

## 555 North Spring



When this house was brand new, the Elgin Daily Courier (12-13-1890) called it "a pretty gothic cottage." The current owners are only the second family to own this 99 year-old-home. Built for \$3,000 in 1890, this was the home of William D. Kimball, and it remained in his family's estate until 1977.

William D. Kimball, born in New Hampshire (11-9-1865) was the son of James Madison Kimball and Ruth Tourtellot. When Will was six, his family moved to Chicago (pop. less than 12,000) where his parents kept a hotel. His grandfather, George W. Kimball, was one of the pioneers of Elgin who arrived here in 1835 from New Hampshire. He was a carpenter and cabinet maker and lived where Finla McClure later built the mansion at 770 W. Highland.

Will Kimball lived with this father and mother at 454 N. Spring until he married Clara Samells. Will and Clara had two daughters; one was Maureen Kimball Dennis, from whose estate auction the current owners purchased the home.

Clara was one of seven people killed in the Palm Sunday tornado of 1920. She died in the First Baptist Church where the twister caused the brick front to collapse into the main floor of the church. (The tornado left destruction throughout the city. The storm destroyed nearly 25 houses and one million dollars' worth of property. Thirty people were hurt.) Kimball later married Una Gage of Michigan.

As most Victorian houses on the tour today, this home is a combination of details from various styles. The form and restrained use of detailing might suggest Stick style. The porch columns are Eastlake as is the sunburst (fan) motif in the bay. A second-story rectangular bay is capped by a finial (ornament). Wall material is clapboard siding with decorative butt shingles and fish scale shingles. The house rests on a rusticated limestone foundation. In 1988, the front porch was reconstructed to resemble the original.

The foyer and staircase are lighted by stained glass windows. The turned spindles and newel posts of the staircase serve as a contrast to other House Tour homes built in the early 20th century which have square detailing; this difference shows the evolution of design.

In the parlors, there is a dramatic use of red stained glass. The pocket doors remain. Note the door hardware, the decorative use of wood in the door and window casings, as well as the moulding at the ceiling. The fireplace mantle in the second parlor has Eastlake details, evident in the wood detailing and in the expressive tile work. The dining room light fixture is original, and the built-in china cabinet opens from both sides (dining room and the pantry).

The owners have an early photograph showing Clara Kimball and her daughters standing outside the front of the house; the original porch and house design are also revealed. Today, the home maintains the charm of that "pretty gothic cottage."