



The Meinhardt house, considered the showplace of Burlington, originally was surrounded by 15 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds, an orchard, a pasture, a dense pine grove, fountains, and tennis courts. Completed in 1883 by Anthony Meinhardt, founder of the Meinhardt Bank and former grocer and postmaster, and his wife, Elisa Riel, the house was designed by the firm of Edward Townsend Mix, Milwaukee's most influential architect.

The eclectic Victorian design is executed in limestone trimmed with buff sandstone. According to one of the daughters, Mrs. Antoinette Meinhardt Fulton, the limestone came from the excavation of the huge basement, as well as from an old garden next to the Charles G. Foltz house, which stood where the Masonic Temple is now, and many loads from the Van Rosenberg farm at Norton's Lake (now Rockland Lake). Mrs. Fulton said that the solid masonry walls were 28 inches thick in the basement, 24 inches in the first floor, and 22 inches at the top of the house.

She also remembered watching with wonder, the placing of the huge 12-by-12 inch center beam, running the length of the house. The carpenter, Fred Itzin, was such a perfectionist that one out of three loads of lumber was sent back because of knotholes or other imperfections.

On the exterior corners are unusual, soothed, vertical stones which are not true quoins, but which frame each wall surface as neat panels. In 1914, the original front porch was moved around to the side, and the large combination porch and porte cochere, extending over the driveway and used to shelter those getting in and out of carriages and automobiles, was added.

The mantel on one of the fireplaces was designed and carved by one of the sons, Francis, who became a dentist. Francis painstakingly carved the mantel from the "hard-as-bone" black walnut counter planks once used in his grandfather's grocery store at the southeast corner of Pine and Chestnut Streets - the corner later occupied by Jacob Wien's clothing store, Kessler's variety store, Rogan's Shoes, and more recently, J. Robert's Men's Apparel. According to Mrs. Fulton, the mantel was Francis's evenings' work for two years, with one panel, on which he carved a trumpet vine, taking three months. The whole was put together with pins and could be moved. Francis's mantel is currently owned by and in the home of one of the heirs.

Anthony Meinhardt died in 1891 and his wife, Elisa, in 1923. Mrs. Fulton, the last of the Meinhardt's to live in the house, died in 1967. She was one of the founders of the Burlington Historical Society and the donor of the society's museum building. The Meinhardt sons, Francis and Albert, never married, so no one in Burlington carries on the family name. Even the bank, which was sold to the Marine Corporation in 1969 and then to Bank One in 1988, no longer carries the Meinhardt name.

In 1963, the house was sold to Donald and Dorothy Johnston, and in November of that year, the Meinhardt Trust auctioned off the house's furnishings. The Johnston family restored some of the house, but also made some changes.

The third owners, in 1971 restored much of the house, furnishing it with antiques and preserving many original or older pieces to maintain a Victorian flavor.

Burlington Historical Society

BANK ONE