



Crystal Lake Historic Preservation Commission



Van Natta House, North

127 College Street

Built 1906

In 1885, the German Lutheran School was built on McHenry Avenue near the current site of Immanuel Lutheran School. By 1906, the school was too small for the growing number of students (150 in two rooms) so a new facility had to be constructed. Rather than tear the old school down, William Van Natta, Jr., purchased the building, moved it to College Street, split it in half, and used the two pieces as the first floors of two new homes. As a result, 127 College Street has two construction dates, the first floor being 21 years older than the second.

The home is an excellent example of folk Victorian architecture featuring a prominent cross gable configuration with a granite fieldstone foundation, narrow clapboards, and wide racking cornice with returns below the eaves. Also known as a "Symmetrical Victorian," this practical vernacular form of architecture eschews the complexity of bays, projections, towers, and elaborate moldings associated with the Queen Anne style. The same thrift that Mr. Van Natta showed in reusing the former school is evident in the simplicity of its design.

William Van Natta Jr., was born in Leydon, Illinois in 1866. In his lifetime he was a farmer, horse car conductor, and a fireman for the railroad. He never lived in either of the houses he built on College Street but rather rented them out for several years. For a time, it appeared as though William's mother and father would spend their golden years together in one of the houses after their farmhouse burned down, but Mrs. Van Natta passed away before they could relocate. Van Natta Sr. chose to live with his various children rather than live alone.

Beginning in the 1980s, a series of owners began restoring the home culminating in 1998 when the Penkava family sought landmark status. The Van Natta house was the third property landmarked by the Historic Preservation Commission.