

9/8/87

MONTANA HISTORICAL/ARCHITECTURAL INVENTORY #29

HISTORIC NAME: Graf Building
 ADDRESS: 219-221 W. Arthur
 LEGAL BOUNDARY: Butte Addition, Blk 10
 Lots 13 & 14
 OWNER'S NAME: Donna Strand
 OWNER ADDRESS: 221 W. Arthur
 SPECIFIC DATE: c.1941
 ARCHITECT: Fred F. Willson (attr.)
 BUILDER: Unknown
 ORIGINAL OWNER: Eugene Graf
 ORIGINAL USE: residence (duplex)
 PRESENT USE: residence (duplex)
 UTM REFERENCE: 12/496860/5057040
 ACREAGE: less than one
 U.S.G.S. QUAD: Bozeman, 1953



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:
 Applicable Criteria: C
 Number of Contributing Properties: 1

An excellent example of a vernacular interpretation of the International style, and clearly the best of the three examples of the style in the city, this duplex is independently eligible for the National Register on architectural significance, and meets the exception to the Register criteria for buildings of less than fifty years of age. The pure, block masses, smooth white wall surfaces, corner windows, porthole windows, and pipe railings are all hallmarks of the style.

The only other residential example of the style in the city is 412 W. Cleveland, which was built in 1936 and was designed by local architect Fred F. Willson. The American Legion Building, a small Main Street block at 225 E. Main, within the Main Street Historic District, is the other example of this style, and was designed by the same architect. Although no solid evidence has yet been found, this building also appears to be the work of Fred F. Willson. It is very likely the duplex listed on the Fred Willson job list under the name Gene Graf, although dated to 1944, three years after actual construction.

If designed by Willson, the building takes on added significance as a very significant example of that architect's work during the latter part of his career. Willson had a virtually monopolistic architectural practice in Bozeman from 1910 to the early 1950's, although the bulk of his work was accomplished during the first two decades of that time. By 1941, when this house was built, Bozeman's early 20th century building boom had subsided, and all but one of the WPA-assisted buildings - all of which had been designed by Willson - had been completed. Examples of this diverse architect's work from the 1940's and 1950's are consequently more rare than earlier work.

Loren T. Marshall, a salesman with the Earl S. Marshall furniture store, and his wife Leolyn Marshall, were the original occupants of 219 W. Arthur. The other half of this duplex, 221 W. Arthur, was first occupied by Glen C. Simpkins, Division Superintendent for the Mararch Lumber Co., and his wife, Teresa M. Simpkins. The duplex is one of the first structures built in the city's residential areas south of College Street.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

This detached, two-story, double family residence has a square plan with flat-roofed attached garages to either side. The frame construction is finished in stucco and the windows are horizontal two-over-two double hung sash. The front entrance vestibule protrudes from the main facade and features a pair of entrances and a balcony on the roof of the entry vestibules. There are two porthole windows above the balcony as well as porthole windows in the two entrance doors. Triple curved pipe railings extend up the concrete steps to each entrance. The balcony rail appears to be strap metal. The axis of the roof is parallel to the street, and the roof is flat.

The only alterations to the building are the seemingly random attachment of some inoperable plastic shutters and the installation of modern anodized aluminum storm doors over the original entrance doors.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Fred Willson Job List: 1944, Job # 4131: "Duplex - Gene Graff"
City Directories: 1933; 1935-6; 1940, p. 132; 1942, pp. 99, 136.

FORM PREPARED BY: James R. McDonald, P.C. (1983-84); Matthew Cohen (1985-86 revision); Patricia Bick (1987 revision), State Historic Preservation Office, 225 No. Roberts, Helena, Montana 59620 (406) 444-7715