THE ARCHITECT

JOHN C. STEIN, JR. is known for many fine church designs in the Detroit area. At 28 years old, before he began designing churches, he designed the Linzell House.

Stahl was a second-generation German American, practicing a common bond between he and the Linzells who were also German. This gave him a special insight into their love for fine foods, which is reflected on the inside of the house.

He graduated from Central High School just seven years prior to designing the house. He studied building and design at night school. During the day, he worked as an apprentice in architectural offices, learning his trade.

Stahl was practicing independently when he designed the Linzell House. In 1912, Stahl formed a partnership and became senior member in the firm Stahl & Kinsey, architects. Their office was at 906 Gas Office Building. C.K. Mod. was an associate.

In the Book of Detours, 1914, John C. Stahl Jr. is listed as an architect. Stahl was a member of the 58th Annual of the American Institute of Architects.

John Stahl Jr. served as Secretary of Standard Lumber & Coal Co.

He made his house in Detroit at 561 Cadillac Ave.

John Stahl enjoyed a lengthy career and lived to be 76 years of age (1873-1951).

THE LINZELL HOUSE STORY

Frederick Linzell was Secretary Treasurer of William Wright Co. As an officer of this decorating and special furnishing manufacturing firm, he and his wife Rosina had taken a special appreciation for fine woodwork and Georgian features.

In 1904, at 57 years old, Linzell built a two-story yellow brick house with a stable at 950 Second Ave.

He purchased a corner lot at Second and the northeastern corner of Pontiac when the old Cash Farm was sold. He fronted the block and constructed a slightly irregular shaped house with two chimneys and a two-story bay section on one side.

Frederick and Rosa chose John C. Stahl Jr., a building young architect, to design and build this fashionable Detroit residence. Two interesting features of the house: a very large secret door secured through a hidden panel in the dining room, along with a built-in desk in the floor, under the rug. With 11 rooms, the house boasts beautiful paneling (wainscoting) and interior rail. Woodwork which remains unaltered (seen for Georgian homes). For the dark mahogany Venetian blinds may not sound attractive but also blend nicely with the other wood treatments. Unusual for a house of this type, the floor plan is deeper than wide, but the 38’ X 52’ lot probably explains why. The lot is also afforded room for the stable. Home-drawn carriage was a part of life at the Linzell house in the early 1940s.

From 1904-1930 only three families occupied the house. The Linzells lived there for ten years. In 1914, Anna and Fannie Calkay purchased the house. Unfortunately, Anna died soon after, but Fannie purchased a house across the street. When the house passed to the Cutler’s daughter Dorothy who married to Ralph Brown, an employee of Ford Motor Company. At that time the address was 5014 Second Ave. They lived in the house until sometime in the 1950s when the house began to in-crease in value and became a habitation of a couple landlords and the Linzell House because the Woman’s Student Building.

Things were not looking promising for the Linzell House in 1944 when the entire block was condemned by the city and taken over for public use by the Detroit Board of Education. Sixteen houses and 12 garages were left on the block. Linzell had formed his house for demolished; however, someone is still surviving the wrecking ball and was still standing in 1996 when the block was divided over to the USW Board of Governors by the Board of Education.

One of two houses to be saved, the Linzell House represents a lifestyle of a bygone era to be well-done. Now, employees of the Dean’s Office of the Fine Performing and Communication Arts, College Study up and down the back staircase between the kitchen and the servants’ bedrooms with little thought to the servants and former occupants who once frequented them.

ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

The Linzell House is an example of early twentieth century colonial revival architecture. The odd number of doorways mark the house as a “revival.”

The yellow two-story brick structure has five fan-lighted gable dormers and a beautiful Palladian window positioned over the front portico which is framed in stone and contains four pilasters with Ionic front.

The front facade is symmetrical in design. Balance was obtained by positioning one of the five dormers directly over the Palladian window and portico.

Four vertical sash windows on the front are equidistant from the midpoint 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 8-inch-diameter capitals set into the front wall. The columns stand against the house on pilasters set on four Doric columns in the opposite corners of the portico. The entablature is Doric, with a frieze of triglyphs and metopes, but the cornice has been removed.

A denticulated cornice of about one foot in depth forms an overhang around the entire house – for a typically Georgian `hip` roof that harmonizes with other classical features.

The house is slightly irregular in shape with two asymmetrical-placed chimneys and, on the side, a protruding two-story bay section.

Interior

Interestingly, although the rooms are arranged in Georgian style, their proportions result in a house deeper than wide – typical of many of the colonial houses.

The interior wainscoting (sack paneling) consists of moulded rectangular panels with molded trim. Classically Georgian, an expansive stairway with turned balusters and pillared door frames decorate the house, along with stained oak woodwork still in excellent condition.

The arched Palladian window centered above the portico is fastidiously, typical of many Georgian and Federal styles. This window casts a majestic light in the upstairs hallway.