



H 2010-73
50 N. Caroline Street – Bertram House
(Landmark Designation)
Project Review for Historic Preservation Commission

<u>Meeting Date:</u>	January 6, 2011
<u>Request:</u>	Historic Landmark Designation
<u>Location:</u>	50 N. Caroline Street
<u>Petitioner:</u>	Tom Nemcek, Historic Preservation Commission Member
<u>Acreage:</u>	≈ 6,521 Square Feet

Background:

50 North Caroline Street was built by Paul Bertram in 1914. Paul Bertram was born in South Australia and eventually made his way to Crystal Lake in September 1897 at the age of 17. In 1901, Mr. Bertram began his lifelong civil service commitment starting with the fire department pumping water then moving up to the first chief. He then moved to the building department, then onto the Zoning Board of Appeals. He also held several positions with other organizations. He had 68 years of dedicated service to the Crystal Lake area before his death in 1966.

The house was first sold in 1920. It was sold to the Shaler family in 1954. The son George Brian Shaler still resides in the house today.

The house is American Foursquare or Prairie Box architecture. The house is made of formed concrete blocks. The blocks were manufactured by W.E. Dunn Manufacturing out of Chicago. The American Foursquare style is a simple square usually two-stories with a low-pitched roof with gables. There is a full-width front porch which is framed by two stone lions on either side of the entry stairs. The front of the porch also has two lion heads.

The garage is detached and is constructed of brick and slip-glazed, hollow terra cotta blocks. The blocks were created by John T. McRoy to carry underground electrical lines. The garage is unique because it uses these blocks as building materials. Both the house and the garage are considered for landmark status.

Historic Landmark Designation:

The petitioner is requesting historic landmark designation. The requirements for historic landmark designation are below.

1. It is within the corporate boundaries of the City of Crystal Lake; and
2. It is over fifty years old, in whole or in part; and

The Historic Preservation Ordinance continues by listing a host of general considerations and items of architectural and historic significance to be considered for designation. The Bertram House satisfies the following criteria as provided in the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

General Considerations

- *3.99-3(c)1.1 It has significant character, interest, or value as part of the historic, cultural, aesthetic, or architectural characteristics of the City, the State of Illinois, or the United States*

The character of the house is unique. The Prairie Box architectural style is important in Illinois History as it is linked to Frank Lloyd Wright.

- *3.99-3(c)1.2 It (the structure) is closely identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture or development of the City, the state of Illinois or the United States.*

Paul Bertram, the original builder, was responsible for several lasting contributions to the City and McHenry County. Known as Mr. Zoning he made improvements to the building codes and worked as zoning enforcement officer. Also his work on the fire department and with the State Fire Marshal probably led him to the unique choice of building materials.

- *3.99-3(c)1.4 It has a unique location or single physical characteristic(s) that make it an established or familiar visual feature.*

The architectural materials are unique for the area. The manufactured concrete block was both smooth and resembling rough stone. The sculpted lion statues on the front of the porch and either side of the stairway are unique elements that do not appear on other houses in the area.

Architectural Significance

- *3.99-3(c)2.1 It represents certain distinguishing characteristics of architecture inherently valuable for the study of a time period, type of property, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials.*

The house is a good example of early American Foursquare or Prairie Box architecture. Most homes of this type were constructed with Clapboard exterior siding, but this home was constructed with the manufactured concrete blocks. This house is both a great example of the Prairie Box architectural type and the use of unique and indigenous materials as the block was manufactured in Chicago.

The garage structure was constructed utilizing terra cotta block patented to carry underground electrical lines. There are very few examples of this material being used for construction purposes.

- *3.99-3(c)2.2 It embodies elements of design, detail, material, or craftsmanship of exceptional quality.*

The manufactured concrete blocks have both smooth face and rough face with the rough blocks resembling natural stone. The lions on either side of the porch entry stairway and the lions in the front wall of the porch exhibit unique craftsmanship.

- *3.99-3(c)2.4 It is one of the few remaining examples of a particular architectural style and had undergone little or no alterations since its original construction or has been properly restored.*

The home has not undergone any additions or alterations to the exterior building footprint. In addition, the garage remains in the same location. Repairs are necessary to the garage and the exterior elements of the house to properly restore it.

Historic Significance

- *3.99-3(c)3.1 It is an exceptional example of an historic or vernacular style or is one of the few such remaining properties of its kind in the City.*

The house and garage are unique for the area because of the building materials used to construct them both. The architectural style is another great example of Prairie Box architecture.

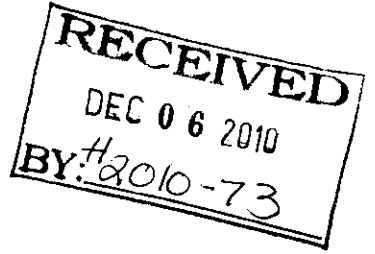
COMMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The following comments and conclusions are based on staff review and analysis prior to the meeting. They are to be considered viable unless evidence is established to the contrary.

Staff has no other comments and comes to the conclusion that this house meets the standards to be considered for landmark status.

HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION - To be reviewed by the Historic Preservation Commission and acted upon by the City Council.

The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend approval of the Historic Landmark Designation for the Bertram House located at 50 N. Caroline Street, to the City Council.



PROJECT NUMBER: _____
CITY OF CRYSTAL LAKE
LANDMARK DESIGNATION
APPLICATION
Please type or print legibly

PROJECT TITLE: BERTRAM HOUSE LANDMARKING

PERSON(S) OR GROUP PROPOSING DESIGNATION:

NAME: TOM NENCEK

ADDRESS: 70 NORTH CAROLINE STREET
CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS 60014

PHONE: 815-455-6896

OWNER(S) OF PROPERTY(S) PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION (as shown on the tax assessor's rolls):

NAME: GEORGE BRIAN SHALER

ADDRESS: 50 NORTH CAROLINE STREET
CRYSTAL LAKE, ILLINOIS 60014

INDICATE OWNER(S) CONSENT TO PROPOSED DESIGNATION:

YES NO UNKNOWN

ADDRESSES & PROPERTY INDEX NUMBERS (attach legal description): _____

ATTACH A WRITTEN STATEMENT DESCRIBING THE AREA AND PROPERTY(S) AND REASONS IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED DESIGNATION AS STATED IN THE CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION AS A HISTORIC LANDMARK@ (ATTACH DOCUMENTATION)

COMPLETE NARRATIVE OF ARCHITECTURE & HISTORY IS ATTACHED

PLEASE PROVIDE A LIST OF SIGNIFICANT EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES AND/OR OBJECTS THAT SHOULD BE PROTECTED:

2 STORY PRARIE STYLE 4-SQUARE HOUSE MADE ENTIRELY OF FORMED CONCRETE BLOCK. HOUSE INCLUDES 2 STORIES W/ ATTIC, FULL WIDTH FRONT PORCH WITH LION SCULPTURES. GARAGE ALTHOUGH SIGNIFICANT TO BE INCLUDED ON THIS APPLICATION.

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION REQUIRED:

PLEASE PROVIDE A MAP DELINEATING THE BOUNDARIES AND LOCATION OF THE PROPERTY(S) PROPOSED FOR DESIGNATION, AS WELL AS PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE SITE, STRUCTURE, OR AREA.

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION AS A HISTORIC LANDMARK

The Historic Preservation Commission shall not recommend to the City Council a designation of a landmark or historic district unless it shall make findings based upon the evidence presented to it in each specific case that the proposed structure, building, object, site or area meets the following requirements:

- It is within the corporate boundaries of the City of Crystal Lake; and
- It is over fifty (50) years old, in whole or in part; and
- One or more of the following conditions exist:

GENERAL CONSIDERATION

- It has significant character, interest, or value as part of the historic cultural, aesthetic, or architectural characteristics of the City, the State of Illinois, or the United States;
- It is closely identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture or development of the City, the State of Illinois, or the United States;
- It involves the notable efforts of, or is the only example of work by a master builder, designer, architect, or architectural firm, or artist whose individual accomplishments has influenced the development of the City, the State of Illinois, or the United States;
- It has a unique location or single physical characteristic(s) that make it an established or familiar visual feature;
- Activities associated with it make it a current or former focal point of reference in the City;
- It is of a type associated with a use once common but now rare, or is a particularly fine or unique example of a utilitarian structure and possesses a high level of integrity or architectural significance;
- It is an area that has yielded or is likely to yield historically significant information or even prehistoric data;

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

- It represents certain distinguishing characteristics of architecture inherently valuable for the study of a time period, type of property, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;

- It embodies elements of design, detail, material, or craftsmanship of exceptional quality;
- It exemplifies a particular architectural style in terms of detail, material, and workmanship, and has undergone little or no alteration since its original construction or has been properly restored;
- It is one of the few remaining examples of a particular architectural style and has undergone little or no alterations since its original construction or has been properly restored;
- It is or is part of a contiguous grouping that has a sense of cohesiveness expressed through a similarity of style, characteristics, time period, type of property, method of construction or use of indigenous materials and accents the architectural significance of an area;
- The detail, material and workmanship of the structure, building, object, or site can be valued in and of themselves as reflective of or similar to those of the majority of the visual elements in the area;

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

- It is an exceptional example of historic or vernacular style or is one of the few such remaining properties of its kind in the City;
- It is associated with an organization or group, whether formal or informal, from which persons have significantly contributed to or participated in the historic or cultural events of the City of Crystal Lake, State of Illinois, or the United States;
- It is associated with a notable historic event;
- It is associated with an antiquated use due to technological or social advances;
- It is a monument to or a cemetery of a historic person or persons.

Bertram House

In 1914, Paul Bertram built this concrete block house at 50 North Caroline Street. It is an example of Prairie architecture that neatly fits into the earliest subtype of this style called the American Foursquare or Prairie Box. It was popular from 1900 through 1920. Its floorplan, like its name, is a simple square usually 2 stories in height with a full attic. It features a low-pitched roof with gables, a symmetrical façade, and a full-width front porch with a centered entryway.

Although most Foursquare style homes were built with clapboard, this house and the accompanying front porch was made entirely of formed concrete block. It represents one of the few houses built with this material in Crystal Lake, and the only one of this particular style. During the early part of the twentieth century, advances in concrete manufacturing and the development of concrete block-forming machines resulted in widespread use of ornamental concrete block in residential buildings. Concrete and concrete block were touted as fireproof and were much less expensive than stone or regular brick. Concrete block machines could be acquired through mail-order catalogs and were easily operated by one person, allowing a homeowner to produce building materials for his own house, though it was more likely that the machines were used by contractors than by homeowners.

Unlike the utilitarian concrete blocks of today, these machines produced blocks that resembled rough stone, cobblestone, ashlar, or brick. The stone face block was so popular that it came to be the standard mold that came with the block-making machine. The blocks could be beveled or tooled on the edges, and molds for capitals, porch columns, corner blocks, and curved blocks were also available. Initially the block sizes were different depending on the machine, but by the 1920's, the size had been standardized to 8 by 8 by 16 inches. Concrete block was especially popular for foundations, porches, and even garage construction. The machines & molds to make these decorative blocks were manufactured by W. E. Dunn Mfg. Co. in Chicago. The full-width front porch has stately stone lions on either side of the entry stairs, as well as lion's heads on the front face of the porch, more than likely formed with the same machinery & molds that made the facade.

The garage is made of brick and slip-glazed, hollow terra cotta blocks. These clay blocks have 4 parallel cells in them and abut each other with a type of rabbet joint that's mortared in place. Mr John T. McRoy patented this block design in 1897 to carry underground electrical lines. This structure represents a very unique use of these blocks and is very rare.

Paul E. Bertram was born in South Australia on August 16, 1880. He lived on the island of New Zealand until he was eleven years old. His parents, Reverend Gardus Bertram and Agnes Vocke Bertam, came to Chicago, but eventually settled in Pecatonica, Illinois, where Paul attended school. He learned the carriage making trade in Rockford and in September of 1897 moved to Crystal Lake to reside with the exception of a short time he lived near Wheaton. He ran a blacksmith shop in Crystal Lake for many years.

In 1901, Mr. Bertram assisted the city marshal in starting a large engine every morning for pumping city water. Later he organized the fire department when Nunda and Crystal Lake villages were consolidated, and in 1914 served as the first chief. He organized

the city's building department, served as building and electrical inspector, was one of the original zoning commissioners, and served as enforcing officer.

Later, Mr. Bertram was appointed building commissioner in charge of building, plumbing and electric wiring and served in this capacity at different periods, also serving as chairman of the city Zoning Board of Appeals at different times.

He assisted the McHenry County Board of Supervisors for three years in passing the county zoning ordinance and served as the first zoning-enforcing officer. He was a member of the Crystal Lake Welfare Association for many years and was on the board of the Illinois Public Aid Commission for McHenry County. For eighteen years, Mr. Bertram was judge of election in his precinct, and for sixteen years was president of the Board of Education of District 47. For many years he was also a member of the McHenry County Board of School Trustees. On May 27, 1966, Mr. Bertram was a guest of honor at a dinner and program dedicated to past and present members of the Dist. 47 grade schools' board of education. He was presented with framed resolutions expressing appreciation for this outstanding service including presidency of the board from 1933-35 and 1937-51.

Other service by Mr. Bertram included several years as director of the Chicago Regional Planning Association. He was a deputy state fire marshal for sixteen years, the last five being in charge of the Chicago office as chief deputy. He was appointed by the Illinois Toll Road commission as an appraiser of property in McHenry County for all property taken over for the toll road.

Mr. Bertram, first president of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, served from 1940 until 1947. It was for him another proud moment when the chamber honored him with a plaque that proclaimed him as "Mr. Zoning." He served as commissioner of the Northeastern Illinois Metropolitan Area Planning commission and chairman of the Planning commission for the City of Crystal Lake until he retired from these posts.

In addition to all this, Mr. Bertram was a very active member of Immanuel Lutheran congregation in Crystal Lake, serving his church in numerous capacities. The automatically operated lighted cross on the steeple is among his gifts.

Squeezed in between all the time given to service for his city, county, state and church, he found time for hobbies too. In the olden days, he was a taxidermist and at one time had a very impressive collection of stuffed birds and animals. He also painted pictures, and many of his paintings and stuffed birds are still found in homes in Crystal Lake.

Mr. Bertram was married to Erda Ritt for almost 64 years. They were married August 20, 1901 in Immanuel Lutheran church by its pastor - his father. She preceded him in death on December 16, 1965. He passed away on June 13, 1966. He dedicated 68 years of service to making Crystal Lake a better place.

In 1920 Mr. Bertram sold his house to Bert W. Colby and his wife Flora. Bert was born in McHenry on June 21, 1866. His parents were Ora C. & Emma Colby. After spending his early years in McHenry, Bert's family moved to Crystal Lake in 1881 when he was 15. On October 1, 1890 he married Flora Jackman and they had 4 children together. The first 10 years of his life were spent in Crystal Lake working for his father learning the general merchandise business. He then moved his family to Loyal, Wisconsin where he purchased his own general store and operated it for the next twenty years. In 1920 he sold the business to his sons and moved back to Crystal Lake. He lived in the Bertram House the rest of his life and passed away there on January 30, 1947 at the age of 80 from a heart

ailment. His wife Flora lived at the house for another 3 years before passing in 1950. The house was inherited by the Colby children.

They sold the house to Cecil and Mary Shaler in 1954. Cecil Stone Shaler was born in La Valle, Wisconsin on May 22, 1904. He was the only son of George and Anna Roloff Shaler. His father died when he was a young man and his mother passed away in 1960. On December 19, 1946 he married Mary Hatton of Hereford, England. She was a professional ballerina who was the daughter of the famous English painter Brian Hatton. They had 2 children, George Brian and Mary Gail.

After graduating from Crystal Lake Community (Central) High School where he lettered in both football and basketball, he worked his way through Iowa State University. By the time he enrolled there he already had years of experience working for the Crystal Lake Herald (which later became the Northwest Herald). He worked after school and during vacations gaining knowledge about the newspaper business. He was recognized by the university for this and became the business manager and printing foreman for the school's newspaper. In spite of all the work he did for the paper, he maintained very high grades and graduated among the top scholars in his class. He also continued working for the Herald during summer vacations.

Upon receiving his Bachelor of Sciences degree in Business Administration he became the Herald's business manager. He also possessed a high aptitude for machinery and made many improvements to the linotypes and presses. He set up a photo engraving plant in his home, building much of the equipment and devising many of the processes himself. He invented a trimming device to be used in the photo engraving trade which won him national recognition.

From boyhood, Mr. Shaler was dedicated to the Crystal Lake Herald. He rose from shop cleanup boy to sole owner and publisher. He worked closely with his close friend and confidant, Ralph Boyle, making the Herald the newspaper of McHenry County.

Mr. Shaler passed away on August 26, 1963. His wife Mary lived on another 11 years in the Bertram House until she passed on January 31, 1974. At present the house is owned by their son George Brian Shaler who has lived there his whole life.

Credit the biographical information to the Northwest Herald.

Credit the architectural information to "A Field Guide to American Houses" by Virginia & Lee McAlester

PUBLIC NOTICE

**BEFORE THE HISTORIC
PRESERVATION COMMISSION
OF THE CITY OF CRYSTAL LAKE**

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLI-
CATION OF Tom Nemcek (#H2010-
73)

LEGAL NOTICE

Notice is hereby given in compli-
ance with the Historic Preservation
Ordinance of the City of Crystal
Lake, Illinois, that a public hearing
will be held before the Historic
Preservation Commission of the

City of Crystal Lake, upon the appli-
cation of Tom Nemcek on behalf of
George Brian Shaler, owner, relat-
ing to the property commonly
known as 50 Caroline Street and
identified by Parcel number: 14-
32-456-009.

This application is filed for the
purpose of seeking a historic land-
mark designation.

A public hearing before the His-
toric Preservation Commission on
this request will be held at 7:30 pm
on Thursday, January 6, 2011, at
the Crystal Lake City Hall, 100
West Woodstock Street, at which
time and place any person deter-
mining to be heard may be present.
Complete information (including le-
gal description) concerning this ap-
plication may be obtained at the
Planning & Economic Development
Department at City Hall.

Brice Alt, Chair
Historic Preservation Commission
City of Crystal Lake
(Published in the Northwest Herald
December 21, 2010)

Credit the concrete block information to "Bungalow Details" by Jane Powell & Linda Svendsen
Credit the garage building material information to Anthony Rubano of the Illinois Historical Preservation Agency





01.22.2005



01.22.2005

