



Jacob W. Houston House, 932 West Seminary Street - 1895.

The Houston House stands on a hill on the west side of the Pine River; many local residents refer to it as “the Castle.” Built in 1895 with stone cut from the John Houston Quarry operated earlier by Houston’s father-in-law, J.S. Winn, the house is the only example of stone from the Winn-Houston Quarry identified in the city of Richland Center. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, stone was used infrequently in Richland Center; although it was used quite often in the construction of foundations. Other examples of stone construction in the city include the 1920 First National Bank Building at 108 East Court Street, The McClary Bungalow at 676 East Seminary Street, the 1937 Schmitt House at 475 North Central Avenue, and the rough stone bungalow at 320 West Side Street.

The house exhibits the irregularity essential to the Queen Ann style in its hip and gable roof forms, by the three-story corner tower topped by a copper finial, and bay window and open porches. Although a very substantial representation of the Queen Anne style, this stone interpretation sacrifices the freedom of shape and surface treatment associated with the wood frame interpretation of the style shown in the Charles Craig House at 414 North Central Avenue.

The two-story sandstone Houston House was patterned after a house in Boston, Massachusetts. It featured a turret on the southeast corner; a gabled roof with dormer windows on the south, east, and west; a wrap-around porch from the

southwest corner to the bay window on the east side of the house. Originally, a small horse barn abutted the house on the northeast. A large barn was located at the back of the lot; a sandstone wall marked the south and east sides of the lot. The nine-room house had a full basement, a small second floor attic, and a full third floor attic that contained a cistern. As was the custom at the turn of the century, a large unfinished third floor was used for parties and dances. Several large elm trees graced the east and south lawn which are no longer extant, long ago victims of Dutch elm disease. The outside trim was painted a red-orange while inside the windows, doors, and stairway was red elm and hard maple. This stone Victorian has two fireplaces and an open staircase.

Jacob Wilson (J.W.) Houston was born in Richland County in 1856. His parents, Jacob and Mary Snyder Houston, came from Ohio to Richland County. J.W. was the ninth of 11 children, served an apprenticeship as a plasterer and did contract work for about 18 years before turning to farming and the quarrying of building stone on his farm. By the early 1900s, Houston had an extensive business in sandstone.



Jacob W. Houston House, 932 West Seminary Street circa 1924. Shirley Steiner photo archive.

(Keep in mind the homes listed are private residences which are not open to the public. Please respect the occupants' privacy when viewing their homes from the sidewalk).