

Herman and Ella Voigts House (1923)

2405 W. 103rd Street – Leawood
National Register of Historic Places



The Herman J. and Ella Busch Voigts House, located at 2405 W. 103rd Street in Leawood, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. *Johnson County Museum Collection.*

While attending Missouri Valley College, Herman John Voigts purchased a cow for \$10.00 and sold it for \$20.00. He recalled later, “From this time on, I knew what I wanted to do. I told my father that I was coming home to begin handling cattle.” In 1900, he returned to Mission Township in northeastern Johnson County and began acquiring land. The 1922 Atlas showed Voigts had title to 218 acres, including a 120-acre tract his father, Herman Henry Voigts, had purchased in 1895. By 1922, Herman J. Voigts had married Ella Busch, the couple had two children, and the family was living in a two-story frame house.

A neighbor named Hans Lassen proposed to Voigts that he negotiate a twenty-year lease of his land to Lassen for use as a dairy farm. Voigts agreed and Lassen rented the pasture for his cows and a tract near Indian Creek for the dairy buildings. In 1923, the Grant-Ready Company moved the Voigt family’s farmhouse down the hill to the dairy as a residence for the operator. Construction at the original location of the frame house began on the simplistic Prairie-style home at 2405 W. 103rd in present day Leawood.

The Prairie-style of architecture is uniquely American, originating in Chicago at the turn of the 20th century. It was primarily a residential style with most built between 1905 and 1915. The Voigts house is an example of one of the more common Prairie-style types – symmetrical with a low-pitched roof, wide overhanging eaves, broad flat chimney, and large square masonry porch posts. Prairie-style homes were usually constructed of brick or plaster walls. The stone for the Voigts house was quarried on a farm one and a half miles from the building site; stone exteriors are not common for the style. The interior of the home was also symmetrical, with rooms organized around a wide central stairway. The home was built by Frank Bayrel and completed in the fall 1923 at a cost of \$23,000, a total exceeding the original estimate.

Voigts was earning a living as a handler of cattle, but was more than a simple farmer. He had acumen as a business man with stock holdings at seven local banks, including Overland Park State Bank, Waldo State Bank, and Westport State Bank. He served as president of First National Bank of Olathe and vice presidents of the City National Bank and the Patron's Bank of Olathe. He also served as a board member and treasurer of the District 1 Board of Education from 1911-1953.

He generously shared his knowledge and business advice concerning cattle and land with friends and neighbors, including Oscar G. Lee, for whom Leawood is named. Herman Voigts reflected back upon his business dealings, "This is a wonderful place to live. In Mission Township a blind man could make money by just buying property."

By February of 1959, all but ten acres of the original farmstead had been sold for suburban development to John Kroh, president of Leawood Building Company, Inc. The Voigts continued to live in their home with their daughter Anna Lois Debach and her husband, Kenneth. In 1956 Ella Busch Voigts died; Herman J. Voigts died in 1970. Anna Debach continued to live in the family home until her own death in 1992.

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