

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE IN IDAHO TR)

SITE NAME: Sommer, Morris, House SITE NUMBER: 4

LOCATION: 548 ^{2nd} Street, Weiser, Washington County (178), Idaho 067

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

Sondra Faye Simmons Hawk
3709 Centennial Way
Boise, ID 83706

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Weise South 7.5 minute ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the Morris Sommer House and the property on which it stands, lots 8-10, block 30, Watlington's addition to Weiser. Legal description on file at the Washington County Courthouse, Weiser, Idaho.

UTM(S):

DATE OR PERIOD: 1899

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: good altered original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Morris Sommer House in Weiser is basically a frame L-plan house, with two primary wings facing the streets intersecting at its corner lot; between these two-story gabled wings, however are a slightly inset entry and stair-hall section, approached through a porch covered with a long flared roof flowing down from a truncated hip. A continuation of this roof covers a shallow one-story ell at the rear of the wraparound porch and under the north-facing gable. The east-facing wing has a slightly outset upper story over a curved bay. There is an outset screened porch on the south rear side, and subsidiary second-floor gables emerge on both rear elevations.

The Queen Anne character accomplished by the idiosyncratic roofline is continued in the surface treatment of the house. The upper angles of the tall gables are penetrated by triangular lights. The eaves return with broad strips of bed molding, and centered between them are sash windows with battered heads and elongated, stylized wooden keystones. The upper surfaces are faced with unusual shingle work. Eight horizontal bands of three or four rows of shaped shingles, all but the top two bands separated by single rows of square shingles, utilize four fancy cuts in

an ABCDABCD pattern. The lower edge is flared over the first story, which is shiplap-sided and corner framed. All windows are simple double-hung sash, handsomely grouped. There is a set of three in the side ell, a set of four in the front bay, and a pair of narrow sidelights framing the front door.

The only apparent exterior alteration to this house is the re-siding of the porch walls under their blocky Doric posts. The walls probably were originally shingled to match the upper story; some shingles survive to the left of the steps. The alteration is reversible; it is less conspicuous at present than when the photograph accompanying this form was taken, since the house has been repainted and the porch is no longer in a contrasting color.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Sommer House is architecturally significant as a Weiser example of the frame L-plan house, a familiar rural type, designed by John Tourtellotte in the decorative Queen Anne style. Several later examples of the firm's work can be seen to derive from the house's unusually flowing roof. The roof, elongated over the corner entry porch from a high truncated hip roof, has been described as unique in Idaho, but grouping these resources thematically by architects calls attention to the fact that a similar unusual roof flows down from a lower-pitched ridgebeam between the front- and side-facing dormers of the Wills house in Boise (site 15). The firm used Tourtellotte's device again as late as 1908 for the porch of the Wyman house on Harrison Boulevard.

Morris Sommer was a German immigrant and proprietor of a department store in Weiser. A. J. Jones was the contractor for his house.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Hibbard, Don. Weiser: A Look at Idaho Architecture. Boise: Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, 1978.

(Weiser) Weiser Signal, December 28, 1899, p. 5, c. 2.