Historic Name:  Frederick Linsell House
Common Name:  N/A
Location:  5104 Second Avenue  (Gullen Mall)
Classification:
Category:  Building
Ownership:  Public
Status:  Occupied
Accessible:  Yes, Unrestricted
Present Use:  Educational

Owner of Property:  Board of Governors
Wayne State University
5050 Cass Ave.
Detroit, Michigan  48202

Description:
Condition:  Good
Unaltered
Original Site

In 1904, Frederick C. Stahl, Jr. built this Federal Revival house for Frederick Linsell at a cost of about $9,000, including a stable. Located on Second Avenue at the corner of what was once Putnam, the two-story, yellow brick, and hipped roof structure has five fan-lighted gabled dormers and a beautiful stone-framed Palladian window positioned over the front portico. All first and second story windows have flat stone lintels which have large keystones. A denticulated cornice of about one foot in depth forms an overhang around the entire house. On the interior of the house, the original unpainted oak woodwork is still in excellent condition.

The house is slightly irregular in shape, with two asymmetrically placed chimneys and, on the south side, a protruding two-story bay section. However, the front facade is symmetrical in design. Balance on the front facade was obtained by positioning one of the odd number of dormers directly over the Palladian window and portico. In addition, the four vertical sash windows on the front are equidistant from the midpoint of the facade.

The front entrance features a square portico containing two fluted Doric columns with egg-and-dart moldings worked into the capitals. Matching pilasters stand against the house on opposite corners of the portico. The entablature is Doric, with a frieze of triglyphs and metopes, but the cornice has been removed. Directly above the portico is a Palladian window framed in stone and containing four pilasters with Ionic capitals. The arched middle portion of the Palladian window is fanlighted. This window casts a majestic light into the second floor central hallway.
The interior wainscoting consists of recessed rectangular panels with molded trim. An expansive balustrade staircase, turned balusters, and pillared and entablatured door frames provide added decorative treatment to the inside. With only a few minor exceptions, the stained and finished oak woodwork is in excellent condition.

Significance:
Period: 1900-
Areas of Significance: Architecture, Education
Construction date: 1904
Architect: John C. Stahl, Jr.

The Frederick Linsell House is significant as a work of John C. Stahl, Jr., a Detroit architect who designed many churches in the Detroit area. The structure is significant also because it was among the first houses that Wayne University moved into when it began to expand in the late-1930s and 1940s. The Linsell House house was thus one of the first of the former residences of the well-to-do to pass into public ownership for the growing urban university.

In 1904, John Clarence Stahl, Jr. (1875-1951) designed this Federal Revival house at Second and Putnam for Frederick Linsell (1847-1938) and his wife, Rosa. Linsell was secretary and treasurer of the William Wright Company, a decorating and special furniture manufacturing firm. Stahl was a second generation German-American and an 1897 graduate of Central High School. He learned building and designing skills at night school and while working in the offices of architects. From 1903 to 1911, Stahl practiced independently. In 1912, Stahl formed a partnership and became senior member in the firm of Stahl and Kinsey, with C.K. Motl as an associate. He was also a member of the Michigan Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.

The Linsell House, in time, made the transformation to institutional functions. In 1944, the Board of Education of Detroit acquired the block between Cass and Second, from Putnam to Merrick, at a tune of $267,729. The property that Frederick Linsell once owned from 1904 to 1914 was among the sixteen houses and twelve garages obtained for Wayne University when it expanded into the second of the residential blocks north of the cramped Old Main building. The first University role for the Linsell House was as the Women's Student Building. In 1956, the year Wayne State University acquired the property from the Board of Education, the University's School of Business Administration occupied the house.

Of the buildings originally constructed along Second Boulevard between W. Warren and W. Palmer, the Linsell House is only one of two former residences remaining. The Wayne State Biology Department currently uses the Linsell House as offices.
Bibliography:

"Bowen, Ralph G." Local History Index, BHC.

"Linsell, Frederick." Local History Index, BHC.


"Stahl, John C. Jr." Local History Index, BHC.

"William Wright Company." Reading Room File, BHC.

Geographical Data:
Acreage: Less than one acre
Quadrangle Name: Detroit, Mich.--Ontario
Quadrangle Scale: 1:24000
UTM Reference:
Verbal Boundary Description & Justification: Lot 19 of Block 4 of the Cass Farm Company, Ltd., Subdivision of the Cass Farm (P.C. 55). This is all the property on which the building stands.