

HERITAGE LANDMARK PLANNING REPORT

SCHULZ HOUSE, 500 SPRUCE STREET

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INTRODUCTION

This report documents the historical and architectural significance of the property commonly known as the Schulz House, 500 Spruce Street. The report makes the case for the property's eligibility for designation as a Farmington Heritage Landmark pursuant to §2-11-4 of the City Code. Farmington Heritage Landmarks are the buildings, sites, and districts so designated by the City Council in recognition of their historical, architectural, archaeological, and cultural significance. Properties are nominated for landmark designation by the Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) following a public hearing. Once a property has been designated a Farmington Heritage Landmark by the City Council, this report becomes part of the official designation record.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA

Name of Property: The common name of the property nominated for Heritage Landmark designation is Schulz House.

Property Owner: Loren G. and Leiann M. Schulz.

Location: 500 Spruce Street; Lot 6 and part of Lot 5, Block 3, Bertzold's Second Addition.

HPC Determination of Eligibility: The Farmington HPC has evaluated subject property and found that it meets the Heritage Landmark eligibility criteria. A Finding of Significance was issued by the HPC in 2006.

Classification: For preservation planning purposes, the house at 500 Spruce Street is considered a historic building.

Historic and Current Function/Use: Single-family residence.

DESCRIPTION

Architectural Classification: The Schulz is an example of the Gable Front and Wing Cottage heritage resource type.

Boundaries: The boundaries of the proposed heritage landmark are those of the parcel historically associated with subject property.

Narrative Description:

The house at 500 Spruce Street is a two story, frame, Gable Front and Wing Cottage type dwelling with a compound plan, intersecting gable roofs, and an open front porch. This is a large and plain house with a simple form, balanced fenestration, and clean lines; the façade is nearly devoid of ornamentation. The horizontal siding (originally clapboard, now simulated clapboard in vinyl) extends into the gables and makes the walls look solid and of one piece. The house assumes its characteristic shape and much of its architectural character from the right-angle intersection of the two large roofs, however. The open gables are broader than usual and rely on geometry to express design and give the roof a strong outline; they also make the body of the house appear more volumetric, in comparison with other houses in the area. The open porch or veranda wraps around the front and part of the side of the upright wing; it has square posts and turned wooden balusters and is a major design element in its own right, designed to be useful as well as pleasing to the eye. The upper floor windows also reinforce the relationship between the gable-end walls and the body of the house. There is a one story addition on the back.

The house is located in the Oak Street Historic Preservation Planning Area, a neighborhood of detached single-family homes and tree-lined streets. The building site is level and the property occupies a somewhat larger than standard-sized (.39 acre) corner lot. A contemporary frame detached garage is located south of the house on the back part of the lot, with access from Fifth Street.

EVALUATION

Applicable Heritage Landmark Criteria: The Schulz House is eligible for Heritage Landmark designation because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Gable Front and Wing Cottage heritage resource type. It is also historically significant for its association with the broad pattern of residential development in the Oak Street neighborhood.

Local Historic Context: Subject property was evaluated within the local historic context, "Residential Neighborhoods, 1865 to 1950," delineated in the city's 1995 historic context study.

Area(s) of Significance: The Schulz House is significant in the areas of architectural history (vernacular) and neighborhood heritage (Oak Street).

Period of Significance: The house attained historical significance qualifying it for Heritage Landmark designation when it was built in 1915.

Architect/Builder: The house was probably not designed by a professional architect. The names of the original builder/contractor is not known.

Narrative Statement of Significance:

The Schulz House is historically significant because of its association with the "suburban cottage movement" in architectural history and is a well preserved example of the Gable Front and Wing Cottage heritage resource type. Contextually, it relates to the early development of Farmington's oldest residential neighborhood and represents the theme of vernacular domestic architecture.

Gable Front and Wing (sometimes referred to as the "Upright and Wing") is the generic term used to describe several related cottage forms that were popular in Farmington during the period that lasted from the 1880's until the 1920's. They are classified as vernacular architecture because their form, plan, structure, and ornamentation was based on common, traditional notions of what everyday Americans thought a proper house should look like, rather than the "high-style" fashionability reflected in the academic period style designations such as Queen Anne, Italianate, and Colonial Revival. Vernacular cottage architecture flourished throughout the United States during the second half of the nineteenth century and was widely promoted in the pattern books of Andrew Jackson Downing, Alexander Jackson Davis, Daniel Topping Atwood, and others. Industrialization and the growth of the railway system meant that siding, roofing, windows, doors, and decorative trim could be mass-produced in factories or turned out by local craftsmen using sophisticated woodworking machinery. Farmington area home builders were able to literally shop the local lumberyards and hardware stores for stylish architectural features and high-grade construction materials to match their personal tastes and finances.

Early vernacular cottages were based on traditional folk house prototypes, but after about 1880 a new class of modest dwellings began to be seen. These "suburban cottages" were also based on standard pattern book plans, but unlike the folk house-derived forms they reflected the technological innovations and changing socio-economic climate of the post-Victorian era. Suburban cottages strove to meet middle-class notions of comfort and beauty by providing more room and modest ornamental treatment, often combining boxy, two-story plans with eye-catching details such as turned porch posts and balustrades, oriel windows, sawn shingle siding, and leading glass. Needless to say, the overwhelming majority of these houses were built by local carpenters or contractors without any participation from architects.

The Gable Front and Wing house type occurs in Farmington in both the folk house and suburban cottage forms. The property type is defined entirely in terms of its volumetric characteristics. The ground plan takes the shape of an L and is sited so that the façade comprises a gabled upright and a perpendicular

side wing of varying dimensions. (After about 1890, Gable Front and Wing cottages sometimes assumed a T-shaped ground plan.) In the suburban cottage form, the apexes of both roofs are nearly always the same height.

Property tax records give 1915 as the date of construction for 500 Spruce Street and the property is clearly shown on the 1917 and 1928 Sanborn fire insurance maps. Nothing is known about the original owner or the property's possible links to important people and events in Farmington area history. It's heritage preservation value is derived entirely from its significance in architectural history.

Subject property is in a good state of preservation. Although it has been altered from its historic appearance by the application of artificial siding and contemporary windows, these changes have not removed or obscured the original plan, form, and structure which are its most important historic character-defining features.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Dakota County Assessor. Property appraisal card for 500 Spruce Street (PIN 14-13701-060-03).

Sanborn Map Co. Fire insurance maps of Farmington, 1885-1928. Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

Vogel, Robert C. *Farmington Historic Context Document: Final Report of the Historic Context Study, 1994-1995*. City of Farmington, Heritage Preservation Commission, July 1995.

_____. "Suburban Cottages, Bungalows, Farm Houses & Ramblers: Vernacular Domestic Architecture in Farmington, 1865-1965." Unpublished historic context background paper, Farmington Heritage Resources Survey, 2001.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

Included as attachments:

- 1) Map showing the location of 500 Spruce Street.
- 2) Photography (May 2006) showing principal and side elevations.

