

PRESERVATION NEWSLETTER

DISTRICT SPOTLIGHT: SEMINARY RIDGE



THE TOWN OF EAU CLAIRE

The City of Columbia was expanding rapidly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The vehicular age was dawning, and trolley cars were able to move large groups of people rapidly to the outlying suburbs located to the southeast and to the north of the city's historic borders. Land developers saw the trolley lines as paths to development and therefore wealth, and soon began buying up large tracts of land to create new neighborhoods along the tracks. One such developer, Frederick Hargrave Hyatt, began the development of Hyatt's Park and created several neighborhoods, selling off lots at auction and encouraging the growth of the area. He helped establish an electric railway line out to his developments in 1896. Hyatt donated land to Columbia College, and was a dynamic force for developing the small town of Eau Claire, which was incorporated in 1899 with over 200 residents. The town was in the shape of a circle, with its center at the intersection of North Main Street and Monticello Road.

Just north of the intersection, the ornately decorated brick American Lutheran Survey building, later the Eau Claire Town Hall, was completed in 1914, followed later by the Survey Publishing Building (commonly referred to as the Eau Claire Print Building). Churches and the Lutheran Seminary also began building in the area during the early 1900s. Built of stone and brick, these substantial new buildings offered the town a sense of permanence and stability. The City of Columbia annexed part of Eau Claire in 1913, with the remainder annexed in 1955.



Tomlinson Map excerpt, 1928

DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

Located just above the nucleus of the small town of Eau Claire, the Seminary Ridge neighborhood developed slowly between early 1900 and the mid-1960s. A plat from 1910 indicates that the Monticello Home Company owned the entire area forming a triangle between North Main Street, Ensor and Arlington (west boundary) and Calhoun Street (later Timrod Street), excluding the Lutheran Seminary campus. This new neighborhood was named Monticello, and playing on the presidential theme it evoked, original street names included Mt. Vernon and Jefferson (later changed to Calhoun, and changed again to Timrod). The earliest homes in the area were built adjacent to each other on Muller Avenue, with another home built on Wildwood Avenue in 1913. Bungalows built during the 1920s appear concentrated in the southern part of the neighborhood, along Jackson, Duke, and Hillcrest Avenues, as well as their western border, Ensor Avenue. The Great Depression brought construction nearly to a halt, though a few buildings were added along Main Street, Arlington, Wildwood, and Sycamore. Construction picked up during the 1940s and 1950s, with homes filling in along Sycamore, Wildwood, and Ensor Avenue and then filling in along Timrod during the 1950s and 1960s.



Sanborn Map excerpt, 1950

ARCHITECTURAL DIVERSITY

This district is very architecturally eclectic due to its extended period of development. The earliest homes from the 1910s have wood clapboard siding and tall roofs and are concentrated on Muller Avenue. By the 1920s, Bungalows with wood siding and low-slung, varied rooflines and exaggerated porch columns became the norm. Brick siding took over as the dominant exterior building material by the 1930s and 1940s with the influx of the Minimal Traditional Style and continued into the 1950s through the 1960s with Ranch Style homes.



Bungalow



Minimal Traditional



Ranch

NOTABLE BUILDINGS

As an architecturally diverse neighborhood, Seminary Ridge has several notable and architecturally distinct buildings. The oldest building in Seminary Ridge stands out as the grand focal point up Ensor Avenue, an all steel house on Timrod is one of the only examples of its type in the state, and a modern house on Wildwood stands as an example of mid-century ideals.

ENSOR-KEENAN

The Ensor-Keenan House is the oldest house in Seminary Ridge and one of its most recognizable, located at the top of Wildwood Drive. This house, which now serves as a City of Columbia park and event space, was originally built in the 1860s for Dr. Joseph Ensor (rebuilt in the 1890s after a fire). Dr. Ensor was from Maryland and served as a medical doctor in the Union Army during the Civil War. He came to Columbia during his service and stayed on, becoming the head physician at what was referred to then as the Lunatic Asylum, now called the Bull Street Hospital campus. The house was well regarded for its Italianate architecture and gardens when the Ensor family lived there, with descriptions detailing fragrant tea olive bushes, large ferns, and a koi pond on the estate.



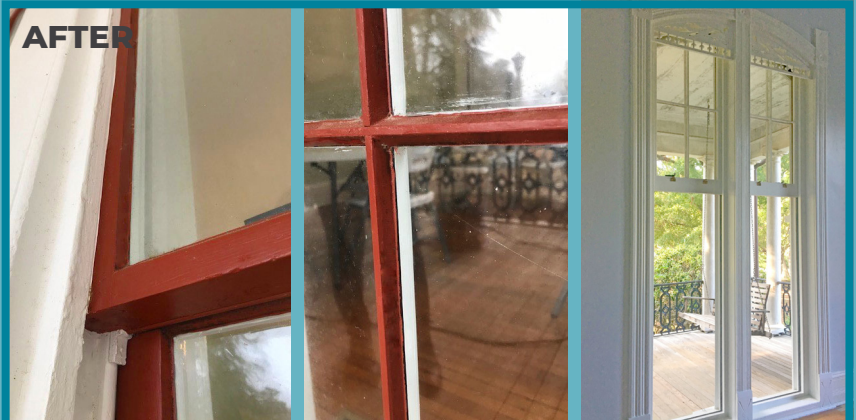
RESTORATION SPOTLIGHT

BEFORE



Part of the recent Ensor-Keenan renovation spearheaded by the City's Parks and Recreation Department involved the careful restoration of the original windows. A local craftsman worked window by window to fully repair each window to working condition. Today, these 150 year old windows operate and look like new.

AFTER



NOTABLE BUILDINGS

MODERN HOUSE

This unique home at 900 Wildwood Drive was referred to as the B.T. Bodie Home at the time of construction in 1951. As Mr. Bodie had served as the mayor of Eau Claire and Mrs. Bodie was a noted hostess, many gatherings were held at the house. One of the most notable was the 1953 Eau Claire Holiday House tour, where the house was described as being “ultra modern in architectural design” with “imaginative creations for Christmastime [that] will create the look of the future.” Currently the house is unoccupied but still maintains many of its notable details such as built in planters, sliding doors and terrazzo floors.



LUSTRON HOME

Post World War II there was a nationwide push to use new and innovative materials to meet rising demand for affordable housing. One effort was made by the Lustron Company of Ohio, which received a government contract to manufacture prefabricated homes that could be quickly assembled anywhere. While these were designed to be accessible for the average family, the \$11,000 price tag was too much for many. The company only operated for about three years, from 1947-1950. Other companies continued to manufacture similar houses from the same plans, which is most likely the case with the house at 1007 Timrod Street, which was advertised as “unusual” new construction in 1955.



HABS photo, Lustron Home Arlington, VA

Open For Inspection
UNUSUAL
1007 TIMROD
\$11,000
Beautiful all metal Lustron home made of porcelain enameled steel inside and out combining the inherent strength of steel and the permanent beauty of porcelain enamel. Well located in a beautiful lot in the garden spot of Eau Claire. This home is only 2 blocks from high school, shopping center and bus line. Only 3 blocks from grammar school. All doors in this Lustron home slide into the walls to provide more living space. The architecture is contemporary ranch style. Many built in features in this 5½ room home such as automatic heating by radiant panels, cabinets cupboards, bookcase and dressing table. A lot of permanent beauty with no upkeep. All for this low price.



HABS photo, Lustron Home Arlington, VA; master bedroom, left, and bathroom, right

WINDOW OF THE MONTH

Windows are one of the most important aspects of any historic building. The design, materials, and placement of windows on a building help define the character of the building, and the loss of these important historic features can forever alter the building's original character and historic value.

Each month of 2023, preservation staff will shine a light on one of our many local historic windows. From mid-century corner steel windows to large Victorian era wood windows, Columbia's historic buildings host a variety of distinct and intact architectural features worthy of celebration. Read on to learn more about January's Window of the Month and check the **City's website** each month to see what window will be featured next.

WINDOW OF THE MONTH JANUARY 2023

This month's window can be found in the Seminary Ridge neighborhood. Windows with diamond patterns are often referred to as lozenge or lattice windows, and they are most commonly found on Queen Anne, Craftsman Bungalow, and Tudor Revival Style houses locally (generally built in the 1910s to 1930s). This window on a Craftsman Bungalow in Seminary Ridge represents one of the earlier architectural styles of this neighborhood.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- *Seminary Ridge District Information*: <https://planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/districts/#seminary>
- *Eau Claire Historic Resources Survey*: <https://planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/city-plans/#NeighborhoodPlans>
- *Lustron Home HABS Photos and Resources*: <https://rhdc.org/lustron>
- *The Ranch House in Georgia: Guidelines for Evaluation*: https://issuu.com/georgiashpo/docs/ranch_house_guidelines
- *Window of the Month*: <https://planninganddevelopment.columbiasc.gov/architectural-highlights/>



We Are Columbia

This newsletter was created by the Preservation Staff of the City of Columbia's Planning and Development Services Department. If you have any questions about your specific historic property please contact your district's preservation planner. Contact information can be found on our [website](#). If you would like to be added to our newsletter mailing list please send an email to preservation@columbiasc.gov.