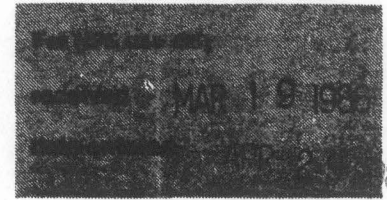


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

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Historic Name: Thomas S. Sprague House

Common Name: Same

Location: 80 W. Palmer

Classification:

Category: Building

Ownership: Public

Status: Unoccupied

Accessible: Yes, Unrestricted

Present Use: Other--None

Owner of Property: Board of Governors  
Wayne State University  
5050 Cass Ave.  
Detroit, Michigan 48202

Description:

Condition: Fair

Altered

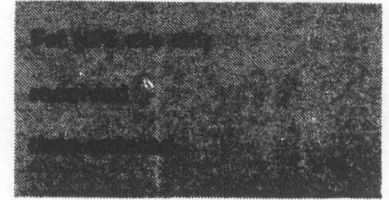
Original Site

The Thomas Sprague House, a two-and-one-half story structure of mixed Queen Anne and Stick Style design, is a remarkable and distinctive composition designed by architect William Scott. Built in 1884, the Sprague House exudes a decidedly Northern European romantic flavor and a highly stylized character in its interior and exterior design that may very well reflect the English heritage and Parisian architectural training of its designer. The presence of a variety of materials and asymmetrical design motifs indicate the ingenuity, skill, and imagination of its architect, William Scott.

The projecting and receding elements of the exterior of the structure combined with a variety of surface materials and ornamentation create a composition of considerable movement and rich texture. The exterior of the house combines a variety of materials: slate roofing, pressed metal on the second story, brick masonry on the first level, and a rusticated fieldstone foundation. The elaborate exterior ornamentation includes densely-carved terra cotta blocks below the second-story bay window on the right side, as well as over-sized carved wood garlands, vines, and flowers on the roof gable faces. This basically squarish structure features numerous projecting gables and bays as well as an octagonal turret at the southwest corner. A one-story porch begins at the center entrance and wraps around the turret and southwest corner of the house. The porch is covered with a hipped roof supported by heavy carved timbers. A pediment in the porch roof over the staircase displays a turned lattice triangular grill. To the right of the front entrance is a triple window surmounted by a segmental arch of stained glass (now removed). The

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octagonal bay on the first floor features double hung sash windows topped by arched stained glass sections (also now removed).

The octagonal turret of the first floor continues up into the second story and is capped by a gable which effectively incorporates and masks the turret, presenting it to the street view as a bay window. The right side features a second-story bay window set within an alcove. Several large brackets support the roof and gable extensions. The side facades are as elaborate as the front with the notable feature of an overhanging bay on the east side which once rested over a porch or porte cochere since removed.

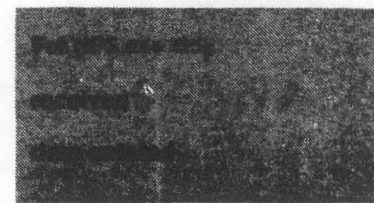
The feeling of deliberate asymmetry of this composition is enhanced by design features such as the "wavy" balustrades of the first-story porch railing and the unique broken mullion patterns of the upper sash windows on the second story--each window presenting a distinctly different "Mondrian-like" pattern. A sunburst-like pattern is repeated on both the exterior and interior of the house and can be found on the front porch brackets and on the interior fireplace and staircase balustrades.

When purchased by Wayne State University in 1977, the interior of the Sprague House was remarkably intact. It appeared virtually unchanged since the turn of the century. Still in place were fixtures such as combination gas-electric chandeliers, stained glass windows, patterned hearth tiles, and a radiator with a glass door warming oven. The asymmetrical character of the exterior was repeated in the interior in such elements as the original butternut fireplace in the main parlor. The unique asymmetrically-designed fireplace featured a curvilinear floral pattern on the left side and a geometrical rectangular pattern on the right. The mantelpiece was surmounted by a butternut panel extending to the ceiling cornice with a beveled mirror set off center in the lower left corner. Three fireplaces of a circa 1890 catalogue variety covered three additional hearth openings in the foyer, side parlor, and the upstairs' master bedroom.

In 1980, however, Wayne State's administration permitted several faculty members to remove most of the interior architectural details from the Sprague House, including the four fireplaces, all gas-electric light fixtures, various wood mouldings, hearth tiles, all stained glass windows, and numerous doorknobs. These architectural details were placed in the University Faculty Club (located in the Thompson Home at 4756 Cass Ave., which itself is a National Register structure) and, according to the University, remain there either as decorative pieces or in storage.

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Significance:

Period: 1800-99

Areas of Significance: Architecture, Other--Housing

Construction Date: 1884

Architect: William Scott & Company

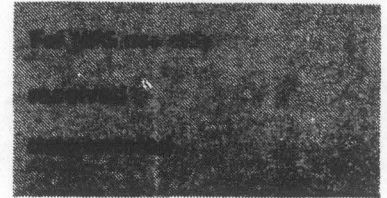
The Thomas S. Sprague House is significant primarily in terms of its design and association with architect William Scott. Both a civil engineer and architect, the English-born William Scott constructed railways, factories, and an occasional light house. Until 1889, he was in partnership with his sons Arthur and John. Together, they constructed fashionable residences in Detroit, including several National Register properties located on East Ferry. After 1889, John Scott and Company designed numerous other buildings, including the Italian Renaissance styled Wayne County Building (1896-1902), located at the eastern end of Cadillac Square in downtown Detroit. The Sprague House is important, secondly, as an example of a fashionable upper-class house built in the late-19th century. When the house was built in 1884, it was surrounded by little residential let alone commercial or institutional development. Although the residence remained in private residential use until purchased by Wayne State University in 1977 and, therefore, is not in itself an ideal example of the historic transformation of the University-Cultural Center, the Sprague House nevertheless serves as a clear reminder of the semi-rural or suburban-like quality of the area in the late 19th century.

William Scott's career in civil engineering and architecture began in England about 1840. In 1873, he arrived in Detroit and by 1875 began the firm of William Scott & Company, with Alfred Wood and his sons John and Arthur as junior members. As an engineer, Scott constructed the Great Western Railroad, the Point Pelee lighthouse in Ontario, and he became the chief engineer of the Detroit, Lansing, and Lake Michigan Railroad as well as the Detroit and Bay City Railway. Among industrial buildings in Detroit, William Scott is best known for his construction of the Detroit Stove Works.

William Scott & Company erected the Sprague House in 1884. Within a couple years, the firm built two other Queen Anne houses in the immediate area. In 1886-87, one was built for John Scott at 84 E. Ferry (a National Register house). Another was built in 1887 at the corner of Woodward and Putnam for lumber capitalist Simon J. Murphy. The company also constructed a National Register house in the Romanesque Revival style for George Owen (100 E. Ferry) in 1886-87. After William Scott retired in 1889, his two sons formed a partnership under the name John Scott & Company. They built the Colonial Revival Henry Baldwin III house (1893) at 295 E. Ferry. One of their most impressive undertakings was in association with Louis Kemper. Together they built a \$47,000 French Renaissance chateau for Colonel Frank J. Hecker at 5510 Woodward, completing it in 1891.

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Continuation sheet

Item number

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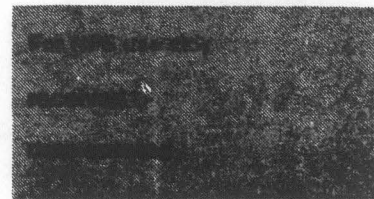
William Scott & Company produced the nominated property for Thomas S. Sprague (1885-1926), a developer of real estate mainly on Detroit's east side. His father, Colonel Thomas S. Sprague, was a successful patent lawyer in the city, heading the firm Thomas S. Sprague & Son. Later, the younger Sprague joined with Joseph S. Visger in the real estate business. They developed the Livingston subdivision at Henry and Rivard streets, Visger and Sprague's subdivision on the west side, and Sprague and Visger's subdivision on the east side of Gratiot and McClellan avenues. They also had a hand in the development of other multi-acre tracts in the eastern portions of Detroit.

When the Sprague House appeared in 1884 on what was then called Holden Avenue (today, West Palmer), the area was wide open for settlement. At the time, Cass Avenue was not yet developed north of Holden. The Cass Farm between Second and Cass was entirely unplatted south of Holden, and north of Holden there were not yet any buildings. The fashionable homes of Mabley, Boeing, Newcomb, and Stevens lined the west side of Woodward between Putnam and Holden, but residences were uncommon on the east side of Cass north of Warren Avenue. There were no W. Kirby or W. Ferry streets. And East Ferry did not have any residences until 1886-87--and the William Scott & Company had a role in building those structures. The Sprague House, therefore, dates from a period when much of the area surrounding it in the University-Cultural Center had not been developed. In the context of the surrounding city, the Sprague House originally appeared as a suburban or semi-rural retreat.

After 1884, the Sprague House had a succession of single-family owner-occupants. Sprague himself lived in the house until 1901 when Arthur D. Welton moved in. Welton was an editorial writer for the Detroit Evening News. From 1905 to 1916, Arthur Patriache occupied the dwelling. Patriache was traffic manager for the Pere Marquette Railroad and was the company's vice-president from 1910 until his retirement in 1912. Michael Guarnieri purchased the house in 1916. The Guarnieri family owned a number of businesses and restaurants throughout the city. Michael Guarnieri owned a fruit market at 231 W. Fort and later his own restaurant at 1987-95 Grand River. Until Wayne State University purchased the property in 1977, the house remained under continuous ownership and occupancy by the Guarnieri family. Currently the Sprague House is unoccupied and unused.

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National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Item number

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Bibliography:

Detroit Free Press, May 4, 1875.

Detroit Illustrated. Detroit: Harry H. Hook, 1891, p. 143.

Detroit News, May 2, 1887; April 7, 1926.

Robinson Atlas (1885).

Geographical Data:

Acreage: Less than one acre

Quadrangle Name: Detroit, Mich.--Ontario

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24000

UTM Reference: 17 329550 4691810

Verbal Boundary Description & Justification: On Lot 15 of Walker's  
Subdivision of Park Lot 51, Governor & Judges Plan. This is all  
the property on which the building stands.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name University-Cultural Center Phase I MRA  
State MICHIGAN

Nomination/Type of Review

1. Cass Motor Sales

Substantive Review

COVER

Date/Signature

4/29/86

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 4/29/86

Attest

2. Jacob, Max, House

Substantive Review

for Keeper

return PWA 4/29

Attest

3. Joy, James, House

Substantive Review

for Keeper

return PWA 4/29

Attest

4. Linsell, Frederick, House

Substantive Review

for Keeper

return PWA 4/29

Attest

5. Rands, William C., House

Substantive Review

for Keeper

return PWA 4/29

Attest

6. Smith, Samuel L., House

Substantive Review

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews 4/29/86

Attest

7. Sprague, Thomas S., House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 4/29/86

Attest

8. Strasburg, Herman, House

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 4/29/86

Attest

9. Verona Apartments

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Delores Byers 4/29/86

Attest

10. Webster Hall

Entered in the  
National Register

for Keeper

Return PWA 4/29

Attest

86001037

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Sprague, Thomas S., House (University--  
Cultural Center Phase I MRA)  
Wayne County  
MICHIGAN

Working No. MAR 19 1986

Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/87

Date Due: 4/17/86 - 5/3/86

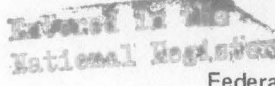
Action:  ACCEPT 4-29-86

RETURN

REJECT

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal



Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_

Discipline \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for:  technical corrections cited below  
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

Condition

- excellent
- good
- fair
- deteriorated
- ruins
- unexposed

Check one

- unaltered
- altered

Check one

- original site
- moved date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

**8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Form Prepared By**

**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



80 W. Palmer  
Sprague House #1  
Detroit  
Thomas Sprague Hse.  
80 W. Palmer  
Detroit, MI. 48202

Photo # **1**.

Wayne Cty.

University Cultural Center ★ Multiple Resource  
Historic District Nomination.

Prepared: Preservation Wayne, 1984

Photographer: Carla Anderson, 1984

Negative Location: Carla Anderson, Detroit

Camera Facing: NORTH



SPRAGUE HOUSE #2  
80 W PALMER  
DETROIT

© Carla Anderson 1984

Thomas Sprague House                      Photo # 2.  
80 W. Palmer Ave.  
Detroit, MI. 48202                      Wayne Cty.

University Cultural Center Multiple Resource  
Historic District Nomination  
Prepared by: Preservation Wayne, 1984

Photographer:- Carla Anderson, 1984  
Negative Location: Carla Anderson, Detroit  
Camera Facing: NORTHEAST



Thomas Sprague House                      Photo # 3.  
80 W. Palmer Ave.  
Detroit, MI. 48202                      Wayne County

University Cultural Center Multiple Resource  
Historic District Nomination  
Prepared by: Preservation Wayne, 1984

Photographer: Carla Anderson, 1984  
Negative Location: Carla Anderson, Detroit  
Camera Facing: NORTH

Carla Anderson 1984

SPRAGUE HOUSE  
#3  
WINDOW

Please refer to the map in the  
Multiple Property Cover Sheet  
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000337

Office of the  
Vice President and  
General Counsel

380 Mackenzie Hall  
Detroit, Michigan 48202  
(313) 577-2268



Wayne State University

JUL 25 1985

MICHIGAN HISTORY DIVISION  
July 19, 1985

Patricia Eames  
Vice President and  
General Counsel

Kenneth A. McKanders  
University Attorney and  
Assistant General Counsel

Michael J. Kiley  
University Attorney and  
Assistant General Counsel

Maria G. Alfaro  
University Attorney and  
Assistant General Counsel

Dr. Martha M. Bigelow  
State Historic Preservation Office  
Bureau of History  
Michigan Department of State  
Lansing, Michigan 48918

*Card sent  
7/26/85  
SJL*

Dear Dr. Bigelow:

In accordance with 16 USC § 470 a(a) (6), Wayne State University objects to the nomination of the Thomas S. Sprague House, 80 West Palmer, Detroit, 48202, to the National Register of Historic places.

The Sprague House does not fulfill the "Criteria for Evaluation" 36 CFR § 60.4 (1984), used to determine a property's eligibility for listing.

36 CFR § 60.4(a)

The property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

This is no indication the Sprague House is associated with a particularly noteworthy historic event other than the residence having been constructed when the area had not been extensively developed either for commercial or residential use.

36 CFR § 60.4(b)

The property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

Under this requirement, the Sprague House must be associated with individuals significant within its context of a University Cultural Center. (UCC).

Thomas S. Sprague was a real estate developer, predominantly involved with properties located on Detroit's East Side. Subsequent owners included an editorial writer, rail road executive, and several generations of a family engaged in the produce industry. None of these individuals made any noteworthy contributions to the areas evolution into its present state.

Apparently, each successive owner was merely a resident of a home situated in a fashionable setting.

36 CFR § 60.4(c)

The property must embody 1) the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. or 2) represent the work of a master or 3) that possess high artistic values.

It is not disputed that the Sprague House served as a notable example of Queen Anne architecture; a style quite common in the UCC in the later part of the 19th Century.

While the Sprague House may well once have been a distinctive structure, such a description is not presently appropriate.

At the present, the Sprague House is in an advanced stage of structural deterioration. Access onto the premises is restricted to the extent that the University's Public Safety Service will not enter the premises without an escort.

1) The Sprague House has lost its former architectural integrity to stand as a recognized symbol of the UCC's past. The University does not deny the significance of the Sprague House, rather it asserts it has not retained its artistic and architectural significance.

2) The contribution of William Scott, designer of the Sprague House, to the UCC area, are undisputed. However, given the state of structural decay afflicting the Sprague House, it does not stand as a fitting illustration of Scott's work.

3) The determination of the Sprague House illustrating the aesthetic ideals, preference, etc., of an era is inescapably a subjective determination. It should be considered, given its advanced deteriorated state, whether the Sprague House is truly illustrative of the artistic ideals held by William Scott and by the National Historic Register.

36 CFR 60.4(d)

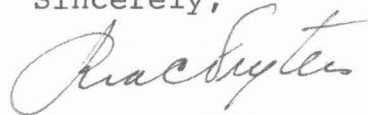
The property has yielded or may be likely to yield, information, important in pre-history or history.

The Sprague House has provided information concerning the architectural ideals embodied in a Queen Anne structure. However, given its present condition it is unlikely the residence will yield any noteworthy information in the future.

Dr. Martha M. Bigelow  
July 19, 1985  
Page 3

For all the foregoing reasons, Wayne State University objects to the listing of the Thomas S. Sprague House upon the National Register of Historic places.

Sincerely,



Ria C. Frijters  
Senior Vice President for  
Administration and Finance  
and Treasurer

State of Michigan) )  
County of Wayne ) ss.

Subscribed and sworn to before me  
this 23rd day of July, 1985.

Rebecca S. Anglin

Notary Public, Wayne County, Michigan

My Commission Expires: 2-27-89

6/ms/MS6