

WILLA CATHER THEMATIC GROUP:

WT07-16

82-4972

1. NAME: Miner house
2. LOCATION: 241 No. Seward
4. OWNER: Jennie Miner Reiher
ADDRESS: 241 No. Seward, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

7. DESCRIPTION: Built ca. 1878 by Hugh, and J. L. Miner, this fine, two-story square type frame house features a symmetrical three-bay front facade with entry to the left, or south bay. The identically detailed two-story wing to the south was built in 1885 as was the spacious porch across the front. A low, truncated pyramidal roof with seamed-metal covering, and the paneled, bracketed and dentilled cornice all give the house a distinctive Italianate character. The porch, which has since been enclosed, with its brackets, chamfered posts and sawn-wood arched ornamentation is more eclectic in nature (photos #20, 53).

8. SIGNIFICANCE: The Miner house is significant to the major theme as well as to the architectural sub-theme. Willa Cather's first playmate in Red Cloud was Mary Miner who, according to Mildred Bennett, brought a bottle of perfume in a red plush slipper to welcome the newcomer. Willa became friends with all of the Miner children but especially Carrie. She wrote to Carrie regularly throughout her life and her book My Ántonia is dedicated "To Carrie and Irene Miner, In memory of affections old and true."

Cather used the Miner family as prototypes for the Harling family in My Ántonia. The Miner House was just one block west of the Cather's and it is described in My Ántonia.

" . . . They had been farming people, like ourselves, and their place was like a little farm, with a big barn and a garden, and an orchard and grazing lots—even a windmill." (My Ántonia, p. 147).

"We had jolly evenings at the Harlings' when the father was away. If he was at home, the children had to go to bed early, or they came over to my house to play. Mr. Harling not only demanded a quiet house, he demanded all his wife's attention. He used to take her away to their room in the west ell, and talk over his business with her all evening. Though we did not realize it then, Mrs. Harling was our audience when we played, and we always looked to her for suggestions. Nothing flattered one like her quick laugh.

"Mr. Harling had a desk in his bedroom, and his own easy-chair by the window, in which no one else ever sat. On the nights when he was at home, I could see his shadow on the blind, and it seemed to me an arrogant shadow. Mrs. Harling paid no heed to anyone else if he was there. Before he went to bed she always got him a lunch of smoked salmon or anchovies and beer. He kept an alcohol lamp in his room, and a French coffeepot, and his wife made coffee for him at any hour of the night he happened to want it." (My Ántonia, pp. 156-157).

WT07-16, Continued

"On winter nights, the lights in the Harlings' windows drew me like the painted glass. Inside that warm, roomy house there was colour, too. After supper I used to catch up my cap, stick my hands in my pockets, and dive through the willow hedge as if witches were after me. Of course, if Mr. Harling was at home, if his shadow stood out on the blind of the west room, I did not go in, but turned and walked home by the long way, through the street, wondering what book I should read as I sat down with the two old people." (My Ántonia, pp. 174-175).

Architecturally the Miner house is one of the finest, large historic houses in Red Cloud . Although a more simplified, vernacular interpretation of the Italianate style, the house is the most salient example of the style in Red Cloud. It may have been the first square-type dwelling constructed in town (see Koch: 1881), a type which became increasingly popular in Red Cloud during the latter years of the nineteenth century.

10. GEOGRAPHIC DATA

ACREAGE: Less than one acre
UTM COORDINATE: 14/E540750/N4437380

Verbal Boundary Description: Lots 1-2 and north 20 feet of lot 3, block 21, Original Town of Red Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

WT07-18

82-4923

- 1. NAME: Perkins-Wiener house
- 2. LOCATION: 238 No. Seward
- 4. OWNER: Rosaline Spiegle
ADDRESS: 238 No. Seward, Red Cloud, Nebraska 68970

7. DESCRIPTION: The Perkins-Wiener house, a one-and-one-half story gable-fronted house, was moved from its original site about fifty feet north of the present site, sometime after 1900. The house was built by Edward Perkins in 1882-83 and is a vernacular product, utilizing an early Greek Revival form with some Gothic Revival details, most notably in the kingpost motif of the front gable. A later, Neo-Classically derived porch spans the front facade.

The house was never owned by the Wiener family but they did occupy the house for a year and a half while the Cather's lived in their first house, just across the alley to the east. The Wiener's occupied apartment space above commercial stores for most of their Red Cloud stay. They did, however, move into the Ed Perkins house in May of 1884 while their new apartment was being prepared. They vacated the Perkins house in October of 1885.

8. SIGNIFICANCE: The house occupied by the Wiener's is significant to the major theme of this nomination. Cather's introduction to French literature came about as a result of her friendship with her neighbors, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wiener, a Jewish couple who spoke both German and French.