

A Look Back in Time

The Joseph and Victoria Palt House located at 3802 Seventh Avenue was designated a local landmark on May 19, 1997. In order to become a historic landmark, properties must meet one or more of the six criteria set forth in Section 15.04 of the City's Zoning Ordinance. It was determined that the Joseph and Victoria Palt House is eligible for landmark status based on Standard 3, "embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen..." The Palt House is a good example of the Craftsman style of architecture. Although it is not elaborately decorated, the house has the form and massing of the style, and its size distinguishes it from its smaller, more vernacular neighbors.

The Joseph and Victoria Palt House is a two story frame house constructed in the Craftsman architectural style. The house has a rectangular plan and a steeply-pitched gable roof. The gables are decorated with narrow bargeboard and under the eaves there are exposed rafters. The walls of the house are covered with stucco and punctuated with medium-sized double-hung sashes that feature single lower lights and vertically divided upper lights.

Projecting from the rear of the house is a two-story sleeping porch-garage ell. The second story sleeping porch features grouped sash and single pane windows in a "window band" effect. The garage opening is on the first story and consists of a modern garage door. The porch is the most distinctive feature of the house. It covers the entire front elevation of the first story and wraps around to cover the entire north elevation up to the garage door. The porch has a low-pitched gable roof decorated with narrow bargeboard and exposed rafters. Stucco-covered



piers support the roof and the entire porch is enclosed with wood panels, and period openings that consist of single lights with vertically divided transoms. A period door provides entry into the porch. It is glazed with vertical lights and topped with a very narrow transom. The porch base is covered with wood panels punctuated with vertically divided openings.

This house was built in 1917 for physician Joseph N. Palt and his wife, Victoria. Palt was born in Chicago in 1880. He graduated from the Illinois Medical College in Chicago in 1905. At first, Dr. Palt practiced in Chicago, but after four years, he came to Kenosha where he practiced medicine and surgery for 34 years. Dr. Palt died in 1944, while his wife, Victoria, died in 1969. After Dr. Palt's death, Victoria Palt sold the house to Andrew and Mary Utterback, who lived in this house until the 1970s. In the 1970s, Floyd and Janice Utterback owned the house. The Utterbacks were factory workers.

The Palt House is architecturally significant because it features details from the Craftsman style of architecture. The Craftsman style was popular for residential construction between 1900 and 1930. The style developed out of the Arts and Crafts movement of the early twentieth century. The Arts and Crafts movement, as interpreted in architecture, stressed honesty

in construction techniques, natural materials, and the abundant use of simple wood trim and built-in cabinets for interior decoration. Other styles which used Arts and Crafts were the Bungalow and Prairie School styles.

Although the Palt House is not elaborately detailed, it features the form and massing common to the Craftsman style in its steeply-pitched roofline and rectangular plan. The exposed rafter detail is common to the style, showing the “honesty” of construction, even though most of these “rafters” were decorative, not structural. The large, wrap-around porch gives the relatively vertical house a horizontal emphasis that was common to Craftsman houses. The use of the window bands in the sleeping porch also suggest this horizontal emphasis. The openings, particularly those of the porch, are fine examples of period openings. The single lower light topped with an upper pane or transom of vertically divided lights is a common feature of the style, and the porch windows have a high degree of architectural integrity. The attached garage is a modern addition to the design. During this period, it was more likely that garages were built as separate structures. It may be that Palt, being a physician, wanted easier access to his automobile due to his profession.

The house has a high degree of integrity, with most of its original features intact. Although the stucco covering is in need of rehabilitation, overall, the house has much of its original historic quality still in good condition.

The Joseph and Victoria Palt House sits in a large residential neighborhood on the north side of Kenosha. The house sits on a medium-sized lot with mature landscaping and is worth the time and effort to drive by some Sunday afternoon.