

287 VINCENT PLACE

Neo-Classical
Built 1909



This impressive house has been home for several prominent Elgin families, and its number of owners is comparatively few for a house built in 1909. Its owners' professions and businesses range widely, but an appreciation for the stately beauty of 287 Vincent Place unites them.

Architect George Morris designed the house in 1909 for Emil and Minnie Althen. The cost was \$9,000. Emil was born in Elgin in 1869. He was one of three sons and three daughters of Casper Althen, who emigrated from Germany to Wisconsin in 1855. The Althen family owned and operated Elgin Eagle Brewing Company; Casper Althen bought the business in 1868. Emil and his brothers joined the business in the

1890s. Emil worked at a Chicago brewery and studied brewing at the U.S. Brewing Academy in New York City before returning to Elgin Eagle. He and Minnie Strandt married in 1893; she had emigrated from Germany to Elgin with her parents at age 3. The business thrived, and Emil and Minnie had a son and daughter

Fortunes changed, however, when the city of Elgin went dry five years before national Prohibition, and the brewery went out of business. Emil and Minnie sold their home to Louis Eppenstein and wife Anna in 1915. Louis was vice president of Illinois Watch Case Company in Elgin, which was owned by his uncle Sol, who co-founded the company in 1888 (the Illinois Watch Case Company building still

stands at the intersection of Slade and Dundee avenues). Louis and Anna sold the house in 1926 to another relative, fellow watch case company executive James Eppenstein, and his wife, Louise.

In 1929 Lyman F. and Marilla Black bought the home from the James Eppensteins. Lyman was publisher of News Printing Company and vice president of Elgin City Banking Company. The couple raised their son, Charles, here. The newspaper company published the Elgin Daily News, which was consolidated with the Copley family's Courier in 1926 and today survives as the Elgin Daily Courier-News. Lyman's father, Willis Black, was the Elgin Daily News publisher and president of First National Bank of Elgin. Lyman was also a First National Bank director, and that bank later absorbed Elgin City Banking Company. He later became board chairman and vice president of the First National Bank.

Lyman sold his interest in the Courier-News in 1953; a windowed door on the third floor of this home today attests to the family's newspaper interest. He died in 1954; widow Marilla remained at 287 Vincent Place until 1971. Subsequently, an insurance agent, a physician and their families owned the house.

It was bought in 1982 by Irving P. Durchslag, president of Singles Roofing Company Inc., and his wife, Marjorie.

Irving founded Singles Roofing in 1958, and the Durchslags bought their three children to the home. Singles Roofing handles commercial, residential and industrial roofs, and also has a location in Raleigh, N.C. Local buildings with work by Singles Roofing include the Elgin Public Museum, Lords Park Pavilion, the Elgin Fire Barn Museum, Bethlehem Lutheran Church and the West Dundee Village Hall.

After Irving Durchslag died in 2008, his son Bob, now president of Singles Roofing, bought his siblings' shares of the estate and set about preserving the home, making renovations as

necessary to maintain its character. Bob has tuckpointed almost the entire house, remodeled and painted, and is building a master suite on the third floor. He has renovated the garage and updated the kitchen with state-of-the-art appliances.

After a flash flood in September 2008, he added knee walls around the back door and built a back terrace. He also has stripped and cleaned the porch columns, installed blue slate porch steps, rebuilt the entrance gate piers and added the wrought-iron fence.

Bob sees the home as a memorial to his father, as evidenced by the plaque on the entrance gate, and his father's collections are visible in the living room. The furnishings, decor and interior are largely as his mother designed them.

Architectural Notes

This magnificent house is designed along Neo-Classical lines. The most prominent feature of the style is the centrally located, full-height front porch with its pediment roof. In this example, the massive columns are topped with Ionic capitals. The cornice features both dentils and small brackets known as modillions. Other classical elements are the wide frieze band beneath the cornice, the small round window in the pediment and the keystones above the window openings. Notice how the brickwork on the corners of the building is built out to suggest the large stone blocks known as quoins. The very large masonry balusters on the front porch add to the classical effect. The fence complements the house with its massive brick corner posts, and the metal sections add a touch of distinction without obscuring the view of the building.

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