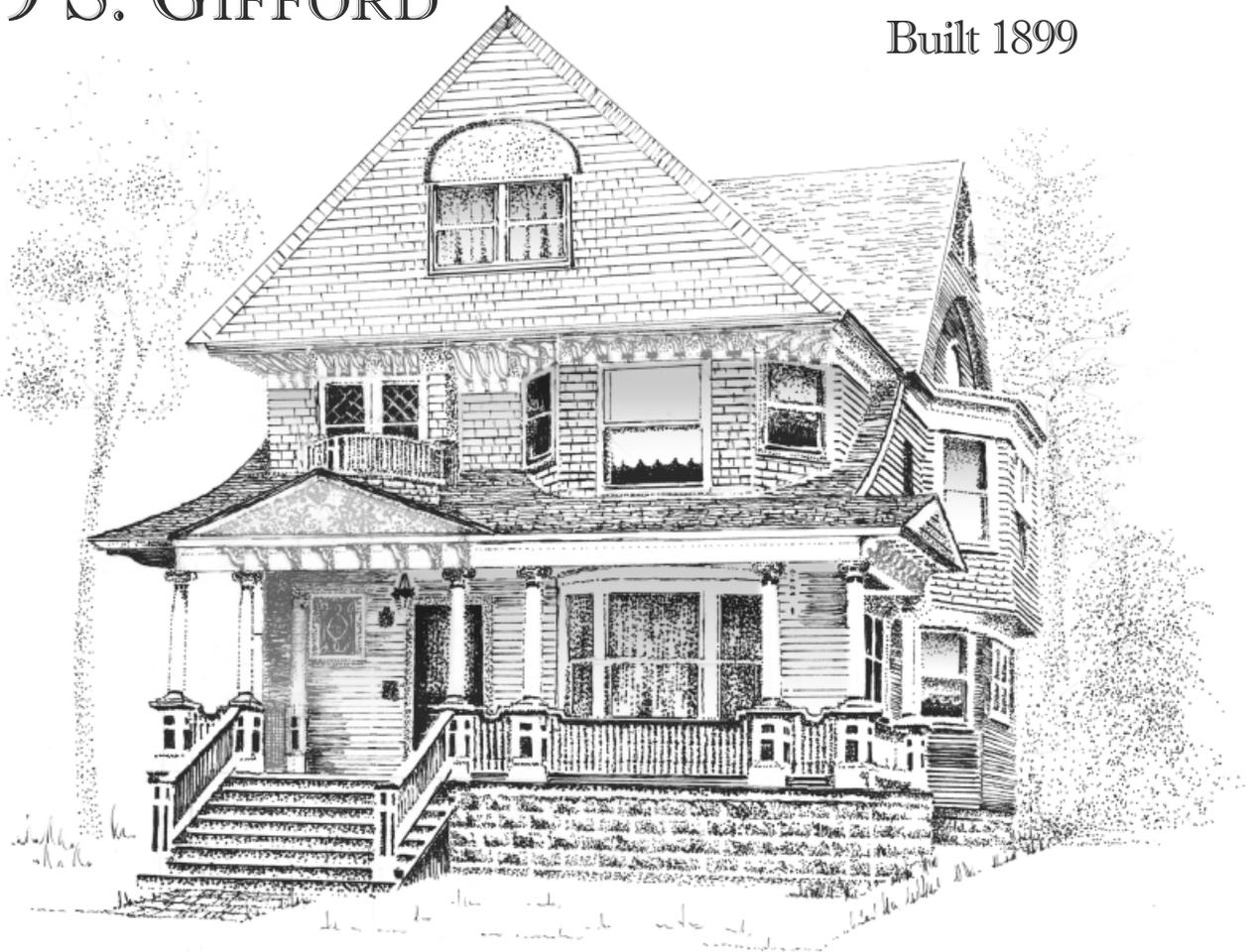


59 S. GIFFORD

Colonial Revival
Built 1899



It is common for families to move to a new address, but every once in a while a house will do the same. The home at 59 S. Gifford St. was built in 1899, but it originally stood at 380 DuPage St. In 1938 it was moved to the current location. The move was short one since the previous address is now underneath the old Elgin High School (now known as Gifford St. High School) gymnasium.

This house was originally built for Eugene G. Hammond and his wife, Martha. The Hammond family owned land south of the city. They found it more profitable to mine the land than to grow crops. Thousands of years earlier, melting glaciers created the Fox River and left behind a rich deposit of gravel along both banks. By 1899 the Hammonds had become prosperous from supplying gravel to local road builders and construction managers. This home, costing \$6,000 to construct, was the reward for a lifetime of work.

Eugene passed away in 1908, but Martha continued to live in the house up until it was

moved. In 1919, the couple's son, Roy Hammond, was married in the house. He and his wife, Clara, took up residence just a few doors away at 415 DuPage St. In 1941, Roy's son David built his home at 409 DuPage. Other Hammond relatives lived in the immediate area meaning that the family spent more 60 years living side by side in this neighborhood. Roy Hammond was also a benefactor of Elgin Academy and the school's field house bears his name.

By the 1990s, the grand old house was showing the signs of age and neglect. Converted into four apartments more than 25 years earlier and robbed of some of its original stained-glass windows, the home's future seemed to be verging on ruin. A decade later it had sunk into foreclosure. However, a renaissance was coming. In 2007, old house rehabbers and entrepreneurs John Anderson and Paul Cayez acquired the home. Taking advantage of the city's de-conversion grants, they were able to invest the time and materials needed to turn

the property from an eyesore back into an asset.

In 2009 Paul and Kathy Del Santo's future became tied to the history of the house. They had recently married and were looking for a bigger home to accommodate their blended family. Paul's interest in old houses goes way back. Kathy's is more recent. While courting, their sight-seeing drives often included stopping by antique shops and looking at older homes. By chance, their random travels took them past this house. The size immediately impressed them. The vastness of the house, made even greater by Anderson and Cayez having remodeled the attic into living space, raised many possibilities for the couple and their children.

Paul Del Santo is skilled in several aspects of the building trades, and to him, the home was a blank canvas upon which he could further refine and restore the house to its Victorian splendor. Kathy saw it as an older home, but in turn-key condition, that was ready to be customized to their needs and tastes. Since taking ownership, Paul remodeled Kathy's home office into a more attractive and workable space. Going back down to the studs, he insulated the walls, installed more electrical outlets, refinished the floors and trimmed out the room with an upscale office feel. Ceiling fans and new wall paper were installed in several other rooms. The new driveway, made with brick pavers was another improvement he made. The couple are still working out additional plans for painting and decorating.

The Del Santos enjoy looking out the front window at St. Mary's Church and listening to the church bells. It is also where they attend services. They like the older and more mature feel to the neighborhood. The neighbors are friendly and quiet. The homes are unique and special. Paul, who considers himself a student of history, now gets to be a caretaker of this piece of the city's heritage.

Architectural Notes

This home was designed by noted Elgin architect W. W. Abell and is one of the many large Queen Anne-style residences he created. Queen Annes are easily recognized by their asymmetrical facades, prominent front-facing

gables, a variety of window types, large porches, steeply pitched roofs and abundant trim detail. Many Queen Annes use a mix of clapboards, shingles, and stonework to give the exterior wall surfaces variety and texture. Other decorative elements can be found on the facade, such as filigree carving, the balustrade along the balcony above the porch and various patterns in the leaded glass windows.

About one-third of Queen Annes, this one included, are of the Free Classic subtype. These homes feature classical columns, rather than turned posts with spindle work detailing. The columns are often paired, as is the case here. Other classical features common to the subtype are the dentils along the cornice lines. In this house, the dentils are replaced by horizontally oriented brackets called modillions which create a similar look.

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