

**United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Isermann, Frank and Jane, House  
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number	6500 Seventh Avenue	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Kenosha	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Kenosha	code 59 zip code 53143

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_ nationally statewide  locally. (\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Alvina L. Cochrane*  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
December 30, 2003  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_ meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Isermann, Frank and Jane, House

Kenosha

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

*Ethan H. Beall*

2/25/04

*per*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as  
as apply)

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

building(s)

district

structure

site

object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources  
in the count)

contributing      noncontributing

1                      1 buildings

   sites

   structures

   objects

1                      1 total

**Name of related multiple property listing:**  
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property  
listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources  
is previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Prairie School

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation concrete

walls      brick

roof      asphalt

other      wood

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Frank and Jane Isermann House, built in 1923, is a two-story, Prairie Style building which sits on a very narrow and deep corner lot in a dense urban residential neighborhood in Kenosha, a medium-sized community located in the far southeastern corner of Wisconsin. Kenosha is located on the shores of Lake Michigan and is served by several transportation links. Several state highways run through the city along north and south or east and west routes. About 10 miles west of the heart of the city is Interstate Highway 94, which is a heavily traveled highway between Milwaukee and Chicago. The city is also served by a popular Metra commuter train that runs from Milwaukee to Chicago. The ease of transportation to and from the Chicago area has resulted in the considerable expansion of Kenosha's suburban areas during the last decade as more and more commuters have opted to live in Kenosha, rather than the Chicago suburbs.

The historic city of Kenosha radiates north, south, and west of the downtown commercial district, which sits only a few blocks from the Lake Michigan shoreline. Dense historic residential neighborhoods surround the city's downtown and consist of a mix of large, medium, and small houses. As the city expanded during the twentieth century, new residential neighborhoods were developed largely with small houses on small lots. And, most of the large lots in the older neighborhoods were subdivided and filled in with similar small houses. This was a result of Kenosha's dominant industrial economy during the late nineteenth and all of the twentieth century, an economy that relied on factory workers who could not afford large houses. This trend continued into the post-World War II era, with large subdivisions of small homes dominating new areas attached primarily to the south and west sides of the city.

The most prominent residential historic neighborhoods in Kenosha were developed just south of the downtown and southeast of the downtown along the lakeshore. Two of these neighborhoods have been included in historic districts listed in the National Register of Historic Places; the Third Avenue Historic District and the Library Park Historic District. These districts contain the largest and most prominent historic residential areas of the city. In the near future, two additional historic districts that lie further south of these areas will be completed. The proposed Lakeside Historic District is an extension of the Third Avenue Historic District, only with slightly smaller homes. The proposed Allendale Historic District sits just west of the proposed Lakeside Historic District and consists of middle-class, Period-Revival houses all built primarily in the 1920s and early 1930s.

In between the proposed Allendale Historic District and the Library Park Historic District is another historic residential neighborhood. It contains a combination of small, medium, and large houses built between the mid-nineteenth century and the 1930s. During the nineteenth century, the neighborhood's houses generally sat on medium to large size lots. During the early twentieth century, many of the large lots were subdivided and lots were filled in with Bungalow, Craftsman, and Period Revival style houses. The result was that by World War II, this

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neighborhood had developed into a dense mixture of small to large houses on small to medium-sized lots. The expansion of the Kenosha Hospital has encroached into the northeastern part of the neighborhood, and the change of many of the large houses from single-family dwellings to apartment houses has had an effect on the historic integrity of the neighborhood. Although the neighborhood, as a whole, has not retained enough integrity to be looked at as an historic district, there are many fine historic homes within its boundaries. Among these fine historic homes are two Prairie Style houses along Seventh Avenue. This nomination is concerned with one of these houses, the Frank and Jane Isermann House.

The 6000 block of Seventh Avenue, like much of the rest of the neighborhood, is dense. In fact, this house and its Prairie Style neighbor sit very close to each other. Because this house sits on a corner lot, it appears to have a more spacious site than its neighbor. The narrow appearance of the lots for the two Prairie Style houses belies the fact that they both have very deep lots with relatively spacious back yards. Their lots run across the entire block from Seventh to Eighth Avenue. Each of the lots is long enough for generous backyards with space for large, modern garages.

The Frank and Jane Isermann House has a set back that is similar to the houses along the street, creating a small front yard. The house and its front yard are raised from the street, which is improved with concrete curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. A narrow terrace sits between the street and the sidewalk. A large tree sits in the terrace in front of the entrance sidewalk. The front yard is raised and supported by a short fieldstone retaining wall. A set of concrete steps leads up to the raised yard from the sidewalk. The retaining wall was probably added at a later date when the street may have been widened. A much higher and sloped retaining wall spans the entire side of the lot. This wall ends in a wide concrete sidewalk on this side of the house.

Another landscape feature of this house is a mature hedge that runs in front of the house by the retaining wall and along the side and rear of the house. Along the side and rear of the house, the hedge is much taller, creating a screen that obscures a wooden privacy fence that runs around the side and back of the property. Because this house sits on a corner lot, it also has a narrow side yard between the house and the hedge.

Several mature trees and many mature shrubs decorate the front and side yards and the foundation of the house. Between this house and its neighbor to the north, the small area of land is paved. The deep back yard is landscaped with both medium and very large sized mature deciduous trees and an abundance of shrubs. The yard has a large area of mature lawn and a number of large planting beds, primarily on the edges of the yard and near the house. The planting beds feature trees, shrubs, and perennials. A number of shrubs decorate the modern garage in the northwest corner of the lot. This two-car garage building features a hip roof,

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vertical board siding, and a very large garage door that faces Eighth Avenue. A wide concrete driveway leads from the street to the garage. The garage is a non-contributing element of the property. The large hedgerow abuts the garage, as does the privacy fence. There is a tree that sits in the terrace between the sidewalk and Eighth Avenue, as well, and some small shrubs near the garage foundation.

*Exterior*

The Frank and Jane Isermann House consists of a long, rectangular, two-story main block with a small one story ell projecting from the center of the south wall. The entire house is covered with a veneer of hard-fired brown brick laid in common bond. The brick walls of the main block are accented with a concrete belt course that defines the upper quarter of the building. Large concrete lintels and sills accent many of the building's openings, as well. The main block sits on a poured concrete foundation and features a low-pitched hip roof with very wide overhanging eaves.

The main elevation of the main block features window bands accented by shallow brick pilasters. The set of three centrally located openings of the first story extend down to the foundation. They are filled with tall single panes that sit on wood panels. These windows suggest "French" style doors that make up an entrance into the building. These three windows are flanked by two very narrow casements that suggest sidelights. In front of these windows is a small terrace defined by a balustrade of short brick piers topped with a concrete ledge. Near the house are two built-in brick planters with concrete ledges. The balustrade and small terrace suggests a front porch for the street facade. Above the concrete belt course on this elevation is the second story window bank that features five sets of paired casements accented by the brick pilasters.

The north elevation of the house is quite close to the neighboring property. This elevation features a plain brick wall punctuated with various openings. On the first story, the openings consist of several small rectangular windows and a side entry door that is covered with a period wood and glass storm door. The second story features two other small rectangular openings and a larger tripartite opening. Several small openings punctuate the concrete foundation on this elevation.

The rear elevation of the house also has a plain brick wall punctuated by openings, in this case, larger openings set together to suggest window bands. The upper story features two sets of paired casements. One set is in the north half of the rear elevation, while the other is at the southwest corner and meets up with another set of casements that sit on the south elevation. The first story has a set of three smaller casements at the north end that correspond to the openings of the kitchen. At the southwest corner of the first story are two sets of taller casements that sit on a

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concrete belt course that wraps around to the south elevation of the main block. Also on the rear elevation are small openings in the foundation that light the basement.

The south elevation of the main block is much more decorative than its counterpart on the north. The projecting one-story ell sits toward the southwest corner of this elevation and only covers a small amount of the wall. At about the middle of the south elevation there is a two-story square brick bay. On the second story of the bay there is a window band of casements that runs across the entire surface of the bay. On the first story of the bay there is a large tripartite opening. Shallow pilasters flanking narrow casements on both the first and second stories decorate the wall of the south elevation that sits east of the bay. To the west of the bay is the projecting ell. Above the ell are the set of paired casements at the southwest corner of the second story and an additional casement near the bay. The casements in the bay and flanking it on the second story create a long window band on this elevation.

Flanking the projecting ell on the first story of the south elevation are openings. To the west of the ell is a single casement window. To the east of the ell is the main entrance into the house. This entrance consists of a wood and glass door covered with a period wood storm door. Flanking the entrance are narrow sidelights. The one-story projecting ell features a hip roof with wide overhanging eaves. It has a continuous band of windows running around the eaves around the three exposed sides of the ell. This window band features wide casements. On the rear or west elevation of the ell, the window band stops before reaching the south elevation of the main block for an entrance that is filled with a wood and glass door covered by a modern storm door. On the east elevation of the ell is a set of concrete steps that leads to a landing. A large brick pier with urn sits to the south of this set of steps. The landing sits in front of the main entrance. In back of the ell is a small wooden deck that leads into the back yard.

*Interior, first floor*

The main entrance into the house is a foyer that has entrances into the sunroom of the projecting ell and into the main hallway of the first floor of the house. The entry door and sidelights feature inserts of modern stained glass panels, a detail that is used extensively throughout the house. These modern stained glass panels feature Prairie Style motifs and are artistically executed, but are not original to the house. The foyer has a red tile floor, a large closet with plain wood doors, and plaster wall surfaces and ceiling accented by plain wood trim. Brick piers accent this area of the house, as well. On the ceiling of the foyer is a light fixture that consists of four mica panels within a wood frame. It is attached directly to the ceiling.

To the left of the foyer is the entrance into the sunroom. Across from this opening is the door leading to the rear yard. The sunroom has a red tile floor like the foyer and some features that

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occur throughout the first floor of the house. For example, the wall surfaces have the original plaster finish and doors and windows are trimmed with plain boards stained a golden color. There are also wide, but plain baseboards trimming the floor. A very narrow decorative wood border spans the entire ceiling. At the center of the ceiling is a light fixture, also a box formed of mica panels in a wood frame. It is attached to the ceiling by its framing posts. Along the south wall of the sunroom, below the window band is a long, short, cast iron radiator covered with an enclosure featuring a wood ledge and panels of wood slats.

A set of "French" style doors with multiple light sidelights separates the sun room from the dining room. The doors have eight lights each and are stained the same golden color as the woodwork. A set of similar doors without the sidelights is attached to brick piers across from the main entrance to the house. These doors provide an enclosure for the foyer from the rest of the house. French style doors with larger sidelights span the entrance between the dining room and the main hallway, across from which is the living room. Just south of these doors are two piers with a cast iron radiator set in between. The radiator fills about half of the space, leaving an opening between the dining room and the foyer. The radiator was enclosed with a wood ledge and panels of wood slats, but the wood slats are missing due to deterioration and are waiting to be restored. Many of the other radiator enclosures of the first floor have already been replaced due to deterioration, but they were replicated exactly as the originals so that the replacements can be only minimally distinguished from the originals.

The light fixtures of the dining room include wall fixtures and a central ceiling fixture. The wall fixtures are similar to wall fixtures seen elsewhere in the house. They were designed to match the Prairie Style of the exterior. The fixtures have a narrow rectangular box shape with wood frame construction and opaque cream colored mica panels. Wood tops extend slightly over the mica panels and the upper sections of the side panels are decorated with wood slats. The wood frames of the side panels extend slightly beyond the end of the panels. The front panels are undecorated and extend by about one-third past the side panels.

The ceiling fixture is large and more elaborately detailed. The box-shaped fixture hangs from the ceiling by four short and narrow wood posts. The bulk of the fixture consists of four mica panels encased in narrow wood frames that create the box. Between the panels, the posts attaching the fixture to the ceiling extend down almost to the ends of the panels and are decorated with square pieces of wood and knobs. Topping the mica box are four panels of wood slats that sit under a "roof" or top made up of a flat piece of wood that extends over the top of the rest of the fixture.

The wall surfaces and the wood trim around the doors, windows, and baseboards of the dining room are identical to those in the sunroom. The ceiling has its original plaster, as well, along with the decorative ceiling molding seen in the sunroom. Added to this room, though, is a wide

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picture rail and the floor is covered with narrow oak boards. A cast iron radiator sits along the west wall of the dining room. It is enclosed with panels of wood slats (replaced) and is topped with a wooden ledge. Along the north wall of the dining room is another architectural feature, a built-in buffet cabinet that is recessed into the wall. The cabinet has a plain wood top, two long top drawers and four smaller central drawers flanked by two recessed panel doors. The doors and drawers have square wood knobs, a detail that is repeated along the baseboard at the bottom of the cabinet. An attached wall mirror sits above the cabinet.

Although the general outline of the kitchen is still extant, it has been significantly remodeled. The original built-in cabinets along the west and north walls were replaced a number of years ago with modern built-ins and these replacements were recently replaced with wood cabinets that reflect the architectural design of the interior. The birch wood cabinets have a Craftsman influence with modern metal door and drawer handles. The countertops are constructed of modern Corian material. The walls and ceilings of this room have been almost all replaced with modern drywall and the floor in the kitchen is recent. It is a laminated floor called "Uniboard," that consists of large square tongue and groove panels that fit together, in this case, in a pattern that looks like large tiles.

Along the south wall of the kitchen is another area of built-in modern cabinets and a counter; an eating island projects from the east wall of the kitchen. At the northeast corner of the kitchen is the entrance into the basement staircase. At the southeast corner of the kitchen is a short hallway that leads back into the main hallway of the floor. Along this hallway is a large closet that was an original pantry for the kitchen. Across from this pantry is a small half bathroom that has been extensively remodeled with modern fixtures and materials.

Spanning the entire east half of the main block is the living room which is sunken two steps lower than the rest of the first floor. Like the dining room, the living room has plaster walls and ceilings, plain wood trim around doors and windows, and a narrow border decorating the ceiling. The living room has a wide picture rail, several wall light fixtures like those in the dining room and its floor also is covered with narrow wood flooring. There is a long built-in bench with slatted panels that enclose short cast iron radiators. A wood slat enclosure covers a larger radiator at the northwest corner of the living room. It is attached to a built-in bookcase that is original to the room.

The dominant feature of the living room is the massive projecting fireplace constructed of brown brick. The brick rises to the level of the picture rail and extends down to surround the firebox. A shallow concrete mantel shelf projects from the brick walls of the fireplace that sit on a concrete foundation that extends to form a shelf at the base. The original firebox is extant and covered



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with a screen and the hearth is covered with the same red clay tiles seen in the foyer and sunroom.

*Interior, second floor*

A partially enclosed two-run staircase leads to the second story. A landing between the two runs is lighted with a large opening consisting of a large single pane window flanked by narrower casements, all with modern stained glass inserts. At the top of the staircase is a large cast iron radiator enclosed with panels of wood slats and topped with a ledge that also tops the staircase's enclosed balustrade.

The second floor consists of four bedrooms, a full bathroom, and a central hallway. The floors of the entire second story are covered with carpeting and all of the rooms have plaster ceilings and walls and all of the trim is original. The plain trim is similar to that of the first floor and includes a wide picture rail that spans the entire hallway and all of the bedrooms. The rooms and closets of the second story are covered with single recessed panel wood doors with period hardware. Each bedroom also has one or more of the wall light fixtures seen on the first floor and small cast iron radiators that are enclosed with benches like those of the living room or larger radiators enclosed with wood slat panels.

Also on the second floor is the full bathroom. The bathroom has some original details and some details from more recent remodeling. The walls of the room are covered with original ceramic tiles that replicate the bricks of the house walls. A modern tile floor is a later addition, as is the vanity and tub enclosure. However, the tub itself has vintage fixtures. The original details include a cast iron radiator that is not enclosed.

*Basement*

The basement of this house is divided into two sections; about two-thirds of the basement is finished recreational space, while the other one-third is an unfinished workshop. The recreational space is currently undergoing a remodeling effort. The stairs from the kitchen lead into the recreational space that includes several rooms or areas, including a den or sitting room, a raised hot tub area, a bathroom, a small laundry room, and a small workshop. These spaces are finished with modern dry wall surfaces along with carpeted and tiled floors. The remainder of the basement consists of a large workshop and old root cellar that has a cement floor.

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1923

**Significant Dates**

1923

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Williamson, Russell Barr

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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The Frank and Jane Isermann House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C, architecture, because it is locally significant as a fine example of Prairie Style architecture. The house is one of two side-by-side examples of the Prairie Style, both being the best examples of the style in the city. The significance of the house is also derived from its architect, Russell Barr Williamson, an important Wisconsin designer during the early and mid-twentieth century. Williamson worked briefly with Frank Lloyd Wright and Wright's architectural influence would remain with Williamson throughout his career. This house and its neighbor, also designed by Williamson, are the work of a master architect who practiced primarily in a progressive style throughout his career.

**AREA OF SIGNIFICANCE: ARCHITECTURE<sup>1</sup>**

The Isermann Clothing Store was a long-time and prominent commercial business in downtown Kenosha during the twentieth century. When Anthony and Caroline Isermann decided to build a new house next door to this house, they chose a progressive architect, Russell Barr Williamson, to design a home that would be distinctive in the neighborhood and in the community. Their Prairie Style home was completed in 1922, and in the next year Williamson completed this house for Frank and Jane Isermann. The houses stood out in the neighborhood of Italianate, Queen Anne, and Period Revival houses for their unusual style, fine construction materials and methods, and modern appearance.

The Prairie Style was an architectural style that grew out of the Midwest. A group of progressive architects led by Frank Lloyd Wright, George Grant Elmslie, and George W. Maher developed the Prairie School of architecture in early twentieth century Chicago. Trained by earlier progressive architects Louis Sullivan and Joseph Silsbee, these and other architects developed an architectural style that emphasized horizontal lines by the use of low pitched hip or gable roofs with wide overhanging eaves, banded windows, emphatic belt courses, and the use of natural materials. Like the Craftsman Style, simplicity, minimal architectural details, and respect for materials are common elements of the Prairie Style. The style was popular in Wisconsin between 1900 and 1925. Although Frank Lloyd Wright was the most famous and important architect of the style, several Wisconsin architects added to its development.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The source for the date of construction of this house and its architect was from historic survey and landmark nomination information on file in the Office of City Development, Municipal Building, City of Kenosha, Wisconsin. The period of significance for this property coincides with the date of construction of the house.

<sup>2</sup> Barbara Wyatt, ed., *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. II*, Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Architecture, p. 2-21.

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The Isermann house is a fine example of one of the variations of the Prairie Style that features a symmetrical form and massing, a hip roof, and an entrance located to the side of the building. This variation of the style has a generally rectangular form and balanced features, as opposed to other Prairie Style variations, which emphasize asymmetry, multiple levels, and gable or hip roofs. The rectangular plan of the main block of the Isermann house is symmetrical, even though it features a projecting ell on only one elevation. The size and placement of the ell, though, is slightly asymmetrical, as it is not in scale with the main block.

Other details of this house are typical of the Prairie Style. The low-pitched hip roof with wide overhanging eaves gives the house a horizontal emphasis, as do the window bands located in the upper section of the main block. The brick pilasters with the narrow casements set in between is a detail seen in many Prairie Style houses, as well.

The interior of this house is equally important as an element of the Prairie Style. Interiors of Prairie Style homes were meant to flow together, with one room leading gracefully into the next in the public areas of the house. This is achieved in this house primarily by the use of large openings between rooms that are covered with the French style doors and sidelights. The use of these doors between the foyer, sunroom, and dining room, is a way the architect defined these spaces while maintaining the feeling of an open plan.

The architectural details of the interior also add to its fine interpretation of the Prairie Style. The simple wood trim, used elaborately throughout, along with details like light fixtures, add to the overall Prairie Style of the building. In particular, the plain picture rails and the decorative ceiling moldings give the main rooms of the first floor a horizontal emphasis. The built-in radiator benches and enclosures, the built-in bookcase in the living room, and the built-in dining room cabinet are fine Craftsman Style details that add to the interior's architectural significance. The massive brick fireplace in the living room is another typical and high-quality detail often used in Prairie Style homes. The simple brick walls and concrete mantel are common, but high quality details that make many Prairie Style houses distinctive, and it was a detail that Williamson used in most of his Prairie house designs.

That the Isermann house is a fine example of the Prairie Style can be attributed to its architect, Russell Barr Williamson. Williamson was influenced by the style as an architecture student during the late 1910s, and this influence reached its peak during Williamson's three-year employment with the master of the style, Frank Lloyd Wright. Many of the design elements Williamson used during the 1920s reflect elements of buildings he worked on with Wright during the late 1910s. This house, and its neighbor, the Anthony and Caroline Isermann House, were Williamson designs during his peak work in the Prairie Style. They have many of the features of his other Prairie Style houses, yet are not carbon copies of any particular building.

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Russell Barr Williamson was, like Wright, a product of the Midwest. He was born in 1893 in Indiana and was raised on a farm near Princeton, Kansas. In 1909, Williamson entered Kansas State University with an initial interest in working for the forest service. He took sculpture classes at the university and changed his interest to art and, eventually, architecture. During the summer of 1913, Williamson went to Chicago and studied at the Art Institute. During this time, he undoubtedly became familiar with the work of the progressive Chicago architects. Before he received his degree in 1914, he wrote both Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright seeking employment. Wright hired him to work in his Chicago office and by 1915 Williamson had progressed to the role of supervising architect for some of Wright's projects in Milwaukee.<sup>3</sup>

After Williamson's marriage to Nola Mae Hawthorne in 1916, the couple moved to one of the houses on Wright's estate at Taliesin. In 1916 and 1917, Williamson was Wright's chief assistant for the Imperial Hotel project in Japan and was the supervising architect on all of Wright's Milwaukee work, most importantly Wright's Bogk House, a seminal work that would influence Williamson for many years to come. The unstable financial and working conditions of Wright and his unconventional lifestyle caused Williamson and his wife to leave Taliesin in 1917. The Williamsons returned to Kansas, where Russell Barr established a solo practice in Kansas City.<sup>4</sup>

Williamson did not thrive in Kansas City due to the onset of World War I, but he did win fourth prize and some note for a Prairie Style vacation home design submitted to the White Pine architectural contest in 1918. He also received a commission to design a roundhouse building for the Pennsylvania Railroad in Logansport, Indiana. In 1919, Williamson decided that his prospects were better in Wisconsin, particularly in Milwaukee, where he was known from working on Wright's projects in that city. The family moved to Milwaukee in that year, beginning a productive period for the architect that would last throughout the 1920s.<sup>5</sup>

In Milwaukee, Williamson worked with Arthur L. Richards, president of the short-lived American Systems Built Homes, to design small and medium-sized houses. But, his most prolific work was individual designs for residences in the Milwaukee area, most of which were Prairie Style houses or Prairie-influenced houses. He also worked in the Period Revival styles, particularly the Mediterranean Revival style, where he could use some of his Prairie Style elements with Mediterranean motifs. His work on Wright's Bogk House influenced many of his

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<sup>3</sup> Russell Barr Williamson, Jr., *Russell Barr Williamson—Architect*, Hot Springs, North Carolina: The Barr Brand, 2000, pp. 1-3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-6.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-10.

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Prairie Style designs during the 1920s. He used variations of the Bogk House form and massing and its details in many of the houses he designed, including the two Prairie Style houses in Kenosha. But, a comprehensive review of his work during this decade shows that while he was influenced by the Bogk House design, he did not slavishly repeat its elements in all of this work. He used other popular Prairie Style details and motifs to create distinctive and creative buildings.<sup>6</sup>

Architectural historians who have studied Williamson's work in Milwaukee during this period have noted some common forms in his designs. Williamson worked extensively with square plans, but often added asymmetrical wings. He used window bands in his Prairie houses and they were often accented with piers, sometimes with concrete caps or twisted columns in his Mediterranean Revival houses. He commonly used entrances in the side of houses and almost always used hip roofs in both his Prairie and Mediterranean Revival designs. His choice of materials and colors were similar to Wright's, and he seemed to prefer to use brick veneers and concrete details.<sup>7</sup>

The Great Depression of the 1930s and World War II almost ruined Williamson's practice when he had few commissions. One notable work came at the end of the 1930s, the Prospect Avenue Apartment Building in Milwaukee. He designed temporary housing during World War II, in particular the housing units at the Army munitions plant near Baraboo, Wisconsin. He designed similar housing in Fargo, North Dakota. In the late 1940s, Williamson was involved in efforts to provide quick, economical post-war housing in the United States and in Europe, but these efforts were generally failures. During the 1950s, though, Williamson's practice was revived and he built a series of distinctive contemporary homes in Wisconsin that had similarities to the type of work that Frank Lloyd Wright was doing during this period. These fine contemporary homes capped off Williamson's career. He died in 1964.<sup>8</sup>

The Frank and Jane Isermann house is typical of the work that Williamson was designing during the 1920s. It is also one of his designs that more closely resembles the Bogk House that so influenced his design style. The front elevation is a simplified version of the Bogk House, but it is not an exact copy. The entire house uses common Prairie Style motifs that appear in many of Williamson's other work during this period. It is a well proportioned and distinctive home, that uses a high quality of materials and workmanship, and most importantly, has a high quality of design. Russell Barr Williamson's work during the twentieth century places him in the category

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 4, "The Years of the Prairie Homes," pp. 19-50.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon R. Birt, "Russell Barr Williamson A List of His Works 1919-1945," unpublished Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1999, pp. v-vi.

<sup>8</sup> Williamson, pp. 51-118.

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of master architect in Wisconsin. His broad range of work in the Prairie and Mediterranean Revival styles during the 1920s, and his post-World War II contemporary works show that he was a progressive architect who expanded the boundaries of traditional architecture. His works add to the works of other progressive architects in twentieth century Wisconsin to create an important body of work that makes the state architecturally distinctive.

The Isermann house is architecturally significant as a fine and locally significant example of the Prairie Style designed by a master architect. It is one of two important Prairie Style houses in Kenosha, sitting side-by-side along Seventh Avenue. Its architect, Russell Barr Williamson, was a master of the Prairie Style during the 1920s and his Milwaukee work is considered the best Prairie style work in that city. The Isermann house is among the best of Williamson's 1920s Prairie houses, with distinctive architectural features. Its historic integrity is high, with much of its details intact. Only the kitchen interior has been extensively remodeled. Because of its unusual historic design, its high quality of materials and workmanship and its high integrity, the Isermann house is an important architectural landmark in the city of Kenosha.

Isermann, Frank & Jane, House  
Name of Property

Kenosha  
County and State

Wisconsin

### 9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 432800 4713810  
Zone Easting Northing

3 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

2 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

4 \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Carol Lohry Cartwright, Consultant	date	12/8/02
organization	prepared for the City of Kenosha	telephone	262-473-6820
street & number	W7646 Hackett Rd.	zip code	53190
city or town	Whitewater	state	WI



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**MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Birr, Gordon R. "Russell Barr Williamson A List of His Works 1919-1945." Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1999.

City of Kenosha Landmark Nomination Form for the Anthony and Caroline Isermann House, June, 1996; on file in the Office of City Development, Municipal Building, Kenosha, Wisconsin.

Williamson, Russell Barr Jr. *Russell Barr Williamson—Architect*. Hot Springs, North Carolina: The Barr Brand, 2000.

Wyatt, Barbara, ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, Vol. II*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The Frank and Jane Isermann House sits on a rectangular parcel with the dimensions of 161.06 feet by 50 feet. Its boundary is the same as the legal description: Commencing 63 rods and  $\frac{1}{2}$  feet south of the southeast corner of Lot 16, Lyman's Subdivision, then south 50 feet, then west to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, then north 50 feet, then east to the place of beginning.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

This boundary consists of the legal description of the property and it has been the historic enclosure of the Isermann house since its construction date.

Isermann, Frank and Jane, House  
Name of Property

Kenosha  
County and State

Wisconsin

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional Items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

<b>name/title</b>	Robert Enstad	<b>date</b>	12/8/02
<b>organization</b>		<b>telephone</b>	262-658-0050
<b>street&amp;number</b>	6500 Seventh Avenue	<b>zip code</b>	53143
<b>city or town</b>	Kenosha	<b>state</b>	WI

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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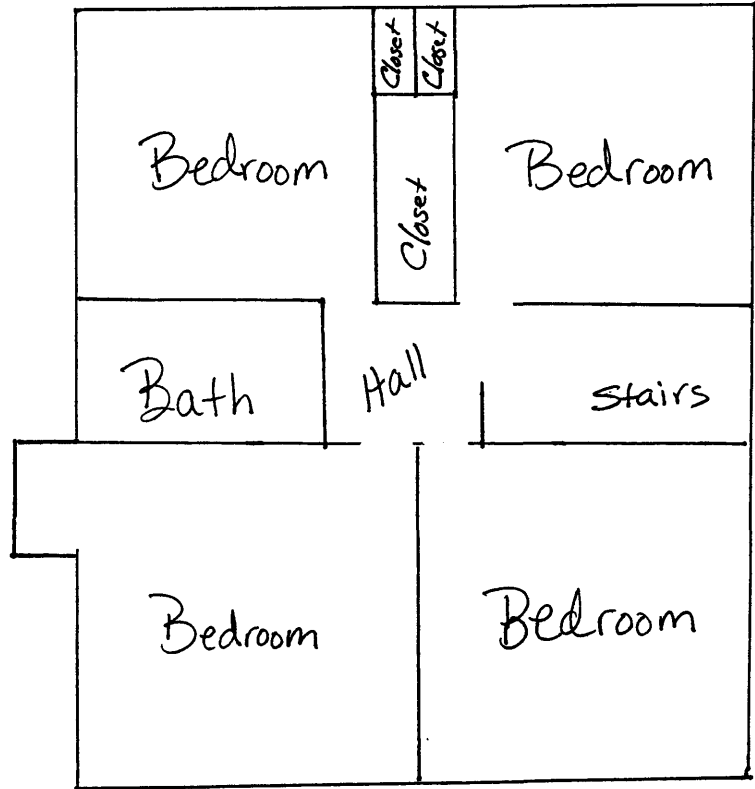
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**ISERMANN, FRANK AND JANE, HOUSE** Kenosha, Kenosha County, WI. Photos by C. Cartwright, September, 2002. Negatives on file in the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin. Views:

- 1 of 17: Site view, from the southeast.
- 2 of 17: Main or east elevation, from the southeast.
- 3 of 17: South ell, from the east.
- 4 of 17: North elevation, from the northeast.
- 5 of 17: Rear or west elevation, from the west.
- 6 of 17: Main entrance, from the southeast.
- 7 of 17: Interior, first floor, from living room looking toward foyer.
- 8 of 17: Interior, first floor, dining room.
- 9 of 17: Interior, first floor, wall light fixture, seen throughout the house.
- 10 of 17: Interior, living room.
- 11 of 17: Interior, living room, showing built-in bookcases.
- 12 of 17: Interior, living room, showing fireplace.
- 13 of 17: Interior, second floor, hallway looking toward east bedrooms.
- 14 of 17: Interior, second floor, interior of southeast bedroom.
- 15 of 17: Interior, second floor, interior of southeast bedroom.
- 16 of 17: Interior, second floor, interior of southwest bedroom.
- 17 of 17: Interior, second floor, bathroom, showing original tile walls.

ISERMANN, FRANK AND JANE, HOUSE  
Kenosha, Kenosha County, Wisconsin

Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan

