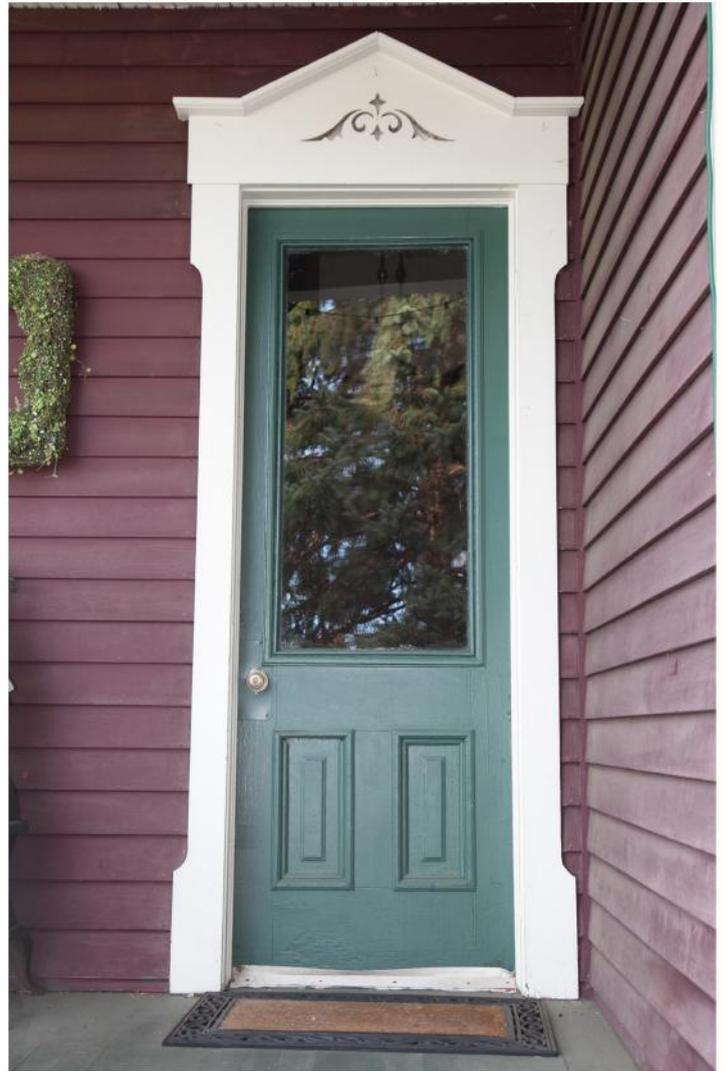


272  
McClure  
Avenue



**Homeowners:  
Anna & Nick Novelli**

Among the early residents of Elgin's near west side was Finla McClure, born in 1823 in Bath, N.Y. He and his parents came to the city 1846 to farm. They bought the land that now includes 272 McClure Avenue and 770 W. Highland Ave., also on the Historic Elgin House Tour this year. They built the farmhouse at 272 McClure, and Finla also lived there after his parents' death. He married Levantia Padelford in 1848. She died of tuberculosis, and the couple had one surviving son, Charles. Next, Finla married Fannie Wilder and they had a daughter, Bertha. He and both families lived in the farmhouse, and he outlived both wives.

Finla's dairy farm surrounded the farmhouse. At the same time he farmed he became a successful businessman, opening Elgin's first ice house. He also pioneered the use of the 8-gallon milk



# 272 McClure Avenue

can for delivery to local and Chicago customers, important because the dairy industry was a key one in the city. Later, he established the Elgin Packing Co. to can fruits and vegetables, and it employed hundreds each harvest season. He also served as an alderman on the city council.

After years of business success, Finla built 770 W. Highland in 1890-91 and moved in shortly thereafter. He began spending winters in Phoenix, Ariz., late in life and died there in 1900 of pneumonia.

Two sets of owners came and went at 272 McClure between 1900 and 1919.

In 1920, Walter and Hazel Geister purchased the home. Walter was a Kane County Highway Department commissioner who later co-owned Wing & Geister, sand and gravel dealers and excavating contractors. With the couple lived Hazel's family: her parents, Alfred and Nellie, and brothers, Charles and Benjamin. The Lawrences were retired farmers. Benjamin eventually worked in the Kane County Highway Department. Walter and Hazel later had children of their own, Margaret and Walter Jr. Members of the two families lived at 272 McClure until 1964: 44 years.

The home passed through several owners until December 2014, when Glen and Susan Holland bought it. They also own 770 W. Highland, so Finla McClure's two homes are tied together today.

The Hollands say they bought 272 McClure Ave. to preserve the Finla McClure legacy and the home's architectural details. They believe this house is the perfect example of how an old home can be updated to modern life while preserving its history. The cost can be less than purchasing a newly built home, Susan says.

Among their renovations, through partnership with Carpentry with Integrity, were removing the dining room wall to create an open-style kitchen, and adding a bathroom and laundry room on the second floor. The original wood floors were sanded and



restained. A back room became a sunroom and mudroom. They painted the inside of the house, updated the mechanicals and added gutters. John Crowe remudded the basement walls, and repaired the storm doors and external stairs to the basement.

Anna and Nick Novelli and their son, Matthew, came to 272 McClure Ave. in December 2015 and "immediately dressed it for the holidays!" says Anna. They had passed this home often before it was restored, and always commented it was one of the most

special homes in the area.

Nick and Anna are both from the Chicago area. Anna, an event coordinator for the city of Elgin, works at the Centre of Elgin. Nick is a commercial photographer and preservationist, specializing in the golf industry and architectural design. He works in Elgin near Festival Park in a building co-owned by his brother, Mark.

The Novellis are very invested in Elgin, Anna says. The couple loves the Elgin Symphony Orchestra and the public library, and they often frequent Arabica Café in downtown Elgin.

Some of their favorite house features are the one-of-a-kind fireplace mantels, wide-board flooring, crown molding and quirky windows. They love the trees in the backyard and side garden, and also the two porches. Says Anna, "This home is truly a work of art that has stood the test of time, and we feel fortunate to wake up to its beauty every day." They light the porches and side yard with white lights nightly to share their home's beauty with all who pass by.



## 272 McClure Avenue

## ARCHITECTURAL NOTES



**THANKS TO ANDREW** Jackson Downing's pattern book, "Cottage Residences," builders and home buyers now had a choice of the popular and fashionable styles of the age. In this 1842 pattern book are illustrations of alternative house styles other than the dominant Colonial Style, and it included designs suggesting the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles. Finla McClure may have had access to this book, and

it possibly persuaded him to design his 1847 home in the fashionable Italianate Style.

In Italianate-Style homes, the principal areas of elaboration are found at its windows, cornices, porches and doorways. Many of these characteristics are found on 272 McClure Ave., such as the elaborate triangle pediment window hoods found at the front elevation. Other Italianate-Style features include the

highly ornate one-story oriel with arched windows separated by twisted rope colonettes, ornate brackets and molded panels; the tall narrow windows; and the paired ornamental brackets found under the home's deep, overhanging eaves.

