



Crystal Lake Historic Preservation Commission

Van Natta House

135 College Street

Built 1885 and 1906

In 1885 the German Lutheran School was built on McHenry Avenue near the current site of Immanuel Lutheran School. By 1906 the school was too small for the growing number of students (150 students in two rooms) so a new facility had to be constructed. Rather than tear the old school down, William Van Natta, Jr. purchased the building, moved it to College Street, split it in half, and used the two pieces as the first floors of two new homes. As a result, 135 College Street has two construction dates, the first floor being 21 years older than the second.



The home is an excellent example of folkVictorian architecture featuring a prominent cross gable configuration with a granite fieldstone foundation, narrow clapboards, cornice returns, and wide barge boards below the eaves. Also known as “Symmetrical Victorian” a practical vernacular form of architecture such as 127 College Street eschews the complexity of bays, projections, towers, and elaborate moldings associated with the Queen Ann style. The same thrift that Mr. Van Natta showed in reusing the former school is evident in the simplicity of its design.

William Van Natta Jr. was born in Leyden Illinois in 1866. In his lifetime he was a farmer, horse car conductor, and a fireman for the railroad. He never lived in either of the houses he built on College Street but rather rented them out for several years. For a time, it appeared as though William’s mother and father would spend their golden years together in one of the houses after their farmhouse burned down, but Mrs. Van Natta passed away before they could relocate. Van Natta Sr. chose to live with his various children rather than live alone.

The original clapboard siding was revealed in 2003 by the present owners and the original house window trims were also recreated at that time.

Both the house and the garage (original carriage house) are landmarked by the City of Crystal Lake.