



Left: 1908 photo of the Seager-Hurlbut House taken during the Homecoming event launched to showcase the prosperity of the City of Adrian. Right: The home in its current state. Photo by Peter Barr.

The Seager-Hurlbut House: 222 Clinton St., Adrian, Michigan

The Seager-Hurlbut house is located at 222 Clinton Street (originally 24 Clinton Street according to the Sanborn Insurance maps) and was built in 1907 by prominent physician and former president of the Adrian Steel Castings Co., Dr. George B.M. Seager. The home is characteristic of the Craftsman style, but also features some Classical Revival elements, which came into fashion with the buildings at the widely attended, photographed and discussed World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893.¹ Few alterations and updates have been made since the home's erection and it is much the same as it was in its original state.

The Craftsman style was inspired by the work of the Greene brothers, Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene, from California from 1893-1914. Characteristics common to the Craftsman include some sort of low-pitched gabled or hipped roof, a wide unenclosed eave overhang, decorative beams or braces under the gables, full- or partial-width porches, and square columns that extend to ground level to support the roof.² Craftsman homes took off in popularity from about 1905 until the early 1920s due to extensive publicity given to them in magazines such as *Craftsman* (the publication that gave the form its name³), *House Beautiful*, *Good Housekeeping*, *The*

¹ Barr, Peter. 19th-Century Adrian Architecture - Illustrated Glossary. <http://web2.sienaheights.edu/personal/PBARR/colonial.html>.

² McAlester, Virginia, and A. Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*, 453.

³ Barr. Adrian Architecture. <http://web2.sienaheights.edu/personal/PBARR/bungalow-craftsman.html>.

Architect, and Ladies' Home Journal. This resulted in the production of a wide variety of pattern books that included plans for Craftsman-style homes.⁴

Two-stories tall, the Seager-Hurlbut house is a pretty common example of the Craftsman style featuring a side-gabled roof, shed dormer, a full-width porch with columns that sit upon a shingled, solid balustrade, shingle siding, and clapboard siding (now vinyl). The exceptions to the home's Craftsman classification are the Corinthian columns, showcasing highly decorative and ornate capitals, on the front porch, as well as leaded glass windows on the main floor (and originally the second floor, as well). The home was a custom-build and I surmise that the well-to-do Seager desired a new, modern looking home, yet also wanted to include some features from the Classical Revival style, which was then still fashionable.



Left: Corinthian columns on the front porch. Right: Beamed ceiling in the sitting room.

Inside the home visitors will find a large number of built-in shelves and storage, a painted brick fireplace, and decorative beams on the ceiling of the sitting room, dining room, and kitchen. The current owner and her husband, Patsy and Richard Hurlbut, made several updates to the house after they purchased it in 1963. Some of these updates include new windows on the second story, new carpeting throughout, the addition of a bathroom on the main floor, remodeling of the kitchen and utility rooms, and vinyl siding on the exterior. After fifty-one years of ownership, the Hurlbuts have lived in and maintained 222 Clinton Street longer than any of the home's previous occupants.

According to the house's Abstract of Title, the plat the Seager-Hurlbut house sits on, #168, was originally owned by Robert Gilliland and family in 1886, and sold upon his death by his wife, Caroline Gilliland, and daughter, Maria A. Gilliland, to William M.

⁴ McAlester. *Field Guide*, 454.

Sheldon in 1904. That same year, the Sheldon's sold it to Dr. George B.M. Seager and his wife Mary Cole Seager. The Seagers built the house three years later in 1907, the same year Adrian's current City Hall was built,⁵ and remained there until 1916.

According to Dr. Seager's obituary in the July 22, 1926, *Daily Telegram*, he was highly active in the community throughout his life. He was Mayor of Adrian from 1902-1903, a member of the board of education for a number of years and president of the board from 1911-1916. Seager was one of the founders of the Adrian Castings Company and had taken part in several other of the city's industrial business ventures. He also maintained memberships in all of the Adrian Masonic bodies.

In 1916, Seager left his medical practice in Adrian and moved to Detroit with his wife to become associated with the Michigan Mutual Liability Insurance Company. When the Seagers moved, the house was sold to Thomas Kennedy, a superintendent at Van Camp Packing Company⁶, and remained in his possession until the September of 1929 when the home was purchased by Wade L. Jones and his wife Lena. I was unable to find a record of who owned the house between the Joneses and the Hurlbuts, but according to the Hurlbuts' daughter, Nancy Cunningham, her parents purchased their home from the Maskery family in 1963.

At the time of the Seager-Hurlbut House's construction, Adrian's economy had begun to grow and so did its population. By 1910, the City of Adrian boasted over 10,000 residents. This growth was due in large part to Adrian's booming wire fence industry, leading to its recognition as the "fence capitol of the world."⁷ Other businesses developing in Adrian during this period include several independent automobile companies, Van Camp Milk Co., Schwartze Electric, Gray Furniture, and Citizens Light and Power Co.⁸ In 1904, city officials began work to obtain a grant from philanthropist Andrew Carnegie in order to build a library and by 1908, the building was complete and it is now the current site of the Lenawee County Historical Museum.⁹ In 1907, the year the Seager-Hurlbut House was built, there was a grand Homecoming event to show off the prosperous city.¹⁰ By the start of the 1910's, electric lit shops and department stores began appearing all around town, drawing Adrian into the twentieth-century.

⁵ Barr. Adrian Architecture. <http://web2.sienaheights.edu/personal/PBARR/chronology-adrian.html>.

⁶ *Polk's Adrian City Directory*. 1917.

⁷ Lindqvist. *Adrian*, 117-118.

⁸ Lindqvist. *Adrian*, 121-125.

⁹ Lindqvist. *Adrian*, 130-132.

¹⁰ Barr. Adrian Architecture. <http://web2.sienaheights.edu/personal/PBARR/chronology-adrian.html>.

Kate Dombrowski
ARH330 American Art History
Historical Home Research Project
5 November 2014

222 Clinton Street is a unique stylistic example of custom architecture combining Craftsman structure and features with several decorative Classical Revival details. The Seager-Hurlbut House possesses an interesting historical ownership by Dr. George B.M. Seager who was a prominent figure in Adrian's community at the beginning of the twentieth-century. The home remains in great condition and is still very much as it was when originally built.

Bibliography

Barr, Peter. "19th-Century Adrian Architecture - Illustrated Glossary." 19th-Century Adrian Architecture - Illustrated Glossary. Accessed September 30, 2014.

Goff, W.H. *Complete Abstract of Title to all Lands in Lenawee County Furnished: Lot 168*. Lenawee County Abstract Office, 1963.

Knapp, John I. and R.I. Bonner, *Illustrated History and Biographical Record of Lenawee County, Mich.* Adrian: The Times Printing Company, 1903.

LaChiusa, Chuck. "Illustrated Architecture Dictionary." Illustrated Architecture Dictionary. Accessed September 30, 2014.

Lindqvist, Charles. *Adrian: The City That Worked*. Adrian: Lenawee County Historical Society, 2004.

McAlester, Virginia, and A. Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Knopf, 1984.

Polk's Adrian City Directory, Vol II. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1905.

Polk's Adrian City Directory, Vol III. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1907.

Polk's Adrian City Directory. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1917.

Polk's Adrian (Lenawee County, Mich.) City Directory. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1929.

Polk's Adrian (Lenawee County, Mich.) City Directory. Detroit: R.L. Polk & Co. Publishers, 1936.

Archival Sources

Lenawee County Historical Museum Archives, Adrian, Mich.

- *Sanborn Insurance Maps*, 1907.
- *The Hollinger Historic Buildings Directory*.