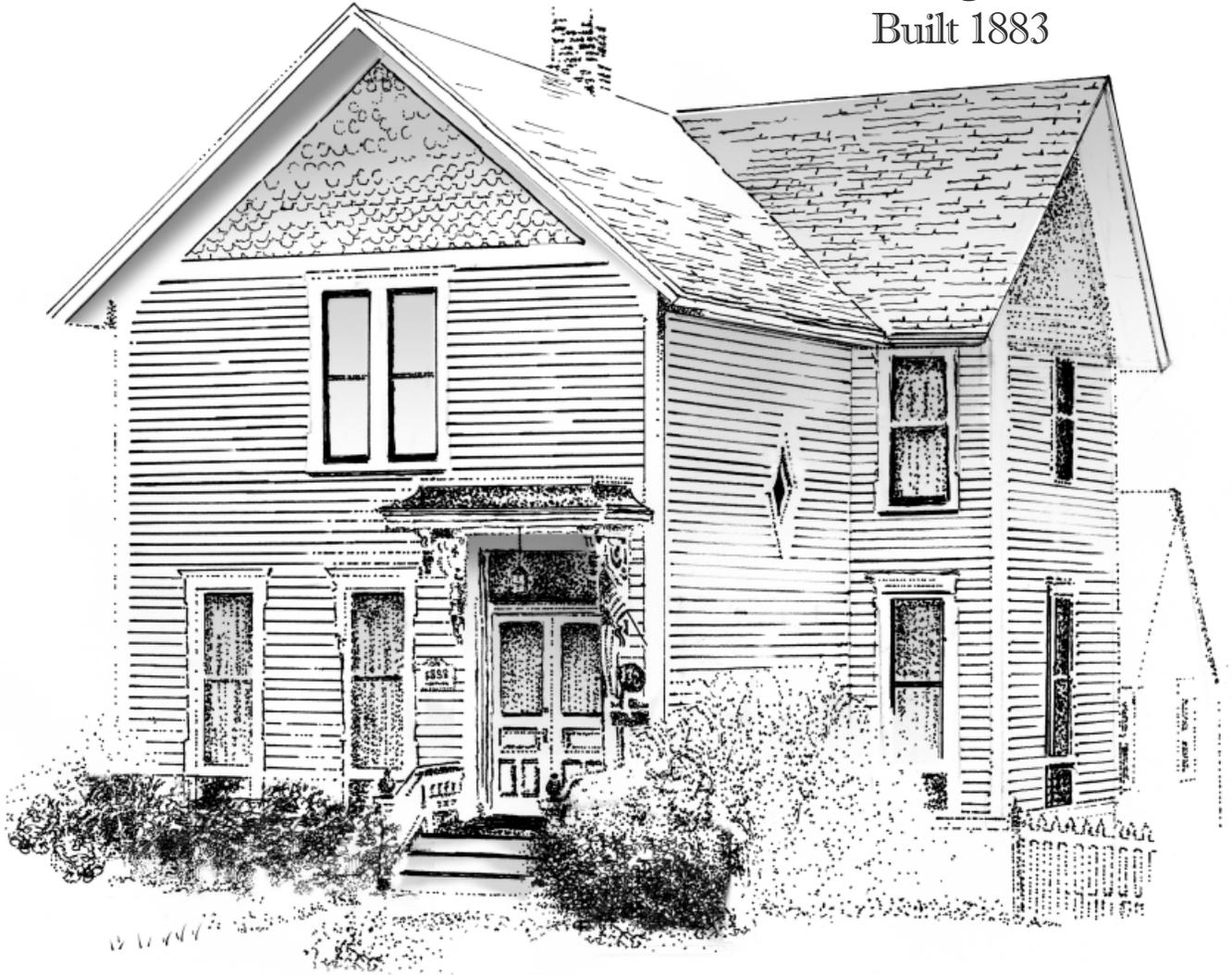


# 132 N. CHANNING

Cross-gabled  
Built 1883



This home was built in 1883 by Thomas Mackey, a contractor. Mackey lived here for about dozen years afterward. When he left, the home was occupied by a series of families who often took in boarders.

Sometime around the 1930s, the house was "modernized" using green-colored asphalt siding. This product, applied right over the existing clapboard siding, offered a no-maintenance alternative to periodic painting. It proved to be durable, although not particularly attractive. What few qualities it had in the latter regard were long gone by the 1980s. The home's landscaping became completely neglected, and a small barn in the back, long since fallen into disrepair, was razed. Worn and unkempt, the house was a glaring eyesore. The inside was an eyesore as well; it had been subdivided into two apartments by installing a shower in the front hallway to create a second bath and wall the units off from each other.

In 2003, the Gifford Park Association was looking for a rehab project. One criterion was finding a house whose renovation would encourage others to do the same. GPA wanted a house that other rehabbers had passed by because it required too large of an investment to be profitable. Such homes seemed doomed to further deteriorate as slum properties. Unlike private investors, GPA was willing to lose money on the rehab effort, because it was an investment for the good of the neighborhood. As such, it had the potential for larger but less tangible returns. Using money earned from annual historic house tours and salvages, plus plenty of volunteer labor to supplement professional contractors, GPA looked for the "worst of the worst." In early 2004, GPA began the two-year process of rescuing this house.

Barb Counterman and Tony Sanchez bought 132 N. Channing and closed on it in March 2006. The married couple left a 1930s-era apart-

ment in a historic Northwest Side neighborhood of Chicago to be here.

Tony and Barb first considered moving to Elgin when their real estate agent recommended the city as a place with affordable homes they would probably like. They had looked at houses in the north, northwest, west and southwest Chicago suburbs before narrowing their choices down to three houses in Elgin.

The GPA renovation impressed the couple greatly. The couple, both graphic designers, had wanted an old house with character, not a “modern, cookie-cutter” dwelling, even though neither of them grew up in an old house. 132 N. Channing filled the bill. They were agreeable to making some light improvements in the house, but not the major ones that some older homes would require. Barb and Tony love the house’s molding and decorative trim, which help convey the historic feel of the house.

Another attraction of the home was that it was within walking distance of the train and downtown Elgin, which they like because of its “unique character and identity.” The historic neighborhood fosters a sense of community,” said Barb, adding they feel they’re a part of it now.

Barb and Tony were “more than ready,” they said, to focus on tackling their backyard “urban prairie” and building a garage. The couple landscaped the dramatically sloping backyard themselves, creating a multilevel living space enhanced with flower beds, stone pathways and patios. They are great believers in sharing and repurposing all sorts of home materials, and mentioned the flagstones, brick pavers and many plants they got for free or very low cost from Elgin house salvages. They also participate in neighborhood plant exchanges.

After a contractor they had hired to build the garage didn’t work out, Tony attacked the project himself in 2008, designing and building it with the help of friend and neighbor John Anderson. They hauled truckloads of dirt away to clear a space for the structure and finished the two-story garage, which has storage space upstairs, by fall of 2008. The couple had a company design and build the property’s fence. Tony and Barb also had the house

painted last year.

Now that they’ve lived here for five years, the homeowners’ appreciation for their house has evolved and deepened. Tony, while appreciating the home’s overall craftsmanship, especially enjoys the light throughout the house, which is maximized by the two exposures in each room. Barb enjoys the red-glassed, diamond-shaped window because “it makes a statement,” she said.

In the future, Barb and Tony’s plans for 132 N. Channing include getting the fireplace working, and adding more plants around the exterior of the house.

### Architectural Notes

This cross-gabled home is typical of the working- and middle-class residences of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The facade is dressed up with the use of clapboards and shingles. The door and window trim add a touch of individuality and craftsmanship. The main decorative feature is the dramatic front entry portico, with its Italianate styling. The handrail, baluster and newel posts on the front stoop are also Italianate-inspired. A similar porch design is located at the rear of the house. The recently constructed garage resembles a coach house and uses design motifs which match the home.

**All Elgin All The Time**

If it happens in Elgin,  
we have it covered

News  
Community  
Dining  
Entertainment  
Weekly bargains from local businesses

**BocaJump.com**