

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 300 W. Prairie Avenue, Decatur, Illinois.

Date of original construction: 1887.

Name of original owner: Peter Loeb.

History:

Theodore Lenzen, architect - San Jose, California.
Architecture of the period - comparable to San Francisco mansions.
Windows throughout plate glass and art glass.
Eight fireplaces. English basement, first, and second floors.
Large attic over whole. Five first floor rooms - five second floor.
Exterior - ornamental brick - rustic shingles - stone.
Original roof was slate. Reroofed with composition in early 30's.
Coach house to west - front and rear doors - permitting access and exit to a circle drive that has since been omitted.
Original landscaping hedge to alley - partly removed to permit exit to alley.

Peter Loeb will^d house to Mr. Gorin, President of Millikin Bank, who sold it to Judge James S. Baldwin. Judge Baldwin sold it to Mrs. Jeanne Lindquist to be occupied by her and serve as her photographic studio. No architectural changes except pillars removed on west porch drive, substituting pillars that occupied less space. Original pillars were of stone that created a problem for motorists. No changes were made in the interior except removal of a double door to make two rooms into one. The basement was remodelled to accommodate dark-rooms and laboratory. Gas boiler was installed for steam heat. Partly rewired for studio lighting requirements.

Peter Loeb owned a foundry in Decatur. He was a representative business man serving as first president of Board of Trade of Decatur in 1888. He came to the United States from Hamburg, Germany.

The above written and submitted
by Mrs. Jeanne Lindquist in
November, 1973.

Present owner's name: Jeanne Lindquist.

300 West Prairie

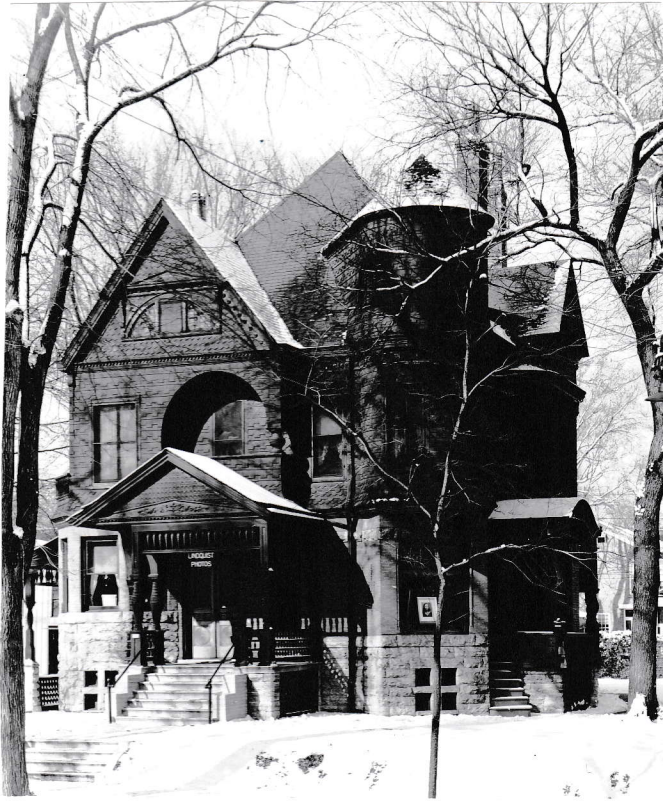


Photo - Jeanne Lindquist

Decatur Diary

Flowers and Towers And Tornado-Proof

By James M. Dedman
Of the Herald and Review

The magnificent old home at 300 W. Prairie Ave., presently occupied by the Jeanne Lindquist Salon of Photography and also used as her home, was built in about 1887 by Peter Loeb.

Loeb was born June 28, 1840, at Sibersbaugh in Prussia and came to this country with his parents in 1852 when his father had to flee the country for political reasons.

They went to Newark, N.J., and a year later moved to Dayton, Ohio, where Loeb learned the foundry business.

Loeb joined the First Ohio Infantry during the Civil War and was wounded on the second day of fighting at the Battle of Bull Run.

In March, 1863, Loeb married Caroline S. Woodman in Dayton, Ohio.

The couple moved to Decatur in 1876, and for 10 years Loeb was with the Haworth foundry.

Loeb was quite a joiner, belonging to the Odd Fellows, Knights of Pythias, Decatur Club, Country Club and was a Knight Templar. But he would never join the GAR and gave as his excuse that the war was over and he wanted to forget it.

He was active in civic affairs; and when Millikin was started, he was on the board of managers and followed the construction closely. He built the Loeb Time Building at the corner of Water and North streets.

In 1886, he formed the Loeb Foundry Co., and it was incorporated as such.

Along about this time he built the mansion at 300 W. Prairie Ave. Nothing was spared in the construction. He had an architect from San Jose, Calif., design the house for him.

Apparently Loeb was afraid of two things: tornadoes and burglars. He built the house with steel rods running vertically and around it. Huge wooden beams were also used with a brick exterior.

It was said at the time that the house "could be laid over on its side without falling apart."

To ward off burglars Loeb had an elaborate alarm system installed with a master board in his bedroom so he could tell just where anyone was trying to enter the house.

It appears that Loeb wasn't the best driver in Decatur, for when he tried to put his electric in the garage he went through the back wall of it and over into his neighbor's garden. He put news doors on the back of the

garage, which he would leave open. Since he had a circular drive which went to either door, he would drive around and around until he could make the car stop in the garage.

The rest of the house was fitted with unusual things like removable shutters, transoms in all the upstairs doors and eight fireplaces.

There were also call-bells for the maid from all rooms — even one under the dining room table that could be operated by stepping on it.

Flower designs are everywhere, starting with the front porch, carried through woodwork and onto the fireplaces. All through the house are little touches of elegance seldom found in homes today. Stained glass is used in windows and doors but always with a clear plate glass part through which a person can see clearly.

The tower on the southeast corner of the house was once much taller. It was lowered when repair work had to be done on it.

Each fireplace has a different design, one with hounds, Apollo and Diana figures, while another has lambs and shepherds.

The light oak banister to the front stairs is augmented with quarter sawn oak panels.

Door knobs are ornate, reflecting elegance of a past era. Mantels are unique, one having cherry wood, another walnut.

One front room was used for Loeb's office when he was home and has windows on three sides.

There is an elevator that goes from the basement to the attic, which was probably used for lifting buckets of coal and wood, since it is too small for a person and yet larger than the conventional dumb-waiter.

There are several cisterns and in the basement, a well, which Mrs. Lindquist restored in 1947 when she moved into her studio.

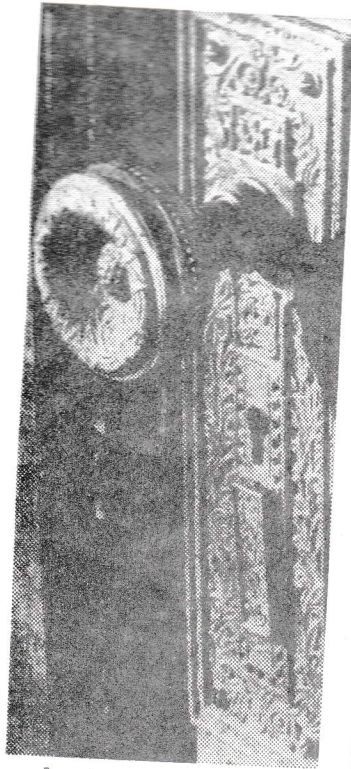
Loeb died in March, 1904, but his widow lived on in the house until she was 85 years old in October, 1929.

Judge J. S. Baldwin next occupied the house until it was sold to Mrs. Lindquist in 1947.

While the house appears large on the outside, many halls and closets take up space on the inside.

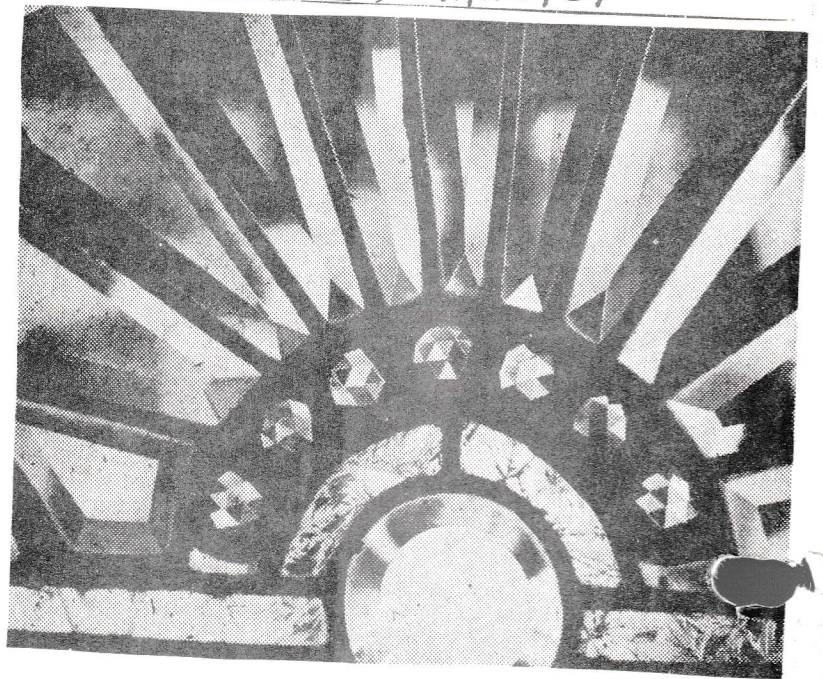
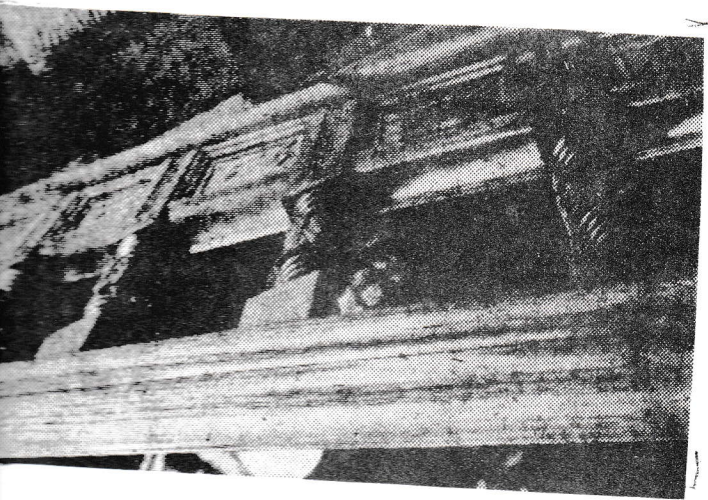
The driveway had to be widened so that today's automobiles could come into it.

According to Mrs. Lindquist, it is ideal for her photography and for her home.



Photos by
Ken Kiley

Decatur Sunday Herald and
Review, 11/23/69



300 West Prairie



46

4/4"

Taken about 1948

300 W Prairie

Norme Landquist, District D

(J-4)

ACKNOWLEDGE AND RETURN TO
RECEIVED BY JUN 17 1966
Copies to F. QUELLMALZ, JR.

(35)

Decatur, Ill

adjacent to downtown - 2 blocks from important business area
Parking facilities in rear of streets

\$150

4/1/44

PROFILE PHOTO SERVICE
BOX 1135
DECATUR, ILL.

300 WEST PRAIRIE
ST.
LESB. KINGQUIST
PHOTO BY JEANNE
LENDQUIST

Record film swapped for residence.

We have

2 survey notes for site

first floor = reception room - plus some - various rooms - wood shop

Basement area = laboratory & office rooms

PROFESSIONAL PHOTOGRAPHERS OF AMERICA, INC.
152 WEST WISCONSIN AVENUE
MILWAUKEE 3, WISCONSIN

01163



Taken about 1943

Character Adorns Old Mansion

By Jeri S. Dodson
Of the Herald and Review
"What a magnificent waste of space."

Indeed, there are an abundance of halls in the house at 300 West Prairie Ave.

"There was no central heating when the house was built (1887), so there are lots of fireplaces — seven of 'em," says owner Jeanne Lindquist. "From the outside it looks like there are lots of rooms inside."

Actually, there are only ten.

When Jeanne moved her photography studio into the house 22 years ago, "A lot of the business people thought I'd lost my mind, moving from downtown," she

laughed. But she needed the parking space for her studio clients.

"We've kept the whole structure as it was," she proudly stated, "I didn't want to change any of the character of the house."

Character is an understatement.

Eighty-two years ago, 300 West Prairie Avenue was Peter Loeb's dream. He handpicked all the lumber and bricks for the house, and adorned the windows in glistening stained glass.

"We're the third tenants in the house, so it's had good care," she said.

First floor is the studio, and the huge English basement harbors laboratory facilities

and equipment for the "family affair" studio — operated by Mrs. Lindquist, her sister and mother.

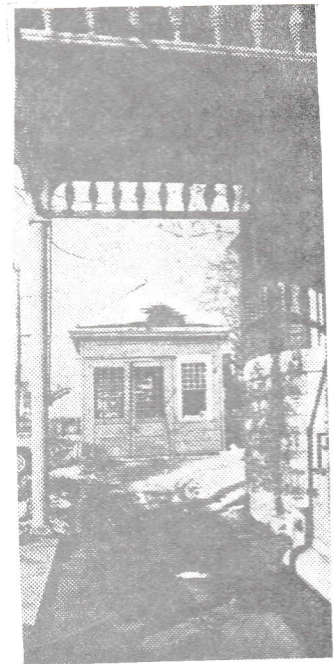
The master bedroom runs the length of the front of the house, an example of the monstrous size of the rooms.

"A warm wood — quarter sawed oak" adorns the heavy banister to second floor.

"The finishing has not been touched — we've been very careful."

One of the many fireplaces (pictured) has a bronze head in the center rumored to be in the image of Loeb's wife.

A dream house full of legend and magnificent beauty — an awesomeness of age.



6/28/70

300 W. Prairie