



## 665 Forest

Built in 1885 for  
J. Henry Gillett



Architectural Style:  
Queen Anne

**O**nce again, it is in the 160 acres purchased by Jonathan Force from the U.S. government that we begin our story. Force sold a lot from this acreage to Emanuel Rineheimer in 1882. By 1885, Albert Rineheimer had inherited the lot from his deceased father, and he sold it for \$200 to John Gillett. The Elgin City Directory lists "J. Henry Gillett, residence 65 Forest" for the first time in the 1885 edition, indicating he was living in a structure on that property.

Five years later, the property again changed hands when Mary King purchased it for \$1500. This was a substantial

increase, which would suggest the property had been improved upon since Gillett first took possession. Mary King probably never lived in the Forest Street house, but borrowed money to purchase it for her daughter and son-in-law, Harriet and Julius Peterson. They ended up owning the property outright, following the settlement of Mary King's estate in 1894. Born in Sweden, Julius Peterson worked in various departments of the Watch Factory, eventually settling in the Plate Department. He was secretary-treasurer of the Employee Advisory Council there for seven years. He retired in 1931, and died in 1956, at the age of 90.

By the time Julius and Harriet sold the house in 1912, it had been assigned, with the new numbering system in place, its

current address of 665 Forest. The new owner was a painter, by the name of Boles Boguslouski. His widow lived in the house for ten years before selling it. During the 1930s, the house was divided into two flats, with various tenants coming and going. After the Depression ended and people were getting back on their feet, the house was returned to single-family status.

Since 1935, the house has had four owners. Interestingly, beginning with Julius Peterson the watchmaker, this house has always been owned by tradesmen: a painter, a carpenter, an engineer, and now a plumber.

The current owner is Roy Chapman IV, who purchased the house in 1999. It wasn't that he set out to own an old house; in fact, he still misses the houseboat he lived on in Hialeah, Florida. But his parents live in the 1894 Bosworth Mansion on Elgin's west side, and like his other siblings, Roy found himself drawn back to his family. He fell in love with the neighborhood surrounding Lords' Park, and when he saw the house on Forest for sale by owner, he put in an offer and bought it.

Forest Avenue was once the main entrance to Lords' Park, graced by a large Victorian-style entrance shelter, where the streetcar would pick up and drop off passengers. Visitors to the park would descend steps from there to the bridge where they could cross the lagoon, toss coins in the fountain, and attend a concert being performed on the bandstand or a dance in the Pavilion. Julius Peterson, the early owner of Roy Chapman's house, probably walked up to this corner to catch the streetcar to the Watch Factory for work each morning.

In the 20th century, much of this scene was gone or in danger of being destroyed. Luckily, the Pavilion was restored, thanks to the vision of a few preservation-minded folks in town during the 1980s, and although the

bandstand no longer exists, Elginites still enjoy free concerts on the lawn in Lords Park during the summer. The fountain, which had been removed after deteriorating and was thrown in a scrap pile, was discovered, fully restored and returned to its location.

The fountain has a connection to this house as well. The previous owners were Bill and Arlene Huffstatler. Arlene is an artist, and when the campaign to "Bring Back the Fountain" was begun, Arlene's rendering of the two children with their umbrella was used on all the project material.

Later, Arlene discovered a smaller ceramic copy of the fountain sculpture at an antique store, and bought it for herself. It used to grace the fountain in the side yard until vandals broke it.

The house has a lovely staircase and wood trim throughout. The original hardwood floors have been refinished and look great, considering they are 117 years old. Since Roy is a plumber, and not really much of a seamstress, one of his first projects was to turn the first-floor sewing room into a bathroom. This completed, he is currently working on refinishing upstairs rooms that were in need of general repair.

He also recently painted the house in three colors, and will be replacing the moss-covered cedar shake roof. His plumbing work keeps him quite busy, but he's managing to tend to his 19th-century home in his spare time. So, even though 665 Forest is not a houseboat on a tropical shore, it has become Roy Chapman's haven of bliss. ◡

#### ARCHITECTURAL DETAILS

The house is built in the Queen Anne Style, bordering on Vernacular. Characteristics of this style are the steeply pitched roof of irregular shape, a dominant front facing gable, and an asymmetrical facade with a partial or full-width porch.

The rather simple front elevation of this house is dominated by the wrap-around front porch. The front porch is

not original to the house, as evident from the classical round columns and simple roof shape. However, interest is provided in the closely-spaced ornamental harp-shaped



balusters running the entire width of the porch. The front entrance to the porch is made asymmetrical with the single newel post reducing the width of the central bay to decrease the width of the entrance. Note the decorative doors, window moldings and leaded glass transom window.

Another feature of interest on the otherwise simple front elevation is a decorative wood panel on the second floor flanked by two simple 2-over-1 double hung windows.

The two bays on the side elevations are unique in the fact that they both contain jerkin head roofs and chamfered corners surrounding a window.

Also of interest is the carriage house at the rear of the property. It has a small gabled roof on its front elevation, several varied windows, and a hay loft door in the back.