



The Henry and Alice Gennett Mansion is a large, Colonial Revival Style house located on the east side of Richmond, Indiana. Prominently situated at the corner of Main Street (U.S. 40) and 19th Street, the house is constructed of yellow ceramic brick and features a limestone foundation and a monumental, semi-circle, entry portico. Construction on the home began in 1897 for Henry Gennett, then vice-president of the Starr Piano Factory, and his family. The house was built on 2 city lots facing Main Street and the family took occupancy during 1898, the same year that Henry Gennett became president of the Starr Piano Company. The family lived in the house for the next 38 years.

The Gennett Mansion was designed by John Hasecoaster who was a significant local architect in Richmond having designed many of the best-known buildings in the area: the Abram Gaar residence in 1876, Knightstown Academy in 1877, Wernle Children's Home in 1893, Reid Memorial Hospital (Original Building) in 1904 and St. John's Lutheran Church in 1908, to name a few.

The home is listed on the National Register of Historic Places for three reasons: it remains a fine example of Colonial Revival Architecture which was part of the Neo Classical movement of that time period; and, the prominence of the Gennett family to the industry and innovation history of the Richmond area and, also, to the Gennett Recording legacy as part of early American music history. As piano manufacturer's, the Gennett family was in a unique position to usher in the era of recorded sound. Henry Gennett was a true entrepreneur and guided the company to explore new areas of business as technology and innovation flourished in the early days of the 1900's. The production of pianos, player pianos, piano rolls and phonographs led to the making of recordings under the family name, Gennett. The Gennett record label was one of the first "independent" labels in America whose existence provides us with historic and seminal recordings of musical pioneers in a variety of musical genres. An astounding number of musicians across a broad field of musical styles made their first recordings at the little studio down by the tracks; many of them such as Louis Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael and Gene Autry becoming icons in their own time.

The main entrance to the house opens into a T-shaped, oak paneled hallway. At the juncture of the main and cross hallways is a stone fireplace. To the west of this fireplace is the oak staircase to the second floor. As the Star Piano Factory built pianos and employed many fine craftsman, the interior of the house is embellished with oak, mahogany, sycamore and poplar treatments throughout, the finest cuts provided to them by many of their lumber suppliers at the time. One door on the second floor is constructed of a solid panel of oak backed by a solid panel of mahogany. The home features 8 fireplaces: including the stone hearth, there are 6 Italian ceramic fireplaces each of a different color: chocolate brown, dark cranberry, white, on the first floor, blue and white marbleized, green and white marbleized and raspberry on the second floor, and an enormous brick hearth in the conservatory. The present owners, Bob and Donna Geddes, installed two Italian crystal chandeliers dated from the late 1800's in the entry foyer and in the staircase leading to the second floor. There are solid oak floors throughout the first floor and there are motifs on the entryway door, on the built in mantels and dining room buffet that are the same trims seen on the finer pianos that Starr produced.

The third floor of the home has a long room the width of the house, east to west, that was originally used as a ballroom that connects in a T-shape at its center to another long room that projects out over the portico with 6 double sash windows in a semi-circle. This room offered such fine light that Rose Gennett used it for painting. Prior to 1912, the third floor was where the orchestra rehearsed before the first floor west side conservatory was added to the original home.

For more historic information or to schedule a tour with our Events Coordinator, please contact Donna Geddes or Julie Shaffer-Smith at 765-935-0055 or 765-969-0013.