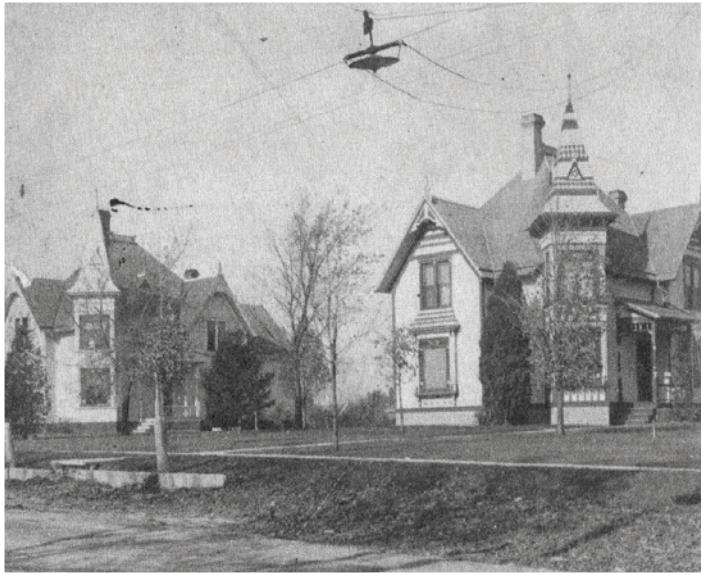


QUINTESSENTIAL BARRINGTON BY BARBARA L. BENSON



Some of Barrington's most detailed houses were built on West Lake Street in the last 15 years of the 19th century. These two houses were built in 1889 and 1891 by Levi Higley and Dell Loomis. Their wives were sisters Ellen and Elizabeth Hawley. (Photo c. 1900)



A Barrington Area Historical Society walking tour in 1984, compares the changes made to #216, including the addition of a brick chimney for a fireplace in the front parlor.

BARRINGTON ARCHITECTURAL LEGACIES

ON JUNE 18, 1983, the center of Barrington was a festive place as the Barrington Area Historical Society sponsored events to celebrate National Historic Preservation Week. Programs, exhibitions, and a walking tour all highlighted the value of preserving historic buildings, both for their architectural value and for their importance in historical events or lives, or all of those.


Historic preservation was gaining increasing interest in the community, spurred by the restoration of the Octagon House on West Main Street. The work of respected preservation architect Linda Grubb inspired homeowners, especially those along West Lake Street, to look anew at their archetypical late 19th-century and early 20th-century houses, and assess their original architectural styles and paint colors. The Octagon House had been a surprise; used to a mundane white clapboard building, paint analysis of a hundred years' worth of layers revealed the colors that we see today. The house was listed on the National Register of Historic Places for the integrity of its restoration to its original design and construction.

Taking their cues from the Octagon House, many West Lake Street homeowners went to work. The street had been opened in the mid-1880s, the lots sold by its owner, first elected Village President Milius B. McIntosh. The eastern end by Hough Street was McIntosh's cow pasture and a stream known as the Kilgobbin ran along its perimeter. Historian Arnett C. Lines recalled a Halloween prank of his grandfather's telling, when someone tied a long rope from the cow's bell to the bell in the Village Hall tower next door. It rang all

night as the cow grazed back and forth.

By June 1983, progress was such that the Council of Barrington Garden Clubs partnered with the Historical Society to create front porch floral decorations for the scheduled walking tour. The Garden Club's theme was "The Days of Our Lives" to interpret the special events that occur in everyone's year. Beautiful displays depicted birthdays, graduations, weddings, anniversaries, and other special occasions.

Informational leaflets in hand, large groups of people strolled along in perfect weather, talking to volunteers and homeowners, learning about the original builders and residents of this architectural treasure trove in the heart of Barrington. Immense pride remains to this day with the residents of West Lake Street; flower boxes and gardens in summertime, with winter holiday decorations and lights inviting a nighttime drive along the street.

Gradually that pride of place and neighborhood would spread to other historic areas of the village. All are stewards of this special environment, for themselves, and those who come after. 



Barbara L. Benson grew up in Kent, England, and later moved to New York. She settled in Barrington and has walked with our history since she first arrived here in 1980.