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Property Information

## Heirloom Home



**1219 William St N**



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Original fireplace



Original fancy newel post

### *A Country Estate*

For over 60 years this country estate, known as the Draver house, was one of the few buildings in this far northwestern part of the city of Stillwater.

Christopher Draver (also known as Henry Christopher Drewer) was born in Brockhagen, Germany in 1826, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1849. He arrived in Stillwater in 1853 where he became the foreman of the Schulenburg & Boekler mill, one of the largest local sawmills, and the chief employer in Dutchtown. In 1881, he purchased 10 lots in this area for \$900, and in the summer of 1883, Draver, and his wife, Anna, built this commodious country residence at 1219 North William Street. According to the assessment records, the east kitchen wing was added a few years later.

By the time of Christopher's death in 1887, the house was valued at \$4,500, part of a \$17,650 probate estate. (Keep in mind, the average house would have been valued about \$600 at this time.) Nineteen years later, Christopher's daughter, Caroline, married George Wilson who moved into the house with members of the Draver family.

George Wilson arrived in Stillwater in 1878. He worked his way up to become the general manager of the Northwest Thresher Company in Stillwater, which employed over 700 residents. It was one of Minnesota's largest manufacturing industries. A document from this period recalls the Wilson property as having a large wooded pasture, surrounded by a white painted rail fence. Over the years, George Wilson added to the estate and by the time of his death in 1928, the estate consisted of 45 lots.

In the 1930s, the house was sold to Urban Berg, and it was under his ownership that the house which was still out in the country achieved its greatest notoriety. From Prohibition days, there are stories of a liquor still and a tunnel to the barn, and a raid by federal agents. One of the later residents of the house, Jack Harper, was visited by a local physician who reminisced about when he was called to the house to treat John Dillinger, the notorious gangster.

Subsequent owners in the 1940s and 50s gradually sold off the lots of the estate for post World War II development, and the house itself was a duplex for several years during this period.

Today the home, except for the new dormer on the roof, has regained much of its original grandeur. Inside many of the luxurious

features that made for a grand nineteenth century country estate house remain.

The house is a good example of the Italianate style characterized by the double front doors, the round window in the gable, the decorative crowns over the paired windows, the transom over the front door, and the projecting window bay on the south side. At some time in the past, there were almost certainly brackets under the eaves.

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**Source(s):** Book B Deeds, page 410; Book Z Deeds, page 607. Draver's obituary is in the Stillwater Democrat, April 23, 1887 and the Stillwater Gazette, April 20, 1887. His Probate Court file is #966 as under the name Christopher Drewer. Wilson's obituary is in the Stillwater Gazette, June 27, 1928. The Stillwater City Directories are useful in tracing the ownership of the house. In addition, the owner has a detailed history of the house written by Donald Empson.

**Washington County Parcel Identification Number (PIN):** 2103020340095

**Common Property Name:** Draver, Christopher & Anna

**State Historic Preservation Office Inventory Number:** [WA-SWC-1713](#)

**Construction Date:** [1883](#)

**Builder:** [Roney, Thomas](#)

**Architect:** \_

**Architectural Style:** [Italianate](#)

**Property information and narrative was compiled by:** Donald Empson, Empson Archives - 12/19/2008

