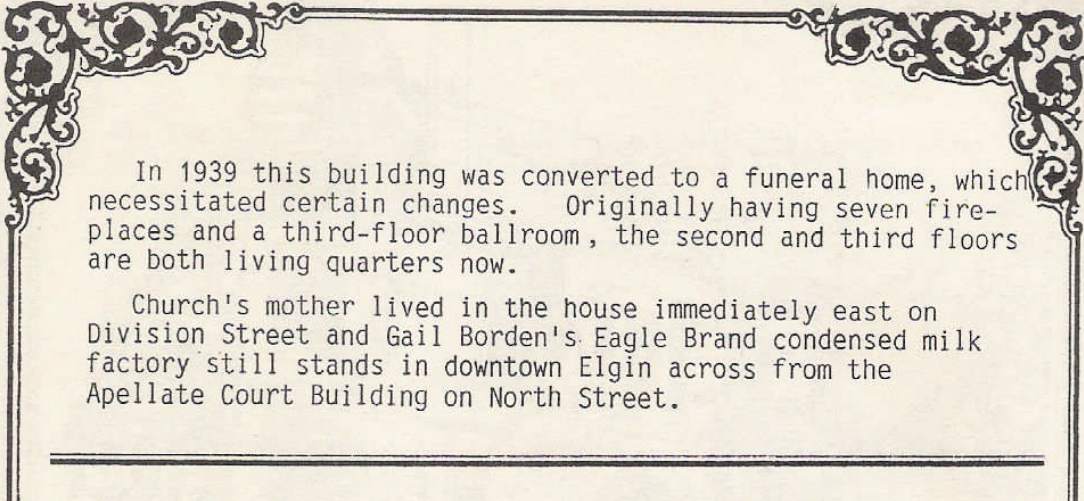




Alfred B. Church is yet another transplant from the state of New York. He was born in 1844 and arrived in Elgin at a young age with his mother and stepfather, Gail Borden of the condensed milk industry. In his adult years he was affiliated in the real estate business in the firm "Grote & Church," which firm was instrumental in bringing the David C. Cook Publishing Co. to Elgin. In the 1880's, he helped to organize the Elgin City Railway Company which instituted the electric street car system in Elgin. He and his brother Samuel donated the David Scofield mansion to the city for use as a library, stipulating that the library be named the "Gail Borden Public Library." Church also served on the Board of Education, as city treasurer, and was a member of the First Congregational Church. He also was a vice president of the Home Savings Bank.

This large masonry structure was built for Alfred B. and Mary Peterson Church by Andrew Magnus in 1886-87, and is a blending of Chateausque, Eastlake and Romanesque styling. Note the steeply pitched hipped roof, the expressive roof forms and the finely detailed gabled dormer with fish scale shingles. The brick facade has brick lintels and decorative window hood motifs. There are four bands of rusticated stone belt courses running horizontally with rusticated stone foundation and window sills, and rusticated keystone in the arch of the west window. Beautiful stained glass is featured. The Victorian porch and porte cochere on the west facade along with the porch columns and balled spindlework screen beneath the porch all feature fine Eastlake detailing. More Eastlake detailing can be seen on the second floor porch detail above the later first floor addition in the southeast corner. This same porch also features a sunburst motif.



In 1939 this building was converted to a funeral home, which necessitated certain changes. Originally having seven fireplaces and a third-floor ballroom, the second and third floors are both living quarters now.

Church's mother lived in the house immediately east on Division Street and Gail Borden's Eagle Brand condensed milk factory still stands in downtown Elgin across from the Appellate Court Building on North Street.

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