



SandHill Marketing photos.

Robert C. Burnham House 263 N. Central Avenue, 1913.

Characterized by overhanging eaves with its original casement windows and stucco finish intact, the Robert Burnham house is one of three Percy Dwight Bentley designed buildings in Richland Center. The Burnham House predates the Fred H. Pratt House, also on Central Avenue, by six years. It shares a similar low pitched hip roof and the horizontal band of casement windows with the later structure. It is contemporary with the third Bentley building, the City Auditorium, which was completed in 1912. This two story house was built for Richland Center druggist Robert Burnham. He ran the Empire Drug Store on Court Street until his death.

For many years the Burnham family was closely connected to the drug business in Richland Center. John W. Burnham was born in Bear Valley in 1858 and came to Richland Center in 1877 to clerk in the Burnham and Bliss drug store, and became the owner of the store located just west of the H.T. Bailey building on Court Street. In 1906 he took in his son, Robert C. Burnham, as a partner and changed the name to Burnham and Son.



(Keep in mind the homes listed are private residences which are not open to the public. Please respect the occupants' privacy when viewing their homes from the sidewalk).

Robert C. Burnham and Lida Postel were married in Milwaukee in 1906. Upon their return to Richland Center, John Burnham held a reception for the newlyweds which was described in a local paper as the social event of the season with over five hundred guests attending.

Robert Burnham completed his new home on Central Avenue in 1913 at that time it was described as one of the finest in the city. The Bentley and Merwin architects of LaCrosse were the designers, Charles Guild the contractor, and Irvin Beatty was the finisher. The house cost \$8,000. When the house was new it had a large open porch with the smaller panes of the windows being stained glass. The living room and dining area had beamed ceilings. Other features included the den with its row of book shelves and two stairways; one in the front hall and the other in the back part of the house for access to the upstairs bedrooms. There were radiators in each room and a cistern located in the basement to provide soft water.

Only two other families have occupied the house. When it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Carl Luenschloss, the Burnhams went to a home on East Seminary Street. Luenschloss sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. Robert and Beata Elliott. Beata Elliott still resides in the house at 263 North Central Avenue.

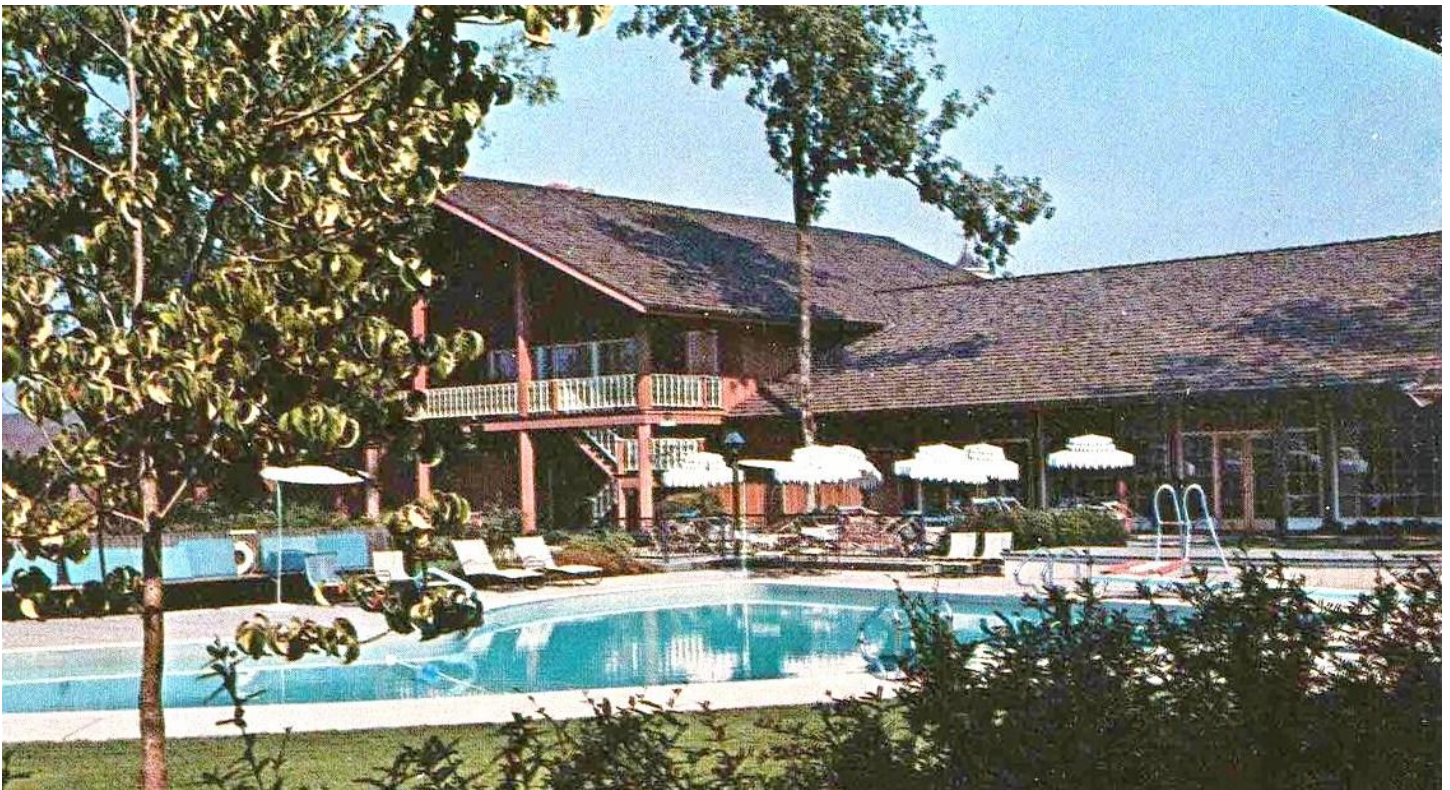
Percy Dwight Bentley, the architect, was born January 30, 1885 in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He attended school in La Crosse before entering Ohio Wesleyan University, where he was a non-graduating member of

the class of 1907. Later, he enrolled on two different occasions at the Armour Institute (now Illinois Institute of Technology) but never completed a year there.

Between 1907 and 1910, Bentley worked in LaCrosse for Wells Bennett as a draftsman when not in school. In 1910, he formed a brief partnership with William Bajari, hiring Otto Merman as a draftsman. Both Merman and Bentley left LaCrosse around 1913 or 1914 and headed for the Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minn. area where Bentley became associated with Charles Hausler for about a decade. He returned to LaCrosse periodically and he and Merman formally announced their partnership in LaCrosse at the end of December 1917. Before becoming a professional architect, Bentley was an accomplished pianist and played with a St. Paul orchestra.

The strong influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan is evident in Bentley's early, primarily residential work. Of his later work he was most proud of the Village Green Motor Hotel in Cottage Grove, Oregon. He had moved from St. Paul to Eugene, Oregon in 1939. Bentley died February 2, 1968, at the age of 83.

Otto A. Merman was also born in La Crosse, Wis. in April 1890. He received his early training in the offices of architects Parkinson & Dockendorff from about 1907 to 1910. He moved to Minneapolis for a short time and returned to La Crosse to form a partnership with Percy Bentley. When Bentley moved to St. Paul in about 1919, Merman assumed the practice. Merman began to specialize in public buildings, particularly schools.



Cottage Grove Motor Hotel - Percy D. Bentley architect.

Percy Dwight Bentley (1885-1968) was an architect from LaCrosse, Wis. who practiced in Lane County, Oregon from 1939-1961. His early work shows the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright and Louis Sullivan. The collection of his papers at the University of Oregon documents his work from 1951-1962 and includes churches, residences, and commercial structures including information on the Village Green Motor Hotel in Cottage Grove Oregon.