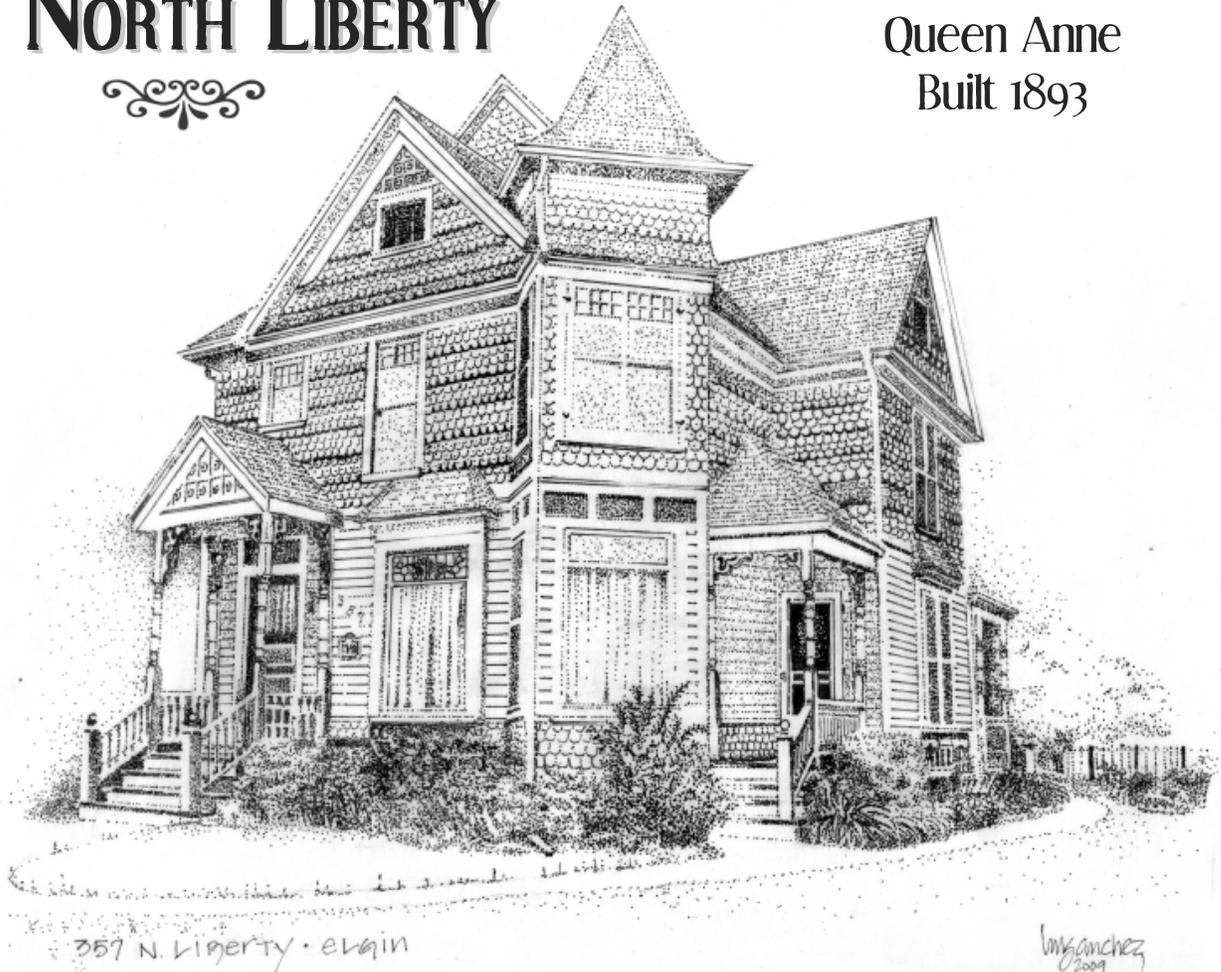


# 357 NORTH LIBERTY



Queen Anne  
Built 1893



**T**his home was originally owned by Albert S. Williams. The December 30, 1893 Elgin Daily Courier annual construction review noted “Burger and Bean erected for A.S. Williams on Liberty Street a modern frame dwelling at a cost of \$3,100 ...” The house became 357 N. Liberty. Three years later, after what appear to be some financial difficulties, Albert Williams sold the home. He seems to have disappeared altogether from Elgin by 1900.

Apparently a more financially stable man, William Walker, wife Mary and their daughter lived there from about 1896 until William’s 1928 death. The house was put into the Walker women’s names and used as a rental until 1935, when Mary died. It was sold to Lauren Miller, an insurance agent who continued to rent the house out. After William Young acquired the property in 1941, he likely had it converted it into two apartments.

The sixth owners bought the house in 1956 and kept it until 2004. It was purchased from their estate by

Elginite Dennis Roxworthy, who has rehabbed more than 60 homes in Elgin and elsewhere over the past three decades. Many people would have said that most of these properties were on their last legs. Not this energetic entrepreneur, who has the vision to see the house much as it was originally intended to be.

This house is practically unrecognizable from when Roxworthy purchased it. The aluminum siding and stripped down porches hid the features of the house that made it unique. These earlier attempts to modernize the house and reduce maintenance resulted in a non-descript building. Roxworthy rebuilt the porches, removed two layers of substitute siding to get back to the original clapboards and fancy-cut shingles. A house that had gone “unseen” for decades emerged.

Dorie Alpha, a senior business analyst for Zurich Insurance in Schaumburg, bought the home in March 2007. Its exterior lines, detail and colors plus the interior’s light airy feel were key factors attracting her to the house. To her delight, Dorie says she feels like

“now I belong to something,” comparing her unique home favorably to subdivisions where one house “looks like all the rest.” She fondly refers to her home as the “Easter Egg House,” because of all of the beautiful colors.

Dorie has continued to upgrade the house with additional electrical and plumbing work. In the kitchen, she bought an antique cabinet to transform into an island, and added a dishwasher and garbage disposal. Dorie discovered the original hardwood floor of the kitchen and hallway after having about an inch of various linoleum layers removed, a surprise she describes as “exciting.” Other work has included renovating the downstairs bathroom and adding a shower, and putting electricity in the garage and buying a garage-door opener. A brick patio with built-in seating has been added to the rear providing an ideal space to watch activities at the sports fields. The patio includes an original Elgin cistern cover as an architectural element.



## Architectural Notes

The Queen Anne Style is prominently displayed in this house. Note the front facing gables, the wide variety of exterior wall cladding, the prominent two-story bay with the pyramidal roof, and the abundant detail around the windows and porches.

The style was named by English architect Richard Norman Shaw although it has little to do with England’s Queen Anne, who ruled from 1702 to 1714. In her day, architecture tended to be based on Renaissance models. When the style became popular in late 19<sup>th</sup> century America it underwent further changes. Americans made liberal use of the mass produced wooden building materials; hence, shingles, spindles, brackets, turned porch columns and balusters, and a vast array of other trim details became common. Queen Annes became the canvas for architects and builders to create some of the most complex and visually interesting homes ever built. That lust for detail extended from the grandest homes to some of the simplest ones. Here we see it on full display in what is basically middle-class housing.



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