

Collinsville's historic treasure

The D.D. Collins house, newly restored and ready for the bicentennial

By Mary Sue Schusky

Cities and towns across Illinois will observe our state's bicentennial in 2018. Collinsville, chartered as a village in 1850, celebrates with the restoration of its oldest house, the D. D. Collins House. The structure is now located at the corner of West Main and Combs streets, welcoming visitors from State Route 157 Daniel Dove (D.D.) Collins constructed his home as a wedding present for his wife, Elizabeth Anderson.

D.D. Collins, born in Maine, arrived in the 1830s and soon became an important figure in the young town. He served in various civic positions including first President of the Village Board. Minutes written in Victorian script from an 1850 city ledger book document that early village meetings were held at the house. Collins also served as county judge and road commissioner. In 1853 he organized the Collinsville Plank Road Company, which ran through town to East St. Louis where people could ferry to St. Louis. The project, financed with private money and supported with tolls, helped the residents move about the muddy streets for over 30 years.

Trained as a carpenter, Collins built more houses in the growing town. In 1843 he donated his services to erect a new building for the Presbyterian Church where he and his wife were active members. He also helped establish local schools and farmed in his spare time.

Collinsville was not named for D. D. Collins but rather for four brothers who migrated from Connecticut in 1817. The Collins brothers and D.D. Collins were unrelated.



Open for Visitors, Sept., 2016

In 1998 Irving Dilliard, a native of Collinsville, bought the Collins house before a public auction and gave it to the city, thus saving the historic house. In his long career at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, Dilliard had supported local cultural landmarks including the

Campbell House and

the Eugene Field House in St. Louis. As a trustee at the University of Illinois, he also helped save Hull House in Chicago. Dilliard was well known in the Illinois State Historical Society, serving as president in 1947-48.

Dilliard had a personal

D.D. Collins, Collinsville's first "mayor"



Waiting for Restoration, 2002

connection to the Collins House. His great grandfather, Horace Look, was a contemporary of D.D. Collins. Look helped Collins establish Collinsville's first governing board and served as a village trustee with Collins. Dilliard's grandparents, Oliver and Kate Look, lived in the house in the 1870s and 1880s. Their children included his mother, Mary Look (Dilliard).

The Collins House was built in the Greek Revival style architecture. The style flourished in America from 1820 into the 1860s, declining after the

