



331 Griswold Street

1893 Queen Anne

Andrew and Britta Cuming



When Anders and Amelia Krogrud had 331 Griswold Street built in 1893, they already knew the neighborhood. The Norwegian immigrants had lived at 337 Griswold since 1886, and turned that house over in 1894 to their son, August.

The Krogruds had lived in Ishpeming, Mich., where Anders was a blacksmith, before moving to Elgin in the early 1880s. They chose noted Elgin architect W.W. Abell to design and Henry Jensen to build their house and barn for \$3,200, according to building summaries in the December 30, 1893, *Elgin Daily Courier*.

Anders and August were employees of the Elgin National Watch Co., which employed many Elginites. Daughter Sophia was a dressmaker.

Anders and Amelia Krogrud sold their home to milk dealer William Stokes and his wife, Josephine, in 1911. The Stokeses raised two sons in the house. Milk dealers bought and sold milk from the surrounding rural areas; it was a large business in Elgin in the 1800s and into the 1900s. William, according to his April 11, 1938, newspaper obituary, had organized a dairy route

in Elgin around 1908, which he operated from home. Josephine Stokes remained here until 1939.

From 1940 to 1946, widow Mary Reed and a relative, Evelyn Reed, lived at the house. Evelyn was a secretary. They sold the home to James Darnell, a machine operator for McGraw Electric Co., in 1956.

James Darnell remained here until 1969. Next Irwin Johnston, a teacher in the Elgin public schools, bought the house with his wife, Sandra.

Other owners included Michael Newton, an Elgin High School teacher and his wife, Patricia, a nurse in the Elgin public schools in the mid-1970s.

In August 2010, Andrew Cuming and his then-fiancée, Britta, bought 331 Griswold a few days before they got married. The couple was looking for houses in Elgin because Andrew had been an intern at ITW's Shakeproof division on Route 25 and liked the city. They made a list of Elgin houses in their price range and drove around looking at them. One was down the block from 331 Griswold, but the couple "fell in love



with" this one right away though it was not quite in their price range. They felt it could be their "forever home," says Andrew. "They set up a tour and found they loved the inside, too. They bought the house, got married in late August 2010 and moved in after their wedding and honeymoon, in October that year.

The home's character and strong lines drew them both, Andrew says. Both he and Britta love old houses, and this one's Queen Anne style and turret really spoke to Britta.

Britta was a newcomer to old houses, having grown up in newer homes in Janesville, Wis., and Bismarck, N.D. She works from home, making and selling handmade quilts and soap. Andrew grew up in Bridgewater, Conn., and New York City. He is a web designer and consultant, specializing in small and individual businesses and nonprofits. He has his own company, EZMadeWeb.com.

The couple lived in Chicago's Streeterville neighborhood for about eight months before moving in, while Britta finished her degree at the University of Chicago. Andrew had just finished his degree at Northwestern University.

Andrew and Britta have redone their kitchen, and are now doing some painting on the first floor. They had the driveway repaved, and Andrew put in new front walkway bricks. The couple has done gardening and landscaping as well. They're especially fond of their home's original features, including pocket doors, woodwork and stained-glass windows, and the new bathtub in the "turret room."

There's an interesting story about some of this home's woodwork. When the Cumings purchased the house, it had little original woodwork because the previous owner had sold it in a "salvage auction." Dan Miller of the Gifford Park Association put out a request to his house salvage email list asking if anyone had bought woodwork from 331 Griswold they weren't using. He got several responses and soon amassed quite a collection. Dan met the couple at their house plaque ceremony and asked if they would like their home's original woodwork back. They were happy to have it, and it's being stored until they're ready to put it back up.

The Cumings also plan to add built-in bookshelves to their library, return a working fireplace to the living room and renovate the master bedroom. They would like to add solar panels to make their house "green" without changing its character.

Architectural Notes

W.W. Abell was perhaps Elgin's most prolific and noteworthy architect during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. He designed several homes, often in the Queen Anne style. In the minds of many, it's the style that defined the Victorian era.

Queen Annes, such as this one, are easily recognized by their asymmetrical facades, prominent front-facing gables, variety of window types, large porches, steeply pitched roofs and abundant trim detail. Bay windows, turrets and small side porches add to the building's romantic image. The exterior wall cladding was often a mix of clapboards, shingles and stonework to give surfaces variety and texture. Other decorative elements can be found on the facade, such as dentils, brackets and various patterns of leaded-glass windows.

Inside, the main floor often featured large parlors, drawing rooms and dining rooms connected by pocket doors and wide doorways. The kitchens were typically large and functional. Upstairs, multiple bedrooms often included a nursery as well as quarters for the live-in help. ♦

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