The Linsell House

In spring, pink and white flowers adorn the Linsell House adding a homely touch to the area.

The Linsell House, built for $50,000 in 1904, sits across from the University Bookstore. Dwarfed by the Adams Undergraduate Library, this house is in direct contrast with these modern university buildings.

It is hard to imagine a stable and horses in front of State Hall, but they were a fact of life at the Linsell House in the early 1900s.

About the Architect

John C. Stahl Jr. designed the Linsell House when he was 28 years old. A German-American, he shared a love of fine woods with the Linsell. He designed the house seven years after graduating from Central High School, after studying building and design at night school while apprenticing in architecture during the day. Stahl was practicing independently at the time. In 1912, he formed a partnership and was soon member of Stahl & Kinsey, architects. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects and was listed as a lifelong Republican and Presbyterian in the Book of Descendants, 1914.

Lester Stahl distinguished himself with many fine church designs in Detroit. Although there’s nothing church-like about the Linsell House, it does have a formal look. In Detroit’s hip spot with brick and brownstone detailing makes the house look tall. John Stahl enjoyed a lengthy career and lived to 78 years of age (1875-1951).

External Architectural Features

The Linsell House is an example of early 20th century colonial revival architecture. The old number of fashioned gabled dormers (five mark the house as a "revival"). The yellow-two-story brick structure has a beautiful Palladian window positioned over the front door which is framed in stone and contains four plinths with tonic capitals.

The front facade is symmetrical. Balance was obtained by positioning one of the dormers directly over the Palladian window. The house is slightly irregular in shape with two asymmetrically-placed chimneys and, on the south side, a protruding two-story bay section.

Four vertical sash windows on the front are reminiscent from the midriff of the facade. All first- and second-story windows have flat stone lintels with large keystones.

The front entrance features a square portico containing two fluted Doric columns with egg-and-dart moldings worked in the capitals. Matching pilasters stand against the house opposite corners of the porch. The entrance is Doric, a blend of triglyphs and metopes, but the cornice has been removed.

A dentilized cornice of about one foot is depth forms an overhang around the entire front of the house. The Georgian "hip" roof that harmonizes with other classical features.

Unique Interior Features

Although the 11 rooms are arranged in Georgian style, their proportions result in a floor plan which is deeper than wide—typical of any of the colonial styles—probably due to the 38’ X 38’ lot site.

The interior wainscoting (sack paneling) of recessed rectangular panels has molded trim. Classically Georgian with a mixture of mahogany and walnut trim, mahogany and discarded marble fireplaces decorate the house, along with stained oak woodwork (rear) still in excellent condition. Dark mahogany and oak paneling blend nicely with the other wood treatments. Horse-drawn carriages took guests miles 1 1/2 miles down Woodward Avenue to Hudson’s Department Store.

One of two houses to be saved, the Linsell House represents a lifestyle of the Victorian age. The Linsell House is a beautiful place to visit and drive back in time while sitting by the kitchen and the spacious with light into the servants and former occupants who once frequented them.