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Oxford's ornate opportunity

85 Oxford Street

East Avenue is often regarded as one of the most intact historic residential boulevards in the country. It and its many side streets serve as a physical timeline of Rochester's evolution from riverside village, to Erie Canal boomtown, to 20th century industrial metropolis. Oxford Street, running from University to Monroe Avenues, is lined with many late 19th century homes and its signature mall of magnolia trees, which have delighted passersby since the 1870s. In 1886, John Roberts, a carriage and sign painter, and his wife Hester moved into their new home (then known as 5 Hawthorn Street). Designed in the popular Queen Anne style, with its diversity of form, materials, and decorative details, this home has retained the majority of its original splendor through the passing years.

The full width front porch looks out over the street and shelters the signature double wood paneled front doors, which lead to the receiving hall beyond with its grand open staircase lit by ascending stained glass windows. Directly ahead, beneath the sweep of the stair, is the former dining room lit by one of the home's many bay windows and embellished by an elaborate original built-in china. A rear door connects to the original butler's pantry and the kitchen. The kitchen has great bones of original wood wainscoting and intricate tin ceilings but will need major investment by new owners. A set of doors provides access to the rear door, basement stair, a half bath, and a maid's stair to the second floor.

To the left of the receiving hall, through a broad opening with leaded glass doors are the two parlors. The front parlor is lit by several original floor to ceiling windows and showcases a beautifully designed parquet floor. Beyond a set of pocket doors, the rear parlor, now used as a dining room, is a feast for the eyes with its carved slate fireplace, encaustic tilework, historic chandelier and sconces, and beautiful decorative plaster ceiling. A rear door leads to the side entry hall, porch, and kitchen.

The second floor features four bedrooms, each with a generous closet; two full bathrooms with clawfoot tubs; a built-in linen closet; and enclosed stair to the attic. The attic is wide open with an insulated floor and features several whimsical windows. The basement is dry with exposed stone walls and updated mechanicals.

This 2,268 square foot home is filled with priceless period character and with the right careful touch can shine again. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and eligible for 20% NYS Historic Homeowner Rehabilitation Tax Credits. Contact realtor Dean Popoli with Empire Realty Group at 585-738-0021 and make it yours for \$199,900.

by Christopher Brandt

Christopher is a member of the Young Urban Preservationists and blogs about his own historic home at www.mypreciouslittlemoney.com.