



The City of Seattle

## Landmarks Preservation Board

700 Third Avenue • 4th floor • Seattle, Washington 98104 • (206) 684-0228

### REPORT ON DESIGNATION

LPB146/01

Name and Address of Property: **Rosen House**  
**9017 Loyal Ave. NW**

#### Legal Description:

Loyal Heights Addition, Block 5, Lots 11-14

At the public meeting held on April 18, 2001, the City of Seattle's Landmarks Preservation Board voted to approve designation of the Rosen House as a Seattle Landmark based upon satisfaction of the following standards for designation of SMC 25. 12.350:

*D. It embodies the distinctive visible characteristics of an architectural style, or period, or of a method of construction.*

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

#### Neighborhood

Ballard is a Seattle neighborhood located in the northwest part of the city, with Salmon and Shilshole bays on Puget Sound forming its southern and western boundaries and Phinney Ridge to the east. It was incorporated as a city in 1890 and annexed to Seattle in 1906. Industries in Ballard were primarily connected to logging and fishing. During the early 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a large immigration from Scandinavia to the United States. Jobs in Puget Sound logging mills and fisheries attracted many of the immigrants from Norway and Sweden to come to the Northwest and many of these pioneers settled in Ballard. They brought with them a strong ethnic identity that is still present today. Ballard is thought of as the Scandinavian part of Seattle, and Bergen Park, the Ballard Avenue Historical District and the Nordic Heritage Museum all help to celebrate the history, culture and contributions of the Scandinavian people to the growth of Seattle.

When it was incorporated in 1890 Ballard included 1,600 residents living between Salmon Bay and NW 65<sup>th</sup> street. To attract home buyers, railroad and streetcar service was expanded to Golden Gardens at the northwest edge of Ballard and to Loyal Heights.

Between 1906-1910 Loyal Heights, one of the largest divisions or land tracts, was sub-divided by H.W. Treat and E.B. Cox, major real estate developers. It consisted of 180 acres at the NW corner of Ballard overlooking "Loyal Beach". Mr. Treat ran a trolley and buggy service out to NW 85<sup>th</sup> and 32<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NW to show his Loyal Heights Division to potential customers. In the 1930's there were newspaper campaigns encouraging people to build while interest rates and construction costs were low. During this time, Ballard led the city in new housing construction. The Loyal Heights Addition, north of 85<sup>th</sup> street was developed more in the 1940's to 1960's.

## **Ownership History**

The house at 9017 Loyal Avenue NW was built in 1933 by (Captain) Ole E. Nilsen allegedly as a copy of his boyhood home in Bergen, Norway. The house was constructed with distinctive craftsmanship in a style consistent with Scandinavian vernacular building traditions and has been maintained in excellent condition. Captain Nilsen worked in sales for the Atlas Engine Company. He and his wife Claire (Clara) lived at 9017 Loyal Avenue from 1934-1939 and then moved to Dana Point, California.

William and Helen Rosen bought the house from Capt. Nilsen in 1940. The Rosens lived in the house 55 years. The Rosen's six children all attended the local Seattle Public Schools in Ballard : Loyal Heights Elementary, James Monroe or Marcus Whitman Junior High School, Ballard High School and graduated from the University of Washington.

Bill Rosen was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, the eldest son of Morris and Rebecca Rosen. He was educated in the Seattle Public School system graduating from Broadway High School (whose Alumni Association honored him by naming him a member of its "Hall of Fame" in 1985) and was a graduate of the University of Washington, where he majored in Business Administration, was a member of the Varsity crew and was president of Zeta Beta Tau fraternity. Upon graduation from the University, he entered his father's business, Alaskan Copper Works, in 1929. Along with this father and brother he established the Alaskan Copper and Brass Company and, as President, led the development of the Alaskan Copper companies into nationally prominent manufacturers, fabricators and distributors of corrosion-resistant metals and into one of Washington's larger privately-held corporations.

Helen Grunbaum Rosen was born in Chicago, Illinois. She moved to Seattle as a child and attended Seward Elementary School, Broadway High School and the University of Washington where she earned her BA in English and did graduate work in Drama. She was the granddaughter of a pioneer Seattle family. Her grandfather Henry Grunbaum came to Seattle shortly after the Seattle fire in 1889 and established the City of Paris department store in 1890. The family went on to start the Grunbaum Furniture Store, and to build the Decatur Building (Henry Bittman, Architect) at 1513-1529 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue which is still in use today as part of the busy retail core of downtown. Mrs. Rosen was an active member of both Ballard and the greater Seattle community. She was interested and active in the arts and served on the Board of Trustees of the Cornish School of Fine Arts. She helped in fund raising for the new Ballard General Hospital. As its Volunteer chairwoman, she started its "candy-striper" program, managed its gift shop and began the then unique service of television rentals in the patient's rooms. She was the first woman member of the Board of Trustees of Ballard General Hospital, and served on that Board for many years. As chairwoman of the

volunteer tutoring program at Loyal Heights Elementary School, she was twice the recipient of the Seattle Public Schools P.T.A Golden Acorn award, given for outstanding service to a school.

## **Architect**

Rosen family history holds that the original architect was the noted George Wellington Stoddard. To date, the family has been unable to locate original plans or other documentation that would provide confirmation. The addition, built in 1948 to match the original house, is by John Jacobson.

Born in Detroit in 1896, he received his BS from the University of Illinois, and practiced in partnership with his father, Lewis M. Stoddard, from 1920-1929. He designed the Winthrop Hotel in Tacoma in 1926-27. He practiced alone from 1929-1955, and designed larger homes, clinics, banks and apartment buildings. It is during this period that he may have designed the house at 9017 Loyal Ave NW. From 1955-60 he practiced with Frances Huggard. Stoddard designed Memorial Stadium in 1947 (now part of Seattle Center) , the University of Washington south stands in 1950, and the Green Lake Aqua Theater in 1950. He died in 1967

## **DESCRIPTION**

### **Exterior**

The house is approximately 5000 square feet, incorporating 10 rooms plus a finished basement and 3.5 baths. The structure is clad in its original old growth Western Red Cedar shingles. The shingles were originally stained gray but are now covered with a gray paint. The style incorporates revival style design elements of the period, including multiple gables and an almost storybook character.

The window frames are painted white. The windows are casements with steel sashes and true divided lites. The trim boards are pegged to simulate mortise and tenon construction. Some of the windows on the second floor have a transom at the top.

The doors are of solid wood stile and rail construction, painted dark red with black metal decorative straps. Two have Dutch doors with a single recessed panel in each half. A third Dutch door has a leaded glass window in its top half. Some of the five entrances to the house have gray painted wooden screen doors. The patios are of concrete scored to simulate flagstone paving; these are original to the house.

The cedar shake roof and copper gutters are new, but are consistent with the original design of the house.

One of the most striking exterior feature is the front porch, suggesting the entrance to a Stave church (a medieval Scandinavian style involving elaborate heavy timber construction). This design is repeated on the back patio and on the carport of the 1948 addition. The Stave motif is carried through to the interior, particularly the living room with its cathedral-ceiling and loft room.

## **Interior: Main Floor**

All the original main rooms of the house are paneled in old growth native softwoods with distinctive Norwegian influences. Throughout the house can be seen examples of Norwegian folk art that have been used for generations. These include rosemaling, carved beams and railings, panels in doors and on walls, decorative wood carving on bookcases and ceiling moldings, and the use of decorative iron hardware. The millwork used throughout the house is of solid wood. Door knobs and escutcheons are made of black cast iron.

The family story is that Capt. Nilsen personally selected all the woods used in the house, sending back the pieces that did not meet his specifications. The woods were custom-milled, carefully grain matched and finely finished.

### Living Room

The great room (or living room) has a double-height vaulted ceiling, with exposed sculptured wooden roof beams and decking. The beams and decking, as well as the walls of the living room, are of Douglas fir. The walls panel boards are of various widths with fluted edges that form a board and batten pattern. The wood is laid horizontally for a wainscot effect on the lower part of the wall with the wood running vertically above the wainscoting. The wall paneling is of the sort one would find in Norwegian homes from the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Above the living room is a loft (reputed to have been used for Capt. Nilsen's afternoon naps) supported by a large, sculpted, decorated, cross-beam. This balcony is reminiscent of the Swiss influence prevalent in Norwegian homes during the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century and is also part of a Stave church design. The support beam is decorated in a traditional style of painting called rosemaling. Family information has it that the beam was hand selected for its natural check which is meant to stand for sensitivity while the unchecked side represents strength.

Original built-in bookcases are accented with cutout scrollwork, and are painted a teal green color that is found in the rosemaling. The distinctive main ceiling light fixture is the original custom chandelier of wrought bronze metal with glass chimneys and metal shades. The walls in the living room and entrance have wall sconces that match the main fixture. The original light fixtures in the house fit with the period's revival styles.

The large natural stone fireplace with its wooden mantle and dentil moulding has handmade firescreen doors with a metal vine design. All of the elements of the fireplace and screen are original to the house. The fireplace is perhaps more in keeping with Western American tradition than with Norwegian style in which a free standing corner stove would be the more common device, but one authority reports seeing pictures of similar fireplaces in homes in the Bergen area of Norway.

### Dining Room

The dining room walls are clad with large rectangular wooden panels separated by fluted battens and decorated with a plate rail at about 5 feet above the floor. The ceiling consists of square wooden panels trimmed with fluted battens to match the walls. There are square medallions at the batten intersections. The room also has a built-in china cabinet with leaded glass doors. The leaded glass is now covered with mirror but can be easily removed. The door that closes the room off from the

breakfast nook repeats the pattern of the ceiling on the dining room side. It is covered with plain pine planks on the breakfast nook side. The plate glass window with two casement side windows looks out on the back patio with its Stave architecture supports and flagstone impressed concrete floor.

### Breakfast Room

The distinctive breakfast room is paneled entirely in pine with two built-in corner cupboards decorated with scrollwork cutouts and rosemaling in the Hallingdal style. The ceiling has cross beams that terminate at a block in the center; a distinctive original light fixture hangs from the center.(glass has been replaced). The inside of the cupboard and the shelving is painted a red tone found in the rosemaling. Its windows face the patio on the west and the tennis court and gardens on the south. A door with a leaded glass window leads out to the patio.

### Kitchen

The kitchen, located on the south side of the house, has a galley configuration. The kitchen is close to its original design with a few exceptions. The kitchen walls, built in cabinets, bread boxes, flour bins, cooler cabinet and drawers are of knotty pine accented with black glass knobs and black metal hinges, all original. Knotty pine was a common wood found in Norwegian homes as pine was a prevalent tree.

The original cabinets on the east side of the kitchen have been eliminated to make room for a dishwasher. Tile countertops have been replaced by hardwood with the original tile backsplashes remaining. The undersink space is covered by black metal screening in wooden door frames. Windows in the kitchen face the tennis court and the front yard.

North of the kitchen and on the east side of the house, the back hall gives access to the kitchen from the front entrance. Within the hall are found storage closets for coats, china, food and cleaning supplies. It includes a Dutch door with leaded glass windows.

### Main entrance

The large Dutch front entrance door opens from the front porch into a formal foyer that measures 5'10"wide x14'10" long. It is paneled in the same fir of the living room. This space has openings to the kitchen hall, den, living room, dining room, and the staircases to upstairs and down to the back door and basement.

### Guest Bathroom

The guest bath room is found off the main foyer. It is painted 2/3 up the wall with the top 1/3 being wallpapered. Under the wallpaper is canvas with an undersea scene painted in oils, original to the house. The Bathtub and sink are original. This full bath is attached to the den.

### Den

A short hallway off the entrance leads to the den. It was originally a bedroom. The bookcases in the den were added in 1948. Through a new door also added at this time is found the family room. The main features include fir paneling, scalloped trim, and built-in bookcases.

### Family Room

Paneled in birch veneer, the family room is in the space of the original garage to the house and has built-in bookcases, a closet and wet bar area. The interior is considered part of the 1948 addition and is not a designated feature.

### Flooring

The floors on the first floor are pegged oak planks of various widths with the exception of the breakfast nook which has oak parquet floors. The original linoleum of the kitchen has been replaced with hardwood.

The floors on the second floor are oak hardwood floors around 2" widths.

### Main stairway

The ascending stairs are about 4 feet wide with two landings as it turns to reach the second story. The stairs and landings are made of hardwood. On the first landing is found a bank of windows and an original wrought metal ceiling fixture. The walls have the wainscot detailing up the wall. The banister consists of partially turned balusters with a heavy rail, which is broken up by square newel posts as it turns corners ascending the stairway. The newel posts are topped with large wooden oval finials. The descending stairs to the back door are equally wide and the walls are paneled like the main floor rooms. The stairway includes fir paneling, an original light fixture, and original wooden banister.

### Loft (see living room description) and hallway

A very distinctive feature of the house, this small but room has a railing with carved balusters that overlooks the living room. It has a closet and a large built-in bookcase with sculpted edges. The shelves and back of the bookcase are painted a red tone seen in the rosemaling of the living room. The lighting fixture is original.

The hallway at the top of the stairs is paneled in pine and contains a laundry shoot to the basement, a linen closet and doors to the master bedroom, bathroom, dressing room and second bedroom as well as entrance into the 1948 addition which encompasses two bedrooms and a full bath.

## **Interior: Second Floor**

### Master bedroom

The master bedroom is paneled in pine that has had a wash of paint (not original) to give it a lighter pickled look. It has a fireplace with a red brick surround and a small mantle above it. The glass fireplace doors are not original to the house. The room has two alcoves with storage closets, a decorative built-in bookcase and a beamed ceiling. The light fixture in the center of the room is wrought metal with glass chimneys in the same style as the rest of the house.

### Dressing Room

The master dressing room is painted cream with stenciling on walls. Originally it had the traditional rosemaling, but it was covered with a new coat of paint due to a stain on one wall. The walls are lined with built-in cabinets that contain areas for hanging clothes, drawers and shoe storage. The room also has its own sink and a built-in dressing table, and an original art deco mirror. The window

above the dressing table faces west over the patio. The white and black striped glass light fixtures are original.

### Master Bathroom

The adjoining full bathroom has walls that are painted halfway up the wall with the top being covered with canvas that has been painted in oil with a land and seascape scene. It is crazed behind the lights due to the heat of the bulbs in the candle-like light fixtures but otherwise is in good condition. The master bathroom includes original porcelain fixtures, and an original oil painting/mural on the wall. The flooring is not original.

### Second original Bedroom

The second bedroom in the original house is paneled in pine with a beamed ceiling. The planks between the beams are painted white and the room is lacking its original ceiling light.

### **Changes to the original house**

In 1948 a north wing was added to the house. The exterior of this addition is built in a style consistent with the original house. The garage, which was a barn-like structure including a dovecote, was replaced by new bedrooms and a bath over a family room. Although the interior of the added rooms is paneled, it is not in the same old growth wood. A carport was constructed on the west side of the house to replace the garage. The roof of the carport is supported by “stave-work” in harmony with that of the entrance and back patio. The carport has a pull down ladder that leads to storage above the parking spaces.

The interior of the 1948 addition on the second floor has fir veneer woodwork in the hall and birch in the two bedrooms. The two bedrooms share a bath that has light green tile used on walls, the floor and a tile vanity. The larger of the two bedrooms has built in closets, drawers, bookcases, and a vanity with mirrors. The 1948 addition includes two bedrooms and a bathroom. These rooms are not included as designated features.

### Carport

Part of the new addition to the house in 1948, the carport has the Stave architecture features of the main house. This is seen in the support columns on both sides of the carport. There is a storage area above the carport that includes a window.

### **Norwegian Folk Art as Part of the Interior Decorative Elements**

Rosemaling is a distinctive Norwegian folk decoration which was popular and in extensive use in Norwegian homes from the late 17<sup>th</sup> through the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (4). At the time of construction of this house, traditional rosemaling was no longer practiced widely in Norway. A resurgence of interest and activity in this folk art developed in this country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and continues, promoted by institutions like the Vesterheim Norwegian-American Museum of Decorah, Iowa as exemplified by a yearly National Rosemaling Exhibition and Competition sponsored by the museum. The builder of this home, like other Norwegian immigrants to the U.S., decorated with hand-painted designs of high quality which closely resemble traditional Norwegian rosemaling. Based on inspection by an expert in rosemaling, the decoration in this home is in Hallingdal style

demonstrated in its symmetry and in S and C shaped scrolling, tulips and other flowers and acanthus vines. Although the painter is unknown, the expert observer felt that the artist was highly skilled in this technique. The rosemaling on the main floor of the house is preserved in perfect condition.

### **Site and Landscaping**

The house and grounds are situated on four building lots. When the house was purchased by the Rosens in 1940, it was sited on one lot, and the Rosens felt it was too large for its lot, so they bought the three adjoining pieces of property. This collection of four lots makes up 3/4 of an acre of graceful, multilevel landscaping with numerous mature trees and plantings, rockeries, lawns and flower beds. The landscaping of the property was developed over the years by the owners and gardeners who maintained the grounds. The empty lots were originally covered with native evergreen and deciduous trees. The site is bordered on the east by Loyal Ave. NW and on the south by Golden Gardens Drive. Well separated from other homes, the estate is the largest in the immediate neighborhood.

In 1941 the tennis court was built on the property south of the house. Since the neighborhood did not have sidewalks, the tennis court and its southern lot saw major use as the informal local playground. A large section of the property was cleared about 1948, planted with grass and given a swing set and bars. The tennis court was used for neighborhood activities including riding bicycles and tricycles, playing tennis and basketball, roller skating, and in cold winters, ice skating! The large maples and evergreens on the most southern point of this lot are original to the property. The blue spruce tree is about 50 years old and the filbert trees on the SE side were planted around the late 1950's.

The original rockeries on the west side of the property are made of large granite boulders. Broken concrete rockeries were built by the gardener for the property during the 1940's and 1950's. They are located on the south, north and western sides of the tennis court, the eastern border of the property and along both sides of the driveway and the entrance up to the front gate. In addition to the rockery sides, the tennis court is bordered on the western end by a chain link fence with a cedar tree hedge behind it and on the eastern end the fence is covered with a mature grape vine and cedar trees that help shield it from the street.

The driveway on the north side of the house was added in the 1949 when the addition to the house was finished. The lot used for the carport and driveway consisted of a small orchard of fruit trees and a "victory garden" planted during World War II. In 1970 the upper lawn east of the driveway was added by filling in the garden and building a granite rockery and planting grass. Rhododendrons and fruit trees were added to this part of the yard which is also bordered to the north with big leaf maple trees and evergreens. The eastern part of this lot is covered with grass and rhododendrons.

The lower garden to the west is much as planted in 1933. The mature evergreen trees (fir and pine) which border the lower eastern lot were planted in the 1950's to screen the houses built to the immediate east. The rockery in the lower garden had a water system that ran down to a fish pond at the base. It was turned off, and the fish pond filled in, after a near drowning of one of the children in the 1940's.



The upper western garden off the patio is as originally planned but the rose bushes that lined the upper rockery were replaced with a cedar tree hedge for screening in 1970.

The front gate and path to the house were added with the 1948 addition. The path of concrete with flagstone paver markings matches the sidewalk to the front door. It meets the original front steps on the left side and curves to the right to meet the carport.. This walk is bordered by a boxwood hedge on the right side and evergreen azaleas and shrubs on the left.

The front yard is grass with garden beds that include azaleas, cotoneaster and cedar trees. The magnolia tree next to the kitchen door and the clematis at the edge of the front steps are original plantings. Some of the mature plantings are original to 1933.

*The features of the Landmark to be preserved, include:*

**The site, the exterior of the building, and the interior of the building excluding the basement and excluding the interior of the 1948 addition.**

Issued: May 2001

Karen Gordon  
City Historic Preservation Officer

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