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### Mott's Colonial Revival

The Mott house at 304 State Street is a typical example of a Georgian-style Colonial Revival home. One of the newest houses in the Dennis Street/State Street neighborhood, it was designed in 1923 by Toledo architect Harry W. Wachter and built in 1925 for Ollie E. Mott, owner of Adrian's Nu-Way Corporation. The home was built during a period of relative prosperity in the city, just before the Great Depression of the 1930s, when diverse industries were beginning to augment Adrian's flagging fence companies.

The Colonial Revival style became a popular American style in the 1880s, following the United States centennial celebrations of 1876. The emergence of the style was partly a reflection of the patriotism that the Centennial celebrations inspired and partly a tendency toward greater simplicity and coherence in design

as American architects became increasingly well trained in architectural history. The style remained popular throughout the twentieth century and was especially popular between the two World Wars, when the Mott House was designed and built.

As Jeffrey Howe points out in *Houses We Live In*, understandings of the Colonial Revival vary somewhat. Some architectural historians treat the Colonial Revival as just another in a string of nineteenth-century Victorian revivals that included the Gothic Revival, the Greek Revival, and the Romanesque Revival. Others say that it represents an entirely new direction and a reaction against the excesses of the Victorian era, especially against the elaborate Queen Anne, and thus marked the end of Victorian Era.

While the overall style is based on a revival of 17<sup>th</sup>- and 18<sup>th</sup>-century Federal and Georgian house styles, these prototypes are more coherent and simple than other revival styles in the nineteenth century.<sup>1</sup>



James Massey, in *House Styles in America*, describes the key features of the Colonial Revival's Georgian-style—so named because it was first popular during the reign of several seventeenth-century British kings named George. On the exterior, these include a rectangular, symmetrical facade of two or three floors, sometimes with quoins at the corners of the walls. The central focal point

of the façade is a temple-like entrance, which is typically topped by either a closed or broken pediment, supported by classical columns and pilasters, and framed by sidelights and a fanlight. Double-hung, rectangular windows on the façade typically contain relatively small, rectangular panes of glass in both the upper and lower sashes, and are flanked by dark shutters. Side-gabled or hipped roofs are normally tiled or shingled; narrow roof overhangs are sometimes decorated with dentils. Plain chimneys are arranged symmetrically—often one on each of the short ends of the structure.

The interior of the typical Georgian-style Colonial Revival home is also symmetrically arranged. The centrally placed entrance leads into a foyer that divides the house in two, with a living room on one side and a dining room and on the other. The foyer typically contains a prominent staircase leading upstairs to the three or four bedrooms and one or two bathrooms. On the far side of the living room and dining room one often finds a sunroom, a porch wing or a

garage. The kitchen, located behind the dining room, differs from 18<sup>th</sup>-century prototypes because it contains the latest conveniences. An attached garage, typically accessed through the kitchen, also represents a significant departure from historical prototypes.



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<sup>1</sup>In *The Houses We Live In*, Jeffery Howe goes into better detail why Colonial Revival homes were so

In addition to the Georgian style, there were other popular Colonial Revival sub-styles, including the Dutch Colonial, the Garrison Colonial, the Cape Cod and the Classical Revival. The Dutch Colonial can be identified because of its gambrel roof, which breaks near the ridgeline to create a profile that resembles the section of a bell. The “Garrison Colonial” house features a second story that projects over the first story. The “Cape Cod” is a one-and-a-half-story Colonial Revival home with attic bedrooms tucked underneath its steeply pitched roof. The distinctive feature of the “Classical Revival” style (also known as the Neoclassical or the Classic Revival; sometimes treated separately) is the full-height porch with colossal columns that dominate the façade.



The Mott house is almost a textbook example of the Georgian style of the Colonial Revival. The double, plain chimneys, tiled end-gabled roof, semicircular porch and the columned

wings of the Mott house are characteristic and attractive features. The simplified roof is constructed with tile that covers this two-story house, and the red brick wraps around the house with decorative details in the lintels and sills around the windows painted white. Both the



screened-in porch to the north and the front portico are supported by elegant Tuscan columns that seem to swell slightly in the middle and then taper to the

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popular and has floor planes of a typical home in this style.

top. The north entrance to the house, near the garage, is set inside a brick archway articulated with voussoir stones placed at the keystone and springings. The large double-hung windows are symmetrical and are made up of small windowpanes. Plain wood shutters painted dark green surround each window. The interior is also typical, too: the foyer divides the dining room, kitchen and garage on the north, from the living room and large sun room to the south.

The plans for the Mott House were completed on May 6, 1922 by Harry W. Wachter.<sup>2</sup> Wachter was a well-known Toledo, Ohio, architect who designed a number of Toledo-area houses, churches, and commercial buildings in the latest styles. Most famously, he collaborated with Edward B. Green in designing the 1912 Classical Revival Toledo Museum of Art building.<sup>3</sup> His commercial buildings included the art deco-style Blevins Auto Sales Company building at 1000 Adams Street in Toledo (now the law offices of Spitler & Williams-Young Co., L.P.A.).<sup>4</sup> But he spent most of his career designing private homes. According to William Speck, in his book *Toledo: a History in Architecture 1914 to Century's End*, Wachter was “the architect of some of the Old West End’s most interesting homes,”<sup>5</sup> and he was responsible for the Colonial Revival-style Bronson Place in Toledo.<sup>6</sup> Outside of the Toledo, he designed the Tudor-style

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<sup>2</sup> Wachter’s plans are in the possession of the current owners of the Mott House Donna and Paul Lentz. Wachter’s death date and age at death (April 19, 1941, in Toledo, Ohio, aged seventy-two) are listed at the Society of Architectural Historians’ website: <http://www.sah.org/oldsite06012004/aame/biow.html> (1/31/2005).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.toledomuseum.org/Travel\\_Writers/HTML/History\\_Mission.htm](http://www.toledomuseum.org/Travel_Writers/HTML/History_Mission.htm) (1/31/2005).

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.spitlerwilliams-young.com/Building/> (1/31/2005).

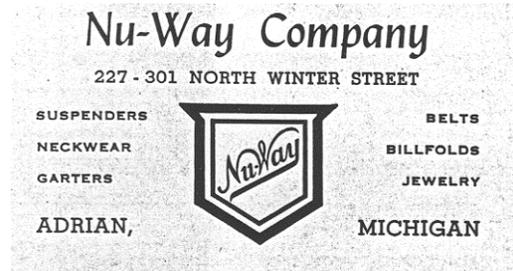
<sup>5</sup> (Arcadia Publishing, 2003), pp. 20, 21, 32.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/OH/Lucas/districts.html> (1/31/2005). For information about Toledo’s Old West End, see: <http://www.oldwestendtoledo.com/> (1/31/2004).

Walbridge House in Perrysburg,<sup>7</sup> the Craftsman-style First Presbyterian Church in Napoleon, Ohio,<sup>8</sup> and the Robert Millard/Bishop Noll House at 1415 West Washington Boulevard, in Fort Wayne, Indiana, which has a Colonial Revival form and Craftsman details.<sup>9</sup>



Wachter designed the house at 304 State Street in Adrian for Ollie E. Mott, a native of Canada who had settled in Adrian in 1918 after pursuing a business career that first took him to Ohio, New York and Indiana. By the time of his death in the 1960s, Mott would be recognized as a highly successful businessman and civic leader in Adrian. In 1918, Mott and his brother J. L., relocated their business, the Nu-Way Company, from Dundee, Michigan, moving it into the Adrian Garage (originally built as a roller-skating rink) at 227–301 North Winter Street. Initially, Mott's company manufactured primarily suspenders that



obtained their stretch from a coiled spring. Then, in the late 1920s, he expanded the business to include neckwear, billfolds, garters, belts and jewelry. Nu-Way would survive the Great Depression to sell suspenders to the military during World War I, and remain in operation until 1963.<sup>10</sup> According to his obituary, Mott also held leadership positions at the Y.M.C.A. and the Salvation Army, served on

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.historicperrysburg.org/walbridge.htm> (1/31/2005).

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.nationalregisterofhistoricplaces.com/OH/Henry/state.html> (1/31/2005).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.westcentralneighborhood.org/BldgHistories.htm> (1/31/2005).

the board at the Bixby Hospital, and was president of the Adrian Chamber of Commerce.<sup>11</sup>

Mott's service to the Chamber of Commerce, the Y.M.C.A and the Bixby Hospital suggests some of the reasons he and a number of other industrialists decided to open operations in Adrian during the 1910s, when Adrian's industrial base expanded and diversified from 40 factories, in 1910, to 71, in 1920--Nu-Way among them.<sup>12</sup> During this decade, Adrian offered small businessmen like Mott an attractive small-city atmosphere with an extensive transportation network as well as diverse commercial and social amenities. Adrian's long connection to the railroad was augmented at the turn of the century by several new rail lines that linked them to markets nationwide, including the Wabash in 1881, the Lima Northern in 1898, and the Toledo and Western in 1901. At the same time, Social amenities expanded in the city, and included an electric street rail system by 1889, the YMCA in 1905, a new Carnegie Public Library in 1908, and the Emma L. Bixby Hospital in 1910.

Mott's decision to locate his home on State Street meant that he needed to demolish an existing building. The neighborhood was conveniently located within walking distance of his factory, downtown stores, the YMCA, and the library. In addition, the neighborhood was also home to many of the city's successful businessmen, among them W. H. Burnham (President of Peerless Fence), Charles Hart (owner of Hart and Shaw Drugstore), and David Metcalf

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<sup>10</sup> For information about Nu-Way Company, see Charles Lindquist, *Adrian: The City that Worked* (Adrian: Lenawee County Historical Society, 2004), 145, 166, 193, 194, 208, 253, 255.

<sup>11</sup> Mott's *Daily Telegram* obituary is available at the Lenawee County Historical Museum.

(Drygoods store owner and land developer). But by the 1920s, most of the lots in the neighborhood were occupied by existing buildings.

Not surprisingly, with the growth in industry, the 1920s was also a period characterized by house building throughout the city of Adrian—most of it occurring on the west side within easy walking distance to the electric street car - until the street car ceased operation in 1924. Following a brief lull after World War I ended in 1919, resulting in only ten new houses being built in the city in 1921, things began to boom. But the end of the decade, there were 37 new houses each year on average, most College, Williams and University, as well as the fashionable Maumee Court. Then, in the 1930s this large growth the housing market collapsed along with so much else.<sup>13</sup>

Today the current owners of the Mott House are Donna and Paul Lentz, a registered nurse and a physician. The Mott home was earlier home to five different owners who are identified in the Abstract of Title, which is in the possession of the current home owners. Paul and Donna had begun their hunt for a new home about twenty years ago and came across four houses in the Adrian area that they liked, but Donna was left with the decision making. She happened to choose this particular home on 304 State Street. They moved to this area for their jobs and raised two daughters in the home.

The Lentzs have made only slight renovations to the interior of the house, having left it in the condition in which they purchased it. There were only a few things that they wanted to change at the time of arrival. Over the years they have

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<sup>12</sup> Lindquist, *Adrian*, 140.

updated the interior by painting cabinets and replacing countertops in the kitchen, along with redoing carpeting. Orange shag carpet had covered several floors and they only left the back stairs covered in it. They removed the wallpaper that seemed to cover the whole home at the time. Several toilets have been replaced because as Donna describes it, one day they would have leaked every where.

The basement is one of the only rooms that has not been renovated, even though they spend most of their time downstairs, in their office. Previous owners



have made other changes, including one door and the laundry shoot, which have been covered over.<sup>14</sup>

The Lentzs have made an effort to return the exterior to its original design. When they moved in, the porches on both sides were covered in aluminum siding, which Donna described as making the house look like a trailer park home. Donna and Paul quickly began removing it and putting in screens and glass windows, working with the original frame of the porches. Around the porch they found the remains of a few exposed rafters; Paul took it upon himself to remake the rest which finished off the exterior of the home.

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<sup>13</sup> Lindquist, *Adrian...*, p. 172.

<sup>14</sup> These changes are only evident in comparison to Wachter's original plans, which the Lentzs purchased along with the home.

Today, following the Lentzs' restoration, the Mott house is a prime example of a Georgian-style Colonial Revival-style home, and a symbol of Adrian's prosperity and pride in the 1910s and 1920s. Much as Mott's generation took pride in the nation's architectural heritage, the current owners have taken pride in its preservation.

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