

903 DOUGLAS AVENUE

HOMEOWNERS: STEPHEN & LAURA DREW

On July 31, 1903, Henry Jensen, a master carpenter and notable Elgin contractor, finished his drawings of the floor plans for 903 Douglas Avenue. Jensen, who was known for a number of Elgin churches, stores and the Lords Park Pavilion, also often worked with W.W. Abell on residences throughout town, as he did with this home. Whereas architects are often remembered for their works, most builders are not. Jensen's combination of skill and craftsmanship are bolstered by diligent record keeping in the form of "estimate books" held by the Elgin History Museum. These estimate books recorded the building specifications, floor plans and sketches of about 175 buildings, one of which is 903 Douglas. Completed in 1904, this Queen Anne Free Classic sits prominently on the corner of Douglas and Slade, and has served as the home of a number of prominent Elgin families.

This first homeowners were Frank H. and Bertha Bosworth. Frank operated his family's company, Bosworth & Son, Lumber, Coal and Wood. The Bosworths' family ties to the Elgin community ran deeper than just business, however, as Frank's father served as the mayor of Elgin from 1880 to 1883. After Frank passed away in 1919, Bertha and her children lived at 903 until they sold it to the Lindquist family in 1937. When the Zimble family purchased the home in 1958, they brought with them their fastidious sense of community. They earned numerous recognitions for their work in the Jewish community, teaming up with local agencies like the





Jewish Welfare Chest, which operated similarly to the United Way organization. By the time the Zimblar family moved from the home in the mid-'90s, only a few families had lived in this home built at the turn of the 19th century.

When Laura and Stephen Drew first looked at the home, they were drawn to its uniqueness, even as they focused primarily on historic homes during their search overall. They had rented for a number of years and really wanted to find a place that felt like theirs, and had the touches with the character they were looking for. "We really felt like God guided us to this home," they remarked, talking about how much they loved this neighborhood even before they started their home-buying search. It had all the elements they wanted and were hoping for, with its tall ceilings, tall windows, a stained-glass ceiling and a more open-style floor plan than other homes they had toured.

It is easy to see the Drew family's draw to this historic home, which received a plaque from the Heritage Commission in 2002. Situated in the northern portion of the Spring-Douglas Historic District, this century-old Queen Anne-style home features timeless

Queen Anne features including an irregularly shaped, two-story frame; and a hipped roof with intersecting gables on the side and rear of the building. The building also has an asymmetrical facade with a full-width front porch. A pedimented section is above the front steps with supporting ornamental brackets, and the porch has classic columns.

Loving a historic house certainly means making repairs and keeping up with projects around it. Over the last year and a half, the Drews have worked on making this historic home a little more theirs, reworking the floors and remodeling a bathroom. With the couple's plans to complete other rooms in the future, their labor of love will continue on to the other rooms in the house for family and friends to come over and stay.

This year marks the first time 903 Douglas has been on the tour in its 114-year life. The Drew family looks forward to receiving all tour-goers in this welcoming home for the 2018 tour.



903 DOUGLAS AVENUE

ARCHITECTURAL NOTES

903 Douglas Avenue was designed by notable Elgin architect, William Wright Abell in the Free-classic sub-type of the Queen Anne style. Earlier homes typically had milled porch columns and balustrades while those after 1893, as seen on this home, reflected the influence of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, often having classical columns and simple, square balusters. Abell's

trademark included a two-story projecting front façade which rises from the porch roof as seen on this home. Other details include the pent roof with the projecting gable with brackets and patterned shingles at the roof peak, as well as the pedimented porch roof with an ornately carved gable ornament.

