

I.O. Pickering House (1870s) **507 West Park Street – Olathe** ***National Register of Historic Places***

“...Like Sterling in silver, Haviland in china, it is the Pewter of housing Pulchritude.” --1962 real estate ad for the Pickering House, Olathe

The Pickering House, located at 507 West Park Street in Olathe, is one of the fourteen Johnson County properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The large Italianate structure was awarded this status in 1981. Major Isaac Orlando Pickering, a Union Civil War veteran who christened his home “Old Liberty Hall”, built the house over a period of about ten years



The I.O. Pickering House, circa 1960. Johnson County Museum Collection.

beginning in the late 1870s. The structure is notable both for its illustrious owner and for its architectural features.

Major Pickering had come to the Kansas City area as a teenager before the war, and afterward married Celona Weaver of Olathe. After some ventures in hotel-keeping and farming, Pickering studied the law and in 1875 went into partnership with John P. St. John, who became governor of Kansas and was a Presidential candidate on the prohibition ticket. Pickering himself served as city attorney and as mayor and was nominated by the Prohibition Party for governor in 1892 and 1894. Pickering's elaborate Victorian house featured five porches with gingerbread trim, several stained glass windows, and an impressive curving walnut staircase. It was sturdily built with a stone foundation and cypress exterior. Originally a much larger acreage, the property included spacious lawns, large vegetable gardens, and several outbuildings including a stable, carriage house, and servants' quarters. As befitted the grand home of a well-to-do and prominent family, the Pickering house became the site of many notable social affairs, from gala lawn parties to society weddings.

Major Pickering died in 1923, but his descendants lived in the house until 1960. Over the years, the building fell into a state of some neglect. Ever a solid

structure, however, the house underwent modernization and restoration in the 1960s. Today the house remains in private hands.

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