

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

HISTORIC NAME: Dehn House

COUNTY: LeSueur

CURRENT NAME:

CITY/TWP.: Waterville

LEGAL DESC.: lot B and E $\frac{1}{2}$  of vacated Herbert St. adjoining  
lots A & B and N $\frac{1}{2}$  of vacated alley, Everett's Tetonka  
Lake Addition

ADDRESS: Herbert Street

CLASSIFICATION:	CONDITION:	SIGNIFICANCE:	THEME/S:
Building <u>  X  </u>	Excellent <u>      </u>	Local <u>      </u>	Primary <u>  Art  </u>
Structure <u>      </u>	Good <u>      </u>	State <u>  X  </u>	Secondary <u>      </u>
Object <u>      </u>	Fair <u>  X  </u>	National <u>      </u>	Others <u>      </u>
District <u>      </u>	Deteriorated <u>      </u>		

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: Yes    No   X   Restricted     
 VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD: Yes   X   No     
 OCCUPIED: Yes   X   No   

PRESENT USE:  
Residence

DATE CONSTRUCTED: 1905

ORIGINAL USE: Residence

ORIGINAL OWNER: Arthur Dehn

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Unknown

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS: Dale R. and Debra L. Paulson  
428 N. Herbert Street  
Waterville, Minnesota 56096

ACREAGE: Less than one acre   X  

LOCAL CONTACT/CRG.: LeSueur County Historical Society  
Elysian, MN 56028

UTM REFERENCE:  
Waterville Quad.

FORM PREPARED BY: Britta Bloomberg

15 / 454100 / 4896680

DATE: August 1980

**DESCRIPTION:**

The Dehn House is located at the north end of Herbert Street in northern Waterville, just south of Lake Tetonka. Other residences of similar scale and materials are located in the vicinity. Immediately north of the house and along the lakeshore are several smaller lake cottages.

The two story frame house was constructed in 1905 and is sheathed with narrow clapboard siding painted a deep blue. The house is T-shaped with an intersecting gable roof. The gable ends feature pent roofs and are sheathed with dark brown shingles. Simple white moldings surround the rectangular windows. An enclosed porch is located on the northwest corner of the house.

A frame garage of recent construction is located south of the house.

The house retains significant design integrity. The removal of a one story room on the east side is the major exterior alteration. The interior has been remodeled. (See continuation

**SIGNIFICANCE:** sheet)

The Dehn House is significant for its association with Adolf Dehn, a Minnesota born artist who has gained a reputation as a mid-twentieth century American regionalist. Known especially for his lithographs and watercolors of Minnesota scenes, Dehn was born in Waterville in 1895 and grew up there. He entered the Minneapolis School of Art in 1914 and studied there for three years. After he won a scholarship to the Art Students League, New York City became his principal place of residence, although he travelled extensively throughout his lifetime, spending eight years in Europe during the 1920s and making many extended visits to his hometown of Waterville. Dehn was known during the early years of his career for his satirical drawings and semi-abstract landscapes of exotic places. In the 1930s, after he had returned to the United States, he turned to watercolor, and his paintings of rural scenes, many of the Waterville area, are what he is best known for today. Whereas his earlier work had never been particularly popular in America, his watercolors earned him wide-spread recognition. The Dehn family purchased the Dehn House in 1914, at about the time Adolf began his training in Minneapolis. Although Dehn never permanently resided in the house, he returned there regularly on his numerous visits to Waterville. The building retains close associations with the work of his mid and late career, including his many rural and local scenes. The house remained in the Dehn family until the 1960s; Adolf died in 1968.

(See continuation sheet)

DEHN HOUSE

Waterville, MN  
LeSueur CountyDESCRIPTION (supplement):

A c.1915 photograph (copy attached) of the house shows the enclosed front porch essentially as it appears today. This photograph also shows a one story wing to the east. According to local sources, this wing was removed c.1930s. The dates of some interior remodeling, such as the addition of a bathroom, is unknown; basic interior arrangement and features are intact.

SIGNIFICANCE (supplement):

Adolph Dehn is internationally known as a painter, printmaker, and author of several books on watercolor and lithography. During the first portion of his career, he produced the celebrated satirical lithographs and political drawings which appeared in publications like THE MASSES. Richard Cox, in an article on Dehn which appeared in the Winter 1977 issue of Minnesota History, states "During the formative decades of Dehn's career (1916-1936), his drawings and prints were mostly spoofs of human behavior; later art historians would judge him to be one of the leading satirists of the jazz age." Dehn is also known for his watercolor landscapes, many of Minnesota lakes and farms, which began to appear in the 1930s. These works associated Dehn with the regional subject matter of the "American Scene" painting of the 1930s. He continued to work along both lines throughout his career.

The references in the attached bibliography contain several different perspectives on both facets of Dehn's career. He is represented in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, the Library of Congress, the Whitney Museum of American Art, the Brooklyn Museum, the Chicago Art Institute, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, and the Minnesota Historical Society.

The house on Hubert Street remains the strongest link in Waterville and in Minnesota with Dehn's productive career. Cox's article emphasizes the crucial influence that Dehn's lifelong association with Waterville exerted on most of his work. Dehn spent much of his early career (1921-1929) in Europe, yet Cox writes, "In retrospect, it is clear that Dehn's skepticism and mocking of affectation came not just from his familiarity with the jaded, high-brow society of New York, Vienna, and Berlin but from the tensions of his youth in Minnesota as well ... In only one series of works did Dehn stray far from his Minnesota heritage." After he returned to the United States in 1929, Dehn spent numerous periods at the Waterville family home. The watercolor landscapes he began to produce in the 1930s were often based on the surrounding landscape. Cox concludes "Dehn's love of the lakes, fields, and farms near his home town at first found expression in his letters of the 1920s and early 1930s. In regard to his art, these feelings merely lay dormant until the proper circumstances brought them out in the paintings and prints in the middle of the Great Depression."

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Cohen, Rena, Ph.D., Art History Department, St. Cloud State University, telephone conversation, September 1980.

Cox, Richard W., "Adolf Dehn: The Minnesota Connection," Minnesota History, Spring 1977.

Mitchell, Olivia Dehn, (sister of Adolf Dehn) Woodstock, New York, telephone interview, August 1980.

Zigrosser, Carl, The Artist in America, New York, 1942.

(See continuation sheet)



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DEHN HOUSE

Waterville, MN  
LeSueur County

BIBLIOGRAPHY (supplement):

College Art Association: INDEX OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY ARTISTS, p. 565-6,  
576-7.

Paul Cummings: DICTIONARY OF CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN ARTISTS, p. 109.

Una Johnson: AMERICAN PRINTS AND PRINTMAKERS, pp. 24, 41, 51-54, etc.

Daniel M. Mendelowitz: A HISTORY OF AMERICAN ART, second edition, p. 467.

Carl Zigrosser: THE ARTIST IN AMERICA, 16-23.

MnSHPO  
Sept. 1982

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

for Keeper Melvin Lyman  
1/19/89

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Note: These changes apply to  
Dehn House in LeSueur County,  
Minnesota.**

**REFERENCE NUMBER:** 82000561

**STATE:** MINNESOTA

**COUNTY:** LeSueur

**RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC):** Dehn, Arthur, House

**CITY:**

**VICINITY OF:**

**ADDRESS:**

**CERTIFICATION DATE:**

**REMOVED DATE:**

**COMMENTS:**

*Nina M. Archabal*  
**Nina M. Archabal**  
**State Historic Preservation Officer**

JUN 17 1988  
**Date**