

Sara Witty
Parley Eaton House Description and Summary

The Parley Eaton House, located at 105 Jail Alley in Mineral Point, was built between 1846 and 1847 and was originally owned by Parley Eaton, a lawyer who had moved to Mineral Point from Massachusetts. Eaton purchased the property of lot 59 from Abner Nichols in 1840 because it was a perfect location, in the center of town and directly across from the courthouse, to set up both a home and a location of business as a lawyer.

The original house was a three story walk-out, with two stories visible on the front, south-facing facade and all three stories visible on the back, north-facing side. The foundation of the house is limestone and the rest of its construction is of brick. The brick was locally made and of a softer quality than is required in modern building. This may be the reason why, as the house settled, the bricks shifted and required bracing for the structure to remain upright. Today the original house boasts four iron braces. Two of these can be seen on the eastern side, one spanning the connection between the ground floor and upper story and another connecting the exterior brick to the limestone foundation. Two smaller braces appear on the back, northern elevation on the eastern side.

The building is placed on two slopes, one that falls away to the north and one that falls away to the east. This allowed for the placement of two six over six windows in the eastern limestone foundation and basement wall. The north side of the basement walk-out has one more six over six window which is located just east of the central walk-out doorway.

The interior space of this basement level was originally used as a kitchen. On the western wall of the room is a fireplace which was perhaps originally used for the majority of cooking.

Today this area is set up as a dining room and what was most likely a root cellar, which lies just west of the fireplace wall, has been converted into a modern kitchen.

In 1848, only one year after the completion of the original house, Parley Eaton built a one story addition onto the ground floor. This addition, located on the western side of the original house, was constructed of brick and used the original building's exterior western wall as its interior eastern wall. The only structural change in that wall, therefore, was the creation of a doorway linking the addition to the main house. This doorway is located about a foot in on the northern side of that wall. Parley Eaton used this addition as his law office and when the house was later sold to Nicholas Treweek, a fellow lawyer, in 1874, he too set up his business in this space.

The addition has one small window and a fireplace on its western side. On the front, southern facade, it has one door, located on the western side, and one six over six window placed just to the west of the addition's connection to the original house. This window visually links the facade of the addition to the facade of the original building, which has two six over six windows on the ground floor. The main entrance to the house is located on the eastern side of the ground level. All of the windows have limestone sills and they and the door have limestone lintels.

The eastern side of the building has only one window on the ground floor. The back has only two windows on the ground floor, one in the center of the parlor in the original house and one in the addition. All of these windows are six over six with limestone sills and lintels.

The main interior space of the ground floor is the parlor. This room has a fireplace in its western wall, directly over the fireplace in the basement. These share one chimney but use two different flues.

To the east of the parlor is the entry hall which the front door opens onto. This area is also the location of the stairs, which are located on the eastern wall. These stairs lead down to the basement and up to the upper story.

The upper story's exterior is a perfect mimicry of the original ground floor, aside from the front door, which has been replaced by another six over six window. Like the lower story windows, all of these have limestone sills and lintels. The upper story interior, however, is the densest part of the house. At the top of the narrow stairs is a small stair-hall. This space is more of an open room than a hall and originally had three bedrooms opening onto it. These rooms are small and each contain one window. One faces north, one south, and one east. These were the living spaces, along with the parlor on the ground floor and the kitchen in the basement, which were occupied by the five members of the Parley Eaton household.

The Parley Eaton House was especially well located for an enterprising landowner, lawyer, and judge. Not only was Parley Eaton's office located directly across from the court house, but his family was established in the heart of Mineral Point. The federal style of the building, with its stepped gable roof, signaled Eaton's eastern connections and marked him as a man of importance and power. As previously mentioned, Nicholas Treweek made the same use of the building and it remained in his family for nearly 100 years.

The significance of this house as a symbol of the rich history of Mineral Point remains evident today. The Parley Eaton House is considered more than an attractive example of architecture, it is seen as a living tie to the past, a way to understand the pioneers who settled the region. Individuals who have lived in the house, owned the house, or have merely passed the house on the street every day, consider it to be a cornerstone of the history and identity of Mineral Point.

