

Martin Van Buren Parker House (1880)

631 West Park - Olathe

National Register of Historic Places

In Olathe, a beautiful Victorian house sits at 631 W. Park. This home, known as the Parker House, is one of 14 properties in Johnson County listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built by Martin Van Buren Parker and his wife Emma around 1869, this two-story, frame house is a wonderful example of late Victorian architecture. It is a vernacular interpretation of the Eastern Stick style, which is identifiable by the gable trusses, wide, bracketed eaves and corner post delineation. The historic home is one of only a handful that remain standing in the area.

Martin Van Buren Parker and his wife Emma arrived in Olathe around 1868. Parker was one of the first lawyers in the area. He set up a law practice with his brother-in-law, John P. St. John, who later served as a governor of Kansas. Parker did not limit himself to the law, however. He also had real estate, insurance and farming businesses as well. At one time, he owned over 700 acres of county farmland. Emma Parker was also active in the community. In 1883, she founded the Ladies Reading Circle with Mrs. Celestia Stevenson and Mrs. Celona Pickering, two prominent Olathean women. The club was the first women's club in Olathe and one of the first in Kansas.



The Martin Van Buren Parker House in Olathe, KS. Photograph courtesy of Sun Publications.

Martin and Emma Parker had five children, May, Effie, Luella, Zula and Zella. Only one of their daughters, Luella, married. The remaining four daughters continued to live in the house. This large two-story structure stayed in the Parker family until 1960 when the last surviving daughter, Zula, sold it. Over the next twenty years, the house slowly deteriorated but managed to escape being razed.

In 1981, the present owners purchased the house and set out to restore the home to its former beauty. The Martin Van Buren Parker home was placed on the National Register for Historic Places seven years later. Today, the house is in excellent condition and maintains a high degree of architectural and structural integrity.

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