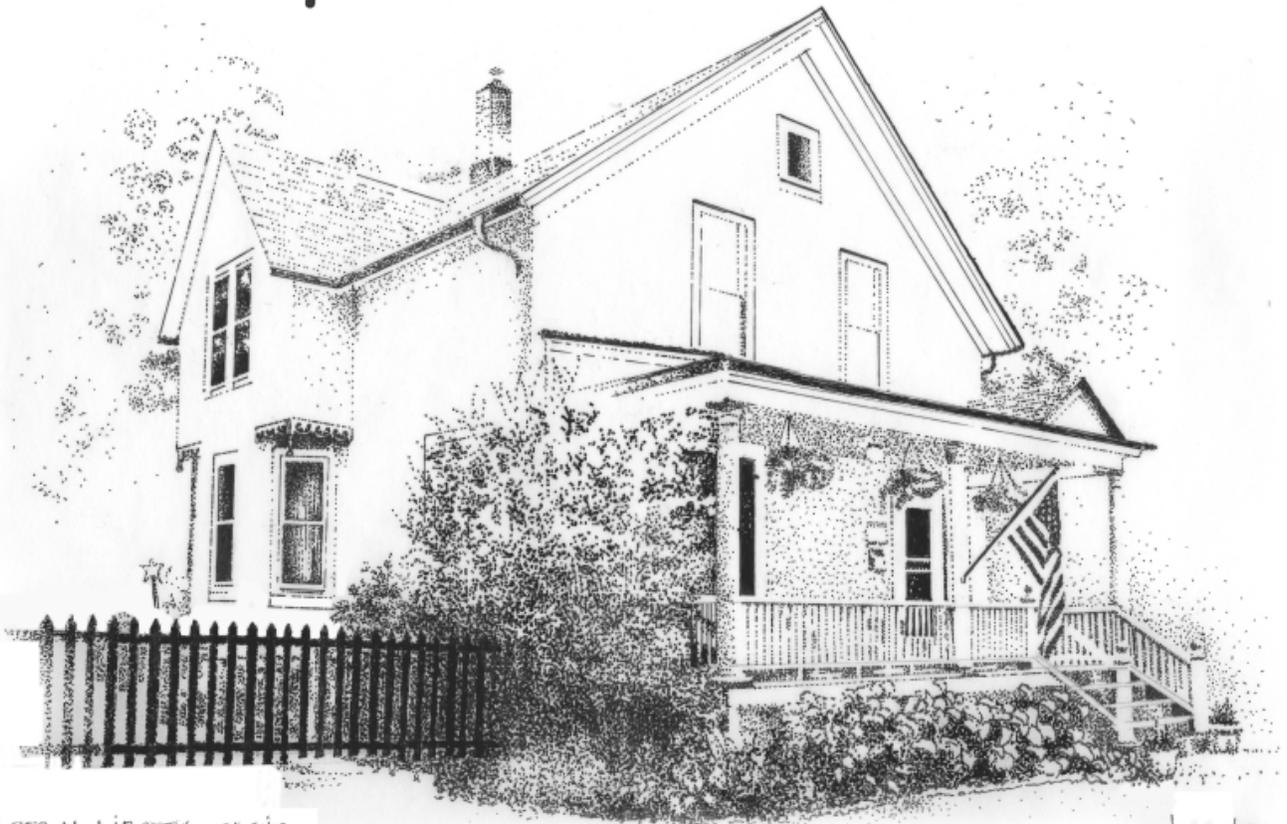


# 252 NORTH LIBERTY



Vernacular  
Built 1902



252 N. Liberty - Elgin

In early 1902, the heirs to the Vail estate sold the lot for this house to Joseph Rehage who soon hired builder Henry Brammer to construct a home. Scott and Moira Savel, the current owners of 252 N. Liberty Street, found the name “Brammer” on windows they removed while restoring the house.

German immigrant Rehage married Amanda Meier February 26, 1903. An Elgin Daily News marriage announcement the next day noted, “Mr. Rehage is a well-known groceryman, and his wife formerly was employed in the Dial Room of the watch factory.” It mentioned the couple would live on “North Liberty Street, where they will occupy a new house.”

Joseph had opened his grocery store in 1900 on South Grove Street in downtown Elgin. His 1955

Elgin Daily News obituary described him as Elgin’s “oldest independent grocer; he had some customers over a 40-year period.” He had to have been prominent; the notice was on the front page and included his photo.

The Rehages sold the house in 1910 to William Gellermann for \$3,100. The Gellermann family owned 252 N. Liberty until 1959.

The Savels moved into the house in March 1998 from 827 Prospect Blvd. in Elgin. After being rehabbed, that house was featured on the 1995 Historic House Tour. The Savels thought their new place at 252 N. Liberty was a “diamond in the rough,” with “beautiful woodwork.”

Moira, a compliance communications manager with Zurich Financial Services, says, of renova-

tions, not to rip too much apart at once. “One project at a time is the rule at our house,” she adds, speaking from experience.

The couple has restored the front porch columns, balusters and newel posts appropriate to the house’s age. They’ve repaired and repainted the exterior, and put on a new roof, gutters and downspouts. Scott, a contractor who owns All Around Home Improvements, completely rewired the house and is slowly updating the plumbing. They have remodeled the kitchen, Moira’s office and daughter Miranda’s bedroom, and restored the foyer.

Scott has done much of the renovation himself. He won the first Artisan’s Award in 2003 as part of the city’s Mayor’s Awards for Historic Preservation.

Moira says, “Living on Liberty Street is not for the faint of heart!” She’s glad they kept the porch’s concrete slab rather than replacing it with wood, because several years ago, someone drove across a neighbor’s lawn and hit the Savels’ porch. “The only damage was to a spirea bush,” she said. The family finds relief from the sometimes noisy street in the nicely landscaped backyard. Scott especially enjoys their koi pond, home to five fish. Moira’s favorite home feature is the remodeled kitchen, which now has sufficient counter space. The garage you see was formerly a barn that had its roof lowered.



### *Architectural Notes*

When constructed this house was probably sided with wooden clapboards and, perhaps, wooden shingles on the gable ends above the second floor. Somewhere along the way that siding was removed and the present-day stucco finish applied. Stucco on wood frame houses was a commonly used in the early twentieth century, mostly on Foursquare- and

Prairie-Style homes. It is less common to find a home converted to stucco after it was initially constructed. Stucco is a durable material that requires relatively little maintenance, however, when the Savels purchased the home it was time to repair the numerous cracks and small chips that had developed.

Because of the change to the façade it is a little hard to fit this home into an architectural style niche. The date of construction, 1902-03, and overall layout of the building, with its intersecting gable configuration and full-width front porch, suggest a home built in the transition period between late Victorian designs and the less ornamented styles that followed. The house retains some Queen Anne-like flourishes such as the wood trim over the clipped corners of the bay window on the south side. The interior trim detail is simpler than Victorian-era fussiness, and more typical of homes built between about 1900 and 1930.



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