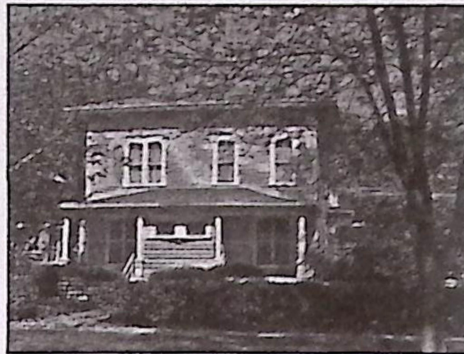


3-4 802-804 High Street
Italianate — 1871



Alonzo Steele, a wealthy merchant, banker and manufacturer, built this handsome Italianate home in 1871 as a single-family dwelling. Steele sited the frame house at the top of a hill overlooking the business district and, in the distance, one of his businesses, Craver & Steele (later the location of the Spaulding Manufacturing Company). He spared no expense in the ornate design elements or on the materials used — perhaps because his business interests also included a lumber yard.

Steele died in 1899, collapsing as he walked home from the train depot after a business trip. ("He went to his heavenly home on his way to his earthly home," his obituary stated.)

Subsequent owner Charles Morse changed the house into a duplex (numbered 802-804 High), which it has been ever since. (Morse lived at 904 High, also on today's tour.)

The duplex features intricate cornices, heavy brackets and straight-sided arched windows. (The house is one of the few Italianate homes in Grinnell that still have the characteristic arched windows. Two blocks north, at 1008 High, is a home with vestiges of original windows similar to these.)

The house is dominated on the front by a pair of high foyer windows with geometric

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leaded-glass designs. A large, arched leaded-glass window looks onto each of the front porches. At one time, a cupola graced the top of the structure.

There are bay windows on both the south and the north, and large porches on the northeast and southeast corners.

Inside, look for arched doorways, decorative moldings, and pine and maple floors.

As in many homes built during this period, a cistern lined with brick can be found in the basement. An electric pump was added later; its switch remains in place.

Since 1980, the north side of the house (804 High) has been owned by Bobbie and Shirley McKibbin, and the south side (802 High) by Dan and Jan Gross.

The two families restored the roofline to its original overhang, rebuilt the porches, tuck-pointed masonry, renovated kitchens and baths, upgraded plumbing and electrical systems, and returned the first-floor ceilings to their original 10-foot height.

Outside, they added extensive plantings and installed brick and stone walkways. When they bought the house in 1980, the McKibbins recall, "Not a tree or a stick of anything like landscaping was evident."

Inside, the McKibbins successfully mix original period rooms and modern spaces. In 1982, the couple built an art studio in back of the house, where a carriage house had once stood.

A treasured feature of the Grosses' home is an original slate fireplace painted to look like travertine marble (*trompe l'oeil*).

Future projects (for the present or future owners) include putting back the cupola and restoring the original bracket and dentil ornamentation.

5 1124 Third Avenue
Queen Anne, Stick 1895



Janet Carl and Greg Johnson know every inch of their one-of-a-kind home at 1124 Third Avenue. "We have done something to every surface of every room in this house," Janet says.

The work has included laying hardwood and ceramic tile floors, patching and painting walls and ceilings, and restoring the front porch to its original design (based on an old photo). Fortunately, Janet says, the lovely oak woodwork was never painted.

The home was built in 1895 for Nehemiah Jenkins, a West Virginian who came to Grinnell in 1857. A longtime owner in the early 1900s, Eugene Henely, was superintendent of schools in Grinnell for many years. Among the occupants in the 1960s was a Grinnell College student whose family reportedly bought the house for his residence. During his stay, the notorious underground college newspaper, *The Pterodactyl*, was published in the basement.

Carl and Johnson have owned the home since 1987. Johnson, who grew up in Grinnell, remembers walking past the house on his way to junior high school.

The house is mainly Queen Anne with Stick-style touches. Distinctive exterior features include a polygonal tower, several kinds of patterned wood shingles, and the incised ornament on the pediment over the front porch.

Inside, look for the rounded archway between two downstairs rooms, the interesting oak staircase and the second-floor smoking porch.

topic
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all historic
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