

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

*Spokane City-County Historic Preservation Office, City Hall, Third Floor
808 Spokane Falls Boulevard, Spokane, Washington 99201-3337*

1. Name of Property

Historic Name **MELE HOUSE**
And/Or Common Name

2. Location

Street & Number 302 E. Mission Avenue
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, Washington 99202
Parcel Number 35172.0401

3. Classification

Category of Property	Ownership of Property	Status of Property	Present Use of Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both		<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> residential
<input type="checkbox"/> object	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes, restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes, unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other

4. Owner of Property

Name Paul and Elizabeth Essex
Street & Number 4119 N. Marguerite Dr.
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, Washington 99212
Telephone Number/E-mail (509) 927-4503

5. Location of Legal Description

Courthouse, Registry of Deeds Spokane County Courthouse
Street Number 1116 West Broadway
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99260
County Spokane

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Title Logan Neighborhood Survey
Date 1985 Federal State County Local
Depository for Survey Records City-County of Spokane Historic Preservation Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Condition
 excellent
 good
 fair
 deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check One
 unaltered
 altered
Check One
 original site
 moved & date _____

Narrative description of present and original physical appearance is found on one or more continuation sheets.

8. Spokane Register Criteria and Statement of Significance

Applicable Spokane Register of Historic Places Criteria--mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for Spokane Register listing:

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Spokane 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 history.

Narrative statement of significance is found on one or more continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography is found on one or more continuation sheets.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property	Less than one acre.
Verbal Boundary Description	Sinto 3 rd First Subdivision P/Block P/Lot 1
Verbal Boundary Justification	Nominated property includes entire parcel and urban legal description.

11. Form Prepared By

Name and Title	Aimee E. Flinn
Organization	City-County of Spokane Historic Preservation Office
Telephone Number/E-mail	(509) 635-6985/ aflinn@spokanecity.org
Street and Number	808 W. Spokane Falls Blvd.
City, State, Zip Code	Spokane, Washington 99201
Date	November 2007

12. Additional Documentation

Map
Photographs and Slide

13. Signature of Owner(s)

Paul Vernon Essex
Elizabeth M. Essex

14. For Official Use Only:

Date Received: _____ Attest: _____

Date Heard: _____ City Clerk

Commission Decision: _____ Approved
as to Form: Michael P. Perels

Council/Board Action: _____ Assistant City Attorney

Date: _____

We hereby certify that this property has been listed in the Spokane Register of Historic Places.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR, City of Spokane

or

CHAIR, Spokane County Commissioners

CHAIR, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission

Russ Ben

OFFICER, City/County Historic Preservation Officer

City/County Historic Preservation Office

Third Floor - City Hall, Spokane, WA 99201

DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

Constructed in 1923, the Mele House is a good example of the Arts & Crafts/Craftsman style. Identifying features of the Craftsman style include the home's dual front gable design and shallow-pitched roof, wide partial-width front porch, decorative exposed beams and rafter ends, and stretcher bond brick cladding. The Mele House was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986 as a contributing historic resource of the Mission Avenue National Register Historic District. The Mele House is well-preserved and retains excellent integrity in original location, design, materials, workmanship, and association as a Craftsman style bungalow.

CURRENT APPEARANCE & CONDITION

Site

The Mele House is located on Lot 1, Block P in the Third Sinto First Subdivision and faces north onto East Mission Avenue, a broad boulevard with a center island parkway. The lot measures 50 feet wide and 140 feet deep. The house is framed by a manicured lawn and mature deciduous trees. A concrete walkway approaches the front porch from a concrete sidewalk which runs parallel to Mission Avenue. A second parking pad and driveway to a two-car garage face west on North Lidgerwood Street. The property is located within the Mission Avenue National Register Historic District, seven residential blocks along the tree-lined avenue that includes the Mission Avenue Parkway and which includes approximately fifty-seven single-family and multi-family homes built from the 1890s through the present.

Garage

A 1923 residential detached brick garage is located at the rear (south) of the lot, adjacent to the alley. Facing west onto North Lidgerwood Street, the front-gable two-car garage has a large modern garage door on the front and exposed beams in the gable face. The garage measures approximately 24 feet deep and 20 feet wide. A wood paneled door opens north towards the rear of the home. A pair of multi-pane windows are additionally featured on the north elevation that faces towards the home.

House Exterior

The Mele House forms a rectangular footprint which measures approximately 35 feet wide and 62 feet deep. The house is a one story building with a shallow-pitched dual front gable roof covered in asphalt/composition shingles. The roof has scroll-sawn exposed beams and rafter ends with plain fascia boards. A single cross-gable is located at the east elevation. The house is clad in stretcher bond red brick. Tripartite wood sash windows are featured throughout. A brick chimney penetrates the eave of the east elevation. The foundation is mortared cut basalt block.

North Elevation

The front, north, elevation features a dual front gable roof with a telescoping partial-width front porch. Supported by brick piers and characterized by a brick half-wall, the front porch features decorative exposed beams in the gable peak, plain fascia boards, and a half-round window. A tripartite window with multi-pane uppers is located just to the west of the front porch. A wood sash window is located under the porch and features a multi-pane upper. The main gable is clad in painted stucco and is defined by a modern metal sash sliding window. Poured concrete steps lead up to a modern solid wood front door.

West Elevation

This elevation faces west onto North Lidgerwood Street and features a brick chimney that penetrates the exposed eave, exposed rafter ends, and a cross-gable. Two fixed wood sash multi-pane windows flank either side of the chimney. A tripartite wood sash window is located in the cross-gable along with exposed beams in the gable peak. Three fixed sash windows are located in the basalt block foundation wall, looking into the basement. A single fixed sash window is located in the gable peak above the porch, along with exposed beams and rafters.

East Elevation

The east elevation features four main floor 1/1 wood sash double-hung windows. Two casement windows are located in the basalt block foundation wall, looking into the basement. Exposed rafter ends are featured along the eaves.

South Elevation

The rear, south, elevation mirrors almost exactly the front (north) elevation. A partial-width front-gable porch is located on the southwest corner, facing south towards the rear of the property and the two-car garage. The porch features exposed beams and rafters ends, a plain gable peak, and is supported by two brick columns. Poured concrete steps lead up to a wood, paneled rear door. A single double-hung wood sash window with a multi-pane upper is located under the porch. A pair of double-hung wood sash windows with multi-pane uppers are located just to the east of the porch.

Areas of Significance	Architecture
Period of Significance	1923
Significant Date	1923-1990
Architect	Unknown
Builder	Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1923, the Mele House was built during the second phase of single-family construction along East Mission Avenue, between the 200 and 800 block, what is today identified as the Mission Avenue National Historic District. In 1986, the Mele House was designated as a contributing historic resource of the Mission Avenue Historic District. The Mele House is an excellent example of the Craftsman style and was constructed for Pasquale and Rosina Mele, although it was occupied by numerous family members through the years. An Italian family, Peter and Rose Mele were the first listed occupants. Peter sold produce as part of the Mele and Son fruit and produce company located in the old Washington Market, and later the Central Market, originally located on Main Street (currently occupied by 809 West Main). The home remained in the Mele family until 1990. During the property's period of significance from 1923 to 1990, the Mele House achieved historic significance for its association with the architectural development and settlement of the Logan Neighborhood, specifically along East Mission Avenue, and is additionally architecturally significant as an example of the Craftsman style. Historically and architecturally significant, the Mele House is nominated for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category C.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Mission Avenue National Register Historic District and the Logan Neighborhood

The Mission Avenue Historic District is a seven block portion of East Mission Avenue between North Lidgerwood Street and North Hamilton Street in Spokane, Washington. Designated and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1986, the Logan Neighborhood, of which Mission Avenue is a part, was developed by Sylvester Heath and Jesuit missionary Father Joseph Cataldo who established Gonzaga University. The establishment of Father Cataldo's college kicked off a construction boom in the neighborhood:

The development of the college signaled a construction boom in the Mission Avenue area...[homes] were built from the 1890s to the 1930s; a majority of the homes were constructed in the last decade of the 19th century and the first decade of the 20th...A second smaller building boom dates to the years around 1910, when a number of bungalow and Craftsman style homes were built among the larger Victorian structures of the previous decades.¹

¹ Scott Brooks-Miller. *Mission Avenue Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1986.

Some of the first homes along Mission Avenue were constructed in 1890, but development in Logan Neighborhood had begun several years earlier. According to the Mission Avenue National Register nomination,

The neighborhood was planned by both Sylvester Heath and Father Joseph Cataldo. The land on the north side of the [Mission Avenue] boulevard was purchased and platted in 1884 by Heath, a prominent Spokane businessman and postmaster who made a fortune in stationary and paper goods and then expanded into the lucrative field of real estate speculation. About the same time, land on the south side of the [Mission Avenue] district, located in the Sinto Additions, was acquired by Father Joseph Cataldo...for the construction of a Jesuit college to provide a Roman Catholic education to families moving to the West.²

Father Cataldo's college, Gonzaga University, opened in 1887 setting off the construction of a series of Catholic institutions such as the associated Gonzaga Preparatory School and the Academy for Young Ladies which was opened in 1891 by the Sisters of the Holy Names. The influence of the Jesuits is revealed in the "physical plan" of the neighborhood, evident in a pattern of unusually wide streets (up to 100 feet in the case of Mission Avenue) or boulevards that could accommodate pedestrians as well as streetcars and carriages. The broad boulevard of Mission Avenue is especially significant as the first street north of the central business district that featured a "landscaped...tree lined median."³ Mission Avenue rapidly became a popular destination, so much so that when the famous Olmsted Brothers firm of Brookline, Massachusetts presented recommendations to the city of Spokane's parks board in 1907, they suggested "that the city incorporate the existing street into a plan that would link the city's parks with [similar] boulevards."⁴

Not only was the wide park-like boulevard of Mission Avenue popular, but so too was the neighborhood. With its collection of religious and educational institutions and well-loved parkway setting, the neighborhood was quickly labeled the "Holy Land." The overall attraction to the neighborhood, and specifically Mission Avenue, was of benefit to Sylvester Heath and other developers who sold residential lots along the boulevard where late Victorian style homes were rapidly constructed. The homes were "generally two and one-half stories, with clapboard and shingle siding...[featuring] intersecting gable and hip roof winds, with corner towers, bays, and broad verandas."⁵ As the Mission Avenue nomination states, "the earliest residents [of Mission Avenue] were not the wealthiest

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

men in the city but they were an important cross-section of successful and prosperous middle class business and professional leaders.”⁶ Many residents owned their businesses, were mining men, or railroad men, ran for city council, were bakers, bankers, or neighborhood druggists. As a result of the neighborhood’s growing popularity, the area along Mission Avenue developed quickly between 1890 and 1905. However, by the turn-of-the-century, the first building boom was easing. Late Victorian, architect-designed homes gave way in the 1910s, 20s and 30s to smaller bungalows in the Craftsman style. In 1913, the Heath Branch of the Spokane Library, so named for developer Sylvester Heath, was constructed with funds from Andrew Carnegie, Pittsburgh iron and steel magnate. Other homes and buildings would be constructed along East Mission as the years went by, during or after World War II, including St. Aloysius School, completed in 1940. Numerous multi-unit apartment complexes and buildings were constructed along the street from the late 1960s through the late 1970s. In recent history, according to the district nomination, the immediate years following World War II in combination with Gonzaga’s increasing student enrollment, contributed to an increasing demand for more housing in the neighborhood:

...larger homes in the district were converted to apartments. Other houses were demolished and in their place new and architecturally undistinguished apartment buildings were constructed. At the same time, a number of commercial business grew on either side of the district creating distinct boundaries...the district is the last intact remnant of the boulevard which still conveys the historic character of the street.⁷

Today the contributing resources located in the Mission Avenue Historic District remain, for the most part, unchanged. Since the district’s designation in 1986, a handful of homes have been demolished for infill construction, including 528 E. Mission Avenue. Infill has also taken place behind existing homes, resulting in larger secondary structures that are often multi-family rentals, or the construction of massive additions at the rear of homes.

Mele House

Part of the second housing boom from the 1910s through the 1930s, the Mele House was constructed in 1923 for \$4,000 for Pasquale (Peter) and Rosina (Rose) Mele.⁸ The Meles were Italian-Americans who reportedly hired an Italian craftsman to construct the cut basalt block foundation, which took nearly a year to complete.⁹ Peter Mele sold fruit and produce, and is said to have sold produce to neighbors out of the garage at the rear of the

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ City of Spokane Building Permits.

⁹ Personal communication with current property owner Paul Essex on 28 November 2007.

house during the Depression which hit Spokane shortly after the home was constructed.¹⁰ Peter later worked independently selling produce at the Washington Market in Spokane, and following that the Central Market on West Main Avenue. By 1930, Peter was working with his son Peter Jr. as Mele & Son at the Central Market, selling fruit and produce. The Central Market was Spokane's equivalent to Seattle's Pike Street Market, featuring open air stands of produce, meat and fish. It additionally contained a large flower market. Peter and Rose occupied the home for a number of years along with their daughter Mary A. Mele, a school teacher, and son Peter Mele Jr. who worked with his father at the market. Shortly after the beginning of the 1960s, Pasquale died. Rose continued to occupy the home through the early 1970s. By 1980, Peter Mele Jr. had moved back into the family home and was retired. The home remained in the Mele family until 1990 when it sold to the current owners, Paul and Elizabeth Essex.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Category C

The Mele House is a good example of the Craftsman style. The Craftsman style, according to authors Virginia and Lee McAlester, was the dominant architectural style from approximately 1905 through the 1920s. The Craftsman style, as described in the McAlester's book *A Field Guide to American Houses*, was

inspired primarily by the work of two California brothers- Charles Sumner Greene and Henry Mather Greene- who practiced together in Pasadena from 1893 to 1914. About 1903 they began to design simple Craftsman-style bungalows; by 1909 they had designed and executed several exceptional landmark examples.¹¹

The Craftsman style bungalow had its heart in the Arts & Crafts Movement which began in England during the nineteenth century. With an emphasis on handcrafted materials and objects, the Movement was carried along by the Industrial Revolution and the beginning of the mass production of household goods. The Craftsman style itself developed out of the Arts & Crafts Movement and was realized in the first known American bungalow located in Cape Cod, Massachusetts, constructed in 1880. The bungalow, a summer house, created a link "with American vacation architecture" according to Paul Duchscherer and Douglas Keister in their book *The Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Home*.¹² The bungalow became a popular style for vacation homes which led to an informality of the layout of the bungalow, a "reflection in a distinct lack of traditionally

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ McAlester, Lee and Virginia McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Knopf, 1989, p. 454.

¹² Duchscherer, Paul and Douglas Keister. *The Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Homes*. New York: Penguin, 1995, p. 13.

separate living and dining rooms, and often combined both functions into one large space where all the shared indoor activities could take place.”¹³

The bungalow would not be realized as a truly popular suburban architectural style until after 1900 when the “bungalow business...fueled by the proliferation of literature that promoted it” really took off as an inexpensive house style.¹⁴ The business of bungalows, so to speak, resulted in a “flood of pattern books...offering plans for Craftsman bungalows; some even offered completely pre-cut packages of lumber and detailing to be assembled by local labor” such as those offered by retail giants Sears, Roebuck and Company and Montgomery Ward.¹⁵ Identifying features of the Craftsman style during this period includes low-pitched gable roofs with widely overhanging eaves that often display exposed rafter ends, beams, and triangular wood brackets. Craftsman homes were additionally defined by full or partial-width front porches supported by columns, or in some cases, a series of columns and brick or other masonry-constructed pedestals.

Craftsman style features depicted on the Mele House include the partial-width front porch with its robust brick columns, exposed beams, and exposed rafter ends. The widely overhanging eaves also feature exposed rafter ends. Tripartite windows feature multi-pane uppers; two fixed wood sash windows flank the brick chimney that penetrates the eave of the east elevation.

Summary

The Mele House is well-preserved and maintains good to excellent exterior architectural integrity in original location, design, materials, workmanship, and association as a residential home built in 1923 in Spokane, Washington. Achieving historic and architectural significance from 1923 to 1990, the Mele House is nominated for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category C.

¹³ Ibid, 14-15.

¹⁴ Ibid, 15.

¹⁵ McAlester and McAlester, 454.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Brooks-Miller, Scott. *Mission Avenue Historic District*. National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1986.

Carley, Rachel. *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Duchscherer, Paul and Douglas Keister. *The Bungalow: America's Arts & Crafts Homes*. New York: Penguin, 1995.

McAlester, Lee & Virginia. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Knopf Publishing, 1989.

Polk, R. L. *City Directories, 1913-1990*.

Personal communication, Paul Essex, 28 November 2007.

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