

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1323

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NOV 11 2007

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 any 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 Albert and Lina Stenger House

Other names/site number PT01-397

2. Location

Street & number 815 Lovers Lane

Not for publication

City or town Columbus

Vicinity

State Nebraska

Code NE

County Platte

Code 141

Zip code 68601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Michael J. [Signature]
Signature of certifying official

Nov. 7, 2007
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beall 12-27-07

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Albert and Lina Stenger House

Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
	1	Structures
		Objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

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.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/ Prairie School

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete

Walls Brick

Roof Clay tile

Other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for 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.
X 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 a 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1907

Significant Dates

1907

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Glur Cement Works, builder

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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 for additional data:

- X State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

Albert and Lina Stenger House

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	639039	4586055	3.			
2.				4.			
				[]	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 Jill E. Dolberg/ Historic Buildings Survey Coordinator

organization Nebraska State Historical Society

Date July 6, 2007

street & number 1500 R Street/ Box 82554

telephone (402) 471-4773

city or town Lincoln

State Nebraska zip code 68501-2554

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Frank and Karen Loomer

street & number 815 Lovers Lane

telephone (402) 563-2295

city or town Columbus

State Nebraska zip code 68601

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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This Prairie style residence is a rectangular shaped, two story iron-fired brick structure with a clay-tile hipped roof with a hipped dormer on the front façade. The house has quoins made of a darker color brick on each of the building's corners. It has a brick and concrete foundation. The façade contains a central entrance with four foot wide, twenty-light door encapsulated by a segmentally arched sidelight and transom of diamond-paned, leaded glass. The porch wraps around the north and east elevations of the house. The one-story hipped porch roof covers only a portion of the north or main façade, and is supported in the two corners by three substantially built square brick columns. Twelve foot wide steps of concrete lead to the porch, which is also made of concrete. It has a closed rail of brick, topped with a section of limestone. On the east elevation, a portion of the original porte cochere remains intact, overhanging a portion of the wraparound porch, and providing a second floor balcony off the sun room. A second bay used to extend further east, but was apparently removed sometime in the recent past, as it existed in Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey photographs from 1996. There are two chimneys on the house. One is located on the west elevation and serves the fireplace in the library; the other served the kitchen in the back of the house.

The majority of the windows in the Stenger House are one-over-one, double-hung windows, arranged singly or occasionally in pairs. The most elaborate windows are the large fixed pane windows that are found on the two front rooms on the first floor that have diamond-paned, leaded glass transoms like the sidelights and transom around the front door. In addition, there are two fixed windows with diamond paned glass that are placed on either side of the fireplace in the library on the first floor inside the front door. These windows also mimic the doors to some built-in cabinets on either side of the fireplace in this room as well. On the second floor under the dormer, there is a tripartite window with a center fixed window with diamond-paned glass in a small portion above, and a double-hung window on either side.

Upon entering the house through the front door, the entrant finds themselves in a large entry hall with doorways into the library to the right, the dining room further to the back and to the right, a parlor to the left, and a hallway further back and to the left. A stairway directly across from the front door provides access to the second story. Hardwood floors grace the entire house. On the first floor, the entry hall, library and the dining room all have boxed beams.

The library is accessed through a colonnade of elaborate square fluted columns with ionic volutes and an egg and dart motif. At the time it was photographed, one of the capitals was being repaired so it appears to be missing, but it is still present on the property. The library features an elaborate round-arched red brick fireplace with a brick mantle. Both sides are flanked by china cabinets with diamond-paned, leaded glass doors. Original sconces grace the walls on either side of the fireplace. A doorway inside the library leads to the dining room. The doorway features a broad two-panel, pocket door.

Opposite the library, the parlor sits arrayed in mahogany. This room can be separated from the entry hall from another pocket door; however this one is oak on the side that faces out, and mahogany on the inside. This pocket door still has a hinged key that can be kept in its keyhole and slid into the wall for safekeeping, and it still moves its tumblers. Additionally, the door to the hallway behind the room, the crown molding, and window and door moldings are all made of mahogany. Outside the parlor, a hallway leads to a breakfast room off the kitchen, which was later used as an office for Albert Stenger, as well as a bathroom on the first floor. At the entrance to the hallway, a beveled glass, mirrored door provides an entrance to the basement. The doorknobs on the house are unique shape, being described as raised pyramid hexagonal brass doorknobs. An arched entryway to the back hallway helps to distinguish private family space from the public entertaining spaces like the library and the parlor. The bathroom on the first floor has hexagonal tile on the floor and subway tile to a height of three and a half feet. There is also a small corner sink that is original to the house.

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The kitchen features a swinging door from the dining room to the kitchen. A butler's pantry is found between the kitchen proper and the dining room. A set of built in cabinets provides storage for dishes and glassware, or other necessary items. There was also a pine floor in excellent condition, a delivery door for ice, and a pantry. Moving into the kitchen, the most striking feature is the number of doors present in this room. There is a door to the outside with a small porch. Additionally, there is a servants' stair to the second floor, a stair to the basement, a doorway to the breakfast room, and a doorway to a closet that is thought by the owners to have been a dumbwaiter based on conversations with members of the Stenger family. After someone fell down the dumbwaiter to the basement, it was converted into a closet. The walls in the kitchen are all plaster, but halfway up the walls, the impression of tile had been pressed into the plaster when it was wet, which gives it a nice, finished appearance even though it is the same plaster as the rest of the room.

The main stair from the entry hall is flanked by an oak boot box. As one ascends the stairs, one goes up three steps and turns left, then five steps and turns left, then seven steps and turns left. Upon turning the last turn in the stairs, the climber realizes that a portion of the floor is cantilevered over the stairwell and that there are no visible braces or supports holding up the floor. The landing at the top of the stairs nevertheless feels very sturdy. At the top of the landing there is a linen closet with a beveled glass mirror, as well as a built in cabinet for additional linens or miscellanea.

There are five bedrooms on the second floor, one bathroom, a sewing room, and a solarium. The Stengers had six daughters and one son, so there was a need for space for so many children. The bedrooms were very nicely appointed, often having more than one closet, presumably with the understanding that there would be more than one daughter inhabiting each room. One of the rooms was trimmed entirely in birds' eye maple, including the baseboards, doors, window trim, and all furniture. One of the daughters suffered for a long time from tuberculosis and lived with her parents during her illness. She obviously had her own room, and often made use of the warm solarium as it had a positive effect on her well being. The master bedroom also had two closets, but had the added comfort of a small sink between them with a mirror for the added luxury of being able to brush teeth or wash hands in the bedroom.

Along the back of the house, there is a steep drive that angles into the basement and it is said that it allowed for a carriage to be driven into a covered holding area under the porte cochere.

There is one noncontributing structure on the property, a modern tin-roofed car port with open sides which is situated behind the house.

In terms of integrity, the Albert and Lina Stenger House has very good historic integrity. The property was originally associated with six hundred acres of agricultural land and numerous outbuildings, all of which were sold off and torn down many years ago. For a time, the property became a home for mentally disabled young men, and suffered much from neglect as the focus of the caretakers was on the people in their care. The new owners have spent the last four years undoing much that had been done, including removing indoor/outdoor carpet that had been glued to the hardwood floors in all the bedrooms on the second floor, the removal of walls that hid the woodwork of the stairs, stripping paint from all the woodwork, and so on. The current owners have worked to sensitively rehabilitate this house and have uncovered much of the original historic fabric of the home. However, there is still some work to be done. The owners intend to take advantage of Nebraska's Valuation Incentive Program as soon as the property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and continue the restoration of their home.

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The Albert and Lina Stenger House is located in Columbus, Nebraska, which lies north of the Platte River in Platte County with a population of 20,971 (2000 Census). Columbus is located eighty-eight miles west of Omaha, and is intersected by US 30 and US 81, the former Lincoln and Meridian Highways. The landscape of Platte County consists of fertile soils that made the county very attractive for agricultural pursuits, with the land around Columbus consisting of the rich bottom land of the Platte River valley.¹ Agriculture served as the economic foundation for the county, taking advantage of the rich soil. The railroads through the county provided access to distant markets, increasing farmers' profits. Although the drought and depression of the 1890s made agricultural and financial conditions difficult for farmers throughout that decade, by the turn of the century, the situation of many farmers had improved greatly, and by 1906 an acre of land was selling for as much as ninety dollars.² It was in this context that the substantial Stenger farmhouse was built just outside of Columbus, although it has since been absorbed by the growing city.

Stenger Family

Albert S. Stenger was born in Colmar, Alsace, France on 22 May 1856. He came to the United States with his parents in 1872 at the age of sixteen. The family fled Alsace after the Prussian War when the area was ceded to Germany. The Stengers lived in Ohio briefly before moving to Columbus, Nebraska on 4 March 1873. Albert Stenger's father, Martin, homesteaded land in the Columbus area. When Martin died in 1897, Albert inherited his original homestead, and purchased more land as time passed. He became known as a prominent livestockman and a breeder of Percheron horses.³ In addition to these pursuits, Albert Stenger owned a dry goods store in downtown Columbus.

Albert lost his first wife, Alvina (Brugger) Stenger in a farm accident in 1892, which left him to raise their two daughters, Katherine (1887-1970) and Cecelia (1889-1965).

He met Lina Steiner, born 7 December 1875 in Utzenstorf Canton-Berne, Switzerland, as she was traveling through the United States en route to China. She met Albert Stenger during a brief stay in Columbus, and consented to become his wife. They married on 1 January 1900. Albert and Lina had six children: Alfred (1902-1986), Bertha (1905-1909), Marcelle (1906-1935), Eleanor (1906-), Doris (1910-1977), and Eugenia (1914-). The house was built in 1907, by which time the couple already had six children. However, the two eldest daughters from Albert's first marriage had already been studying in France for two years by the time the house was built, so it is uncertain if they ever lived in the house with the rest of the family. Two more children of Albert and Lina would follow construction of the house.

On 6 October 1932, Albert and Lina sold the farmland associated with this property to Alfred for one dollar and "other valuable consideration."⁴ By 1932, Albert was seventy-six years old, and of retirement age. At thirty, Alfred was ready to begin his career. It seems clear that Lina and Albert remained in the house, however.

Albert Stenger died on 11 December 1944, at the age of 88. Lina passed away exactly six months later, on 11 June 1945. The family sold the property in 1948. The house was held privately by several individual families until approximately 1970, when it became the Association for the Developmentally Handicapped, which utilized the house as a

¹ Barbara Kooiman, *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, "Reconnaissance Survey Final Survey Report of Platte County, Nebraska." Prepared for the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, by Mississippi Valley Archeological Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, Wisconsin. July, 1996. 14.

² *Ibid.*

³ Farmer's Directory of Columbus Township, Platte County, 1923.

⁴ Warranty Deed, 6 October 1932.

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home for four boys who stayed over the course of thirty-one years. In 2003, the house was purchased by Frank and Karen Loomer, who are undertaking the task of restoring the house to its former glory.

Significance:

The Alfred and Lina Stenger House is significant under Criterion C for its architectural significance. It is a massive example of the Prairie style of domestic architecture, far outstripping the ubiquitous American Foursquare that is the most common example of the Prairie style. At the time the Stenger House was built, the couple already had his two daughters from his previous marriage, the four children from his current marriage with Lina, in addition to the hired hands he housed in the basement. Two more children would come within seven years of the completion of construction in 1907. The house easily accommodated all of them. Interestingly, having produced primarily daughters, the locks on the doors to the basement could only be accessed from the family side of the doors. Prudence would require a father of so many daughters to protect them from men that were not family.

Size alone, however, does not convey this property's significance; the house's fine appointments and wood treatments illustrate the impression that Mr. and Mrs. Stenger were trying to make with this house. Family lore tells us that when the Stenger family arrived in the Columbus area to homestead in 1873, their first year was as difficult as one could possibly imagine. They found their summer to be blisteringly hot, and the winter that followed was beset by blizzards that snowed them in for days at a time. In addition to the challenges of weather, the next summer was plagued by grasshoppers that decimated their crops. Success eventually came to them, in the form of 600 acres of land holdings, a successful livestock and horse breeding program, and a dry goods store in town, and the house is an extremely tangible reflection of not only that success, but also their tenacity.

The house features oak hardwood floors throughout, in addition to supplementary oak features that are particular to each room. The parlor and the dining room each feature a two panel pocket door in oak, but the parlor pocket door features the added elaboration of exhibiting mahogany on the parlor side. Mahogany also graces the door and window trim and baseboards of the rest of the parlor as well. The stair across from the main entrance consists of three sets of steps with right angle turns with a landing at the top cantilevered over the stairs and foyer itself. The woodwork of the rails and newel consists of square posts that speak of the Arts and Crafts era, and are appropriate for the time, but pose an interesting juxtaposition when compared to the fluted ionic columns of the colonnade into the library on the other side of the foyer. The capitals feature volutes that are elaborated with an egg and dart motif. Inside the library, in addition to the dining room and foyer, boxed beams create an even more formal feeling to the room.

The masonry of the building is likewise significant architecturally. It is constructed of iron-fired brick, a buff colored brick with dark stripes that were embellished on the porch and in other details with limestone capstones that were cut in place. Family lore tells us that Albert Stenger hired fourteen Swiss masons to construct the house. A masonry porte cochere was included in the original design of the property, allowing for the dry arrival of guests to the side door of the home. It survived until at least 1997, the last time the building was surveyed in the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey. Sadly, a portion of it has been removed. The current owners would like to reconstruct it from historic photographs if they are able to locate a sufficient supply of iron-fired brick. In addition to the masonry of the exterior of the building, the fireplace in the library is likewise impressive. The brick fireplace was created in a perfect round arch, with a brick mantle built into the structure of the fireplace. It is a striking feature of the home.

Another architecturally significant feature of the home is the preponderance of beveled and leaded, diamond-paned windows on the front façade. They are present in the transoms in the front windows, the sidelights and transoms surrounding the front door, the windows on either side of the fireplace in the library, as well as the doors of the cabinets of

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the library. There are even a few examples in the upstairs bedroom under the dormer. They create a striking visual pattern on the front elevation, particularly around the door. The door itself is astonishing in the quality of its materials and its size. It is of sufficient girth to allow someone to move a sofa inside without having to manhandle it through the door.

The house features five bedrooms upstairs, including a master bedroom with two closets and a sink between them, illustrating what defined luxury in a different era. One bedroom was decorated completely in bird's eye maple, including the room's side of the doors, the baseboard, the door and window trim, and the furnishings. Most of the rooms featured two closets, presumably with the understanding that at least two daughters would be living in each room, and peace would be most easily maintained with separate storage for clothing. There is a single bathroom on each floor, each tiled in subway tile, which was extremely popular at the time, being ostensibly very easy to keep clean in a time that emphasized cleanliness and efficiency in the home. Lina had a small sewing room at the end of one hallway on the way to the solarium.

Considering the past of the Albert and Lina Stenger House, the house exhibits excellent historic integrity. During the thirty years that it housed mentally disabled boys, the primary concern was, naturally, for the welfare of the young men in their care, not necessarily the house in which they lived. As a result, the house experienced a certain amount of neglect. The current owners have to repair places where benign neglect crossed with a lack of funds. The largest permanent issues in regards to the historic integrity of the house are the loss of the porte cochere, and a small amount of vinyl siding applied to the eaves of the porch, which the owners intend to reverse. Additionally, the permanent loss of the associated agricultural acreage in 1932 has resulted in the loss of integrity of setting and association, and precludes the nomination of the property under Criterion A for its association with the history of agriculture in the area. Nevertheless, the permanent physical changes to the property in no way diminish permanently this property's ability to convey its architectural significance, and it remains eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C. Its period of significance is 1907, for the year of its construction, and it is considered locally significant.

The Albert and Lina Stenger House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architectural significance. It is an impressive example of the Prairie style of architecture, not least of all for its size, but more so for its impressive detailing within. It features woodwork in oak, mahogany, and bird's eye maple, in Arts and Crafts and Classical Revival styles. It has pocket doors and butler pantries, elaborate fireplaces and windows. The house is visually stunning, and every turn provides the visitor with an architectural indulgence.

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Bibliography:

Columbus Weekly Telegram, October 1905.

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Harris, Cyril M., ed. *Illustrated Dictionary of Historic Architecture*. New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1977.

Kooiman, Barbara M. *Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey*, "Reconnaissance Survey Final Survey Report of Platte County, Nebraska." Prepared for the Nebraska State Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, by Mississippi Valley Archeological Center at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, La Crosse, Wisconsin. July, 1996

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997.

Warranty Deed, page 435. 6 October 1932. Transfers title of agricultural property from Albert Stenger, father, to Alfred Stenger, son.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

Lot 5, Block A, Lovers Lane 2nd Addition, Columbus, Platte County, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries include all the land currently associated with the Albert and Lina Stenger House.