

439 Division St.

The first family to live in this warm and welcoming home was William B. Long, his wife Arvilla and their children. They took occupancy in the newly constructed house about 1885. Mr. Long was 42 years old at the time. He was a Civil War veteran, having first enlisted at age 15 but soon discharged when it was learned how young he was. Undaunted he managed to re-enlist twice more and remained a soldier until the war's end in 1865.

Following in his father's footsteps William Long became a carpenter. In 1873 William was employed by the Elgin National Watch Company, but only for a few months. He returned in 1889 and was soon appointed foreman of the carpentry shop. Mr. Long held that post until retiring in 1927, at age 79.

Lost to history is what role William Long may have played in designing and crafting this fine home. While his watch factory duties probably precluded him from being the actual builder there is evidence, both inside and out, of an expert carpenter's hand. For example, the exterior features intricate trim around the doors and windows, plus the curved front porch. Inside the woodwork and faux finishes are indications of a master craftsman working under the watchful eye of a discerning buyer.

William Long lived in the house more than 49 years. Around 1927 Samuel Mills Eno and his wife Doris joined Mr. Long as residents. This was, perhaps, when the house was converted to 2 apartments. The Enos stayed 27 years. In 1954 the family of Donald and Lois Fay moved in and stayed for 21 years.

Warren and Christine Tejes, the current owners, took up residence 44 years ago. They had married six years earlier. After Warren served a stint in the army, including being stationed in Germany, the couple became renters in the Elgin area. Without much thought about how long they might stay the Tejes purchased this house in 1975. The house was in "pretty good" shape and being a two-flat brought them some extra income plus the space to eventually expand into.

The Tejes began to set down roots. Their daughters attended the nearby schools. All three made the National Honor Society attesting to the quality of education they found in School District U-46. Warren and Chris became active in school affairs and neighborhood issues. Warren served 20 years on U-46's Citizen Advisory Council, plus 6 more years on a special committee to improve communication between the school board, staff and administration. Chris is involved at St. Mary's Church, while Warren has given 36 years of volunteer service to another important neighborhood institution – the Elgin Turners. The Tejes are long time Gifford Park Association members and have helped with almost every House Tour, including featuring this home once before, way back in 1985. Their commitment to the house, the neighborhood and the community are an example of what makes Elgin a good place for others to set down roots.

Over the years the Tejes have given back to the house the care it has provided to their family. They stripped the painted woodwork, upgraded the plumbing and electrical systems, made improvements to the kitchen and baths, converted the building back to a single-family home and kept the place in good repair. They have made this a very livable home in a nicely situated section of Elgin. As the Tejes prepare for the next phase of life they are looking for housing that meets the needs of aging. Hopefully 439 Division Street will pass on to another good steward who may also enjoy the magic power of long-term ownership.

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