

**Marie Litta
and 512 East
Taylor
Bloomington, IL**

The house at 512 East Taylor was built by John Routt in 1857. It is believed the house was built as rental property, utilizing the upstairs section. This section contained what was referred to as

"sleeping beds" which suggests a dormitory type arrangement.

From 1878 to the early 1880's Hugo Von Elsner and Kate Dimmitt Von Elsner, daughter of William Dimmitt, occupied the house at 512 East Taylor. Hugo Von Elsner was descended from a German family. Mr. Von Elsner, a highly educated civil engineer by profession, was also an accomplished musician. Of the Von Elsner's five children, Marie Eugenia, born July 1, 1856, displayed an impressive musical talent. Marie Litta, as she was later called, was gifted with an exceptional singing voice. With careful training by her father, she was earning \$2000 a year by the age of ten. Marie was taken to several major cities to study; her places of residence during this time included the city of Chicago. Moving to Europe at the age of 18, she continued her studies with the lessons of the noted Professor Underner of Cleveland and the patronage of a Mr Hough until her Paris debut in 1878. French critics and public alike soon referred her to as the "Queen of Song". During this time, Marie's name was changed to Marie Litta. With the events connected to the Franco-Prussian war, dropping the name of Von Elsner made good sense considering the importance of her continued activities in France.

Marie Litta returned to America at the close of the European Opera season the same year (1878). Embarking on an exhausting three-year performance tour, she fell ill as a result of her willingness to work far beyond the limits of her health and eventually returned to

Bloomington in the spring of 1883. On July 7 of that year she died in her mother's house on Washington Street, three blocks from where she was born. Marie Litta had just celebrated her 27th birthday.

The citizens of Bloomington erected a stone monument to mark Marie Litta's resting-place in Bloomington's Evergreen Cemetery. One inscription on the monument reads: A flower is dead. A star is fallen. A bird, singing the highest and rarest melody, has gone from the groves of that time.

The current occupants of 512 East Taylor, Herb and Pamela Eaton have done extensive re-designing and re-modeling, adding a great deal of originality and charm to this historic home.

Gary Justis

Information courtesy of Pamela Eaton and the Pantagraph Archive

Want to Save Some \$\$\$

It is midwinter and the perfect time to save a little money on your heating bills. If you have not changed your furnace filter in the last 2 months, you might want to check it and see how clogged it is.

Filters keep your heating system clean. However, should they become clogged, the amount of air moving through the system slows and it begins to cost you money because your furnace is not operating at peak efficiency. They are inexpensive. Most cost less than \$5.

Also, if your bills are high and you want to cut them down. Turn the thermostat down when you are not at home or when you are sleeping. For every degree you turn the thermostat down, you will save 3% in heating costs.

Hope you can stay warm and save some money with these two tips.

