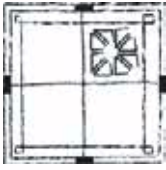


# UNIFIED VISION

THE ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN OF THE PRAIRIE SCHOOL



## ARCHITECTURAL TOUR:

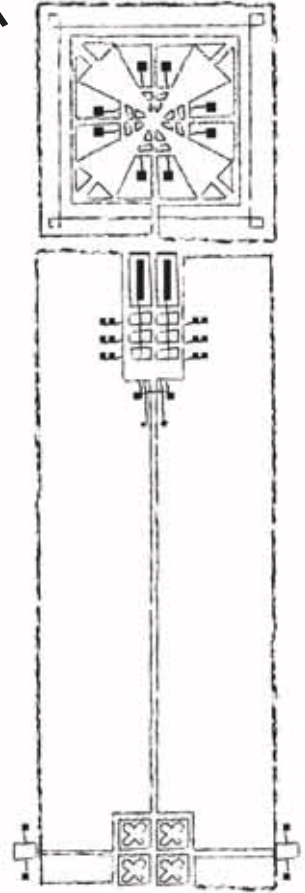


# GREATER MINNESOTA

The nine buildings in the Greater Minnesota tour include three examples of the great Midwestern Prairie School bank type, with opulent structures by Louis Sullivan (considered the father of the Prairie School), George Washington Maher, and the team of Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie. The terrain covered includes St. Paul, Red Wing, Winona, and Owatonna.

One of these stops is enhanced with audio interviews. This printed tour guide will tell you when to call (612) 870-6446 to hear the recordings on your cell phone.

Look for this icon:



## OWATONNA



# NATIONAL FARMERS' BANK



Stop #1

101 Cedar Street North,  
Owatonna

The National Farmers' Bank is located on the corner of N Cedar Street and W Broadway Street in Owatonna.



Architect: Louis H. Sullivan  
Designer: George Grant Elmslie  
Year: 1907 - 8



Call (612) 870-6446 and press 1 to hear a recorded interview with David Ryan, a Minneapolis Institute of Arts Curator. (2 minutes, 27 seconds)

# NATIONAL FARMERS' BANK

Boston-born architect Louis Sullivan is generally considered the father of the Prairie School movement. Sullivan, who believed a building should reflect its time, place, and function, conceived the idea of an authentic American architecture suited to the needs of people living in the modern age. He decorated his buildings with stylized plant motifs derived from the American prairie to create the sense of a unified whole. Sullivan inspired a younger generation of Chicago architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright, George Washington Maher, and George Grant Elmslie, to apply his principles to all types of buildings. This movement would later be known as the Prairie School.

The National Farmers' Bank was the first and perhaps the finest of Sullivan's bank projects. The simple, square brick exterior conveys a sense of solid permanence desirable in a bank, while its organic terra-cotta ornament subtly hints at the elaborate decoration within. Inside, the large, open-plan banking room features incredibly ornate stenciling alongside terra-cotta and plaster ornament, all using Sullivan's trademark stylized plant motifs. Four monumental cast-iron electric chandeliers, called electroliers, are a spectacular expression of organic ornament. The color scheme favored earthen tones in green, gold, brown, and red. Two art-glass arches and a skylight in the same autumnal colors allow natural light to wash over the whole, adding their glow to what Sullivan referred to as a "color symphony." George Grant Elmslie, Sullivan's chief draftsman from 1889 to 1909, was a master of organic ornament, and was largely responsible for the bank's decorative scheme.

The National Farmers' Bank failed in 1926. Subsequent owners of the building made only minor changes to the interior until 1940, when the entire main floor was remodeled; the seven elaborate cast-iron tellers' wickets were sold as scrap metal, and some of the original terra cotta was discarded. In 1958, architect Harwell Hamilton Harris remodeled the bank, this time more carefully, avoiding further damage to the original design. In 1976, architect David Bowers, of the St. Paul firm Val Michelson & Associates, undertook a six-year project to restore as much of the original interior as possible while maintaining its function as a working bank. Bowers restored the original president's office and remodeled the tellers' windows under the balcony. Recent modifications have further improved the bank's interior appearance.

When looking at any of these buildings in person, please respect the privacy of the people who live and work in them.



# NATIONAL FARMERS' BANK

## HISTORIC PHOTOS:



The National Farmers' Bank,  
Owatonna



Interior  
The National Farmers' Bank,  
Owatonna

## RELATED BUILDING OF INTEREST:

### FEDERATED INSURANCE COMPANIES BUILDING

129 Broadway Street East,  
Owatonna

Architects: Jacobson and Jacobson  
Year: 1923



C.I. Buxton was secretary of the Minnesota Mutual Fire Insurance Company (later the Federated Insurance Companies Building) when its main office moved from Minneapolis to his hometown of Owatonna in 1910. Buxton rented office space in the recently completed National Farmers Bank and became so enamored of Sullivan's progressive style of architecture that he commissioned the firm of Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie to build a bungalow for he and his wife (see Buxton Bungalow on this tour). By 1919 Buxton's growing company needed a new building. Unfortunately, by this time few Prairie School buildings were being built. Purcell had moved to Philadelphia and he and Elmslie's partnership had virtually dissolved. Sullivan had lost his Chicago architectural practice and was in ill health. Buxton turned to two young

## NATIONAL FARMERS' BANK

brothers, David and Nels Jacobson, who had recently returned home to Owatonna from their architectural studies at the University of Pennsylvania.

Completed in 1922 at a cost of \$200,000, the building is one of the latest examples of Prairie School architecture built in the Midwest. At the dedication ceremony the Jacobsons recognized their debt to Sullivan's principles of design. The two-story exterior is finished in brick and Indiana Bedford stone and originally had a low pitched, hipped roof of Spanish tile with overhanging eaves. Polychrome terra-cotta ornament from the American Terra Cotta Company completes the Prairie School ornamentation. Additions to the building were made in 1929, 1949 (the roof was removed and a third floor was created), 1967, and 1978.

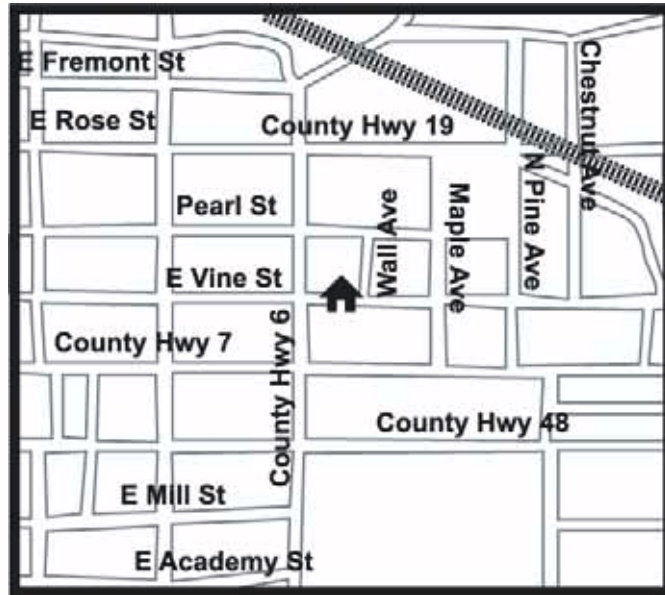
# ADAIR HOUSE

Stop # 2

322 Vine Street East  
Owatonna



The Adair House is located on Vine Street between S Grove Avenue (County Highway 6) and Wall Avenue in Owatonna.



Architects: Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie  
Year: 1913



# ADAIR HOUSE

The Adairs were friends of C.I. Buxton, who had Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie design a bungalow for him the previous year (see next stop). A large, rectangular house with a massive hipped roof, the Adair residence is defined inside by a slatted screen dividing the entry from the stairwell, similar to a feature in the Purcell-Cutts House (see Lake of the Isles tour). Its interior also features a large semicircular hearth and half-globe pendant light fixtures with stencil designs similar to those that originally adorned the walls.

When looking at any of these buildings in person, please respect the privacy of the people who live and work in them.

## HISTORIC PHOTOS:



Adair House,  
Owatonna  
Photo: Northwest Architectural Archives



Adair House,  
Owatonna  
Photo: Northwest Architectural Archives

# BUXTON BUNGALOW

Stop #3

424 Main Street East  
Owatonna



The Buxton Bungalow is located on Main Street E (County Highway 48) between S Grove Avenue (County Highway 6) and Lincoln Avenue in Owatonna.



Architects: Purcell, Feick, and Elmslie  
Year: 1912



# BUXTON BUNGALOW

Purcell and architect Marion Alice Parker designed this small bungalow for "empty nesters" C.I. Buxton and his wife. Buxton was secretary of the Minnesota Mutual Fire Insurance Company (later the Federated Insurance Companies), and commissioned a late Prairie School style building for his company across from the National Farmer's Bank in downtown Owatonna (see Farmer's Bank stop on this tour). Parker, the only female drafter in Purcell and Elmslie's office, was one of the few women in the United States practicing progressive architecture. She became quite skilled in executing the abstracted organic ornament essential to Purcell and Elmslie's unified design. Parker and Purcell enlivened the rustic, board-and-batten and shingle exterior of the Buxton bungalow with polychrome sawed-wood decoration. Purcell declared, "She and I spent time and study on every smallest arrangement and detail." The budget for the bungalow was limited, but they also managed to include art-glass bookcase doors to further the organic design. As in the E.L. Powers House (See Lake of the Isles Tour), the living room is at the rear, to take advantage of the garden view. The interior of the bungalow has been extensively remodeled.

When looking at any of these buildings in person, please respect the privacy of the people who live and work in them.

## HISTORIC PHOTOS:



Buxton Bungalow,  
Owatonna  
Photo: Northwest Architectural Archives



Buxton Bungalow,  
Owatonna  
Photo: Northwest Architectural Archives