



Crystal Lake Historic Preservation Commission



Collen House

70 North Caroline Street

Built 1904

Built by Joseph H. Collen, this house is a restrained example of Queen Anne architecture. Queen Anne homes were primarily built between 1880 and 1910. Identifying features of this home are an abundance of steeply pitched gable roofs, variegated polychromatic shingles, and pedants hanging below the cut-away bay.

Joseph Collen was a Civil War veteran, serving the 127th Illinois Infantry. He married Anna Bates in January, 1867. To this union were born 10 children. This modest-sized home was built by the Collens after the children had grown and moved out.

The house was originally built with electricity, but no plumbing. A cistern, located in the basement under the kitchen, collected rainwater from the roof through an elaborate gutter system. This water was pumped up to the kitchen. The outhouse was located about 15 feet from the back door. The furnace was powered by coal, as evident by the coal storage room in the basement, which still shows traces of coal dust. City water and sewer service was added in 1918.

The Collens lived in the house until 1920. It was then owned by Charles and Louise Miller. Upon their death, their daughter Bertha, and her husband William J. Pinnow, inherited the house. It remained in the Pinnow family until 1992, when Tom and Susan Nemcek purchased the residence.

The Nemcek family has dedicated a great deal of time and effort to accurately restoring the Collen house. Their projects have included repainting the formerly white home with a more traditional (but certainly not subdued) polychromatic Queen Anne pallet of colors, and the replacement of a concrete side porch with an ornate wood model matching the back.

Considerable attention has been given to the home's original fenestration, including historically accurate storm windows. In recognition of the home's history, architectural integrity, and the owner's commitment to preserve it, the Historic Preservation Commission landmarked the property in 1999.