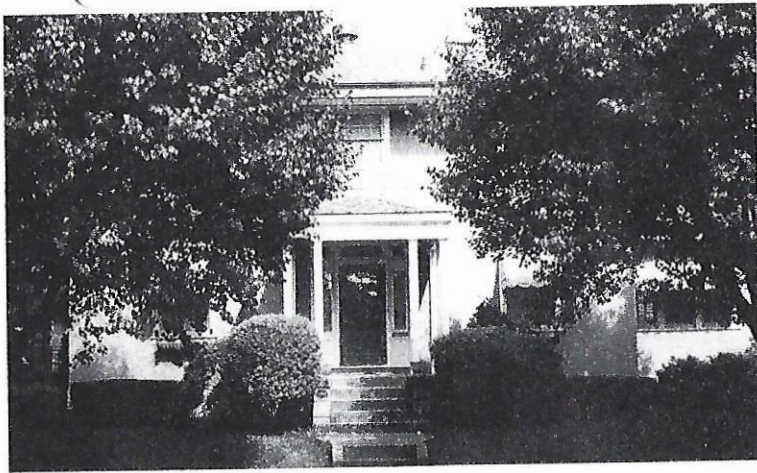




2301 Jersey Street
Vernacular Prairie Style • Circa 1924
James W. and Bertha VanValzah House

James VanValzah was a traveling hardware salesman when he built this house. Van Valzah and his family lived in this home for twenty-five years. This good-looking vernacular Prairie Style pattern book house is typical of those found in the suburbs of Midwestern cities such as Minneapolis and Milwaukee after World War I. In Quincy in the 1920s, it may have stood out somewhat from its neighboring houses in the Lawndale setting.

The Prairie School was an attempt at developing an indigenous North American style of architecture that did not share design elements and esthetic vocabulary with earlier styles of European classical architecture. It is considered the only American-born architectural style. Prairie Style homes were especially fashionable from 1900 to 1930. Their greatest popularity was in the Midwest.

This stucco home's near-cubic simplicity is eye-catching. Its south-facing 'living porch' is just one of many Prairie Style features. Others are its band of second floor windows on the south, its prominent 'belt course' strategically placed just below the second floor-over-twelve windows and the stuccoed and flat-trimmed soffit. The low hipped roof completes the image.

Its centered porch with its eight columns and the door's sidelights and transom give a nod to the 1920s rage for the Colonial Revival style. Subsequent owners added the period-style side porch, a Prairie Style garage, with nine-over-nine window and the garden area.

The central hall and staircase are inviting features of the house. The turned, painted spindles and their contrast to the natural railing and the spiral banister further create a colonial feeling. The centered hall between the living room and dining room is popular in both a colonial and craftsman/prairie homes. The French doors between the living room and "living porch" are both functional and fetching.

The upstairs plan is livable. Rather than the typical procedure of placing a room in each corner, the plans ran the master bedroom along most of the south side and inserted two bathrooms between the other rooms. Notice how natural light floods the bedrooms through the twelve-over-one and nine-over-one windows. The garage, added at a later date, carries out Prairie features-even in its windows.

Behind Closed Doors
17 2009



James W. and Bertha VanValzah House
2301 Jersey • 1924
builder unknown

This pattern book house is typical of those that lined the suburban streets of such midwestern towns as Minneapolis and Milwaukee after World War I, though in its Lawndale setting the near-cubic simplicity of the design stands out. The south elevation, with its "living porch" and band of four second story windows, has clear links to vernacular Prairie School design, as does a prominent belt course between the stories, a stuccoed and flat-trimmed soffit, and a low hipped roof. But the 1920s rage for Colonial Revival shows as well, in a centered front entry surrounded by transom and sidelights.

The colonial theme is picked up on the inside by a central hall with a show staircase. Though very simply designed, the turning of the spindles and the contrast of painted spindles and natural railing recall Georgian prototypes. By contrast the placement of living and dining room at either side of the front is typical of Craftsman houses of the World War I period, here invested with an unusual degree of openness.

The upstairs plan is quite unusual. Rather than the typical procedure of placing a room in each corner, the builder ran the master bedroom along most of the south side and inserted two bathrooms between the rooms. A recently completed garage echoes the Prairie School themes of the house, as does the landscaping.

James VanValzah was a traveling hardware salesman through the many years he and his family occupied the house.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
OCTOBER 16, 1993
current owner: Brent Bergman