

# Hycrest (1881, altered 1919)

## 505 E. Cedar - Olathe

### *Register of Historic Kansas Places*



Characteristic of stick-style architecture, the first floor of the Hyer house was originally clad in horizontal clapboard and the second story sported wood shingles. That exterior was evident on the house as late as 1984. Sometime in the early 1990s, the entire exterior was replaced with clapboard siding, as evident in this 1995 photograph. *Johnson County Museum Collection.*

The large frame house located at 505 E. Cedar in Olathe is significant both for its style and for its ties to leading businessmen in the city's history. Known locally as "the Hyer House," the structure was placed on the Register of Historic Kansas Places in 1984. The two-story frame building on a cut limestone foundation is an example of the 19<sup>th</sup> century "stick" style of architecture, characterized by a cross-gable roof line, overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends, and decorative detailing on the outside walls.

Olathe businessman Jonathan Dow built the original three-story structure in 1881. A Civil War veteran, Dow arrived in Olathe in 1866 and soon established a general merchandise store on the northwest corner of Cherry and Chestnut Streets in a building later occupied by the Hyer Boot Company. According to local tradition, Dow's house on East Cedar was the first in Olathe--and possibly in Kansas--to have indoor running water. The water was pumped from a well house to a holding tank on the third floor of the house. Besides the well house, outbuildings included a barn/carriage house, a storage shed, and a children's playhouse.

In 1918 W. Henry "Willie" Benade purchased the Dow property. Originally from Pennsylvania, Benade entered business as a hide trader in Salina in 1870 and later farmed outside Olathe. In 1919 Benade removed the third story of the house, which included a ballroom space. Additions to the outbuildings were also apparently made at this time. The children's playhouse was upgraded to a guesthouse with the addition of two rooms, heating, and plumbing.

Benade died in 1928. Four years later his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Hyer, inherited the house and its 14 acres of land and christened the property "Hycrest." In 1914 Amelia, the youngest Benade child, had married Charles A. Hyer, whose father was founder of the Hyer Boot Company in Olathe.

Upon the death of his father in 1921, the younger Hyer had taken over the boot business.

Charles and Amelia Hyer made some alterations to the house in 1933, including enclosing two porches, converting one of the first-floor parlors into a bedroom, and enlarging the other parlor by knocking down the wall between it and a hallway. After this initial remodeling, no significant changes were made to the house during the Hyers' long tenure there. Various interior features notable for their craftsmanship remained unaltered throughout these years. These included a carved walnut staircase in the parlor and a pair of stained glass windows at the stair landing. Parquet floors and decorative wooden wall paneling in the entry and the library were also retained.

After Charles Hyer's death in 1976, his widow remained at Hycrest. Amelia Hyer died in 1988. In the early 1990s her heirs remodeled the house, installing air conditioning and replacing aged wiring and plumbing. The structure was then sold, passing out of Hyer family ownership for the first time in some sixty years. The house, its outbuildings, and extensive grounds remain an impressive presence in the landscape of Olathe.

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