

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House

other names/site number Wichterich-Lang House

2. Location

street & number 300 Good Hope Street [n/a] not for publication

city or town Cape Girardeau [n/a] vicinity

state Missouri code MO county Cape Girardeau code 031 zip code 63703

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 [])

 25 June 1998
Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO Date

Missouri Department of Natural Resources
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 _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register See continuation sheet [].	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet [].	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, explain See continuation sheet [].	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	1	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	0	0	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 COLONIAL REVIVAL

Materials
 foundation Limestone
 walls Brick
 roof Asphalt
 other Wood

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

- 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.
- 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

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or 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.

Areas of Significance

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1906

Significant Dates

n/a

Significant Person(s)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic 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 of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other:

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

A. Zone	Easting	Northing	B. Zone	Easting	Northing
16	276480	4130850			

C. Zone	Easting	Northing	D. Zone	Easting	Northing
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[] 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 see continuation sheet

organization _____ date _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Greg Jones and Jenny Strayer

street & number 300 Good Hope Street telephone 573/334-7690

city or town Cape Girardeau state Missouri zip code 63703

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Section 7 Page 1

Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Summary: The Robert Felix and Elma Taylor Wichterich House at 300 Good Hope Street in Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri is a 2 1/2-story brick residence with Colonial Revival elements applied to an enhanced American Foursquare plan. Constructed in 1906, the house best exemplifies the Hipped Roof with Full-Width Porch subtype as defined by McAlester and McAlester.¹ Actually, the two-ranked Wichterich House has a fine wraparound veranda with Ionic capitals, a feature carried over from the slightly earlier Free Classic Queen Anne style.² The house, with a full basement, rests on a foundation of limestone and has load-bearing brick walls set in a variation of a Flemish bond pattern. On the west, a pedimented gable with a Palladian window tops a slightly projecting two-story bay. Pedimented dormers with lattice windows are in the other three hips. Modillions and dentil bands enliven the overhanging eaves of the main roof on all four sides. The off-center entrance is of classical design incorporating sidelights, pilasters and a three-part transom. On the east, an opening with a round arch contains an exquisite leaded art glass window. Distinguished by fine woodwork and other features, the largely intact interior of this well-maintained house reflects various styles. Currently undergoing sensitive renovation, the Wichterich House exhibits a high level of integrity of design, setting, materials, craftsmanship and association. Directly behind the house, a circa 1920 detached garage is noncontributing.

Narrative: The Wichterich House is at the northwest corner of Good Hope and Lorimier Streets, in a residential neighborhood two blocks from the Mississippi River. The south-facing property is situated within the central portion of a 100 feet by 180 feet lot. The main block has an essentially rectangular footprint measuring approximately 31 feet by 40 feet. The bearing walls are approximately fourteen inches thick. The cut limestone foundation has a broken course pattern and contains window openings for the full basement. In addition to the frame wraparound porch, a small frame porch with a hipped roof is in the back. Chimneys flush with the exterior walls emerge from the roof south of the projecting bay on the west and near the northeast corner. The chimneys are unadorned. The roof is sheathed with slate or asbestos shingles arranged in a diamond pattern with tile rounds where the hip edges are joined.

North of the house and aligned with the property line, a circa 1920 garage with a clipped gable roof and frame walls covered with stamped metal sheathing faces Lorimier. Although its architectural style is dissimilar to the house, this noncontributing building is too small (10 feet by 30 feet) to be considered a serious intrusion. A public sidewalk skirts the unfenced property on the east and south. An alley is to the west. Several other historic homes, most of Victorian origin, are in the general vicinity of the Wichterich House.

The four-square plan of the Wichterich House is indicated by the two ranks of large windows and off-center entrance in the main (south) facade. But a horizontal effect is achieved by the wide front porch which extends several feet beyond the southeast corner and wraps well into the east elevation. Aligned below the east upstairs window, the transomed entrance is flanked by slender pilasters and sidelights with wood kick panels. The door is glazed above a low panel. The one-over-one sash windows occupy flat-arched openings with compound voussoirs and smooth stone lugsills. Four smooth round columns with Ionic capitals support the front portion of the wood porch, with stairs in the middle. Engaged columns are at the back corners on the front and east. The columns support a molded frieze with a dentil band below

¹ McAlester, Virginia and Lee, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), pp. 320-321.

² McAlester, *op.cit.*, pp. 264, 266.

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the overhang. Between columns flanking the stairs are balustrades with turned balusters. Lattice panels have been temporarily removed from the porch base to facilitate the replacement of some rotted flooring. Shingles arranged in a diamond pattern cover the hipped porch roof. Curvilinear modillions and a dentil band enliven the overhanging eaves of the main roof. A dormer with a pedimented gable and a pair of latticed casement windows is centered in the front hip. These windows are between three vertical members containing torus molding rectangles. The pediment is elaborated with cornice moldings and dentil bands.

On the east elevation, the wraparound porch fills roughly a third of the facade. Fenestration consists of five one-over-one sash windows with flat compound voussoir heads and a one-over-one sash window with a round-arched compound voussoir head, all with smooth stone lugsills. The round-arched window contains original leaded art glass in a Victorian design. Two flat head windows are aligned, one above the other, in both the front and rear quadrants. The round-arched window and the fifth flat head window, which is smaller than the other four, are arranged diagonally between the upstairs front window and the downstairs rear window. In the stone foundation, a casement window is aligned below the northernmost double-hung windows. Wood stairs between the middle and north Ionic columns and lattice panels at the porch base have temporarily been removed for repairs. Centered in the side hip is a pedimented dormer similar to the one in the front. Today the chimney near the north corner is for a water heater but originally it served the kitchen and servant's quarters.

The west elevation is dominated by a large pedimented gable with a modest Palladian window above a two-story projecting bay. The wide bay extends two feet beyond the main wall, delineating the area of the dining room and master bedroom above it. The double-hung central unit of the Palladian window is flanked by small lattice windows. The gable contains cornice-line dentils and imbricated shingles, while the main cornice is elaborated with modillions and a dentil band as on the other facades. Two one-over-one sash are symmetrically arranged on each floor of the projecting bay and a similar window is on the first floor directly north of it. Two similar but wider windows are aligned one above the other in the south portion of the facade. Casement windows are set in the stone foundation directly below the three southernmost windows. All window openings in the brick portion of the facade have flat heads with compound voussoirs and smooth stone lugsills. The chimney that emerges from the west hip accommodates the living room fireplace and the original furnace.

On the north (rear) elevation, a frame off-center entry porch with a hipped roof has smooth round columns with Doric capitals. Fenestration is oriented eastward. The back door and window openings have segmental arches with compound voussoirs, rather than flat arches as in the other facades. From east to west, first floor fenestration consists of a one-over-one sash window, a transomed entrance and a small louver window. Stairs to the basement entrance (below the back entrance) are enclosed within a compartment with a shed roof at the west end of the facade. Three one-over-one sash windows are upstairs. A pedimented dormer is centered in the north hip.

The interior of the Wichterich House is largely intact with fine Colonial Revival-inspired trim in dark stained oak. The floor plan is rectangular, with a side hall and living spaces in the four quadrants on the first and second floors. In addition to a large reception hall, the first floor has a living room, dining room, kitchen and butler's pantry, all with ten-foot ceilings. The second floor has four bedrooms, a bathroom and five closets. An attic containing multipurpose rooms and storage space extends over the entire second floor. The original circa 1906 Roper furnace is in the full basement. The basement has two entrances. The

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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
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exterior entrance is in the north end under the back porch, directly below the back entrance to the first floor. The interior entry is on the east, accessed from the rear of the kitchen.

Notable interior features include fine woodwork throughout, a main staircase with ornate newel posts and paneled sides, pocket doors, an elaborate mantel with tile facing, a Victorian leaded art glass window in the staircase landing, and what appear to be original lighting fixtures. The house's classical aesthetic is continued throughout the two main floors. Window and door enframements have entablature heads and molded pilaster casings with a wide central groove. Crown moldings are intact throughout the first floor including the kitchen. Doors throughout most of the house consist of five horizontal panels. Baseboards have moderately curved, beaded tops. Window bases resemble their entablature heads. Original radiators remain and what appear to be their gold finishes are intact. Circa 1939 wallpaper has been removed throughout the house, revealing surfaces of plaster over lathboards. The first floor has a hardwood surface and the second floor surface appears to consist of pine boards.

The hall in the southeast portion is essentially a continuation of the living room in the southwest. Markings on a ceiling beam across the juncture and other evidence suggests that the opening was originally spanned with freestanding or low-pedestal colonnades, and these may be replicated by the present owner. Two Craftsman style bookcases below the ceiling beam provide token separation today. The oak main staircase is a double L-type with a lower landing surmounted by a small lateral flight between ornate square newel posts with pellet moldings set within cutaway corners. Cornices feature egg-and-dart moldings above frieze panels carrying incised octagonal plaques. Balusters have elaborately turned middle sections. Below molded face stringers, walls are paneled vertically. At the second landing midway between the first and second floors is a double-hung leaded art glass window with a round head. The 19th century design features mottled brown string-of-beads elements arranged around translucent fields of milk and rose with elaborate middle constructions in red, green, blue, yellow and brown. The staircase is of a design associated with some Cape Girardeau Queen Anne style houses.³

The living room fireplace is canted in the angle between two load-bearing walls in the northwest corner. The mantel shelf is supported by flared square columns and an overmantel is supported by short Tuscan columns. Decorative tile surrounds the fireplace opening which is covered with a Victorian era cast iron grate with an ornate floral pattern. A rectangular mirror is centered between the upper columns. Double pocket doors with horizontal divisions are in the north wall between the living room and dining room. Each pocket door features twelve rectangular panels with beveled borders. Natural illumination is provided by large one-over-one sash in the west and south walls.

The spacious dining room is in the northwest quadrant behind the living room. In the southeast corner, a single pocket door with twelve horizontal panels leads to the reception hall. Two double-hung sash are in the projecting west wall, divided by a radiator. A butler's pantry is directly north of the dining room, through a doorway with a swinging door. The eleven foot north wall of this narrow room is filled with original built-in white-painted cabinets with drawers and panel doors. Their original hardware is intact.

The kitchen is in the northeast quadrant, accessed through the butler's pantry. Currently being remodeled to reflect contemporary tastes, the kitchen will be equipped with modern appliances but no changes will be

³Similar staircases have been found in local Queen Anne houses at 821 Broadway (the Vandeeven House) and at 121 N. West End Boulevard.

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made to the basic structure. The kitchen was previously remodeled in 1939, with wall tile in a stepped pattern and other elements reflecting the Art Deco style. The kitchen retains its original woodwork (entablature heads, molded vertical casings with wide grooves, a molded cornice, etc.), all painted white. The back door is paneled and glazed and has a transom window for ventilation. The back staircase, an enclosed winder type, is accessed from the southeast corner of the kitchen. Basement and attic staircases are over and under the back staircase.

On the second floor of the Wichterich House, large bedrooms with tall ceilings (9-1/2') and shallow closets (18 inches deep) are in the southeast, southwest and northwest quadrants. The servant's room is across the hall in the northeast room. The bathroom is in the northwest corner, above the butler's pantry. All five rooms, the main staircase and the back stairway (parallel to the main staircase) are accessed from the central hallway. Glazed transoms above doors may be opened to provide improved air circulation. The bathroom, remodeled in 1939, is being renovated to modern standards. The old tub, sink and commode will be removed and a shower will be installed in the northwest corner. The new fixtures will reflect an appropriate historic style for a Colonial Revival house, but with modern engineering underneath. An enclosed winder staircase to the attic is behind a doorway in the south wall of the servant's room.

The attic features beaded board walls and ceilings, as well as storage areas behind walls in the four quadrants. A partition wall divides the main attic floor space into two large rooms. Several years ago, lightning started a fire which damaged the hipped roof. Most of the roof was replaced without changing the form. Support posts were relatively solid and the charred rafters--still visible in the attic--were reinforced with sister joists. The house remains structurally sound today.

The house was designed with interior plumbing and electric lighting. When the present owners purchased the property in January 1997, all of the original wiring, fixtures and push-button light switches were intact. A pull-down switch in the second floor hall allowed power to be shut off throughout the house, and the paneled stairwell was illuminated by two lamps emerging from the mouth of a miniature deer's head. For safety and fire code reasons, the house has been completely rewired and many of the original light switches were replaced with modern units. Many of the light fixtures, after rewiring, were retained.

The current restoration involves exterior as well as interior elements. Settling necessitated repairs to a cracked and damaged north dining room wall as well as to the support piers. Water-damaged window frames and front porch steps were carefully repaired. Porch planks were replaced with new lumber milled to the same dimensions as the originals. Weather damage to the front entrance also was slated for repair. Interior restoration under way or completed includes new wiring, remodeling of the bathroom and kitchen, and general redecoration. Sun damage to the finish on some interior woodwork, particularly in the southwest bedroom, was repaired. A new sewer line also has been installed.

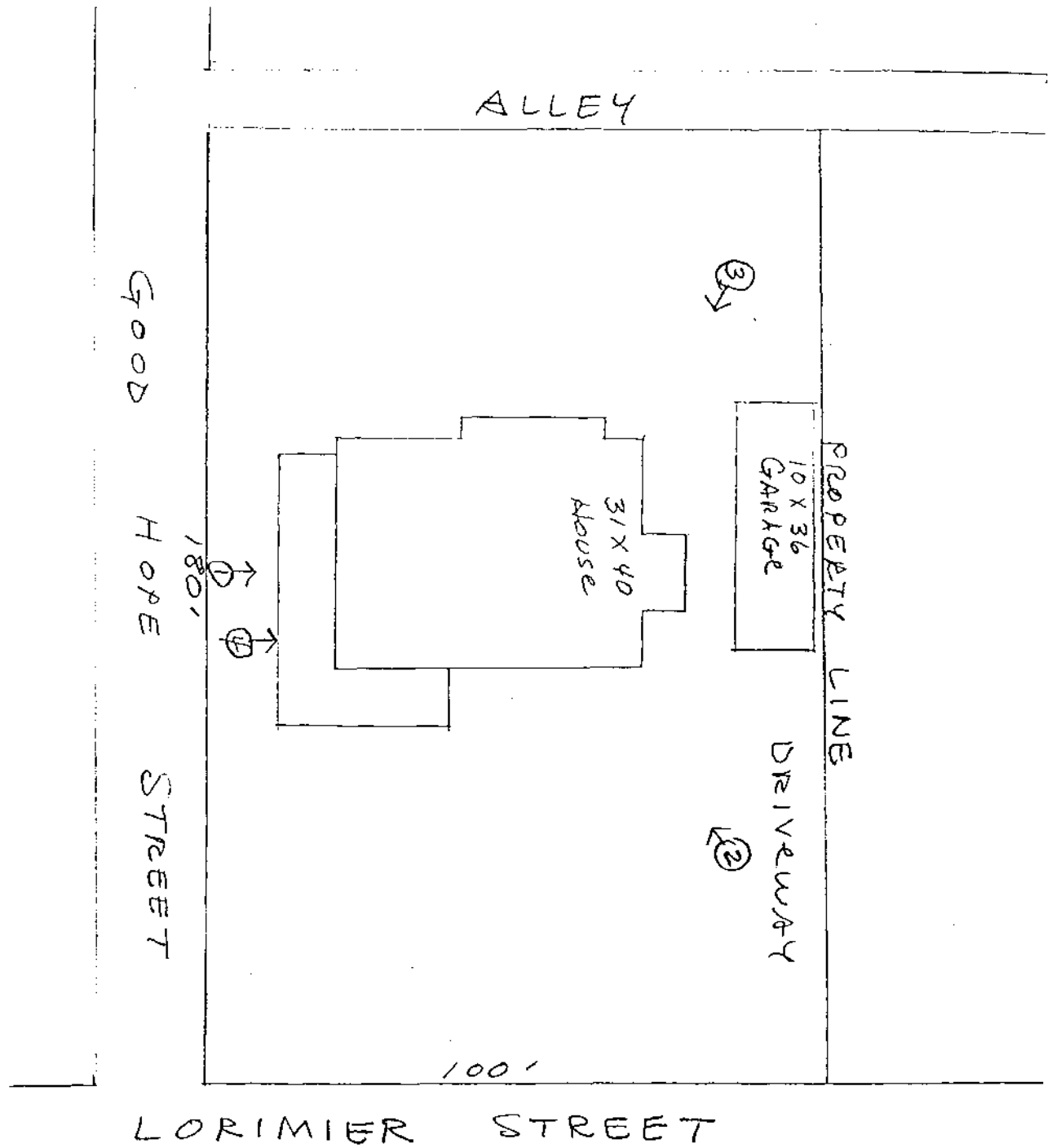
Overall, the house's integrity has not been compromised by these repairs and upgrades because they were sensitively done and historic materials still greatly predominate. The Wichterich House, always a single family dwelling, continues to exhibit a high level of integrity of design, setting, materials, craftsmanship and association.

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Site Plan
not to scale

→ 2

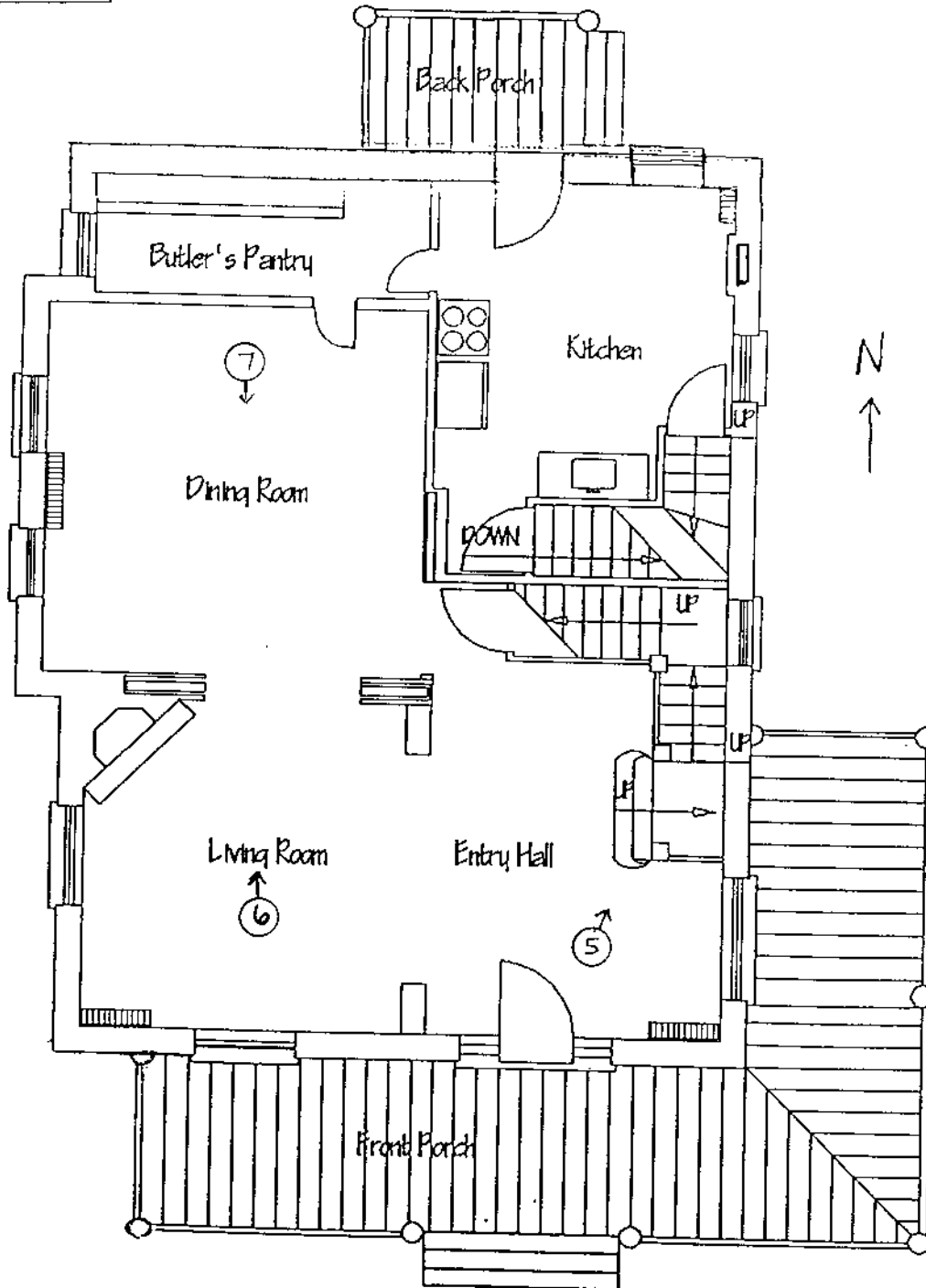
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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
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First Floor
not to scale



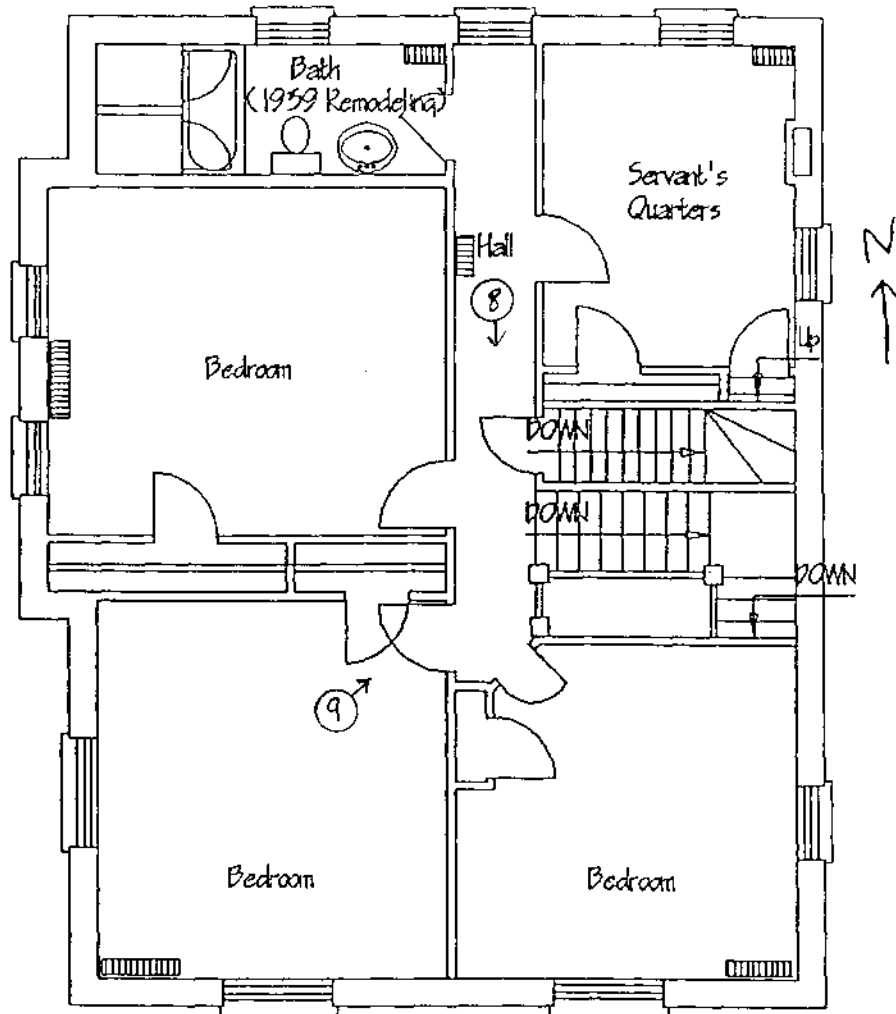
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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Second Floor
not to scale



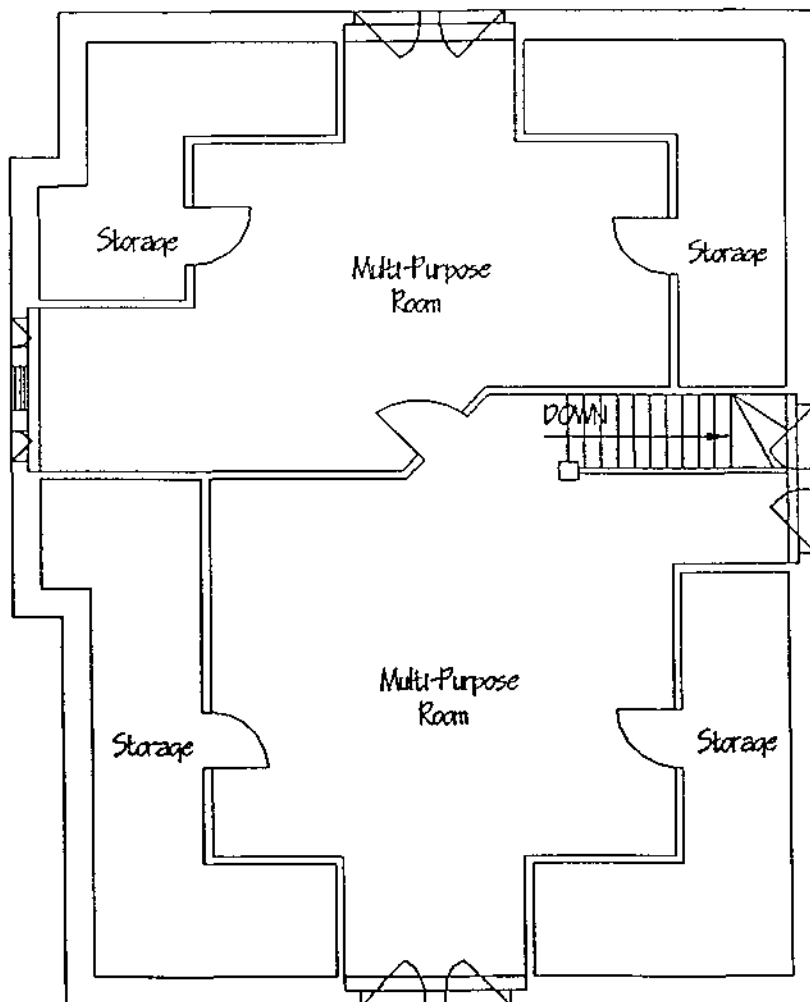
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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
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Attic
not to scale



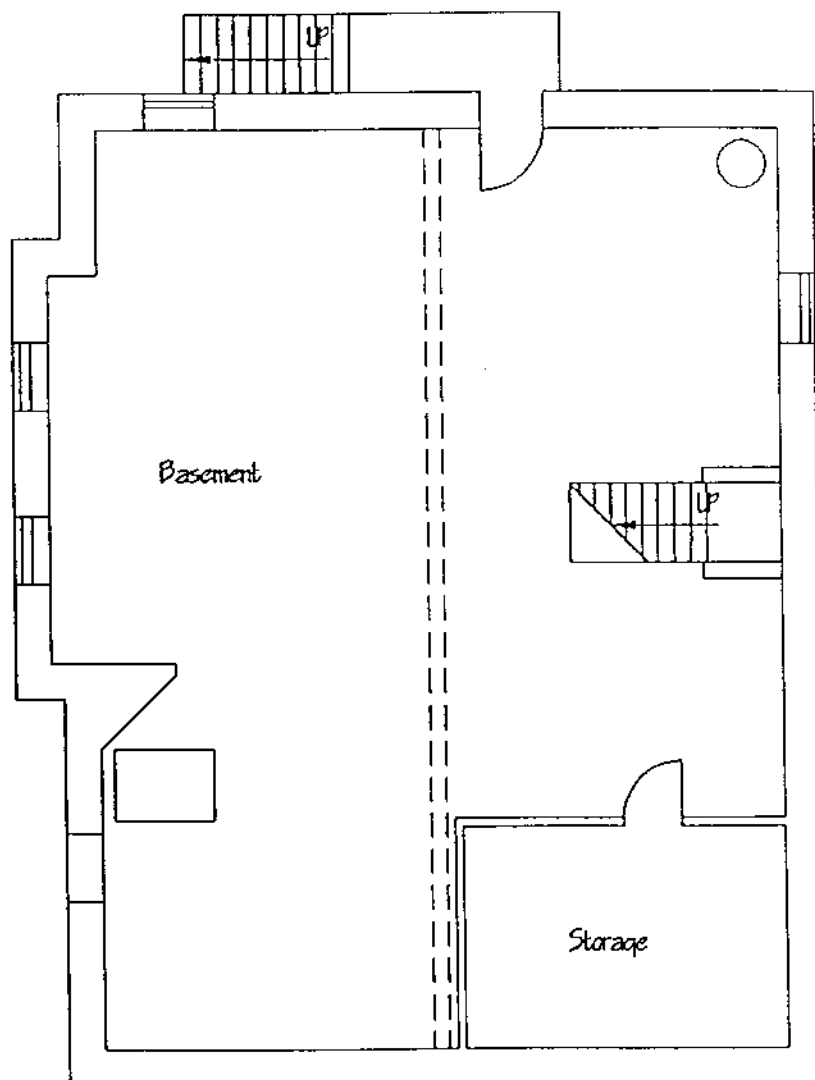
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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
Cape Girardeau County, MO

Basement
not to scale



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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
Cape Girardeau County, MO

SUMMARY: The Robert Felix and Elma Taylor Wichterich House, 300 Good Hope Street, Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, is significant under Criterion C in the area of ARCHITECTURE. This circa 1906 American Foursquare exemplifies the application of Colonial Revival elements to a popular building form, resulting in a stylish house suitable for a prosperous local businessman or professional and his family. The basic form of the house (two-stories over a raised basement, a nearly square plan, a one-story porch across the facade and a hipped roof) are defining characteristics of the popular foursquare folk house type, which in this case is enhanced with a projecting two-story bay and an extension of the porch into a side elevation. The exterior of the Wichterich House is elaborated with features which in combination are typical of the Colonial Revival style, notably Ionic capitals on the porch columns, modillions and dentil bands along the overhanging eaves, pedimented dormers and a Palladian window. The classical columns also may be seen as a feature carried over from the slightly earlier Free Classic Queen Anne style, which also lingers in the form of a lovely leaded art glass window with a round head. The interior is finished with fine woodwork inspired by early American precedents. Overall the Wichterich House is an excellent example of its type in Cape Girardeau, retaining integrity of design, materials, craftsmanship and location.

WICHTERICH HOUSE HISTORY: When Robert Felix Wichterich commissioned construction of the Wichterich House in 1906, Cape Girardeau was midway through the most intense decade of population growth in its history. Between 1900 and 1910, the city's population surged from 4,815 to 8,475, an increase of 76 per cent. The period's spiraling growth was undoubtedly railroad-generated. Cape Girardeau had a river port but no railroad until 1881 when Louis Houck completed the first of several local short-line railroads, to Delta some 15 miles inland. In 1902, Houck organized the Gulf System (later absorbed by the Frisco) which placed Cape Girardeau on the main line between St. Louis and Memphis. In 1905, Houck constructed a series of railroad depots on his line including a three-story stone depot on Independence Street in Cape Girardeau. A year later when the Frisco relocated to Chaffee, even the loss of the line's local repair shops, division offices and other facilities failed to curb the momentum for growth.⁴

Born in Cape Girardeau in 1868, Robert Felix Wichterich was a respected member of the city's German community and his house at 300 Good Hope Street was near the Haorig, the main German business district. His parents were Nicholas Wichterich, who operated a local flour mill and served as city treasurer for 32 years, and Eliza Molitor. Nicholas Wichterich immigrated to the United States after the Revolution of 1848, in which he participated. He was living in Cape Girardeau by 1860, was a lieutenant in the Home Guards during the Civil War and was a Democrat. He left the milling business in 1873, but continued serving Cape Girardeau as city treasurer until his death in 1900.⁵

Robert Wichterich, the youngest of his parents' three children, attended Cape Girardeau schools and St. Vincent's College. As a young man in his late teens, he was "connected" with the Texas and Pacific Railroad Hospital in Marshall, Texas. In 1889, at the age of 21, he was back in Cape Girardeau as a registered pharmacist in a drugstore partnership with Dr. J. H. Rider. Wichterich apparently spent most of the next decade away from home becoming a medical doctor. He entered Memphis Hospital Medical

⁴Images of the Past in the City of Roses (Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Concord Publishing House, 1993), pp.112-113; and Missouri, A Guide to the "Show Me" State (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1941), pp. 199-202.

⁵Douglass, Robert Sidney, History of Southeast Missouri (New York: Lewis Publishing Company, 1912; reprint ed., Cape Girardeau, Missouri: Ramfre Press, 1961), p. 690.

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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
Cape Girardeau County, MO

College, followed by the St. Louis College of Physicians and Surgeons and finally Barnes Medical College, from which he was graduated in 1899 with the degree of M.D. Then he returned to Cape Girardeau and set up a local medical practice. His specialty was internal medicine.⁶

Dr. Wichterich might have settled in Cape Girardeau to be near relatives and friends in any case, but at the time he obtained his degree there was probably a shortage of physicians because of the city's rapid growth. When Nicholas Wichterich died in 1900, Dr. Wichterich, also a Democrat, served the remainder of his father's term as city treasurer. He also served on the Cape Girardeau board of health and was a member of local and state medical societies, the Benevolent & Protective Order of Elks and the Knights of Columbus. In 1907, he opened his own drugstore which was presumably located in the thriving German business district known as the Haarig, near his home.⁷

Dr. Wichterich married Elma Taylor, daughter of J. W. Taylor, in 1902. Four years later the Cape Girardeau Democrat reported that Dr. Wichterich was having a new family dwelling (the present house) built on Good Hope Street.⁸

The extent of Mrs. Wichterich's input into the design is unknown, but the house certainly incorporates conveniences that a wife (or husband) of the period would be likely to appreciate. The servant's room with a separate back staircase was to be expected in a house for the well-to-do, but the functional step-saving kitchen, accessible laundry areas beyond the public rooms, modern heating, plumbing and electrical systems and other amenities added up to a relatively progressive early 20th century house. Even the location was choice, with commanding views of the Mississippi River to be had from the attic dormers. Nonetheless, after sixteen years of marriage, Mrs. Wichterich found reasons to leave both hearth and husband; greater freedom for women was another aspect of the Progressive Era that championed Colonial Revival architecture. Before vacating her progressive new house in 1918, however, according to local history, Mrs. Wichterich stoked the boiler and opened the valves on the shiny gold radiators to the maximum, eventually causing a blast that deposited sections of the plaster ceiling in soggy clumps. About a year after his wife's rather dramatic exit, Dr. Wichterich became ill and died at his medical office.

Hugo A. Lang and his wife Anna bought the house from Dr. Wichterich a few months after his wife left. The property remained in the Lang family until the death of Hugo A. Lang, Jr., in 1993.⁹

ARCHITECTURE: Popular architecture is a term that applies to buildings whose form and design fit somewhere between folk and high-style. In their purest form, folk or vernacular buildings are constructed of local materials crafted by builders to fill a specific need, while popular architecture is based on commercially manufactured building materials. While the basic forms of popular architecture are often borrowed from folk housing types, exteriors of such houses are likely to be elaborated with elements of

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Cape Girardeau Democrat, May 11, 1906.

⁹Bernhardt H. Lang, who inherited the property in 1993, provided historical information about the Wichterich House.

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Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
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academically designed, or high-style, buildings. The Wichterich House is an ideal example of a popular building form dressed up with fashionable high-style ornamentation.

The basic form of the Wichterich House is that of the American Foursquare, while its stylistic elements are related to the Colonial Revival style. Common throughout the Midwest, the American Foursquare (and forms of the bungalow) were extremely popular house forms from circa 1890 through 1930, as prefabricated components became increasingly available to builders. Characteristics include a basic two-story cubic shape, set on a high basement, capped with a hipped roof and fronted by a full-width porch of one story. The American Foursquare was promoted as a simpler, economical alternative to the excesses and extravagance of Late Victorian designs; their relative austerity was seen as more dignified. Also, their simple cubic shape provided the most space for the least expenditure on materials and labor. Set on a high basement, the two-story form gave the houses a sense of solidity and massiveness without the complex rooflines and projections typical of, for example, the Queen Anne style. Such houses "fulfilled one of the oldest social functions of the art of architecture--to provide a cushion against future shock, to provide a sense of roots without which humans cannot long or happily live."¹⁰

Plan books, mail-order companies and other disseminators of the form promoted the Foursquare house as uniquely and perfectly suited to the American family, and it was an easy sell. Foursquare houses were among the most popular designs offered by the suppliers of house kits--Sears, Roebuck and Company, Montgomery Ward & Co., Aladdin Redi-Cut Houses, the Radford Architectural Company, etc. Sears alone offered at least 28 different versions.¹¹

The basic floor plan can be traced to the 19th century double-pile house type and the 18th century four-over-four Georgian mansions found in England and America. The Foursquare has been described as a "Georgian mansion reborn in middle-class form." The form continued through the 19th century by adapting its stylistic "shell" to conform to the popular style of the moment. Thus the basic Foursquare plan can be seen under the low-pitched, bracketed roof of the Italianate cube, and behind the bay windows, corner turrets and pre-cut trim of many Queen Anne houses. The Wichterich House and other stylistically-enhanced American Foursquare houses of the late 19th and early 20th century exemplify the continuation of this persistent form as disseminated through popular culture.¹² Although many Foursquares have minimal if any stylistic elaboration, examples can be found in every popular style of the late 19th and early 20th centuries; others display an eclectic mixture of styles. While the Wichterich House is mildly eclectic with its Queen Anne art glass window and wraparound porch and its Greek Revival broken transom above the main entry, it is unquestionably a Colonial Revival house.

Colonial Revival has been America's most popular and persistent architectural style, originating in the 1880s and flourishing into the present. The reawakening of interest in the nation's colonial antecedents is generally traced to the Philadelphia Centennial in 1876, but colonial architecture was also prominently

¹⁰Gowans, Alan, The Comfortable House: North American Suburban Architecture 1890-1930 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1986), p.148.

¹¹Stevenson, Katherine, and H. Ward Jandl, Houses by Mail: A Guide to Houses from Sears, Roebuck and Company (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1986), pp. 263-296.

¹²Gowans, op.cit., p. 87.

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featured at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. The year after the Philadelphia Centennial, the architectural firm of McKim, Mead, White and Bigelow made a well-publicized tour of surviving Georgian and Federal buildings in New England. Subsequently they designed two buildings, the Appleton House in Lennox, Massachusetts and the Taylor House in Newport, Rhode Island, which became models for the two most prevalent Colonial Revival subtypes through about 1910. While these early renderings were interpretations rather than historically accurate copies of colonial architecture, Colonial Revival houses built from 1915 through about 1935 more closely resembled the real thing. In the 1930s, the Great Depression began a trend toward simplification of the style which has continued through the present, as exemplified by the Williamsburg Colonial.¹³

An inherently conservative style, Colonial Revival provided a link to a simpler past and a sense of continuity in times of rapid change. For many Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, "there was a search for order, unity, and structure--reassurance that this incredibly disparate land had a worthy history, a legitimate social order, and a class hierarchy that reflected that order." The early Colonial Revival houses were typically built by members of a newly formed social class bound together by, among other things, financial success. With an array of architectural styles available, however, those who opted for Colonial Revival over Romanesque, Chateausque, Beaux-Arts, Tudor, etc., "were less inclined to display their material success so conspicuously."¹⁴

While Colonial Revival has consistently provided an architectural connection with the past, it also has been influenced by changing social currents. At the time the Wichterich House was built in 1906, ideas of progressive reform were permeating American society. Among other things, this movement sought to improve the perceived inadequacies of late Victorian life through the application of scientific principles and, in the case of architecture, good design. Both the progressive era reformers and advocates of the Colonial Revival style were motivated by a longing for a past that they perceived as simple, stable and virtuous. Progressive reform was a reaction to a variety of social problems resulting from widespread mechanization, urbanization, monopolistic corporations, corrupt political machines, the introduction of new technologies and a great influx of immigrants.¹⁵

Reformers who sought improvement by changing the home environment developed an aesthetic based on principles of simplicity, honesty, naturalness, and organic unity. Simplicity of design was seen as an antidote to late 19th century complexity and clutter, while making the home an oasis from an increasingly hectic modern workplace. Colonial Revival architecture fit the progressive notion of simplicity because its design precedents were rooted in the houses of an earlier, less technologically complex era. The progressive notion of honesty in design focused on allowing the natural qualities of materials to assert themselves. Architectural decoration was to come primarily from the inherent color and texture of the building materials, and Colonial Revival was considered inherently honest because of its connection to the

¹³McAlester and McAlester, op.cit., p. 326, and Baker, John Milnes, American House Styles (New York: W. W. Dutton & Company, 1994), pp. 91-92, 149.

¹⁴Baker, op.cit., pp. 92-105.

¹⁵May, Bridget A., Progressivism and the Colonial Revival: The Modern Colonial House, 1900-1920 (Winterthur Portfolio 26, No. 2/3, 1991), pp. 108-127, and Garraty, John A., The American Nation: A History of the United States (New York: Harper & Row, Fourth Edition, 1979).

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founding fathers. The progressive notion of naturalness in architecture meant that a house should be built to withstand the constant onslaught of nature rather than modeled after it, as was favored by the Victorians; Colonial precedents were universally admired for their solidity and longevity. Organic unity meant spurning the complexity and multiplicity of late 19th century designs in favor of a single unifying design principle for each house. The common practice of mixing styles was rejected. Colonial Revival architecture satisfied the notion of organic unity because it provided a single style that could be used for everything from exterior ornamentation to the furniture inside, although in practice many such houses were characterized by an eclectic mixture of styles. Other Progressive Era influences on house design included more open floor plans with fewer rooms, smaller houses which were generally similar in plan and appearance, and a strong emphasis on modern, efficient and hygienic kitchens and bathrooms.¹⁶

Georgian and Federal houses of the 18th and early 19th centuries provided the models for the Colonial Revival buildings of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Typical features include a simple block-like massing topped with a simple gable, hipped or gambrel roof, dormers, symmetrical fenestration, emphasized entrances, and the use of classical ornamentation particularly at the main entrance and cornice line. Early 20th century examples were interpretations of colonial forms guided by progressive ideals. Advocates often referred to them as "modern colonial" to suggest a continuity with a virtuous past and progressive present. The primary design guideline for Colonial Revival houses constructed in the first decade of the 20th century was simplicity. Unlike the large and complex Colonial Revival houses constructed in the last quarter of the 19th century, 20th century buildings were likely to have uncomplicated profiles, simple roofs and restrained ornamentation.¹⁷

As an American Foursquare, the 1906 Wichterich House with its projecting side bay and wraparound porch is more than the form requires, but it is an American Foursquare nonetheless. As an American Foursquare with Colonial Revival styling, the house best exemplifies the Hipped Roof with Full-Width Porch subtype as defined by McAlester and McAlester.¹⁸ Overall, the Wichterich House is typical of early 20th century Colonial Revival houses in that it is a more or less free interpretation of colonial design principles. (After around 1915, Colonial Revival houses began to more closely resemble their historic prototypes.) Fine Colonial Revival features present on the Wichterich House include porch columns with Ionic capitals, pedimented dormers, a Palladian window, and modillions and dentil bands along the overhanging eaves. The largely intact interior reflects Colonial Revival ideals of simplicity, openness and convenience, along with a classical aesthetic. The large reception hall and living room essentially constitute one large chamber, reflecting the Progressive Era vision of an open floor plan with fewer rooms. The house's practical plan included a butler's pantry chock full of built-in cabinets adjacent to both the functional kitchen and the dining room. Separate from the stylish main staircase, a boxed winder stairway continues from the basement to the attic and is convenient to the servant's upstairs bedroom. Transom windows throughout the second floor provided improved air circulation for comfort and health in the years before air conditioning. Interior appointments include typically fine molded woodwork with entablature

¹⁶May, op.cit.

¹⁷McAlester, op.cit., pp. 321-326, and May, op.cit., pp. 114-115.

¹⁸McAlester, op.cit., pp. 320-321.

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enframements. The house was constructed late enough for it to be fully wired for electricity and equipped with modern plumbing and heating systems, along with other conveniences of the period.

In 1906, the Wichterich House was stylish while projecting the somewhat restrained public image that was appropriate for a young, recently married physician and druggist in Cape Girardeau. Robert Felix Wichterich had been practicing medicine for around seven years when the house was built and he still had enough money to open a drugstore the next year, so it can be assumed that the family enjoyed more than average prosperity; presumably he could have afforded a more ostentatious house if a display of material success had been the goal. Apparently both Wichterich and his father Nicholas Wichterich were well-known local figures, not only in the German community but in Cape Girardeau society as a whole. Nicholas Wichterich, who had lived in Cape Girardeau since 1860 if not earlier, operated a local flour mill for several years and was serving as city treasurer at the time of his death in 1900. Robert, active in medical and fraternal organizations and a member of the local board of health, completed his father's term. He was a Catholic and, like his father, a Democrat. While the Wichterich House was a practical Colonial Revival house rather than, say, a Beaux-Arts mansion, it epitomized early 20th century comfort and style.

Today the Wichterich House, a product of the Progressive Era, is undergoing renovation that is sensitive to its architectural character. Relatively unaltered over the years, it possesses a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, craftsmanship and feeling. The Wichterich House exemplifies an early 20th century American Foursquare house with a strong complement of Colonial Revival elements, and it is one of the best preserved examples of the style in Cape Girardeau.

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- Oral Interview, Bernhardt H. Lang, descendant of Hugo A. Lang and Hugo A. Lang Jr.

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10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at the northwest corner of the intersection of Lorimier and Good Hope streets, proceed north 100 feet along the west right-of-way of Lorimier Street; then proceed west 180 feet to the east right of way of the alley which runs north and south between Lorimier and Middle streets; then proceed south 100 feet along the east right-of-way of the alley to the north right-of-way of Good Hope Street; then proceed east 180 feet along the north right-of-way of Good Hope Street to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries encompass all property historically associated with the Wichterich House, including a circa 1920s garage which is noncontributing.

11. Form Prepared By

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Photographs

The following information is the same for all photographs

Wichterich, Robert Felix and Elma Taylor, House
Cape Girardeau, Cape Girardeau County, Missouri
Roger Maserang (#1-5)
Scott Myers (#6-9)
March 1999

Missouri Cultural Resources Inventory, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Jefferson City

List of Photographs

1. Primary (south) facade, facing north.
2. East and north elevations, facing southwest.
3. North and west elevations, facing southeast.
4. Roofline and dormer detail, facing north.
5. Lower main staircase landing in reception hall, facing northeast.
6. Living room, dining room and butler's pantry, facing north.
7. Dining room and living room, facing south.
8. Second floor hallway, facing south.
9. Upstairs bedroom in southwest corner, facing northeast.



WICHTERICHT, ROBERT FELIX AND
 ELMA TAYLOR, HOUSE
 CAPE GIRARDEAU COUNTY, MO
 16/276480/4130850

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