



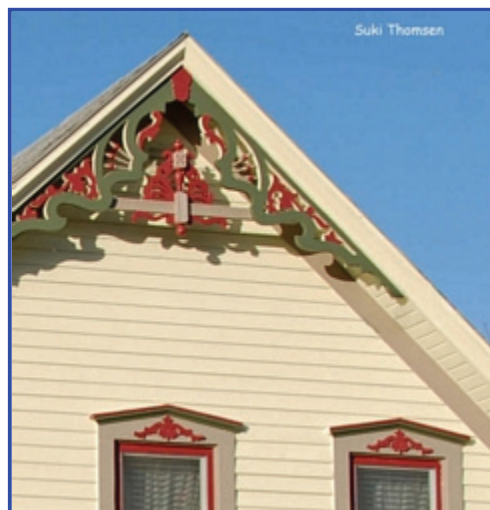
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Property Information

Heirloom Home



310 Wilkins St W



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The Little Captain

Alexander Wilkin was born in New York State; member of a prominent family. He came to St. Paul in 1849 where he practiced law. Subsequently he served as the U.S. Marshall to Minnesota and ran for the U.S. Congress as a supporter of Stephen Douglas rather than Abraham Lincoln. But, like most monied Minnesotans — while working at these other occupations, he invested in real estate. In 1856, he purchased 80 acres in Stillwater and mapped out Wilkin's Addition between Wilkin and Moore Streets; between Fourth and William Streets. He named Wilkin Street for himself. (It is Wilkin and not Wilkins Street.) When the Civil War broke out a few years later, Wilkin recruited the first company of the first regiment for the war. Because Wilkin was a small man, weighing little more than 100 pounds, he became known during his war service as The Little Captain. He was shot through the heart in a battle in Tupelo, Mississippi on July 14, 1864.

At 310 West Wilkin Street in Stillwater is an attractive vernacular style house built in 1884 (and valued at \$670) by Christian Thompson who had purchased his lot two years earlier. Christian was born in Denmark in 1855; his wife, Hannah was born in Denmark in 1853; they came to Stillwater in 1880. Trained as a cabinet maker, Christian soon went to work for the Stillwater Manufacturing Company, a local corporation specializing in high grade interior finishing, bank, store and office fixtures, and special cabinet work; in short, almost anything made to order from wood.

In 1894 the plant of the Stillwater Manufacturing Company burned, and, only with a great deal of financial support from the townspeople, was the business resurrected. By 1902, Christian was the vice-president of this corporation which brought jobs and economic development to the City of Stillwater as the lumbering industry collapsed. The last of the Main Street buildings of the Stillwater Manufacturing Company were recently demolished to make way for the Stillwater Mills condominiums.

During his rise as a businessman, Christian continued living at 310 West Wilkin raising a growing family of six children. In 1914, Christian applied for a building permit to raise the roof on the ell of the house, as well as put on a porch, a job valued at \$400.

The house is typical of those built in the 1880s. The decorative hoods over the original window openings, the ornament in the gable, the small portico over the front door, the three windows evenly spaced on the second floor with a first floor window (and the door) directly underneath, are all characteristic of that period. The typical floor plan of this side entry house would be a stairway on the left as you enter, a

corridor leading back into the house, and two rooms behind each other on the right.

Source(s): Building date and value is from the original annual tax assessors' rolls, 1884 (on microfilm in the St. Croix Collection, Stillwater Public Library); biographical data is from the 1910 U.S. Census and the Stillwater City Directories for 1884, 1894, and 1919. Book 15 of Deeds, page 231 is the deed. City of Stillwater building permit application #1459. The 1924 Sanborn Insurance Map gives the footprint of the house at that time. Information on Alexander Wilkin can be found in Pen Pictures of St. Paul, Minnesota by T. M. Newson, 1886. An early history of the Stillwater Manufacturing Company can be found in History of the St. Croix Valley by Augustus B. Easton, 1909, page 260.

Washington County Parcel Identification Number (PIN): 2103020340139

Common Property Name: Thompson, Christian & Hannah

State Historic Preservation Office Inventory Number: [WA-SWC-1715](#)

Construction Date: [1884](#)

Builder: _

Architect: _

Architectural Style: [Vernacular](#)

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

