

**Presbyterian Manse, 435 Dennis St. Adrian  
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### **435 Dennis Street – Queen Anne Style**

The house on 435 Dennis Street is a very typical example of the Queen Anne architecture from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house carries the three main characteristics of the style: an asymmetrical shape, a complex roof structure, and a variety of surface treatments on the exterior. Called the “Presbyterian Manse” today, it was originally designed by Adrian architect Christian Frederick “Fred” Matthes for Adrian businessman, Samuel Hart, who intended to give the home to his son Charles as a wedding gift. Following Samuel’s death, however, the Hart family donated the home in his name to Adrian’s Presbyterian Church, which used it as their parsonage until 1950. Today it stands as one of several handsome Queen Anne style homes in the Dennis Street/State Street neighborhood and testify to Adrian’s prosperity at the end of the nineteenth century.

The Queen Anne style became popular at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when American designers came upon an English architect named Richard Norman Shaw. The Americans wanted a style that they could make their own. The style was first introduced to the Americas in 1876, the year of the Philadelphia Centennial, which featured two of Shaw’s buildings. The style was inaccurately named after Queen Anne, since Shaw’s half-timbered buildings looked nothing like the houses built during the reign of Queen Anne, and more closely resemble the home built during the reigns of Queen Elizabeth I and several of the King James—almost a hundred years before Anne.

Architectural historians are generally in agreement about the history and key features of the style. All emphasize the asymmetrical shape, complex roof structures, and the unique textured exterior. All the sources that I’ve listed in my bibliography seem to agree that the style was first popularized in England by the Scottish architect Richard Shaw, and that he misnamed it. In addition, architectural historian Jeffrey Howe points out that the Queen Anne style can be seen as an accumulation of all the preceding

Victorian styles, including the Gothic Revival and the Romanesque Revival, but is distinct from them in its “essential asymmetry, and the richly patterned and textured surfaces” (Howe pg. 241).

There are three main characteristics that define the Queen Anne style home. The first is the asymmetrical shape of the house which allows for very spacious floor plans and fairly large rooms. The asymmetrical shape also allows for an endless range of variety in the construction of the house. The second is the roof structure which usually follows along the same lines as the layout of the house, and is usually steep and hipped. Also, Queen Anne style homes usually have towers, bays and verandahs which contribute to the complexity of their roofs. Lastly, homes during this period would have several different exterior surface treatments; there was to be little or no smooth surface on the house. The key was to have as much contrasting material as possible to add to the uniqueness and variety of each home in this period. It is because of these three characteristics that the house at 435 Dennis Street can so easily today be identified in the Queen Anne style. The only feature that might make this home even more characteristically Queen Anne would be a roof that combines hips and gables rather than has just several interlocking gables.

Christian Frederick Matthes, the architect who designed the Queen Anne home at 435 Dennis St., was a considered to be one of the leading architects and builders in the city of Adrian. Matthes not only built local homes, but also important city buildings such as the Adrian Training School and the city’s first library, which is now occupied by the Lenawee County Historical Museum. It is clear that Matthes was very fond of the Queen Anne style since he built his own home in the style as well at 329 Toledo Street, at the corner of Locust Street, in 1885-86. And of all the Queen Anne homes that Matthes built, he was clearly proudest of the Presbyterian Manse because he featured a

large photograph of home on a full-page advertisement in the *McEdoroney's Adrian City Directory*, 1896-1897.

The construction of the Presbyterian Manse began in 1893 by local businessman Samuel Hart at a time of great prosperity in Adrian. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Adrian served as the principal hub of the Michigan Southern and Northern Indiana Railroad, building and repairing its cars in factories just east of the Dennis Street/State Street neighborhood. Then, in 1888, J. Wallace Page began manufacturing woven wire "bounce-back" fence in Adrian, a business that would expand and thrive until the 1920s, making Adrian the "fence capital of the world." In addition, by 1900 the surrounding county was one of the top ten in the country in terms of agricultural output (Lindquist, *Lenawee County...*, 42). All of this prosperity provided Hart with business opportunities that allowed him to build three of the finest homes in Adrian.

Hart is best-known as a pharmacist and business partner with Byron Shaw in the Hart & Shaw Drug Store in downtown Adrian, a commercial enterprise that thrived by serving the needs of farmers, factory workers and industrial leaders. (Indeed, Shaw built a Queen Anne style home for himself down the street at 304 Dennis Street in 1885-89, less than a decade before Hart built the Presbyterian Manse.) But Hart was also associated with real estate developer Ambrose Berry, who invested in one of Hart's pharmaceutical partnerships. Hart reciprocated by acquiring land from Berry.

On November 23, 1844, Berry purchased the property that would become the Dennis Street/State Street neighborhood from the heirs of Adeline and Elias Dennis, pioneers who purchased the property from the United States government in 1826. (Dennis Street is named in their honor.) Berry then platted the land, which came to be known as "Berry's Southern Addition" and sold the lot at 430 Dennis Street to Samuel Hart. In 1856, Hart built one of the first fancy homes in Berry's Southern Addition: the Italian Villa that stands across the street from the Presbyterian Manse, where Hart lived

until 1873. (After Berry fell into financial ruin and left town, Hart built a second home in the neighborhood, a handsome red-brick Italianate at 417 State Street.)

The Presbyterian Manse was the third home for Hart in this neighborhood. Hart built this home as a gift to his son Charles and his new bride. However, within months after their marriage, Charles' bride passed away. Then, before the home's completion, Samuel Hart passed away as well, and Charles moved in with his mother at 417 State



Street, in Adrian. When the house was finally

finished the Hart family

donated it to the

Presbyterian Church as a

memorial to Samuel. The

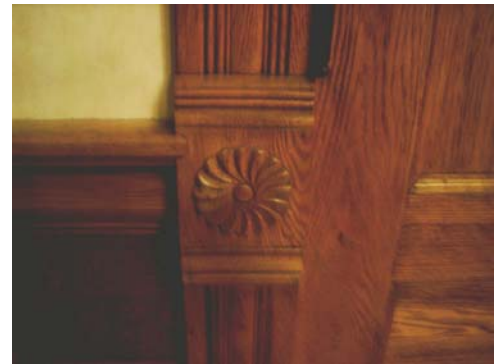
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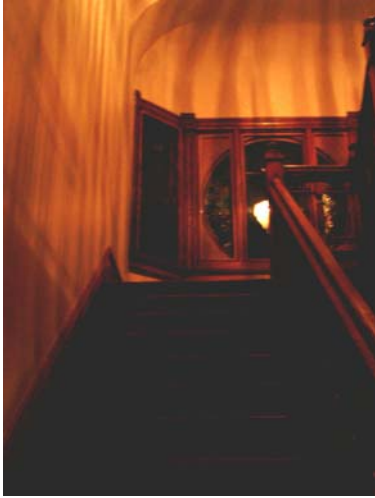
house are believed to be Rev. W. K. Spencer, his wife and his mother. It would be occupied by Presbyterian ministers until antique dealers Ed and Garnet Norvell purchased it in 1950.

The interior structure of the house has not changed much since its completion in 1895, but there has been several renovations done to the house since Mr. and Mrs. Norvell purchased it. There are 66 feet of hallway and 35 doors

throughout the house, giving an indication of its large size. All the rooms in the house are large with very high ceilings. The house contains five large rooms on the first floor and five bedrooms and a very large bathroom making it six rooms on the second floor.

The first floor music room is accented with a beautiful leaded glass window, along with an Italian ceramic tiled fireplace. The living room and music room both have been done in a beautiful cherry wood finish, whereas the rest of the rooms on the first floor appear





to have been done in oak. The house contains beautiful curved arches and oversized windows in a Victorian style bringing richness to the house.

The transition from the first floor to the second is accomplished by a gorgeous oak stairway, which is accented with a stained glass window on the wraparound area leading to the second floor. The second floor also contains a beautiful porch area accompanied by French doors. The fifth bedroom on the second floor is actually where a maid would have lived back in the late 1800s, but it was never used for such a purpose.

The exterior of the home is well preserved. The first floor of the house's exterior is surrounded by an L-shaped verandah that connects the front of the house to the home's main entrance on the right. On the entrance porch there are turned porch posts, which lead up to the wooden cut-out patterns located on the porch freeze. All along the porch are double turned posts.

Moving upward to the second level we can begin with the decorative porch gable located at the center of the façade, left of the main entrance. In the face of the gable is a sunburst wooden appliqué. According to architectural historian, Lester Walker, these wooden appliques—usually a sunburst or a sunflower—were very popular on the Queen Anne style homes (American Shelter pg. 153). Next is part of one of the key features to the house, the clapboards siding, which is only one a few textures applied to this particular house.

Just slightly above the gable is an arched window. Moving to the left is a solid bracket that is shaped in a kind of horse shoe. Inside the bracket is a sash window. Off the far left is an oriel window on the left side of the house. The window juts out from the rest of the wall helping to create the asymmetry present through out the house.

Lastly we come to the top level, which has triple windows which are all identical in size and shape. Around the windows are factory-made gingerbread and octagonal shingles. This decorative skin covers almost the entire surface of the top level. To top off the house is capped by a massive verge board. Projecting from the roof is a high brick chimney.

The house now known as 435 Dennis St. is beautifully painted in three main colors: teal, mauve, and beige. The house has not always been so colorful. According to the current home owner, Patty Grey, when the Norvell's owned the home they kept the house painted white. When Mrs. Grey's family purchased the home, they immediately had it painted the way in which it looks today. The colors are a magnificent accent to the exterior features of the house and appropriate to the Queen Anne style.

The former Presbyterian Manse at 435 Dennis St. is a beautiful example of Queen Anne architecture. It has been wonderfully kept in almost perfect condition by all of its owners to date. It stands as a physical reminder of the prosperity and optimism of Samuel Hart and industrial and agricultural community in which he lived.

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