



This is one of 14 images created for the special Sesquicentennial edition of QB. This image is for the chapter about Barrington's early settlement.

# Meet Artist Kathleen Nelson

Local artist Kathleen Rickert Nelson is an artist, historian, and speaker who is known for her ability to marry the past with the present. She creates one-of-a-kind illustrations and works of art in pen and ink. Her illustration work includes historical structures, building architecture, private homes, and monuments. *Quintessential Barrington* magazine commissioned Nelson in 2014 to create the cover art and a series of 14 unique chapter images for the interior of its special Sesquicentennial edition.

**QB:** *Your artistic focus is with architectural drawings. Did your career as an artist start out in that area?*

KN: My interior design career did not fall into place right away. I started doing graphic design with drawings depicting HVAC systems for Honeywell. The graphics were then made into slides for systems out in the field. From that point, I was doing panel layouts using pneumatic and electrical Honeywell components for the construction field. It was a very diverse position, and I was the first woman to work in the department as a plant engineer tech. I was also in charge of doing office layout updates. I have worked at other Fortune 500 companies and have held positions as an Facility Office Manager.

While I was doing this during the day, in the

evening I was creating pen and ink illustrations of homes and businesses in my free time. That was over 35 years ago. Eventually, I decided that I wanted to do this full-time, because I felt that my creative side was vanishing. Illustrating different historic building styles is my passion. I like to experiment with my pen and ink, applying them to different mediums while creating the illustration.

**QB:** *How did you go about creating the color swatches for QB?*

KN: I worked with watercolor, and diluted the values starting with a warm value to a cooler value. It is important that the color chip that I create dry thoroughly, so that I know which one to start with. It has to be the right color value so that the color chosen

will enhance the illustration that is created. Using the right watercolor paper is important, as well.

**QB:** *What were your concerns regarding historic accuracy?*

KN: If the historic accuracy is not attained, it would not present well, and everything would be offset. I strive for accuracy of the historic period of time that is being created, and needed a lot of research to find the right values. For example, a lot of the colors of clothing were muted and not bright. I had to place myself in that time to see what was being experienced to achieve the results that were required. This is what makes the image pop off the page.

**QB:** *What steps did you take to create each individual illustration?*

KN: I had to start in a pencil format of the subject, then make corrections as needed. This would include making sure that the planting materials, soil, people, animals, building structures, and hues of the sky were in keeping with the time of the historic period. The next step would be to ink with a very fine nib. I did not want the image to look heavy in doing these smaller illustrations. It would make them appear too bold in appearance. The next and final phase is the application of watercolor. I always referred to my watercolor value calculations, doing a test page first before I apply the watercolor onto the finished inked paper. This does take extra time, but the results are very authentic.

**QB:** *The QB cover must have been a large project. What was involved in that?*

KN: I took many photos, including close-ups that showed details and textures. This was important on how the home was portrayed. Because of intricate




details in trim work, I suggested that the Robertson House should be rendered in pen and ink without color. After receiving approval to do the illustration in pen and ink, the rendering was illustrated in a very fine nib pen. Using a wider nib would make it appear busy and the elegance of this building would have been lost. I kept the landscaping to a minimum to enhance the beauty of this home. After the pencil layout of the home was approved, I completed the illustration. I also worked with Beth Raseman and her project management construction team to review the drawings of the leaded glass windows and other building details. They were so accommodating to assist me on the details that I needed.

**QB:** *How did this project compare to others?*

**KN:** I loved creating illustrations that depicted a different era of time. As I illustrated the subjects, I envisioned the residents of the Barrington area as passionate people who wanted to create good lives as they traveled from the East Coast of the United States to the prairies of Illinois.

I feel strongly about my creative art. My passion is to save our history through pen and ink illustrations of historic structures, whether it be black and white, or watercolor. It is so important to pass our history onto future generations. This has been a humbling experience for me to work with the *Quintessential Barrington* team and the Village of Barrington. I have met so many people that have given so much to the Barrington community.

**QB:** *Will the Sesquicentennial special edition images be used in other ways?*

**KN:** The images will be used on several items to highlight the Sesquicentennial celebration of Barrington. As a limited edition, there will be silk pillows adorned with the Robertson House and other illustrations quilted on the front. The Robertson House will also be available as a collectable Christmas porcelain ornament. Magnets, appetizer boards, pen and ink note cards, prints, and other paper products featuring the art will be made available. 

For more information on Kathleen Nelson Fine Art, visit [www.kathleen-nelsonfineart.com](http://www.kathleen-nelsonfineart.com)

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