

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 30 1985

date entered

JUN 27 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Otto J. Hager House

and or common

2. Location

street & number 402 Allamakee St. not for publication

city, town Waukon vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Allamakee code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Thomas and Jean Hansmeier

street & number 1709 Cherry Lane

city, town Cedar Falls vicinity of state Iowa 50613

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Clerk's Office

street & number Allamakee County Courthouse

city, town Waukon state Iowa 52172

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved    date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Otto J. Hager House (1907-08), an example of Prairie School design, was noted Chicago architect Robert Clossen Spencer Jr.'s only Iowa known commission and is representative of what is thought to have been the most innovative period of his long career. Spencer's work stands out among the major practitioners of the Prairie School by virtue of the fact that his work was strongly influenced by the English arts and crafts movement, however this example does not exemplify that influence. The modest house design exemplifies both the Prairie School and Spencer's own design approach. The house is generally well preserved.

This two story rectangular plan measures 69'4" x 38'3" overall. The eastward facing house presents an elongated, low lying brick mass on its public face. The wall plane is visually broken only by the open entry porch and the superimposed chamfered balcony room. The entrance is just off center to the south. Fenestration on the facade is irregular, but is anchored on each end by paired casement windows on both floors. The balcony entry grouping is balanced by the presence of a stepped window stair set to the right. A pair of hipped dormers on the front are vertically aligned with these two central features.

Red Monona brick, of regular dimension, with narrow mortar joints (originally of the same color) was used for the veneered exterior surface. Horizontal mortar joints were raked out. Buff colored Postville limestone was used as a contrasting material. It forms a water table, first floor window sills, terrace copings, a boldly projecting continuous second belt course even with the sill level, chimney copings, and lastly a rich surround on the stair window set. Lastly, stucco covers the front and underside of the balcony and the soffits of the broadly projecting eaves which have nearly a four foot projection.

A rubble stone foundation plan provides footings for terraces and wings around the main plan perimeter. The front terrace entrance, a southwest corner terrace, and an open porch with 2nd floor balcony project from the plan. A half octagonal rear kitchen wing, in line with the entrance on the front, projects to the west and is a key recognizable Prairie School feature. It is fully fenestrated and has a matching half octagonal roof. Two major chimneys, 3' x 8', project through the roof. A centered south end fireplace (partly in wall) services the living room and second story sitting room. A cripple on the roof is necessary since the eaves encircle it. The 2'9" x 4'6" second flue, set perpendicular to the main roofline is square cut, contains four flues, and is fully in wall. It services the heating system and kitchen. Windows on secondary floors are mostly paired or tripled. Two roof dormers are also set on the roof plane.

The recessed entryway leads to a broad single door main entrance. Free standing flaired columns, octagonal in section, with decorative capitals support a masonic exposed wooden beam, which in turn supports two cross beams which support the balcony room above. The balcony stair, underside, and eaves soffits are covered with exterior one inch stucco, with buff colored finial coat, which is based on Cleveland corrugated metal lath (Garry Iron & Steel Co., Cleveland). The tulip motif on the column capitals matches that which is employed in the windows of the main house.

Casement windows glass in the house in classic Prairie School. The vendor is not identified. The main house windows utilize a centered floral tulip pattern. The garage casement window pairs are composed of 12 rectangular lights, with a narrow surround of rectangular lights. The balcony room front features a band of three windows.

The building is borne upon its load bearing foundation, and interior walls, a series of square brick piers, and a series of 8" l beams. Floor joists are predominantly 2" x 10". Steel lintels support each window heading. They frame material is Normandy pine. The

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Continuation sheet Physical Description

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basement has a 4" concrete floor based on 5" of locomotive cinder fill.

The basement houses from south to north a large storeroom, a central furnace room, a two part coal bin with access for furnace and range coal, and a service area (servant's bath, laundry, vegetable room). A dogleg stair in the northwest leads to the kitchen area above. Similarly on the main floor concentrates family areas on the south end of the plan, service areas to the west. Beginning at the west, a large living room (16 x 24) with fireplace has a western exit onto an open terrace. The dining room and hall are separated by a built-in sideboard, the the hall joins with the entrance hall to the east. A butlers pantry, kitchen, and a small square office fill out the plan. The stair hall with a single turn rises alongside an entry hall to the 2nd floor. A bath is tucked beneath the landing. The basement stair contains a dogleg to the 2nd floor. A side porch on the north end connect with the pantry area.

The second floor, from the west contains a sitting room with fireplace (with bath and closets) the main bedroom which occupies the west wing, a small bedroom in the balcony area, a longitudinal hall and two additional bedrooms. A straight round stairs from the center of the plan connect to yet another large attic bedroom, which is lighted by the four dormers.

Halls and stairs and four bedrooms are floored with flat quarter sawed white oak. The trim is flat grained white oak. Remaining trim is poplar. Yellow pine was used for trim in basement and attic, and maple in the attic bedroom floor. The two baths had tile floors (Zanesville mosaic 2" hexagonal vitreous tile), with 4' wainscott of 2 x 6 cream white English tile. The entry porch and terrace are paved with Roman shaped brick, fireplaces are faced with Roman brick with colored mortar.

The interior is plainly adorned. Wood trim is used to create a hall-timber effect indoors in at least the main rooms. The first floor fireplace has an arched wooden casing above it, and the woodwork above this trim meets in a sill with a five part verticle break up of the wall area by trim work. The second floor fireplace has corbelled brick brackets beneath a mantel. Side brick piers are connected by a sill and again vertical trim breaks up the enclosed wall space into three squares. Built-in features originally included are numerous. Three kitchen metal bin drawers, bookshelves, a rangehood, ice door, and speaking tubes which connected service pantry, laundry, maids room and main bedroom. Original metal light fixtures remain.

Undated alterations include the replacement of the original diamond shaped asphalt shingle roof with a slate roof. The exterior brickwork was repainted with the mortar and improperly pointed (horizontal lines not raked). A shed roof porch and sun screen was added to the southeast terrace.

In 1948 a side entrance door was added to the front entrance. The home was converted into four apartments during the Letchford ownership and remains so today. The kitchen became a bedroom, the pantry a bath, the dining room a kitchen breakfast room. The original 2nd floor bedroom is a kitchen, as is the corner bedroom on that level.

Garage The one story garage with loft to west of the property measures 26 x 16 and matches the house in terms of materials, style, and date. Two sets of paired windows pierce each side. The door is reduced in size and is now an overhead door. Side dormers light the loft. The roof is of composition shingles.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600–1699	xx architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
___ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
xx 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1907–08      **Builder/Architect** Robert Clossen Spencer Jr. (Arch.)

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Otto J. Hager House (1907–08), an example of Prairie School design, was noted Chicago architect Robert Clossen Spencer Jr.'s only Iowa known commission and is representative of what is thought to have been the most innovative period of his long career. Spencer's work stands out among the major practitioners of the Prairie School by virtue of the fact that his work was strongly influenced by the English arts and crafts movement, however this example does not exemplify that influence. The modest house design exemplifies both the Prairie School and Spencer's own design approach. The house is generally well preserved.

Robert Clossen Spencer (1865–1953) is considered to have played a central role in the development of the Prairie School movement in the midwest. He entered private practice in Chicago in 1895. Spencer, like his fellows, sought in his own way to "break away from the stylistic merry-go-round of nineteenth-century architecture and to find an experience that was both "personal" and "American."<sup>1</sup> Spencer was attracted by English antecedents and utilized Tudor design components to a greater degree. He combined half timbering, light stucco, dormers, stair tower, dark trim, and rows of casement windows with plans which featured cross axial roofs and wings, broad rectangles and a steep gable roof. He along with Wright experimented with low-lying plans.

Spencer's<sup>1</sup> more creative period is considered to have followed the St. Louis Louisiana Purchase in 1904.<sup>2</sup> Spencer joined in late 1905 in partnership with Horace S. Powers (1872–1928) another notable Chicago based adherent to the Prairie School. Spencer however served as primary designer, with Powers working as office manager. No apparent exterior design changes took place in Spencer's work<sup>3</sup>. Spencer at this time began to author a series of informative house design articles which appeared between 1905–09 in House Beautiful. Spencer, in switching from writing for professional to popular magazines was to serve as a major popularizer of the Prairie School.

Spencer and Powers, Architects, produced plans and specifications for a "Residence For Mr. O. J. Hager To Be Built At Waukon Iowa" dated August 12, 1907. While nothing is known concerning how Mr. Hager selected either architect or style (there was a design competition of sorts between the Hager brothers, but the J. H. Hager House, see below, dates from 1913–14). There is no indication that work on the house began prior to spring 1908. The local paper announced on 12 August of that year "The new O. J. Hager residence has also recently been surrounded with fine walks and curbing."<sup>4</sup> Construction on the house was nearly complete by late December 1908 when the local paper announced "Mr. and Mrs. O. J. Hager have moved into their new home on Allamakee Street, probably the most modern up to date house in the city."<sup>5</sup> The day before, the same paper announced "Mr. and Mrs. O. J. Hager moved into their palatial new home last week in time to partake of their Christmas dinner therein. A portion of the house is still receiving its finishing touches during which they will occupy a few of the rooms only. It will be as handsome a finished home as is to be found anywhere when completed."<sup>6</sup> Hager was a banker and businessman. He lost his wealth during the depression.

The O. J. Hager House fits nicely into the continuum of Spencer's design efforts. His J. August Magnus House (1906), Chicago utilized many of the same components including an

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Waukon

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	6	2	3	9	8	0	4	7	9	2	0	4	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification Lot One and Lot Two of Block Two of the Original Plat of Waukon, except one rod off the north end of Lots One and Two. Contains only house and garage.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Office of Historic Preservation  
Iowa State Historical Department date 29 April 1985

street & number E. 12th & Grand Ave. telephone 515-182-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Towell J. Saitta*

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer date May 9, 1985

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*for Melvyn Byers* Entered in the National Register date 6-27-85  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

Chief of Registration

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Significance

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octagonal tower, hip roof with dormers, a basic rectangular core plan, with cross axial wings, and a juxtaposed chimney placement. A large curved bow window occupied the same relative location as did the balcony in the Hager House. The design differed primarily with overall irregularity in terms of stories and plan, and its use of stucco and half timbering.

Robert Spencer's design for his townhouse, (1905, River Forest, Ill.) produced a compact two story rectangle with hip roof, windowbands, and a 2nd floor string course. It too was fully stuccoed and had slanting corner pieces and chimney base.

H. Allen Brooks considers Spencer's two best works to have been contemporaneous with the Hager House design, all having been executed in the years 1907-08. These works are according to Brooks typified by a 'palladium formality' and an emphasis on balance, not symmetry. These designs are the Edward W. McCready House, Oak Park Ill., (1907), and the John W. Broughton House, River Forest, Ill. (1908). The former most clearly resembles the Hager House (although Brooks acknowledges that the Hager commission was a private design on Spencer's part and is therefore not quite comparable). Spencer had moved by this time to the use of more expensive brick in lieu of stucco for his exteriors. According to Brooks (speaking about the McCready design) "The varied internal requirements are reflected in the fenestration which is carefully ordered and scaled to produce a harmonious effect on the exterior...the doorway...is placed off-center and balanced by the decorative glass windows of the stair and landing. Behind this pavilion the plan of the house seems clear. To the left are the living and dining rooms and to porch; the right is primarily for services..." The McCready house has the identical two story rectangular plan, off center entrance, a strong 2nd story stringcourse, roof dormer, and chimney arrangement. The house is more contemporary in appearance as was the Hager design, this effect being achieved by discarding the half timber look. The Broughton House offers a more complex plan, but utilized the same internal plan scheme, and the same range of component parts including a chimney and terrace scheme with parapet walls which matches those used in the Hager plan.

The Hager house is more modest in its conception by virtue of the use of regular dimension brick in lieu of longer and thinner Roman brick, a simpler overall plan and its very compact size. It retains the requisite range of Spencer's design components, and these are well executed, especially the stair tower and entry way.

After this design period "... the most inventive phase of Spencer's career was nearly over. He had never entirely abandoned English medievalism, and by 1910 the revival of these forms became increasingly pronounced in his work."

Local Context:

One other Prairie School design can be found in Waukon. The house of J. H. Hager, O. J. Hager's brother, 17 4th Avenue N.E., designed by Chicago Prairie School architect George Maher (1864-1926), and constructed 1913-14. Maher's work differs from Spencer in this instance in that the plan is squarish in form, and utilizes a portico entrance. This house has a fully stuccoed exterior, and employs longer window bands and even a picture window or Chicago window grouping.

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Wilson, Richard Guy and Sidney K. Robinson. The Prairie School In Iowa. Ames: The Iowa State University Press, 1977, pp. 23, 126-7.

Brooks, H. Allen. The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright And His Contemporaries. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1972, pp. 29, 31, 33, 37, 58-9, 61, 77, 91, 93-4, 96-8, 122, 195.

Sanborn Insurance Maps, Waukon, Iowa. 1912, 1920, 1920/34, 1920/\_\_\_.

Waukon Standard, 31 December 1908.

Eaton, Leonard K. Two Chicago Architects And Their Clients: Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard Van Doreen Shaw, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 28-9.

Plans and Specifications, "Residence For Mr. O. J. Hager To Be Built At Waukon Iowa." Spencer & Powers Architects, Chicago, August 17, 1907.

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Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Leonard K. Eaton, *Two Chicago Architects And Their Clients: Frank Lloyd Wright and Howard Van Doreer Shaw*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969), pp. 28-9.

<sup>2</sup> H. Allen Brooks, *The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright And His Contemporaries* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1972), p. 91.

<sup>3</sup> ibid., p. 96.

Waukon Standard, 12 August 1908.

ibid., 31 December 1908.

ibid., 30 December 1908.