



Crystal Lake Historic Preservation Commission



Raue House

25 West Crystal Lake Avenue

Built 1901

The Raue House was built and occupied by the Raue family for 93 years. Constructed by Benno (Ben) Raue in 1901 at a cost of approximately \$2,000, this home's architecture is classified as Free Classic Queen Anne. "Free Classic" refers to the classical elements such as the original Doric porch columns and pediment styled dormers. The Queen Anne features include the round corner tower, original variegated shingles, and the variety of dormers and windows.

Ben Raue, Sr. was born in Germany on April 16, 1866. After learning to be a watchmaker, he immigrated to the United States in 1883 and eventually found his way to Elgin where he was employed by the Elgin National Watch Company. He opened his own jewelry store here in Crystal Lake in 1892. With time, his business evolved into a hardware store. Ben Sr. operated Raue Hardware until he retired at the age of 89.

As a leading citizen in Crystal Lake, Ben Raue, Sr. served on the Board of Education, Park District Board, organized the forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce, was president of Home State Bank, and served as Mayor for two terms (1923-1927). During his tenure in those positions, the Main Beach building was constructed and the first paved street was completed.

Ben Sr. married Dora Brown of Cary Station in 1892 and they had four children, Ethel, Ben Jr., Leone "Tone", and Lucile. None of the children ever married. When Lucile, the last of the Raue family members, passed away on Thanksgiving Day 1994, the Raue house was bequeathed to the Historic Downtown District of Crystal Lake (Main Street).

The Raue family became very wealthy doing business in Crystal Lake and have given back generously to the community. Over two million dollars were donated to the Crystal Lake Civic Center Authority who used the money to purchase and renovate the old El Tovar / Showplace Theater on Williams Street. Today it is the Raue Center for the Arts.

As a fitting tribute to the generosity of this watchmaker and his family, on the southwest corner of Williams and Brink Streets stands the 21 foot tall Raue clock. In 2004, the Raue house itself was recognized as a significant structure in the history of Crystal Lake when it became the seventh property plaqued by the Historic Preservation Commission.