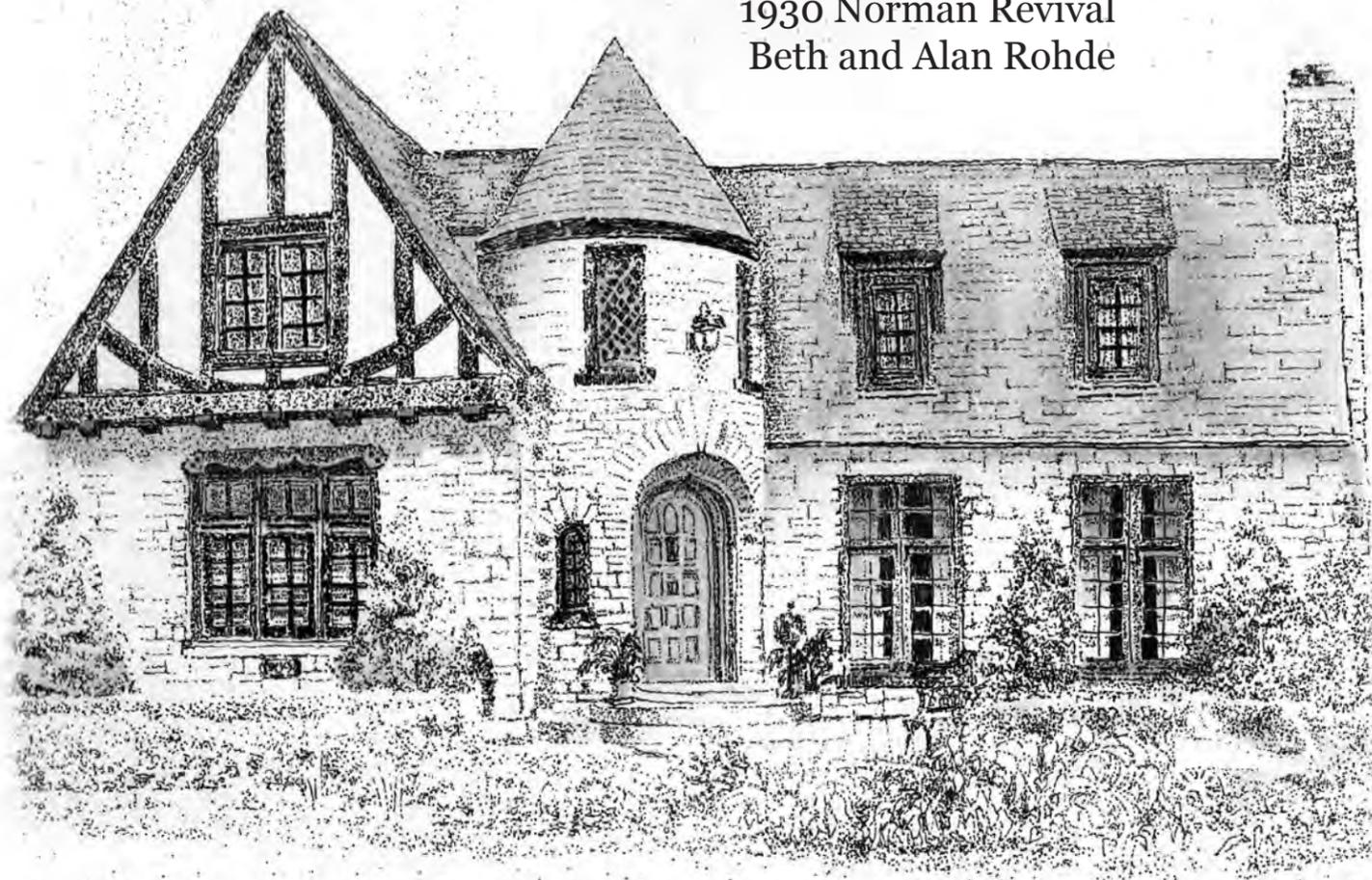




309 Wing Park Boulevard

1930 Norman Revival
Beth and Alan Rohde



The first owners of 309 Wing Park Boulevard opened their brand-new house to the public from July 25 to Aug. 10, 1930. The gesture was fueled by a mix of pride in workmanship and its owners' "primary object" to promote a "still greater interest in the art of making a home," according to an article about the event in the July 25, 1930, *Elgin Courier-News*.

John and Marjorie Kienzle were the original owners of 309, which they named *Sunset Tower*. The open house was co-sponsored by the newspaper, and many Elgin merchants displayed their goods and services at the open house.

Kienzle and his brothers owned Kienzle Brothers Company, which specialized in woodwork, sashes and doors, at 701 N. State St. in Elgin. Unsurprisingly, the 30-employee company was responsible for these features and the millwork in the house. That building now houses the State Street Market shops (where current homeowner Beth Rohde enjoys shopping).

The Kienzles divorced in the mid-1940s and sold 309 to Otto Jens, owner of O.A. Jens Potato Chip Company, and his wife, Mattie, in 1946. The current homeowners discovered a sign advertising Jens potato chips at the house when they moved in.

In 1951, Stewart and Mary Bond bought 309 and raised four children there: Stewart Jr., Dennis, David and Mary Lynne. Stewart was a longtime Elgin dentist, caring for local teeth for more than 43 years. He served in the Army Dental Corps at Fort Hood, Texas, for two years in the early 1950s. The Bonds were married for 62 years, until Stewart's death in 2003. The couple sold their house in 1989, after living there for 38 years. Dentistry and orthodontics have continued in the family for two subsequent generations.

309 had several intervening owners before Alan and Beth Rohde came along. Beth grew up in an old house on Worth Avenue in Elgin, and trick-or-treated at nearby

309 as a child. She says she has "loved this house for as long as I can remember." Alan was raised in a 1962 ranch house in Lombard—"in sort of a 'Wonder Years' kind of subdivision," he says. The couple was living in a new house in a South Elgin subdivision, when Beth drove past 309 one day on her way to a doctor's appointment. She noticed it was for sale and instantly called Alan on her cell phone, saying "Wanna move?" The Rohdes—Alan an electrical estimator and Beth a retired preschool teacher who's now a Mary Kay consultant and takes care of their grandson two days a week—moved in Thanksgiving weekend of 2006.

The couple had old-house experience, however, having lived in an old house on Hendee Street early in their marriage that they converted from a two-flat to its original single-family status.

They put that knowledge to use at 309 by adding a brick driveway, new roof, new deck by the pool, new shed, remodeling the kitchen and master bath, putting new windows in the kitchen and upstairs, and stripping the built-in cabinet in the breakfast nook. The couple also uncovered a hidden window in the master bedroom and made a window seat for it, and replaced the 1950s-style hollow-core birch doors with more appropriate frame-and-panel doors upstairs. They upgraded the three-season room and replaced the original boiler.

The Rohdes' plans for the house include continuing to strip the paint from the woodwork in the bedrooms. They love their home's character, curb appeal and craftsmanship as well as its warmth and coziness.

Beth enjoys Elgin because "it's where I come from—roots from way back." Alan mentions the city's small-town feel, parks, "great old homes and lots of great people.

Some of their favorite Elgin restaurants are ITN (In the Neighborhood) Deli, Chooch's Pizzeria, Al's Café, Big Skillet, Walnut Speak Easy and Elgin Public House. Favorite businesses include Klein's Farm & Garden Market, Joseph's Hair Salon, Kellenberger Auto Service and the Centre of Elgin gym.

They enjoy fine arts in downtown Elgin at The Hemmens Cultural Center, and the Janus Theater Company's annual "Walkabout: Theater on Your Feet." They also attend events at Elgin Community College.

Alan says 309 "just seems to fit us very well." Beth says it is her "dream house" She loves that Alan was willing to make her "dream come true."

Architectural Notes

The Norman Revival Style is rarely seen in the Elgin area. It was popular in the United States, albeit on a limited scale, after World War I, when Americans became exposed to rural French architecture from the Normandy region.

One of the defining elements of the style is the centrally located round tower with a cone-shaped roof. The tower mimics the silos that were often situated between barns and the living quarters of farms. Like the farm buildings, the style makes liberal use of stone, stucco and exposed timbers on the facades. The rambling layout, suggesting interconnected buildings that were built over time, results in an asymmetrical arrangement of doors and windows. Multiple roof planes are created by a variety of gables, dormers and roof pitches. The main entrance is often arched, with a heavy wooden door. Windows are multi-paned and set into openings surrounded with prominent wooden frames and trim work.

In this excellent example, elements of the style are carried over to the interior, where the design and workmanship on plank floors, beamed ceilings, paneling, built-in cabinetry and masonry are beautifully displayed.