

Spokane Register of Historic Places Nomination

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

1. Name of Property

Historic Name **SARFIELD FARMHOUSE**

2. Location

Street & Number 5520 West Thorpe Road
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99224
Parcel Number 25343.9040

3. Classification

| Category of Property | Ownership of Property | Status of Property | Present Use of Property | |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> building | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agricultural | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site | <input checked="" 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"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes, restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input 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 Gary C. and Robin Congdon
Street & Number 5520 West Thorpe Road
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99224
Telephone Number/E-mail

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 City of Spokane Historic Landmarks Survey
Date Federal State County 1979-80
Local
Depository for Survey Records Spokane Historic Preservation Office
final draft 17 April 2002

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 1.25 acres.
Verbal Boundary Description Range 42E, Township 25N, Section 34, south 350 feet of east 150 feet.
Verbal Boundary Justification Nominated property includes entire parcel and urban legal description.

11. Form Prepared By

Name and Title Linda Yeomans, Consultant
Organization Historic Preservation Planning
Telephone Number/E-mail 509-456-3828 or lyeomans@qwest.net
Street and Number 501 West 27th Avenue
City, State, Zip Code Spokane, WA 99203
Date 17 April 2002

12. Additional Documentation

Map Spokane City/County plat map, 1999
Photographs and Slides 10 black & white prints; 19 color slides

13. Signature of Owner(s)

Dary C. Congdon
Robin Congdon

14. For Official Use Only:

Date Received: _____ Attest: _____

Date Heard: _____ City Clerk

Commission Decision: _____ Approved
as to Form: _____

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 *W. Habuda*

CHAIR, Spokane County Commissioners

CHAIR, Spokane City/County Historic Landmarks Commission

Jesse Brown

OFFICER, City/County Historic Preservation Officer
City/County Historic Preservation Office
Sixth Floor - City Hall, Spokane, WA 99201

Description of Property

Summary Statement

The Sarsfield Farmhouse is sited on 1.25 acres located along West Thorpe Road in the Thorpe-Westwood neighborhood in unincorporated Spokane County. Built in 1905, the farmhouse is an excellent example of the Craftsman style and is clad with an uncoursed basalt “liver rock” rubblemix that is held together with unexposed, *or blind*, mortar. The house rises one and one-half stories and has a front gable roof with decorative truss and vergeboard embellishment and wide, slightly flared overhanging eaves with scroll-sawn brackets. A one-story, full-width front porch shades the home’s front entrance. Planted when the house was built, locust trees line the west side of the driveway, and scented lilac bushes shade a basalt rock wall that surrounds the grounds in front of the home. A chicken house/hay barn and a tack room/bunk house are located behind the house. The Sarsfield Farmhouse is in excellent condition and retains integrity in location, design, workmanship, materials, and association with the West Plains in Spokane County.

Site

The Sarsfield Farmhouse is sited on a flat, grassy plain located in the southwest quarter of Section 34, Township 25 North, Range 42 East of the Willamette Meridian. The lot measures 190 feet wide on the north boundary, 265 feet on the east boundary, 225 feet on the west boundary, 185 feet on the south boundary, and abuts West Thorpe Road on the south. The house is sited on the south half of the property along the east side of a gravel driveway that is lined with mature locust trees. The driveway continues north to the back of the house and separates the house from two outbuildings. A three-foot-high rock wall made of black fractured basalt runs parallel to the front of the house and is located equal distance between the house and Thorpe Road. The rock wall wraps around the southwest and southeast corners of the front yard and extends north along the driveway up to the house, and north along the east side of the property line to the lawn behind the house. The rock wall encloses a manicured front lawn. Lilac bushes and locust trees planted when the house was built are located just inside the rock wall. A round pedestal birdbath with two tiers is located in front of the house. Built by local stone mason, J. Boehme in 1932, the birdbath is constructed of small, smooth, round black basalt stones and red-tinted mortar.

Exterior of House

The one-and-one-half story Sarsfield Farmhouse follows a rectangular footprint and has a front gabled roof with matching roof dormers on the east and west roof slopes. The roof is covered with composition shingles and has wide, unenclosed overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails at the rake and scroll-sawn brackets along the horizontal edges of the house.

The most distinguishing feature of the Sarsfield Farmhouse is the exterior rock masonry veneer that clads the entire first floor of the dwelling. The veneer measures 12 inches thick and is composed of black basalt rock rubblemix with blind concrete mortar. The majority of rock in the rubblemix reveals a horizontal shape that resembles an animal liver and is called "liver rock." Turned on its horizontal axis, the rock is stacked one on top of another with the mortar hidden in the crevices which are formed by the stacked rocks. Over the basement windows, the rock is set vertically and forms radiating voussoirs. The rock veneer extends down to grade and covers the face of the foundation wall which is made of random basalt rubble mix held together with concrete mortar. The foundation wall measures more than two feet thick. A wide wood frieze band separates the first floor from the second floor of the house. Wood shingles clad the gable peaks, a full-width front porch marks the facade of the house, and original multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash windows remain in the house. Windows on the first floor of the house have lug sills that measure ten to twelve inches deep. The lug sills are made of bricks coated with a skim coat of concrete.

The facade of the Sarsfield Farmhouse is dominated by a prominent front-facing gable roof with wide, overhanging eaves and exposed rafter tails that measure four feet deep along the rake. The roof eaves flare slightly and are embellished with decorative scroll-sawn vergeboards. An open truss with a king post and diagonal struts highlight the gable peak. A full-width front porch spans the first floor of the house and is supported by square columns with scroll-sawn brackets. The porch has a shallow-pitched hip roof that is capped with a small wood balcony and wood balustrade. A multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash tripartite window is located behind the balcony on the gable face. Two small horizontal windows are located in the gable peak. The gable is clad in split wood shingles.

The west elevation of the house features a slightly flared roof with wide, overhanging unenclosed eaves and scroll-sawn brackets. Plain wood struts support the roof eaves. The roof has a center gabled dormer with a dual pitched gable peak and wide, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails set at sixteen-inch centers. The roof dormer is clad in split wood shingles and has two multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash windows. Below the roof dormer and horizontal edge of the main roof is a three-sided bay with multi-paned windows. Like the first floor of the house, the bay is also clad in rock veneer. The veneer extends down over the face of the foundation wall. Radiating rock voussoirs cap an arched multi-paned basement window below the center bay window. The east elevation of the house has a dual pitched gabled roof dormer with two multi-paned windows that is a duplicate of the dormer on the west elevation. An enclosed back porch is located on the northeast corner of the first floor and has a door that opens to the east. A concrete stoop and steps rise from grade to the door. The north, rear elevation of the house is dominated by a gabled roof. Like the home's facade, the roof has wide, overhanging, slightly flared

eaves with exposed rafter tails. The gable peak is embellished with an open truss. The gable is clad in split wood shingles and has two multi-paned, double-hung, wood-sash windows. A small frame addition is attached to the northeast corner on the first floor of the house and has a shed roof that faces north. A below-grade entrance to the basement is located on the west side of the north elevation.

Interior of the House

The footprint of the Sarsfield Farmhouse is rectangular and measures 46 feet long and 30 feet wide for 1380 square feet on the first floor. The house has a living room, dining room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom, and back porch on the first floor, and four bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor. The basement is unfinished with exposed basalt rock foundation walls and a hard-packed dirt floor partially covered with concrete. Except for a small storage room, all the woodwork throughout the house is painted red fir or painted pine. The storage room retains the original walnut-colored finish applied to red fir floor molding, chair rail molding, and door surround. The ceiling measures nine feet high on the first floor and eight feet on the second floor, the original flooring is fir plank, and the walls are plaster-and-lathe. Linoleum installed in the 1940s covers the fir plank floors on the stairs that lead to the second floor and on the second-floor hallway.

Original Appearance and Alterations

Exterior

Except for a back porch addition and a composition shingle roof, the design for the Sarsfield Farmhouse appears as it did when it was built in 1905. The house retains its original footprint, exterior design, multi-paned wood windows and storm units, front porch, front door, back door, most of its original interior floor plan, and all interior doors and door hardware. The house was originally heated with stoves that burned wood and were located in the living room, dining room, kitchen, and first floor bedroom. Sometime before 1948, a boiler was installed in the basement, and radiators for transporting steam heat were installed throughout the house. The boiler was first fed with wood, followed by coal, then with oil in 1948. A basement window on the south end of the west elevation was enlarged to accommodate a coal chute. The coal chute was removed in 1948, and the segmental rock arch over the window was replaced with brick vousoirs. In 1969, a one-story, shed-roof frame addition that measures eight feet wide by five feet deep was built on the east end of the north elevation of the house where the back porch is located. The back porch was enclosed when the addition was added. The original wood shingle roof was recovered with a composition shingle roof in 1993.

Interior

During the early 1950s, a bathroom was installed on the second floor. In 1966, the kitchen was remodeled and part of the living room was enclosed on the east wall to form a closet and a storage room. In the 1970s and 1990s, the first-floor bathroom was remodeled. Over the years, nearly all of the finished woodwork on the first floor has been painted and the floors have been covered with a variety of floor coverings.

Outbuildings

In 1939, a one-story rectangular frame building was constructed with a concrete floor, composition roof, and wood lap siding. It was built for use as a garage, chicken house, and barn. The building measures 50 feet wide and 20 feet deep and is located 85 feet behind and north of the Sarsfield Farmhouse. Another outbuilding was constructed adjacent east of the barn in 1955, for use as a shop, tack room, and bunk house. It is one story with a concrete foundation, concrete floor, composition roof, wood lap siding, and multi-paned wood windows. The interior of the building is partially finished with electric wall heaters, hot and cold water, and a living room/kitchen, bath, and bedroom. The building measures 30 feet wide and 16 feet deep. A third building, an unenclosed wood horse shed, was built in the 1990s and is located behind the bunkhouse. None of these buildings have been altered since they were built.

| | |
|------------------------|--------------------|
| Areas of Significance | Architecture |
| Period of Significance | 1905-1951 |
| Significant Dates | 1905 |
| Architect | Isaac J. Galbraith |
| Builder | Peter Lefevre |
| Specific Dates | 1905 |

Statement of Significance

Summary Statement

Built in 1905, the Patrick and Kate Sarsfield Farmhouse is a product of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic in America and is an excellent example of the Craftsman architectural style. The home was built for Patrick and Kate Sarsfield, Irish immigrants who founded one of the area's first dairies on the acreage surrounding their house on White Bluff Prairie which is located in West Spokane County. Their business was incorporated as the Marigold Dairy but was locally known as the Sarsfield Dairy. As documented in the *1979-1980 Community Cultural Resource Survey for Spokane County*, the Sarsfield Farmhouse was designed by noted Spokane architect, Isaac J. Galbraith and built by Medical Lake pioneer, Peter Lefevre. The house is one of the oldest and best preserved in unincorporated Spokane County and conveys early 20th-century building techniques evidenced in the unique use of basalt "liver rock" applied in the blind-mortar method as a ten-to-twelve-inch thick rock veneer. The Sarsfield Farmhouse is one of the only dwellings clad in "liver rock" known to exist in the West Plains region. The house is significant in the area of Architecture during its period of significance from 1905 to 1951 as the work of master craftsmen. Architecturally significant, the Patrick and Kate Sarsfield Farmhouse is eligible for listing on the Spokane Register of Historic Places under Category C.

Historic Context

White Bluff Prairie

According to a Bureau of Land Management map and surveyor's notes dated August, 1880, for Township 25 North, Range 42 East in unincorporated Spokane County, the area surrounding the Sarsfield Farmhouse was undeveloped and characterized by a flat, grassy prairie dotted with rocky basalt outcroppings, scrub brush, and pine trees. Spokane historian Peggy Bal claims in her book, *Fairchild--Heritage of the Spokane Plains*, that the region was called "White Bluff Prairie" (page 26). She reports the name was given to the area by early traders and pioneers who "traveled a wagon road...called White Bluff Road" across the West Plains "to a place called White Bluffs," a point on the Columbia River from which steamboat navigation was possible. A *Spokesman-Review* article dated August 27, 1927, describes White Bluff Prairie in the late 1870s, and reports

that “there were few white folks with whom to neighbor” and that “there were Indians in large numbers...[that] were always friendly Indians.”

Portions of the prairie were platted for rural residential development as early as October, 1890, while other sections and quarter sections of land were purchased by homesteaders for agricultural purposes. In 1900, Thorpe Road bisected the area and was a connecting link to Spokane on the east, and to Medical Lake and Cheney on the west. At this time, Thorpe Road was a dirt trail used by Indians and pioneers who lived in the area, and was the main east-west thoroughfare through the prairie’s southwest plains. As recorded in *Book #156 of Deeds for Spokane County* (page 287), the Washington Water Power Company in Spokane constructed an electric railroad called the Seattle, Lake Shore and Eastern Railway a few feet north of Thorpe Road in 1904. An arrival/departure platform was built for use by the railway, and the site was called Windsor Station. With easy access provided by the railroad to medicinal waters in Medical Lake and various amenities in Cheney and Spokane, White Bluff Prairie and the area along Thorpe Road were an active site of early 20th-century settlement. By 1905, all available land had been purchased in the area.

First Homesteaders

In November, 1880, Jackson and Lucinda Windsor, and their two sons and three daughters, arrived from California and began homesteading all 640 acres in Section 34, Township 25, on White Bluff Prairie. On October 1, 1883, the Windsor’s son, William Russell Windsor, applied for the purchase of 160 acres in the southwest quarter of Section 34 under the Homestead Act of 1862. United States patent records recorded the land was valued at \$2.50 an acre. Windsor, however, could receive the land free and clear if he could render part of it productive after five years. By 1890, seven years later, Windsor had “proved up” his property with farming and ranching, and was awarded a patent for the land.

The Sarsfield Farm

Born in 1863, Patrick J. Sarsfield, and his wife Katherine Mahoney Sarsfield, emigrated from County Cork and County Galway, Ireland to the United States and settled in Spokane in 1897. Patrick Sarsfield worked as a blacksmith, and he and Katherine lived in a house they bought at 1310 West 15th Avenue. On November 1, 1900, the Sarsfields purchased 50 acres of land on White Bluff Prairie in the west half of the southwest quarter of Section 34 from William R. Windsor. The sale was recorded at \$2500. To the Sarsfields, Windsor conveyed a \$2000 mortgage at 8% per annum, with \$500 payable in a year and the remaining \$1500 payable in 1905.

Patrick immediately purchased milk cows and built a dairy on his 50 acres of range land. He was listed in the *1900 Polk's Spokane Directory* as the proprietor of the "South Park Dairy," also called the Sarsfield Dairy. The Sarsfield family continued to live in Spokane on West 15th Avenue while Patrick earned enough money to pay off the mortgage to William Windsor by 1905. With the mortgage for their 50-acre land purchase retired, the Sarsfields sought and were granted a loan from Spokane businessman Coolidge McClain in the amount of \$2500, money they used to pay for the construction of the Sarsfield Farmhouse. They moved to the farmhouse soon after it was completed in 1905, and sold their house in Spokane in 1909.

"Shamrock Landing"

Early Spokane city directories (1911-1917) listed the Sarsfield's new address as "Windsor Station" on "White Bluff Prairie." According to old-timers from the area, Windsor Station was a railway stop site with a raised wood platform built to accommodate travelers who were getting on and off the electric train. Historian Charles Mutschler explains in his book, *Spokane's Street Railways--An Illustrated History*, that the "Windsor Station first stood in front of the stone farmhouse of dairyman Pat Sarsfield...As more people began to settle farther west, the station was later moved to a point near the crossroads of Thorpe and Grove"...[however]...the trainmen continued to let the family off at the original station site, referring to it as "Shamrock Landing" (page 148).

The Marigold Dairy and the Sarsfield Dairy

Patrick Sarsfield, his wife Katherine (Kate), and their children Clara, Catherine, Mary, Miles Theodore (Ted), and Howard, all played a part in the family dairy operation. Sons Ted and Howard co-owned and helped operate the dairy with parents, Patrick and Kate. Old-timers in the area remember that daughter Mary "kept the books" and also worked as a stenographer for the Spokane and Eastern Bank in Spokane, and later, as a cashier for Tull and Gibbs Furniture Store. The Sarsfield's dairy was legally incorporated as the Marigold Dairy, named after Mary Sarsfield; however, the dairy was commonly called the Sarsfield Dairy. According to Leo Rohner, a retired farmer living in the area, the Sarsfield's dairy was one of many dairies located in Spokane and on the West Plains, but in the smaller context of the immediate area along Thorpe Road, he recalls the Sarsfield Dairy was the largest and most productive, operating continuously for 49 years from 1900 to 1949. Rohner says "the Sarsfields kept about 60 head of cattle which was one of the largest herds in the area." On their acreage west and north of the farmhouse, the Sarsfields built barns for the cows and for hay, dairy equipment, delivery trucks, and other farm implements. The Sarsfield Dairy bought, sold, and delivered raw milk to customers living in the area and in the city. Leo Rohner remembers that the Sarsfields were active members of Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Spokane and that they

delivered milk to many church parishioners and to various Catholic organizations including the Catholic Diocese, Sacred Heart and Holy Family hospitals, Gonzaga University, and Holy Names Academy.

Sometime during the 1920s-1930s, says Rohner, *before* pasteurization of dairy products was mandated by Spokane County law in the early 1940s, the Sarsfield Dairy began pasteurizing milk. He remembers they were one of the first dairies to do so in the immediate vicinity. At that time, Rohner says the Sarsfields sold their cattle, and concentrated on buying raw milk from other dairy farmers in the area. Until 1949, the Sarsfield Dairy pasteurized, bottled, sold, and delivered milk throughout Spokane and Spokane County. Leo Rohner remembers that Patrick Sarsfield would not purchase any of Rohner's milk until it had been thoroughly examined by a health inspector. Rohner's milk passed the test and for the next decade, he recalls he sold about four 10-gallon cans of milk a day to the Sarsfield Dairy.

In 1940, the Sarsfield's son, Ted, sold his portion of the dairy business to his parents and brother Howard, and moved to Spokane where he started the Sarsfield Real Estate Company. After 40 years in the dairy business, both Kate and Patrick Sarsfield died within a few weeks of each other in the summer of 1947. In 1949, the Sarsfield Dairy (legally doing business as the Marigold Dairy) was sold to Harold C. Anderson, owner and manager of the Early Dawn Dairy in Veradale, Wa. An article in the *Spokesman-Review* reported that "Mr. Anderson...purchased the route and good will of the company but no equipment" and promised that "all former accounts of Marigold would be handled, and all products formerly delivered, would be available" (15 March 1949).

In 1951, Mary Sarsfield sold the property for \$14,550 to warehouse packer Frank Gilbert, and his wife Christena. In 1966, the Gilberts sold the property for \$29,500 to Joe and Frances Meadows, owners of the Bridlewood Sanitarium in Spokane. In 1967, the Meadows sold the 1.25 acres on which the Sarsfield Farmhouse and outbuildings are located, and the 10.22 acres bordering the property on the west and north, to Spokane County equipment operator Stanley Hendricks, and his wife Dorothy. In 1979, the Hendricks sold the farmhouse, outbuildings, and acreage to certified public accountant Gary Congdon, and his wife Robin. Gary and Robin have lived in the Sarsfield Farmhouse for 22 years during which time they have selectively bred and raised more than 17 horses for show and performance events.

Architectural Significance*The Craftsman Architectural Style*

The Sarsfield Farmhouse is one of unincorporated Spokane County's best examples of the Craftsman style. The style was especially applied to one- and one-half-story bungalows and emerged as an independent movement in American architecture in rebellion to the more elaborate Victorian styles that preceded it. Heavily influenced by the 19th-century English Arts and Crafts Movement which rejected the mass reproduction and mediocre design associated with the Industrial Revolution, Craftsman-style dwellings were designed to harmonize with nature and the environment. Traditional handcraftsmanship and natural materials such as native field stone or basalt rock, irregularly textured clinker brick, split wood shingles, and hand-rubbed interior woodwork were revered and used.

Identifying features of the Craftsman style include a broad house form with a front or side gabled roof, wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafter tails and decorative scroll-sawn brackets, decorative beams or braces commonly added under gables (non-supporting truss work), scroll-sawn vergeboards, natural materials like wood and stone, full or partial-width front porches, and square, round, or tapered porch columns, pedestals, and piers. All of these elements were designed to work together to produce the illusion of a low-slung house rendered as an organic expression of nature and natural surroundings. Secondary influences were common such as flared eaves from Japanese and French roof forms, Swiss balustrades, and Tudor Revival false half-timbering and decorative bracing.

The Craftsman style quickly spread throughout the United States by builder's pattern books, pre-cut house packages, and home design magazines, especially Gustav Stickley's magazine called *The Craftsman (1901-1916)*. The style became the most popular design in America, but by 1930, it had quickly faded from fashion.

Architect and Builder

Through its period of significance (1905-1951), the Sarsfield Farmhouse is architecturally significant as a fine example of the Craftsman style and as the work of master craftsmen. As documented through research completed by Spokane County survey coordinator, Sara Patton, in the *1979-1980 Community Cultural Resource Survey for Spokane County*, the Sarsfield Farmhouse was designed by Spokane architect Isaac J. Galbraith and built by Peter Lefevre, a French Canadian pioneer who helped found Medical Lake. Galbraith came to Spokane by way of Pennsylvania and Montana, where he gained attention for notable design work, including that done on the Montana State building for the Chicago World Exposition in 1893. Galbraith practiced for twelve years in Spokane, but little is known of his work. He designed the Commercial Block, the Old Hill Apartments, Holmes Building, Vinter and Nelson, First Methodist Episcopal Church, and the Roberts House at 724 S. Lincoln Place.

The Sarsfield Farmhouse

The design of the Sarsfield Farmhouse conveys the Craftsman style that is especially achieved in the home's roof eave and gable peak embellishment, and in the use of basalt rock veneer. McAlester's, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, claims,

“Among the most distinctive features of the [Craftsman] style are the junctions where the roof joins to the wall, which are almost never boxed or enclosed. The roof has a wide overhang; along horizontal edges the actual rafter ends are exposed, or false rafter ends are added. These are sometimes cut into decorative shapes. Along with sloping, or rake, edges, three or more beams (usually false) extend through the wall to the roof edge. These are either plain or embellished by a triangular knee brace” (page 454).

The Sarsfield Farmhouse exemplifies these elements as revealed in wide, unenclosed, bracketed eaves supported by wood struts, and decorative truss work in the front and rear gable peaks of the house.

“Liver Rock”

Adapted to the Sarsfield Farmhouse, the most impressive expression of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic on the house and the strongest distinguishing feature of the Craftsman style is the robust use of basalt rock veneer. The first floor of the house, including the foundation wall, is entirely clad in black basalt “liver rock,” named for its coloric, textural, and shapely resemblance to animal livers. According to expert Spokane rock masons, Mike and Maggie Rail (Mike Rail Construction), who have over 15 years of masonry construction experience in the area, the most prevalent rocky outcroppings and fieldstones found in and around Spokane are basalt. Based on the rock's shape, they explain that “three forms of basalt fieldstone are found: lava rock basalt, boulder rock basalt, and ‘liver rock’ basalt.” They say that lava rock is usually oval or round with smooth corners and has small holes, called vesicles, exposed on the surface of the rock. Boulder basalt can be very large or small and has a smooth texture with no vesicles. It is usually chunky and square or round with various planes and sometimes sharp edges. “Liver rock” basalt is characterized by its gray-to-very-black color, smooth texture, small to medium size, pointed ends and sharp edges, and by its unusual broad, flattened shape that resembles the shape of animal livers. Maggie Rail explains that “liver rock” is usually found in clusters in fields or in a naturally occurring rock slide throughout the scabland area of the West Plains. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, pointed spires of “liver rock” were sometimes utilized as protective coping when set vertically atop a rock wall. When stacked horizontally, the “liver rock” formed a unique rubblemix design that is

horizontally accentuated by the elongated shape of the rock. The rock was frequently used to build dry-stack or blind-mortared rock walls but was rarely used to clad a house.

The Sarsfield Farmhouse is the only building found on the White Bluff Prairie region in unincorporated Spokane County that is entirely clad with a veneer of basalt “liver rock.” In addition to the uncommon use of “liver rock,” the blind mortar method of construction used to form the veneer for the Sarsfield Farmhouse is an excellent example of the technique and demonstrates turn-of-the-century building practices. By design, very little mortar is visible between the rocks. According to rock masons Mike and Maggie Rail, one reason for the excellent condition of the rock veneer on the Sarsfield Farmhouse is the superior utilization and application of the blind mortar method. They observed that the rocks are tightly packed and chinked. Unusual and artistic applications of the “liver rock” veneer on the farmhouse include the extension of the distinctive rock over the basalt boulder rock foundation of the house, and the use of “liver rock” set vertically to produce radiating voussoirs over the arched basement windows. Although not used as abundantly as on the Sarsfield Farmhouse, the use of “liver rock” is also evident in the rock wall that encloses the grounds in front of the home.

The Sarsfield Farmhouse can be compared to other rock dwellings in Spokane County. In the immediate area surrounding the Sarsfield Farmhouse on White Bluff Prairie, only three homes were found to be fully or partially embellished with rock veneer. They include the Brown Rock House (1625 Hayford Road, built in 1912), a two-story house (6306 South 48th Street, built in the 1960-1970s), and a one- and one-half-story house (3820 West Thorpe Road, built in the 1960-1970s). Unlike the Sarsfield Farmhouse, the three comparative homes are all clad in a combination of lava basalt and boulder basalt with exposed mortar. Of the three homes, the Brown Rock House is most like the Sarsfield Farmhouse. Both of the dwellings are farmhouses built in the early 20th century for dairymen and both homes are well preserved. In contrast, the Brown Rock House retains a completely different design and does not resemble the Sarsfield Farmhouse in style, bulk, height, materials, or craftsmanship.

Other dwellings and structures in unincorporated Spokane County were constructed with rock veneers or are solid rock masonry buildings. These include the Barth Windmill Tower (4221 Ashton, built in 1917), the Vera Pump House (601 North Evergreen Road, built in 1906), and the Barth River Rock House (4220 Campbell, built in 1915). Unlike the Sarsfield Farmhouse located on White Bluff Prairie west of Spokane, these three buildings are all located in the Spokane Valley east of the city, and are built with smooth, round river rock veneer or masonry walls. Another rock building is the Mordhorst Store, located at the intersection of Pine Springs and the Columbia Basin Highway, and built in

1902. Unlike the Sarsfield Farmhouse, the Mordhorst Store is clad in boulder basalt with exposed mortar joints and was designed as a commercial store rather than a house.

In summary, the Sarsfield Farmhouse is a fine representation of identifying elements of the Craftsman style. In addition, the farmhouse is an excellent example of the late 19th- and early 20th-century blind mortar type of masonry construction combined with a rare rubblemix application of “liver rock” veneer that convey building practices and materials used during that time period.

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