

# Quincy's jewel

By Beth Young

One of Illinois' hidden treasures is the Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County's History Museum on the Square at 332 Maine in downtown Quincy. Housed in a beautifully-restored Richardson Romanesque structure which was completed in 1888, the building served as the Quincy Public Library until 1974. In 1977 the structure was sold and became the Gardner Museum of Architecture and Design. That museum closed its doors in 2009, and in 2012 the Historical Society of Quincy and Adams County accepted both the ownership and assets of the building. Today, the edifice serves as the home of the Society's History Museum and Quincy's History Shop.



Among the structure's exterior Romanesque features is the rough-faced native Quincy limestone that forms the walls of the building. The magnificent three-story entrance tower with its deep-set windows and its conical roof also identifies the Museum as Romanesque. Along the south side of the original structure is an extension added in 1929 by noted Quincy architect Ernest Wood.

Surrounding the Museum are several flower beds, a variety of trees and shrubs, and large pieces of stone architectural sculpture from the Gardner collection. Adjacent to the Ernest Wood addition is the John Wood Memorial Plaza, a patio area replete with benches and various architectural remnants. The plaza itself is composed of pavers purchased by individuals supporting the Society and its mission. Along the east side of the building visitors can also find a stone drinking fountain erected by the family of Brigadier General Henry Root Hill to



**John Wood Statue and History Museum on the Square.**

memorialize his service in World War I. Hill was killed in Lorraine, France, in battle in 1918.

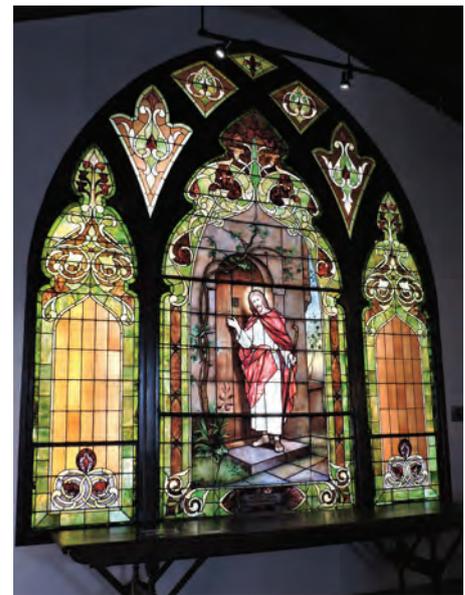
As visitors enter the Museum, they will appreciate the "carved butternut woodwork, pocket doors, and transom, as well as the mitered hardwood ceiling panels." At any given time, there will be a variety of displays, some permanent and others temporary.

On the main floor are two permanent exhibits, the "City of Refuge" and "Early Quincy." On the walls of the "City of Refuge" room are photos, document facsimiles, and informational panels describing Quincy's 19th century relationship with the Mormons and telling the story of their exodus from Missouri when they were expelled by Governor Lilburn Boggs in 1838. An excellent video provided by the Mormon Historical Site Foundation is available for viewing in this area. The film details Quincy's humanitarian assistance to the Mormons during the winter of 1838-

1839 as the community welcomed and provided for them. The keys to the original Nauvoo Temple are also hanging on a wall in this room. The "Early Quincy" display contains maps, documents,



**Nauvoo Temple Keys located in the City of Refuge Room.**



**Christ at the Door, the tallest piece in the Stained Glass Gallery.**

objects, military uniforms, and photographs relating to the first days of the city's history. Included in this collection are the original seal of the city, the compass carried by John Wood as he explored western Illinois, and original maps of the bounty lands. Hanging on the wall of this area is an original Excelsior Banner, a prize won by the Illinois 50th in competition against other troops from Illinois and Iowa on 3 July 1865.

In other sections of the main floor, guests will see various changing collections. In the recent past some of these displays have included "Golden Age of

Quincy” and “Remembering World War I.” A current exhibit “Road to Freedom” provides an overview of the local Underground Railroad, including a look at the life of Father Augustus Tolton (the first Black priest in the U.S.) as well as information about New Philadelphia and the Mission Institute of David Nelson. Also located on this level is a small theatre which seats up to fifteen people and is used for viewing a variety of historical videos. The final stop on the first floor is Quincy’s History Shop which features Quincy souvenirs, postcards, apparel, toys, puzzles, games, books, and area maps for sale.

The second floor of the Museum houses three permanent displays, each of which focuses on a specific interest. The Stained Glass Gallery is found in the large, open meeting area which seats approximately seventy-five people. Most of these gorgeous panels came from Quincy churches and include pieces by Tiffany and Frank Lloyd Wright, as well as by the Franz Mayer Glass Works. Among the scenes portrayed are the “Annunciation Window,” the “St. James of Ulm Window” and the gorgeous, multi-paneled “Christ at the Door Window.” Adjacent to this room is the Everett Gallery, which features eleven watercolors painted by Quincyan Edward Everett. The works include local residential and Mississippi River scenes. Identified as a romanticized landscape



**History Museum on the Square.**

painter, Everett’s most famous works are paintings of the Alamo which were inspired by his service in the Mexican War of 1846. The final room in the second floor features “Window onto the Square,” an interactive display that allows visitors to view scenes detailing the history of Washington Square. Visitors may select from a variety of time periods and view old photos showing events and people from Quincy’s past as they look out onto Washington Square.

The History Museum is open from Tuesday through Saturday from 10:00



**Root Hill Fountain.**

am until 4:00 pm. Private tours may be arranged, and there is no admission charge but donations are appreciated. Visitors may also wish to tour the Governor John Wood Mansion which is located only a few blocks away from the museum. Admission for the mansion tour is \$10.00 for adults and \$5.00 for children ages 6 – 18 and students. Please contact the HSQAC at 217-222-1835 for details. 

*Frequent contributor Beth Young of Quincy is a retired librarian and educator who taught more than 50 years at Quincy High School, John Wood Community College, and Quincy University.*



**Items from the Early Quincy Exhibit.**