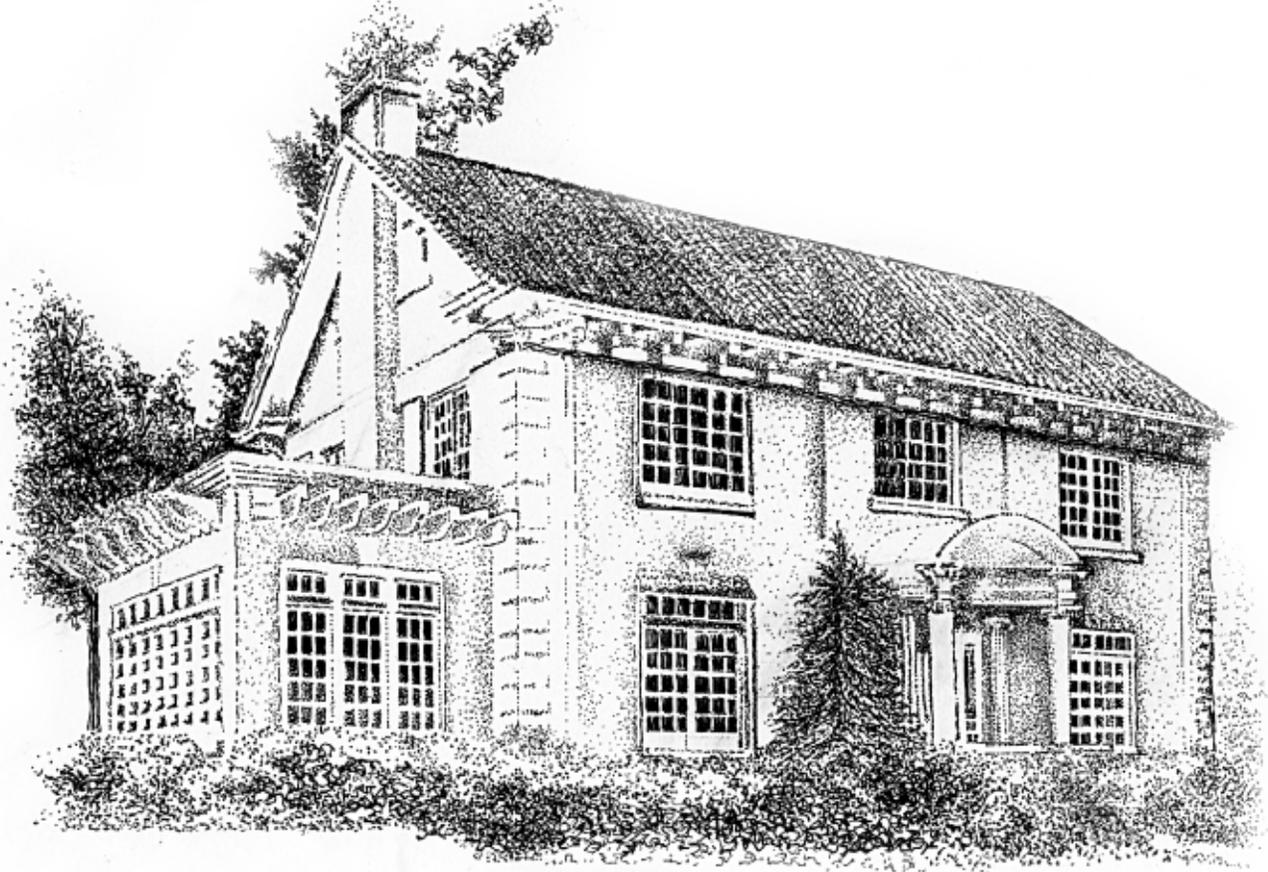


300 VINCENT PLACE

Colonial Revival
Built 1925



When the family opens the impressive front door to its home at 300 Vincent Place, it has truly arrived. These words are as true today for current owners Dan and Sheri Butler as they were in 1925, when Edward J. O'Beirne built the house for himself and his family.

Born in New Haven., Conn., in 1860, Edward and his identical twin brother, William, lost their mother at age 7. Their father, an Irish immigrant, decided to move west to Elgin the next year, where the twins grew up. Edward went to public school in Elgin and worked for a time at Elgin National Watch Factory, before joining the Navy at age 17. There he served as a submarine diver under Admiral Farragut on the U.S.S. Hartford for several years. After his military service, Edward returned to Elgin and worked at the watch factory a second time, leaving for the last time in 1881. William also

joined the Navy and worked at the watch factory at the same time as his brother, according to a May 16, 1999, Elgin Courier-News column by E.C. "Mike" Alft about the brothers.

The O'Beirne brothers next won a contract to put up seven electric light towers around Elgin in 1883, which were the main illumination source for the city. This work led to similar contracts in other cities and expanded into installing the pipe for the New Orleans water system. Based in the South for a time, O'Beirne Brothers & Co. designed and built more than 60 municipal and corporation utility plants across the country, and Edward O'Beirne became a nationally recognized public works engineer.

Edward O'Beirne returned to Elgin in 1909 and constructed a large business block on Spring Street, where the parking garage now sits. At age 65, he and second wife Mildred built 300

Vincent Place, having raised seven children from his two marriages, and lived there until his death in 1940.

Like several other tour homes, 300 Vincent Place has had few owners. They included Morgan Jones, president of insurance company Morgan Jones & Co. in the 1940s, and Charles and Marjorie Van Ness from 1964 to 1986. Charles Van Ness was a senior executive at D.C. Cook Publishing Co., the prominent Elgin Sunday school materials publisher, and Marjorie was a teacher at several Elgin public schools.

Dan and Sheri Butler came to 300 Vincent Place in 1991, having lived in either brand-new or 15- to 20-year-old houses in their married life. The Butlers had school-age children at the time and found Elgin to be a “well-kept secret,” says Sheri, the children’s pastor for the age 2 room at Willow Creek Community Church. Dan, who’s in sales and marketing in the home appliance industry, describes what they were looking for as “more than a shelter: a home.” Having moved to the area from Oklahoma City, the couple were stunned by home prices in some of the Chicago suburbs. They sought an older house in an established neighborhood, which they felt would help them form a connection to their community, and this one filled the bill.

The Butlers’ changes to their home have included repairing the rotting roof and the rafter tails decorating the sunroom’s exterior. Most have been decorative, such as removing the wall-to-wall carpeting from the hardwood floors on the first floor.

The children attended Elgin public schools and had some “fantastic teachers,” Sheri says. The family has continued to enjoy the home and its west-side location. In fact, the Butlers’ daughter was married in the home’s beautifully landscaped backyard two years ago. She and her husband also live in Elgin, and she is a social worker with the Elgin Boys and Girls Club.

Architectural Notes

The basic design of Colonial Revival comes from the placement of doors and windows, and the arrangement of interior spaces. These are derived from homes built in the Northeast during, and right after, the Colonial period in American history, or roughly from about 1700 to 1850. Some of the other defining home features are two stories with gabled ends; a symmetrical arrangement of windows; and having the front entry set in the middle of the building. Variations in detailing 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 about 1910.

The main entrances of Colonial Revival homes are usually trimmed with classically inspired details. The portico of this house is a lavish example of the Greek Ionic Order. Adding to the very distinguished appearance are the curved underside to the roof, the impressive front door and its side windows, and an elliptical arch window overhead. From the tile roof, to the detailing in brickwork, to the sun room with its projecting rafter tails, this home boosts top quality in design and craftsmanship.

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