

Maurice Vaseu Residence
2107 Jersey

Style: Prairie School
Date: 1918
Architect: George P. Behrensmeyer

In the Maurice Vaseu House, Behrensmeyer seems to have reached his height in the Prairie Style, a style that he would later interpret in a more flexible manner. Here, he followed the Prairie School through emphasizing the horizontal, sheltering with hovering roof planes, centralizing the fireplace with spaces flowing out from it, integrating structure, minimalizing parts to create a unified whole, and reaching out to greet the prairie, integrating the house with its site.

The house is a simple, two-story, brick with contrasting wood trim, and hipped slate roof with a single-story front porch with hipped roof. A side saddle entrance allows the front porch wall to remain unbroken, making it accessible only from within the house. The front facade is dominated by horizontal lines of the overhanging roof planes and front porch, and by the upper-story horizontal bands of casement windows with sharply defined vertical detailing. There are contrasting trim at eaves and a brick soldier course with limestone insets creating a continuous horizontal element at the upper level windows. Massive brick porch supports and heavy brick corners emphasize the structure and tie the house to the earth while its roof appears as a plane floating above, protecting its inhabitants.

Following the Prairie School principals, the house is raised off the ground, placing major living quarters up with view of the landscape. This emphasized the importance of being able to extend oneself into the prairie while remaining under refuge. The main entrance is recessed to one side of the extending front porch. Upon entering, the space opens up to the right. It is an open plan with central hearth and staircase. Living and dining rooms extend from the entrance hall with the front terrace off the living room. This enclosed front porch was originally open. Windows are banks of light screens rather than cut holes in walls, they open out from the dining room and the master bedroom. The ceilings are low and intimate, extending beyond the wall and into the landscape, reinforcing the horizontal thrust.