

159 HILL

Bungalow
Built 1922



Unlike most of homes on this year's tour, this one has had a series of loving owners who have taken good care of the property. It was built in 1922 for James and Mary Jacobson. He was a watch factory employee, and the family spent about 37 years living here. Beginning in about 1962, Alfred and Lauretta Waterman owned the house. They stayed for 36 years. Alfred worked in the Elgin Sanitation Department, eventually becoming superintendent.

Tim Walkup and the late Tim Burke owned the house from 1998 to 2006. It was when the "Tims," as they were known in the neighborhood, resided here that the house was featured on the 2003 Gifford Park Association Elgin Historic House Tour. They had remodeled the kitchen and bathroom, plus added the fence that now encloses the backyard. The home is such a fine example of a Craftsman-style bungalow that we had to see it again. The current owners graciously accepted our offer to join this year's tour. They enjoyed the fun when their immediate neighbors to the north, the Burnsers, were on the tour in 2009, and they also have justifiable pride in this fine home.

Since purchasing the home in 2006, Mike and Carmen Howard have continued the tradition of stewardship. They have respected its architectural heritage by selecting complementary furnishings in the Arts and Crafts, and Prairie, styles. They have continued to give the house the meticulous care that has allowed it to remain in such pristine condition for nearly 90 years.

The Howards moved to Elgin from the Avondale neighborhood of Chicago – near to where Mike grew up. Discerning buyers, they looked at about 50 houses. In their search, they pushed out from Chicago, bypassing many other suburbs that lack the appeal they found here. They seemed to be drawn to Elgin, and even made an unsuccessful bid on another home before finding this one. As Carmen says, "Other places are not like Elgin; this city has got a history, it's unique, it has character." What they were looking for is more likely to be found in an older neighborhood. Hill Avenue and the adjacent area had it. The area is not what the Howards termed the "suburban sprawl found in newer suburbs."

The home's clean appearance, rich woodwork

and tasteful decorating sold them. Carmen and Mike like the mature trees and the atmosphere created by kids playing in the neighboring yards and street. These homey aspects of life were missing in Chicago. Mike also likes being near the Fox River, which he considers one of the assets of downtown Elgin and a recreational resource for the entire Fox Valley. Elgin's reasonable prices were also an attraction, even though they both had to commute further to their work in Chicago. Carmen is now retired, and Mike says, "It's not a problem." His work schedule for the Union Pacific Railroad helps him avoid the rush-hour traffic jams. "It is worth it to be living here." We agree.

Architectural Notes

This year's tour features two bungalows illustrating two the more commonly built variants (the other bungalow is at 111 N. Porter St.). In this home, the roof is side-gabled, with a swallow pitch that slopes downward toward the front and back of the house. The slope becomes even flatter as the roof extends over the front porch. When viewed from the street, the appearance is of a large, sweeping roof surface. This expanse is broken up by the small dormer that gives the one-and-a-half-story design a little more useable space on the second floor. The dormer and gable ends feature clapboards and provide a nice contrast in materials to the mostly brick building.

The front porch is a prominent and inviting feature. Wide and deep, the porch provides a shady buffer between the street and the front rooms of the house. In the summer, it acts as an outdoor living room. In the winter, it serves as an entry foyer, giving a little transition space before stepping into the house itself. The slightly tapered brick porch columns start at ground level, but terminate before actually reaching the roof. They are topped with wood columns of a smaller diameter that gracefully curve into the header supporting the porch roof. The interrupted column and curved shape are common Craftsman motifs.

Typical of the style, there are several windows providing an ample amount of light and fresh air. The original windows, including the storm windows, have been retained. This demonstrates that with proper care, original windows can probably outlast a modern-day window

with a so-called lifetime guarantee. Though primarily a brick building, the home's paint-color scheme plays an important part in its overall appearance. The colors are well-balanced with each other and that of the brick. They provide an accent and styling detail that is in keeping with the Craftsman tradition.

ELGIN FIRE BARN #5 MUSEUM
Open House
October 22, 2011
11am-3pm

Fire Station Tours!
 Kids Crafts!
 Food!
 Fire Safety Lessons!
 Fire Truck Rides!
 Come Out And Join the Fun!!

533 St. Charles Street
 Elgin, IL 60120
 847-697-6242

Interior Decorating
 Real Estate Staging
 Paint Color Consults

Helping Housewalk homeowners today...
 ...helping you tomorrow!

Four Seasons Redesign
 changing your interior landscape

847-997-8822
 web: fourseasonsredesign.com email: fourseasonsredesign@yahoo.com