

A cooperative effort of City Newspaper and RochesterCityLiving, a program of the Landmark Society.



A Historically Significant Home

185 West Ave.

At the turn of the 20th century, the far western side of the city of Rochester looked very different than it does today. Neighborhoods like the 19th Ward were just starting develop, with a smattering of modest single-family houses mixed in with large family estates. But that was quickly changing.

In 1907, the time had come for the home at 185 West Avenue to rise from land that was once part of the large Danforth property, a rural estate that dates to the 1840s. In fact, the historic Danforth house still stands right across the street as an active, popular community center.

This home was one of the first to appear on the south side of the street. It was built for the family of Mr. J. Hicks Crippen, who owned a funeral parlor on East Main Street. Records indicate that Mr. Crippen's wife, Alice, helped spearhead the design of this massive Colonial Revival. The Crippens clearly had affection for the stylish spaces and details of the home, as the property remained in the family until the 1960s. Today, the house still stands tall thanks to the loving care of its longtime current owner. The exterior retains its original painted wood shingles, while many windows are highlighted with diamond-paned leaded glass.

Inside, the house has a natural dividing line: center side-by-side stairwells leading up to each side of the house. Towards the rear, the spacious kitchen would have been the domain of the family maid. It connects to an almost perfectly preserved butler's pantry. The various storage drawers and shelves are still in excellent condition. This space even

retains and repurposes a truly unique feature: the original ice box that the Crippens would have used to store perishables.

The family would have used the spaces in the front of the house for living and entertaining. The spacious dining room, foyer, and parlor all retain elegant hardwood floors, varnished gumwood trim, and wooden ceiling beams. Mrs. Crippen's decision to have the main entrance face Hancock Street, rather than West Avenue, allows for an open flow to these spaces. A welcome addition in modern times, the current owner converted a closet space into a discreet first-floor powder room.

The combined rooms on the second floor and finished attic offer plenty of living space and possibility. Currently there are five total bedrooms and two full baths, with potential for the right owner to make one of Rochester's true original homes a part of his or her personal history.

185 West Ave offers approximately 3,573 square feet of living space, plus a rare two-car garage, and is listed at \$119,900. Contact Tammy Dostman of Howard Hanna Realtors at 585-429-1157 for more information.

Special thanks to Cynthia Howk, Architectural Research Coordinator with the Landmark Society, for contributing historical research to this article.

by Peter Smith

Peter lives and works in Rochester and is a Landmark Society volunteer.