

Oregon Historic Site Record

LOCATION AND PROPERTY NAME						
address:	122 SW Marconi Ave Portland, Multnomah County		historic name:	Bennes, John Virginus & Annice, House		
assoc addresses:			current/other names:			
location descr:			block/lot/tax lot:			
			twshp/rng/sect/qtr sect:	1N 1E 32		
PROPERTY CHARACTERISTICS						
resource type:	Building	height (stories):	2.0	total elig resources:	1	
elig evaluation:	eligible/significant			total inelig resources:	1	
prim constr date:	1911	second date:	1927	NR Status:	Individually Listed	
				date indiv listed:	03/27/2013	
primary orig use:	Single Dwelling			orig use comments:		
second orig use:						
primary style:	Prairie School			prim style comments:		
secondary style:				sec style comments:		
primary siding:	Stucco			siding comments:		
secondary siding:	Cast Stone					
plan type:	Foursquare (Box)			architect:	Bennes, John Virginus	
				builder:		
comments/notes:						
GROUPINGS / ASSOCIATIONS						
Not associated with any surveys or groupings.						
SHPO INFORMATION FOR THIS PROPERTY						
NR date listed:	03/27/2013	Special Assessment			106 Project(s):	None
ILS survey date:		Status	Term	End Yr	Federal Tax	
RLS survey date:		Closed	1st	2024	Project(s):	None
Gen file date:	02/25/2008					
ARCHITECTURAL / PROPERTY DESCRIPTION						
<i>(Includes expanded description of the building/property, setting, significant landscape features, outbuildings and alterations)</i>						
<p>The John Virginus Bennes House, located at 122 SW Marconi Avenue in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of Portland, Multnomah County, Oregon, was built in 1911 as the home of Oregon architect, John Virginus Bennes. The house is two stories with a basement and approximately 4,370 square feet in size. It was the first residence constructed in the Arlington Heights neighborhood, which is adjacent and within Washington Park. The house is designed in the Prairie School style with Mediterranean influences and exhibits the strong horizontal lines emphasized by broad, low-hanging eaves, which is characteristic of the style. The residence has a rectangular plan and a low-pitched hip roof, with the ridgeline perpendicular to the front lot line. It is a wood-frame building with a stucco finish, a tile roof, and a concrete foundation. The front façade includes a partially enclosed porch on the first story and a band of vertically-oriented windows under the eaves on the second floor, which further emphasizes the horizontal lines of the building. The ornamental detailing of the house is restrained and honors craftsmanship as demonstrated by the ornamental frieze beneath the upper eave, the Prairie School-style planters anchoring several corners of the building and property, and the glass-and-metal overhang above the entryway. The interior of the house features an open floor plan of large rooms, as is characteristic of most styles of the early 20th century. The foyer is dominated by a dramatic yet simple central stair case and heavily articulated molding in a geometric pattern. The house has undergone minor alterations several times since its construction, including the addition and enclosure of a back porch into a breakfast room, addition of a detached garage, conversion to forced air heating system and remodeling of the kitchen and three bathrooms. However, the residence retains the distinctive influences of the Prairie School style, as well as its Mediterranean features, and is a strong representation of the architectural work of John Virginus Bennes.</p>						
HISTORY						
<i>(Chronological, descriptive history of the property from its construction through at least the historic period - preferably to the present)</i>						
<p>The John Virginus Bennes House, located in the Arlington Heights neighborhood of Portland, Oregon, is significant under National Register Criterion C as a remarkable example of a mix of Mediterranean and Prairie School style of architecture, which is said to be the first original American architectural style. The house embodies the Prairie Style through its strong horizontal lines, stucco finish, low pitched hip roof, and open floor plan. The house also qualifies for listing under National Register Criterion B, as it was the personal home of John Virginus Bennes, a highly regarded Oregon architect who has been credited with introducing the Prairie School style to Portland, but also designed numerous buildings in Oregon that are listed on the National Register, including the Hollywood Theater and the nearly 50 buildings and complexes in the Oregon State University National Register Historic District. Bennes designed and completed the house in 1911 and lived there until a few months prior to his death in 1943, which is the Period of Significance for the home. The John Virginus Bennes House is an excellent example of mixed Mediterranean and Prairie School style architecture, which was pioneered by famed architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Prairie School design is seen as both an architectural style and aesthetic movement. Prairie School homes, with their characteristic strong lines, boxy forms, open flowing floor plans, and relatively subdued detailing, contrasted with the Victorian style of architecture popular in late 19th and early 20th century; which focused on complex forms, numerous small rooms, and ornate detailing. As noted by Portland architectural historians William Hawkins and William Willingham, the work of Bennes and his partners was among "...the most avant-garde architecture to be seen in Portland" at the time that Bennes was designing his own home: "Such radical departure in Portland, however, caused little stir, despite the great inventiveness for the period and the promising possibilities of an entirely new aesthetic." Prairie School style buildings are relatively rare in Oregon. The Prairie School Traveler website lists 15 homes, including the John Bennes House, as exhibiting the Prairie School style in Portland, Oregon. Of such 15 homes, six are located in the southwest area of Portland. The Bennes House, along with the Aaron Maegly House, are the only two listed Prairie School style homes located in the Arlington Heights neighborhood and both were designed by Bennes, who is credited with introducing the Prairie School style to Portland. The Maegly House was completed in 1915, four years after the John Bennes House became the first home completed in Arlington Heights. The Bennes and Maegly houses are similar in structure, both showcasing the strong horizontal lines and organic focus of the Prairie School style. The two homes also have broad tiled roofs; however, the Maegly House incorporates more Mediterranean influences in its ornate and somewhat flowery frieze work and detailing. Architectural historian Gideon Bosker has noted that, "The Bennes house, which is many ways was a precursor for the more ostentatious Maegly home, revealed the architect's desire for order and abstracted shapes." The John Bennes House adheres more closely to the simple lines and ornamentation of traditional Prairie School Design, except for the "unusual...addition of brackets which appear to add support to the widely extended eaves." The personal residence Bennes designed for himself within Washington Park in Portland, Oregon embodies both Bennes' immense talent as well as his appreciation for Prairie School design. The house boldly represents the Prairie School style through its stucco exterior, low-pitched tiled roof, broad overhanging eaves, ribbons of plentiful windows, and restrained use of ornament. The interior boasts the open floor plan and dominant central chimney associated with Prairie School design, along with art glass, built-in furniture, and simple yet finely crafted woodwork and moldings. Where Bennes' personal interpretation of the Prairie School style can be seen, in his Prairie School residences as well as other work, is the incorporation of highly articulated friezes and brackets on otherwise relatively simple volumes with a restrained expression. Construction of the Bennes House was completed in 1911 and the Bennes family lived in the home until a few months prior to his death in 1943. Bennes moved to Portland in 1906 after working on several projects in Baker, Oregon. While living in Portland, Bennes</p>						

designed numerous historically and architecturally notable buildings, many of which are listed on the National Register. Some of Bennes' most notable works include the Hotel Cornelius, the Hollywood Theater, Oregon State University buildings within the Oregon State University Historic District, Temple Beth Israel, and the A.H. Maegly House.

RESEARCH INFORMATION

Title Records	✓ Census Records	Property Tax Records	Local Histories
✓ Sanborn Maps	✓ Biographical Sources	✓ SHPO Files	Interviews
Obituaries	Newspapers	State Archives	✓ Historic Photographs
City Directories	Building Permits	State Library	

Local Library:

Historical Society:

University Library:

Other Respository:

Bibliography:

Books and Articles Bosker, Gideon and Lena Lencek. Frozen Music, A History of Portland Architecture. Oregon Historical Society Pr., 1985. Clark, Rosalind. Oregon Style, Architecture from 1840 to the 1950s. Professional Book Center, 1983. Ferriday, Virginia Guest, et. al., Historic Resource Inventory. Portland, Oregon: City of Portland, 1984. Hawkins III, William J. and Willingham, William F. Classic Houses of Portland, Oregon 1850- 1950. Timber Press, 1999. King, Bart. An Architectural Guidebook to Portland. Oregon State University Press, 2007. Nelson, Donald R. Portland's Washington Park: A Pictorial History. Donald Nelson, 2010. Obituary of John V. Bennes, Oregonian (Portland, OR), November 30, 1943. Obituary of Mrs. John V. Bennes, Oregonian (Portland, OR), April 19, 1953. Ritz, Richard Ellison. Architects of Oregon. Lair Hill Publishing, 2002. Online Publications Landis, Larry. "Portland's "Versatile Stylist": The Architectural Legacy of John V. Bennes. Lecture. Architectural Heritage Center, Portland. Mar. 6, 2010. Scholar's Archive @ OSU. OSU Libraries. Web. . "Oregon Encyclopedia - Oregon History and Culture." Oregon Encyclopedia - Oregon History and Culture. N.p., n.d. Web. 15 May 2012. . Oregon Historical Sites Database, http://heritagedata.prd.state.or.us/historic/index.cfm?do=v.desp_main, accessed August 2012. Other Resources American Institutes of Architects, Application for Membership, John V. Bennes, November 17, 1916. City of Portland. Buildings Bureau, files and plumbing inspection records. City of Portland, Buildings Bureau, microfiche and card files. Dodds, Gordon B., National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, March 15, 1985, Item 8, Page 3. Larry Landis, lecture entitled "Oregon's Versatile Stylist: The Architectural Legacy of John V. Bennes," The Oregon Encyclopedia sponsored lecture at McMenamins Mission Theater, 6 August 2012. Multnomah County Tax Assessor records, microform, automated data files and card files. Oregon Historical Sites Database, http://heritagedata.prd.state.or.us/historic/index.cfm?do=v.desp_main, accessed August 2012. Oregon Historical Society, Vertical Files. Meijer, Peter R., National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form – Oregon State University Historic District, April 2008. Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Portland, Oregon. U.S. Census, 1920.