BELoit
HISTORIC
SURVEY
AUGUST 1884
INTRODUCTION
Much of Beloit’s history is contained in its buildings, streets and parks. The purpose of the Beloit Historic Survey was to document the history of Beloit’s buildings and places and, in the process, formally recognize those which are most architecturally and historically important through nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. It is hoped that through official recognition of properties, and heightened public awareness, historic preservation will become a tradition in Beloit as it serves to retain the diversity and character of the community.

Planning for the Historic Survey began in 1977. At that time, the City had begun assisting various groups in improving established neighborhoods, and expressions of concern to preserve the future of Beloit’s historic sites were voiced. Beloit already had a few structures listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but there was a need to identify and document the remaining significant properties. The City was also aware of the financial and tax benefits available through historic preservation programs and was interested in utilizing them as incentives to stimulate additional housing rehabilitation. To aid in ongoing neighborhood preservation and housing rehabilitation efforts, the decision was made to become active in historic preservation programs available on the state and federal levels. The Historic Preservation Division of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin offers survey and planning grants as a means of encouraging preservation through the identification of historic buildings and properties. The City of Beloit applied for and received a survey and planning matching grant early in 1980, which provided the funds for conducting an inventory of Beloit’s historic sites and determining the significant sites. The findings of this survey, partially presented in this brochure, resulted in nominations to the National Register of Historic Places, as well as a wealth of information useful to the City of Beloit and to its residents.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of properties and districts in the United States worthy of preservation because of their historical, architectural, and archeological value. The program was established by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and is administered by the United States Department of Interior. This law authorizes the Secretary of the Interior “to expand and maintain a national register of districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects significant in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture, hereinafter referred to as the National Register of Historic Places.” Beloit’s recent nomination to the National Register is in the form of a multiple resource nomination. A multiple resource nomination may include any combination of eligible properties and districts within a specific geographic area. Beloit’s nomination includes properties and districts of architectural or historical significance that are within the city limits of Beloit. The Beloit Historic Survey revealed a rich, yet dwindling, supply of historic resources that are included in Beloit’s multiple resource nomination because of their compliance with the National Register criteria.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY
The Beloit Historic Survey involved a comprehensive and thorough examination of the City’s built environment. It began with an update of an existing reconnaissance survey that was done in 1975 by the Rock County Historical Society. At that time, surveyors traveled every street and road in the county looking for historic properties and gathering telephone numbers, addresses, and brief descriptions. This information was then added to the Beloit City Property Tax Assessor’s Records. As the first step in the Historic Survey, the City’s records were accessed to verify and update the information from the 1975 reconnaissance survey and add any new properties.

Next, the City’s Survey Team visited each property, which was assigned a number that corresponded to its location on the survey map. Each property was photographed, and a brief survey form was completed. The survey form included questions about the property’s age, style, and significance. The Survey Team also recorded any historical facts about the property, such as its former use or any notable events that occurred there.

Once the survey form was completed, the property was marked on the survey map with a red pin, and a detailed description of the property was written in the field log. This process continued until all of Beloit’s historic properties were documented.

Finally, the Survey Team compiled the information from the survey forms and field log into a report, which was then submitted to the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The report included a detailed inventory of Beloit’s historic properties, along with photographs and descriptions of each property. This report was then used to nominate Beloit’s historic properties to the National Register of Historic Places.
identifying and photographing potentially significant properties. State Historical Society inventory cards were completed for each, and the properties were mapped.

The 1980 intensive survey utilized the results of the 1975 reconnaissance survey and, in addition, included a second house-by-house survey of Beloit, verifying and adding to the earlier list of historic properties. Also, those properties that had been altered or demolished since 1975 were noted. This survey resulted in the identification of over 500 sites which were considered historically or architecturally interesting. Following this initial step, the Beloit Plan Commission received a progress report outlining the results of the reconnaissance survey.

The reconnaissance survey provided a broad base of information on the nature and condition of Beloit's buildings. The second phase of the project called for more in-depth and detailed research on Beloit's history and on individual properties identified in the survey. Evaluation of the city's properties yielded a number that were considered significant.

From a summary map of those selected, obvious groupings of sites were examined for possible district designations. A historic district is a contiguous group of buildings that exhibit substantial significance and integrity. A number of potential districts were revealed by the survey, of which five were especially significant. These were the downtown commercial district, Eclipse Park, Bluff Street, Beloit College, and the near east side residential neighborhood. Not only did these areas contain important sites, they also were distinguished in their overall character and function in the City.

Concurrently, research was conducted on sixteen historic themes. These thematic studies included subjects such as commerce and industry, parks, transportation, prominent individuals in Beloit's history, government, and education. Buildings and places, relating to the history of Beloit and its citizens, were identified through this topical research. Also, local architectural styles, architects, and builders were studied to further aid in identification of buildings having architectural significance.

As revealed by this historic survey, Beloit possesses a great number of sites and structures diverse in architectural style, yet alike in their graceful and pleasing appearance. The Beloit Historic Survey identified the most significant of these properties for inclusion in a multiple resource nomination for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Significant properties are within three historic districts, as well as outside district boundaries. These properties were selected for inclusion after evaluation according to the National Register criteria. The three districts are the East Grand Avenue Historic District, the Near East Side Historic District, and the Bluff Street Historic District. These districts were selected due to the clusters of architecturally significant buildings found in each area and the role of the districts in the history of Beloit. Outside of the district boundaries, twenty-six individual properties were nominated for their historical or architectural distinction.

BLUFF STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
The Bluff Street Historic District, which stretches along a portion of Bluff Street from Merrill Street south to Shirland Avenue, is lined with interesting homes and churches representing varied architectural styles. This district is one of the older residential areas of the city and was first settled in the late 1840's, following the construction of the first bridge across the Rock River. John Hackett, a man of influence and substance in the pioneer community, played an important role in the development of Bluff Street. He purchased a farm on the west side of the river that included land on Bluff Street from St. Lawrence Avenue to the Illinois state line. This land was platted as Hackett's Addition and parcels were quickly sold in response to Beloit's growing population. By 1856, most land above Hackett's Addition that is included in the district was platted as Tenny's Addition, Walker's Addition, Merrill's Addition and Rockwell's Addition. There were at that time, however, very few houses in that part of the district. On West Grand near Bluff Street, the site of the second Beloit High School, later occupied by the Municipal Center, John Hackett built a substantial home in 1842. Its construction initiated a west side trend of homebuilding by prominent Beloit citizens.

The most monumental west side homes were built on and adjacent to Bluff Street. Throughout the 19th century, it continued to be home for numerous city leaders, many of whom spared little expense in constructing their houses. Industrialists and businessmen were among those who built in the Bluff Street district, which was close to the rapidly expanding industrial areas along the river. Skilled laborers, such as industrial patternmakers and carpenters, also built their homes there, which were more modest in size, but distinctive in style and detail.

The Bluff Street Historic District includes fine residences from Beloit's early history and reflects many styles of residential architecture. There are two houses in the district that are already listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Both are from the first, or pioneer, period of architectural history in Beloit, typified by vernacular and Greek Revival styles.

LATHROP-MUNN HOUSE

BLODGETT HOUSE

The Lathrop-Munn House, 524 Bluff Street, was built around 1848 (NRHP, 1977). It is a fine example of cobblestone construction, a method imported to Wisconsin from New York. Further south, Selvy Blodgett, the son of Caleb Blodgett, the first permanent settler in Beloit, built his stone house at 417 Bluff Street, sometime between 1847-50 (NRHP, 1980). Selvy Blodgett was one of the founders of the Blodgett Milling Company, which operated in Rock County for over 100 years. The house expresses the popularity in the 1840's of the Greek Revival style in the old Northwest Territory and its limestone construction reflects the use of local materials.
A number of other homes reflect the character and styles of the Bluff Street Historic District. Two, from different periods, were homes of important Beloit industrialists. The Parker House, at 231 Roosevelt, was built in 1858 by Charles H. Parker, co-founder of the Parker & Stone Reaper Company, one of Beloit’s earliest industries. It is an Italianate style structure. Alonzo Aldrich, one of the founders of the Beloit Iron Works in 1885 and its president for many years, lived at 423 Bluff Street in a house originally built by a druggist in the early 1890’s. (See photo 15.) This stately Victorian house is built in the Queen Anne style.

Two other late 19th century houses were built by individuals representing the business and skilled labor sectors of Beloit’s society. The elaborate stick work detailed house at 261 St. Lawrence dates from the Queen Anne period and was built in 1899 by George Anderson, an agent for the American Express Company. He was also manager of Beloit’s Wisconsin Telephone office. George E. Lewis, a patternmaker, built the house at 118 Bluff Street in 1890. (See photo 14.) It is a Queen Anne style house with clapboard and shingle and spindle decorations. More modest, it is representative of homes of skilled workers in the late 19th century.

EAST GRAND AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The East Grand Avenue Historic District incorporates a section of the downtown commercial district containing a number of historically and architecturally outstanding buildings. The area generally includes the east side of State between Broad and East Grand, East Grand from State to just east of Pleasant, and portions of Pleasant from East Grand to Public.

This district is an area which was part of the original Beloit settlement. Along these streets lived Beloit pioneers such as Caleb Blodgett, John Hackett and Dr. Horace White. John Hackett built the first store in Beloit on the southeast corner of School Street (now East Grand) and Turtle Street (now State). Blodgett’s Boarding House, also called the Rock River House, was located across the street from Hackett’s Store on the northeast corner. The first full two story house, of wood frame construction and erected in 1839 by Israel Cheney, was located on the northeast corner of Broad and Pleasant. The downtown area was originally a place where people conducted their trade as well as a place of residence. Homes and businesses stood side by side during this early development period.

As Beloit continued to grow in the 19th century, people began to build their homes further east and west. By the late 1880’s, Beloit was a busy commercial center serving the city and the surrounding agricultural region. The downtown area, including the East Grand Avenue Historic District, became more closely associated with commerce. Residences were demolished or altered to make room for the expanding business district.

Although a few buildings remain from the 19th century, the district is distinguished by the collection of early 20th century commercial buildings. Of the 19th century buildings, the Hanchett Block stands out. The Hanchett Block is a four-story commercial building, built in 1856, located at 305-309 State Street (NRHP, 1980). However, the building front was altered significantly around the turn of the century and, therefore, has since lost its most predominant 1850’s characteristics. Nonetheless, the Hanchett Block is of major local significance for its long association with Beloit business and social life. It was the site of Rock County’s first enlistment for the Civil War in 1861. The top two floors are occupied by Hanchett’s Hall. This Hall received broader significance when Abraham Lincoln spoke there in October of 1859 while visiting Rock County. The original builder, James Hanchett, was well known as a contractor and speculator. He was the builder of the Hanchett farmstead (c. 1857), 2149 St. Lawrence, now the Bartlett Museum, and also builder of the first Beloit dam over the Rock River.

Twenty years ago, an historic district in the downtown would have been much larger. In recent years, however, many old and significant buildings have been destroyed by fire, demolished to make room for parking lots, or replaced by modern structures. Fortunately, a cluster of buildings and a number of individual structures do remain and have been identified by this historic survey. This is especially true of a number of interesting examples of early 20th century commercial architecture. Four buildings in the district, in addition to the Hanchett Block, were identified as the most distinguished. These are the Strong Building, the Rindfleisch Building, the Hulbert Building and the Beloit Professional Building.

The Hulbert Building, at 439 East Grand Avenue, was built in 1907 (See photo 9). It represents a turn of the century commercial style and has an unusual masonry front which includes two story columns and attic windows. The building also has two story tripartite windows and a two story bay window.
Also on East Grand Avenue is the Rindfleisch Building. This beige brick building located at 512 East Grand Avenue was built in 1926. It is a vernacular commercial structure with large plate glass, transom windows and smooth decorative stone trim.

The Beloit Professional Building, one of the largest commercial buildings in Beloit's downtown commercial district, is located on the southeast corner of Public and Pleasant Streets (See photo 10). This building, from the early 1920's, combines the Classical Revival and Sullivanesque architectural styles. The particular fenestration, massing and the terra cotta facing relate it to commercial architecture in Chicago from the early 20th century.

One of the most interesting buildings in downtown Beloit is the Strong Building at 400 East Grand Avenue (See photo 11). It was designed in 1929 by the Chicago firm of Oman & Lillienthal. The building is significant as one of the best examples of Art Deco style buildings in Rock County. The Strong Building is distinctive in its green and white terra cotta frieze with a stylized daisy floral design bordering the building.

**NEAR EAST SIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The Near East Side Historic District is an area which incorporates three significant elements from Beloit's history. These elements are Beloit College, the near east side residential neighborhood and Horace White Park. The district possesses a rich heritage tied to the origins of the City of Beloit and its founders. The Near East Side Historic District is part of the original claim of Beloit's first permanent settler, Caleb Blodgett. This was land which he purchased from Joseph Thiebault, a trader, who was the first to claim the land east of the Rock River and north of Turtle Creek. Two early surveys, the 1837 Kelsou Survey and the 1840 Hopkins Survey, mapped the land on the east side much as it is today. The entire district is contained within the Hopkins Survey (the Original Plat of Beloit).

Beloit College dominates the district on the west. Built on land donated by the citizens of Beloit, the college was chartered in 1846 and is Wisconsin’s oldest college in continuous academic existence. Its formation was based largely on the religious and educational backgrounds of the early settlers in Beloit, who labored for the establishment of a college from the first years of settlement. The cornerstone for Middle College was laid in 1847 and it was built with funds given by Beloit residents. Although altered since then, it is today the oldest college building in continuous use northwest of Chicago. It originally housed students and classes, and was also the site of the first college library and early administrative offices. It presently houses the college administrative offices.

Another significant Beloit College building is Eaton Chapel. Built of rusticated stone, in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, the cornerstone was laid in 1891. It served as the college chapel until 1970 and over the years was remodeled and enlarged. Eaton Chapel was designed by the Chicago firm of
Patton and Fisher and was named in 1930 after the second president of the college, Edward Dwight Eaton.

Pearsons Hall of Science (NRHP, 1980) was designed by Daniel Burnham of Chicago. It was constructed in 1892 and is an imposing building of Romanesque Revival design, faced with rusticated plum brown brick of strong character. Pearson Hall is significant as the only building in Rock County designed by the Burnham firm.

The Near East Side Historic District has many homes occupied by a variety of Beloit's citizens. The neighborhood grew up around Beloit College and many of its early residents were associated with the college. However, a cross section of Beloiters built their homes in the district, including grocers, druggists, bankers, industrialists, professors, doctors, lawyers and carpenter/builders. Some of the homes in the district date today from the 1850's. From this beginning, the area's structures reflect many periods of Beloit's architectural styles.

One of the district's earliest houses, the Rasey House, at 517 Prospect Street (NRHP, 1974), is one of only a few cobblestone structures remaining in Beloit. It was built on college property in the late 1840's by labor procured from the building of Middle College. In order to raise money for the college, the property was sold after its construction. Its first resident was Professor A. L. Chapin, who lived there from 1850 to 1851. The house was then sold to Deacon Samuel Hinman, who lived there for many years.

The neighborhood achieved the character it has today toward the end of the 19th and into the early 20th centuries when many prominent families built large and comfortable homes in the area. The district had many examples of the Italianate, Queen Anne, and Early Colonial Revival architectural styles. However, not all homes in the district looked to historical styles. Several homes drew their inspiration from the Prairie School of architecture made famous by Frank Lloyd Wright. An example of the Prairie style influence is the house built in 1913 at 816 Wisconsin, later lived in by Dr. Connell, a Beloit physician and surgeon (See photo 2).

The district is also the site of a number of churches, one of which has been a key Beloit landmark since its construction. Built in 1859, the First Congregational Church (NRHP, 1974), 801 Bushnell, was constructed of Milwaukee brick in the Greek Revival style with some Romanesque Revival details. It was designed by Lucas Bradly, a prominent mid-nineteenth century Wisconsin architect from Racine.

Among the many other distinguished homes in the district is the Sereno T. Merrill house, 703 Park Avenue. Built in 1869, the house is a fine example of the Italian Villa style of architecture, and was the home of Sereno T. Merrill, a prominent citizen of Beloit. Merrill contributed to Beloit in many ways during his lifetime. He moved to Beloit in 1846 and became principal of the Beloit Seminary (which merged with Beloit College in 1849). During the years 1850-1851, Merrill, together with T. Wright, built the first paper mill on the Rock River. Merrill was also an inventor and industrialist. In 1873, he helped organize, and was president of, the Eclipse Windmill Company (the early forerunner of Fairbanks Morse and Company). He was also president of Merrill and Houston Iron Works (forerunner of the Beloit Corporation) and the Citizen's National Bank.

Horace White Park is another significant feature of the Near East Side Historic District. This park was included in both the 1837 Kelsou Survey of Beloit and the 1840 Hopkins Survey (Original Plat). In the Kelsou Survey, the park was a public square and was larger than it exists today. The public square was planned on the scale of a New England town square around which the village was to grow. As detailed in the Hopkins Survey, this growth did not occur as planned, however, as the commercial area flourished nearer the river, and the square became a smaller public square. It was the site of the first school house, of 1839, called the "Old Brick Pile." The public square was also the site of the second county fair in 1852. In the early 1860's, the public square was named the City Park. Later, in 1910, the City Park was landscaped by O. C. Simonds, who was concurrently doing similar landscape work on the Beloit College Campus. In 1919, the City Park was dedicated to and named after Dr. Horace White and son Horace White, Jr. Dr. White was a distinguished early citizen and the leader of the New England Emigrating Company which settled Beloit in 1837.
INDIVIDUAL SITES
The Beloit multiple resource nomination includes individually eligible properties as well as the three historic districts. The individual properties are distinguished either by their architectural significance or by their importance in Beloit's history. Some properties are significant in both categories. In order to be considered architecturally significant, a National Register property must represent the work of a master, possess high artistic value, or represent a type, period or method of construction. Historical significance indicates an association with the lives of significant persons or with important historical events.

The Beloit Historic Survey identified twenty-six potentially eligible buildings that are not located within the historic districts. These are listed below, together with a brief description of the property. They have been divided into five categories that indicate their distinguishing characteristics.

FARM HOUSES AND BARNs (Because of their outlying location, these are not shown on the map.)
2501 Spring Creek Road — An early Greek Revival farm house constructed with native limestone, built around 1850.
2149 St. Lawrence Avenue — The Bartlett Memorial Museum (NRHP, 1977). An Italianate limestone farmhouse, with barn and smokehouse, built around 1857.
2601 Afton Road — The Klondike Farm House. An elegant Queen Anne style house built in 1904 with money earned from Klondike gold mining.
2601 Colley Road — The Dougan Round Barn, an example of a concentric barn, a concept espoused by Professor E. F. King of the University of Wisconsin, built in 1911 (NRHP, 1979).

CHURCHES
822 East Grand Avenue — St. Thomas Catholic Church. A High Victorian Gothic style church built in 1885.

PUBLIC STRUCTURES
1005 Pleasant Street — Beloit Water Works and Water Tower built in 1885.

ARCHITECTURALLY DISTINCTIVE HOUSES
NINETEENTH CENTURY STYLES
1701 Colley Road — The finest example of Beloit's many “Brasstown” cottages, c. 1880. (See photo 1)
702 Euclid Avenue — A house with Stick style characteristics built in 1883 by Wilson D. Kenzie, a builder/architect.
348 Euclid Avenue — A Queen Anne cottage built in 1887 by Stephen Slaymaker, a carpenter.
757 Euclid Avenue — A house with Eastlake detail built in 1891 by Charles Rau, a furniture merchant. (See photo 16)
1119 Eclipse Avenue — A house with Stick style characteristics built in 1893 by Bridgott Callahan.
745 Milwaukee Road — An apartment house with Shingle style elements built as a fraternity house by a Beloit College professor in 1891.
1303 Bushnell Street — A house with elements of the Shingle style built in 1904 by architect Irving Hand, later occupied by Ernest Lipman, a prominent industrialist.
720 Parker Avenue — A house with Colonial Revival elements built in 1904-1905 by Charles Still, a merchant.
636 Milwaukee Road — An Early Colonial Revival house built in 1908 by E. H. Smythe, a carpenter/builder.

TWENTIETH CENTURY STYLES
1302 Bushnell Street — A fine Tudor Revival style house remodeled between 1920 and 1931. This house is associated with the Neese family of the Beloit Corporation.
1335 Chapin Street — A Georgian Revival house built in 1927 by L. Waldo Thompson, president of Gardner Machine Company and the Gaston Scale Company. (See photo 6)
1754 Sherwood Drive — A large and rambling Tudor Revival house built in 1927 by Harold F. Freeman, Vice President of the Freeman Shoe Company.

MISCELLANEOUS BUILDINGS AND STRUCTURES
910 Broad Street — A cobblestone barn built around 1850, to the rear of a late Queen Anne-Early Colonial Revival house built around 1900.
312 State Street — Now the Voigt Music Center, this Victorian Italianate commercial building was built in 1880 to house the Moran Saloon. (See photo 12)
1221 Clary Street — Broder Mausoleum, Oakwood Cemetery. A private burial vault built of Italian marble and Vermont granite in 1883-1885. It is one of the finest examples of 19th century Classical Revival style of architecture in Rock County.

Emerson Hall, Beloit College — This elaborately detailed Jacobethan style building (NRHP, 1979) was constructed in 1897 and is associated with co-education at Beloit College as an early women's dormitory.
205 and 215 Birch, 206 and 216 Carpenter — Edgewater Apartments, originally Fairbanks Flats, built by Eclipse Homemakers, Inc. of Fairbanks Morse and Company. Constructed in 1918-1919 to house black workers brought to Beloit during World War I to work at Fairbanks Morse and Company.
136 West Grand Avenue — A Modernistic commercial building with Art Deco detail, given its present facade in 1934. This building had been occupied by E. L. Chester & Company department store since the 1890's.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY
Beloit's buildings reflect a wide variety of architectural styles which reflect historical trends in American architecture. These styles have at times been adapted to local tastes and building materials, yet generally they follow the period trends since the 1840's. Outlined below is a brief view of Beloit's architectural styles.