

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 90000575

Date Listed: 4/6/90

Beckwith, Nelson F., House  
Property Name

Green Lake  
County

WI  
State

Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*Beth Boland*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

*4/6/90*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

=====

Amended Items in Nomination:

#3. Classification: The correct category is "building."

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DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

525  
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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

DIVISION OF  
NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only archival paper (20 pound, acid free paper with a 2% alkaline reserve).

1. Name of Property

historic name Beckwith, Nelson F., House

other names/site number Harmon, Solomon C., House

2. Location

street & number 179 East Huron Street N/A not for publication

city, town Berlin N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Green Lake code 047 zip code 54923

3. Classification

| Ownership of Property                       | Category of Property                         | No. of Resources within Property |                        |
|---|--|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> building(s)         | contributing                     | noncontributing        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <u>1</u>                         | <u>1</u> buildings     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State       | <input type="checkbox"/> site                | <u>    </u>                      | <u>    </u> sites      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal     | <input type="checkbox"/> structure           | <u>    </u>                      | <u>    </u> structures |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> object              | <u>    </u>                      | <u>    </u> objects    |
|   |  | <u>1</u>                         | <u>1</u> Total         |

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. of contributing resources  
previously listed in the  
National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

*[Handwritten Signature]*

*2/20/90*

Signature of certifying official  
State Historic Preservation Officer- III  
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet

*Beth Bland*

*4/6/90*

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register.

\_\_\_ other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials  
(enter categories from instructions)

Italianate  
Greek Revival

foundation STONE  
walls Weatherboard  
roof ASPHALT  
other WOOD  
Cast Iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

### Description

This excellent two-story three-bay-wide frame residence is located at 179 E. Huron Street and is a highly intact transitional example of the Italianate style whose earliest portion was built in 1858 for newly arrived saw mill owner and lumber dealer Nelson F. Beckwith and family. The Beckwiths had previously lived in the nearby village of Omro, Wisconsin and their move to the upper Fox River community of Berlin coincided with the cresting of a population boom that had increased the local population from 250 in 1850 to 2800 in 1857, the year Berlin was officially incorporated as a city.<sup>1</sup> Much of this growth was due to Berlin's growing importance as a transportation hub and this importance was further enhanced in August of 1857 when the tracks of the Milwaukee and Horicon Railroad were extended to Berlin from the nearby city of Ripon. Beckwith built his house in the newly created city in the the following year and set himself up as a lumber dealer. In 1863, five years after building his house, Beckwith built a new brick hotel in Berlin called the Beckwith House (extant but considerably altered) which he then leased to others. Seven years later, in 1870, Beckwith sold out his various business interests in Berlin, having already sold his house to another saw mill owner, Solomon C. Harmon, in 1869. Harmon immediately built a one-bay-wide two-story addition of nearly identical design across the west-facing side elevation of the house's original two-bay-wide cupola-crowned main block, giving the building its present day appearance.<sup>2</sup> By then, Berlin had settled down to a more orderly pace of growth and by 1980 the city had a population of 5478 and a national reputation as the "Fur and Leather City" based on its having become a center of specialty clothing manufacturing.

The Beckwith house is one of the earliest of the many architecturally impressive houses constructed in the gently sloping neighborhood surrounding East Side Park (aka Nathan Strong Park), Berlin's oldest public space. This park was donated to the city by Nathan Strong (?-1852), the founder of Berlin, and consists of a single square block containing a band stand and an impressive war memorial and sculptural group known as the Soldiers and Sailors Monument. The park is bounded on the east by North Church Street, on the north by East Park Avenue, on the west by North State Street, and on the south by East Huron Street--the principal thoroughfare of the city of Berlin--and the Beckwith house is located directly across the street from the southwest corner of the park towards the rear of the large 140 foot by 140 foot double lot which forms the northwest corner of the intersection of East Huron Street and North State Street. This conspicuous corner location on East Huron Street directly across from one of the main entrances to East Side Park has made the Beckwith house one of Berlin's most visible local landmark.

<sup>1</sup> Gillett, Lulubelle C. Early Houses in Berlin, Wisconsin. Worzalla Publishing Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1976, Pg. x.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of this addition can still be seen today in the vertical line on the main facade between the left and the middle bays that resulted from the meeting of the butt ends of the 1869 siding and the original siding.

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The house is free-standing and its principal facade faces south onto East Huron Street. The house now has an L-shaped plan that consists of a two-story rectilinear main block with overall dimensions measuring approximately 45 feet wide by 35 feet deep. A 22 foot wide by 26 foot deep one-and-a-half-story rectilinear ell known as "the north wing" is connected to the north-facing rear elevation.<sup>3</sup> The dimensions of today's main block, however, reflect the 1869 addition built by the Harmons. The original portion of the main block appears to have also been rectilinear in plan and was approximately 27 feet wide by 35 feet deep and each elevation was two-bays wide. The north wing was then located in the same position it now occupies but may have originally been freestanding and connected to the main block by a short hyphen. It is now attached to the rear of the north-facing elevation of that portion of the main block built by the Harmons.

The Beckwith house's exterior walls rest on cement-covered fieldstone foundation walls which enclose a crawlspace that underlies the entire house except for a portion under the northwest corner of the main block that consists of a small 10 foot by 8 foot cellar of normal depth whose walls are also made of fieldstone. This cellar's position underneath that portion of the house added by the Harmons in 1869 may indicate that it too was added at that time although its position would also have placed it just outside the kitchen wing constructed by the Beckwiths, in which case it may have originally been utilized as a root or storm cellar. The exterior walls that rest on these foundations still have their original, beautifully maintained weatherboard cladding throughout and these walls are enframed by a system of corner pilasters, corner boards, water tables, and cornices; the complexity of whose design varies depending on whether one is discussing the main block or the kitchen wing. All the exterior walls terminate in wide overhanging eaves which both shelter the walls themselves and support the asphalt shingle covered roofs above. The roof of the main block is unusual. That part which covers the original portion consists of a very shallowly pitched hip roof which has a square plan cupola of decidedly Italianate style design centered on it. When the house was expanded by the Harmons, the same roof design was replicated and the pitch of the original slopes was respected but that portion in the center which would have been covered by a cupola was left as a flat deck adjacent to the original cupola, and this deck is encircled by wrought iron cresting. In keeping with its subordinate status, the roof of the kitchen wing has a simple gable form whose ridgeline runs north-south and is lower in height than the cornice of the main block.

The south-facing East Huron Street facade is the principal elevation of the Beckwith house and the main entrance to the building is placed in a projecting vestibule in the center bay of this three-bay-wide composition. This facade is rectangular in shape and is asymmetrical in appearance with the wider left-hand bay being the one added by the Harmons in 1869. The facade is enframed by plain corner pilasters at either end that are topped with simple capitals, and also by a wide, transitional

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<sup>3</sup> Letter from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker. July 20, 1948. In the possession of Mrs. Walker.

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design bracketed wooden cornice above. This cornice has as its model a classically composed entablature and has a simple architrave at its base which is then separated from the wider but equally simple frieze above it by a band molding strip. This portion of the entablature is then terminated by a band of denticulated blocks. A wide overhanging cornice with panelled soffits shelters the frieze and architrave below and the cornice itself is of three-part construction and is terminated by a crown molding. Six pairs of elaborately scroll-sawn sandwich brackets are then affixed at regular intervals along the length of the face of the frieze and appear to support the cornice above.

The most prominent feature of this facade is the combination flat roofed entrance vestibule and front porch salient that covers the middle and right-hand bays of the first floor. The vestibule is approximately 8 feet wide and 5 feet deep and light is admitted into both it and the entrance hall beyond by a system of windows placed in and around the single south-facing entrance door. The door has a large single light filled with pieces of clear beveled plate glass set in an elaborate geometric pattern that are held in place by metal comes. It is flanked by similarly filled sidelights and these three elements are all surmounted by a broad, segmentally arched transom light which is also filled in the same manner as the other windows.<sup>4</sup> The door, its surrounding windows, and their frames are all treated as a unit that is inset approximately 1 foot into the vestibule and the reveals of this flat-arched recess are panelled in the same manner as the soffits of the roof cornice. Paired pilasters flank both sides of this recess and the outermost pilaster of each pair is a corner pilaster that wraps around the corner of the vestibule. These pilasters have tall pedestals, chamfered shafts, and stylized non-traditional capitals and that portion of the main wall of the vestibule visible between the individual pilasters of each pair contains a tall, thin panel that has been recessed into the main wall. A small, narrow side door having a segmentally arched head is placed at the rear of both the east and the west-facing sides of the vestibule. Each of these doors has a single panel placed below a tall, segmentally arched single light which is filled with the same clear, geometrically patterned beveled plate glass that is used in the front door and there is also a pilaster attached to the wall on the southerly (outermost) side of each door which is identical in design to those that flank the entrance door. The vestibule is then surmounted by a bracketed cornice whose frieze is decorated with a frieze band with a repeated scallop motif along the lower edge.

To the right of the vestibule is an equally deep screened porch that covers the remainder of the right-hand portion of the first floor of the main facade and also

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<sup>4</sup> While the beveled glass that fills the various window in the entrance vestibule is clearly newer than the house itself, it predates the period of ownership of the present owners who acquired the house in 1944. Such glass was available from many sources before and after the turn-of-the-century and its incorporation into the Beckwith house may date from that period.

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shelters the tall pair of French doors with transom lights above that are centered in the right-hand bay of the first floor and that admit light into the main living room of the house. This porch has a raised concrete pad floor and its flat roof is supported by two free-standing posts that are identical in design to the pilasters that flank the entrance door and the post that supports the corner of the porch is also doubled by a similar pilaster which is placed directly behind it on the main wall of the house. The cornice of the porch roof is now a continuation of the cornice of the vestibule and is identical to it in design. This porch is a later modification of a smaller one of very similar design that originally occupied the same position. Sanborn-Perris maps show that this earlier porch had the same dimensions as the bay window which makes up the first floor of the bay to the left of the entrance vestibule and that it was attached to the vestibule in a similar manner. Later, between 1911 and 1926, this porch was enlarged to its present size using the structural and decorative elements of the original and such additions to the length of the cornice as were necessary to accommodate the revised dimensions.<sup>5</sup>

The first floor of the left-hand bay on the main facade consists of a large one-story-tall flat-roofed bay window of rectilinear plan that measures approximately 3 feet deep by 12 feet wide. Light enters the bay and the dining room of the house behind it through two pairs of tall, thin one-over-one light double-hung windows facing south and through single windows of identical design located on the east and west-facing sides of the bay. A simple rectilinear panel is recessed into the face of the bay just below each window and the detailing of the bay is identical in design with that of the vestibule and features individual pilasters positioned on either side of each window with the outermost two being corner pilasters that wrap around the corners of the bay. The cornice of the bay is identical to that used on the vestibule and it and the roof of the bay are extended across the space between the bay and the vestibule, creating a covered recess between the two.

The left-hand bay of the second floor of the main facade contains a paired group of tall flat-arched one-over-one light double-hung windows that light the master bedroom of the house. The pair is topped by a simple crown which imitates the uppermost portions of the main cornice above. The middle bay and the right-hand bay both contain identical French windows, each of whose two three-light halves opens inward. The middle window lights the second floor hall while the right-hand window lights a bedroom. Each of these two windows is topped by simple crown identical to that used above the paired group in the left-hand bay and all three windows are of equal height and have louvered shutters although only those shutters belonging to the middle and right-hand bays are functional.

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<sup>5</sup> Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps of Berlin, Wisconsin. Sanborn-Perris Map Company, New York, New York, 1895, 1905, 1911, and 1926. Mention of this change is also made in a letter to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor dated October 3, 1948. Mrs. Taylor lived in the Beckwith house between 1899 and 1912 and this letter is in the possession of Mrs. Walker.

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The main facade is surmounted by the asphalt shingle-covered hip roof that covers the main block of the house. The slopes of the hipped portion of this roof have a very low pitch and the roof is then topped by a broad deck whose most prominent feature is the asymmetrically placed square plan Italianate style wooden cupola that is centered between the middle and right-hand bays of the main facade. This cupola also has a hipped roof and it is completely original. Each of its four sides consists of a triple group of one-over-one light double-hung windows whose upper sash has a semi-circular arched light. Each individual window has its own semi-circular-arched drip mold and the windows are then surmounted by a bracketed and denticulated cornice which is a scaled down version of the main cornice of the house. The cupola's cornices are identical in design to those below except that they use smaller scroll-sawn paired brackets made out of single thicknesses of wood instead of ones made out of sandwiched construction such as are found on the main cornice. An unusual feature of this cupola is the use of brackets at the corners of the base of the structure. These brackets are attached to both the main roof and to the walls of the cupola and they are placed directly below the similar pairs of brackets in the cornice. The remainder of the deck portion of the main roof is enclosed by wrought iron cresting which was added to the roof between 1899 and 1909.<sup>6</sup>

The east-facing side elevation of the main block of the house is two-bays wide and is entrained by the same corner pilasters and cornice found on the main facade. This elevation faces towards the park and the left-hand bay on the first floor contains a single tall pair of flat-arched French doors surmounted by a transom light above, which light the main living room of the house. Each door opens inward and contains three lights and the entire unit of doors and transom is surmounted by the same simple crown which imitates the uppermost portions of the main cornice above. The window in the second floor of this bay is identical with that below except that it lacks the transom lights. An identical window occupies the second floor of the right-hand bay. Both of these windows light bedrooms. The first floor of the right-hand bay of this elevation is covered by a fine five-sided polygonal flat-roofed wooden bay window that was probably added when the Harmons bought the house in 1869.<sup>7</sup> The two innermost faces of this bay window both contain a single one-light casement window that is surmounted by a fixed semi-circular arched transom light. The three remaining faces each contain paired one-light casement windows, each pair of which is surmounted by a large, fixed single-light segmental arched transom light. A bracketed cornice encircles the bay above the windows and a single

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker. October 3, 1948. In the possession of Mrs. Walker.

<sup>7</sup> This assertion is conjectural. The earliest rendering of the Beckwith house uncovered in the course of this research is shown on the bird's eye view of the City of Berlin printed in 1867. This view illustrates the house just before its purchase by the Harmons and shows it in its original two-bay-wide state and also depicts the cupola but it does not show the east-facing bay.



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recessed panel is placed below each window or group of windows. All of the windows on this facade excepting the bay window have operable louvered shutters and these are identical to the ones found on the main facade. There is also a tall red brick chimney placed on the main roof between the two bays which exhausts the living room fireplace.

The west-facing side elevation of the main block of the Beckwith house is three-bays wide and is asymmetrical in composition, unlike the two-bay-wide east-facing elevation, and it is enframed by the same corner pilasters and cornice used on the main facade. The middle and the right-hand bays are separated by a tall red brick chimney mass built in 1951 that pierces the main cornice and exhausts the dining room fireplace and the furnace. Both the right-hand bay and the middle bay on the first floor each contains a single tall pair of flat-arched French doors, surmounted by a transom light above, and both of these pairs of doors light the dining room of the house. Each door opens inward and contains three lights and the entire unit of doors and transom is surmounted by the same simple crown which imitates the uppermost portions of the main cornice above. A single window is placed in the second floor of each of these bays and both admit light to the master bedroom. These windows are similar in height and width to those found elsewhere on the second floor of the main block but they consist of single two-over-two light double-hung windows instead of the French doors found elsewhere. The first floor of the left-hand bay contains a small paired group of later double-hung windows which is surmounted by the same simple crown as the rest of the windows on the main block and the second floor of this bay contains a thinner but equally tall version of the other double-hung second floor windows on this elevation.

The rear or north-facing elevation of the main block is three-bays wide and is also asymmetrical in composition and it is enframed by the same corner pilasters and cornice used on the main facade. The left-hand bay features the same fenestration pattern found elsewhere on the original portion of the main block with the first floor having a pair of tall three-light French doors with transom lights above that in this case help to light the living room. The second floor has a pair of three-light French doors without the transom light above that help to light a bedroom. The second floor of the middle bay contains a window identical to that in the adjacent left-hand bay and this window lights the second floor bathroom. Neither of these windows are as tall as those on the front and east-facing elevations. The first floor of the middle bay contains a large, later triple window group that lights the den of the house. This window group features three, three-over-one light double-hung windows, each one of which has a small three-light transom window above it. Both the first and second floors of the right-hand bay of this elevation are covered by what would be the south-facing elevation of the attached one-and-a-half-story north wing of the house.

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The north wing (aka kitchen wing) of the Beckwith house is a one-and-a-half-story, rectilinear plan, 22 foot wide by 26 foot deep ell, which is surmounted by a gable roof whose ridgeline runs north-south and whose single visible gable end faces north. This ell is also sided in weatherboard and each of the three visible elevations is enframed by simple corner boards, water table boards, and by wide fascia boards placed just below the broad, overhanging eaves of the roof. The east-facing facade of this ell is three-bays-wide and is asymmetrical in composition. The first floor of the left-hand bay contains a later pair of three-over-two light double-hung windows that light the main kitchen of the house. The first floor of the middle bay contains an entrance door having a six-light window in its upper half and this door is sheltered by a fine open entrance porch whose hip roof is supported by two chamfered shafts that have raised pedestals and capitals as decoration. The space between each porch shaft and the main wall behind it is filled by a wooden slat-backed bench of a later date than the rest of the porch. The first floor of the right-hand bay contains a window that lights a bathroom and this window has a simple eared frame and the window itself consists of a clear rectilinear pane surrounded by a frame composed of smaller rectilinear panes of colored glass. Two small two-light rectilinear windows similar to eyebrow windows are placed in the half story above the first floor on this facade and these windows are positioned over the first floor windows in the left and the right-hand bays and light the second floor storage room.

The rear or north-facing facade of the north wing is asymmetrical in composition and contains a six-over-six light window placed in the center of the gable end that lights a storage room inside. An identical window is placed slightly off center on the first floor just below and another window of the same design is placed on the right-hand edge of this facade. Both of these windows light the old summer kitchen of the house. The first floor windows flank an eight-panel rear door located between the windows which is surmounted by a four-light transom window.

The west-facing facade of the north wing is also asymmetrical in composition and is three-bays-wide. Each bay differs in width and the first floor of the left-hand bay contains a paneled door that is sheltered by a fine wooden hipped-roof entrance hood. This hood has a wide fascia surmounted by a multi-part cornice identical to the one that crowns the cornice of the main roof of the wing and it is supported by two large elaborately scroll-sawn brackets that flank the door opening. A small two-light rectilinear window similar to an eyebrow window is placed in the half story just above the door and an identical window is placed in the half story above the tall eight-light window that fills the first floor of the right-hand bay and lights an office room inside. There is also an identical eight-light window placed between the door and the other window in the first floor of the middle bay. Because the westerly edge of this wing projects beyond the west-facing wall of the main block of the house, a small, thin one-over-one light window has been placed on the first floor of the exposed portion of the south-facing wall of the wing immediately adjacent to the main block.

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Each of the four owners of the Beckwith house has altered the interior of the house to some degree although most of the changes to the main block occurred shortly after the Harmons took possession in 1869. The original floorplan of the first floor of the main block consisted of a long, narrow entrance hall on the westerly, left-hand side of the block. To the north, behind this hall, was another room and two parlors were ranged along the entire eastern side of the block. After the Harmons purchased the property the partition between the front and back parlors was removed and a new two-story addition was added across the entire west side of the block. The first floor of this addition contained a new dining room just to the left of the entrance hall, and a new serving pantry was added just behind, and to the north of the dining room. All of the rooms that resulted from this remodeling are still intact today. The only significant changes later owners made involved building in several pieces of very fine carved furniture into the living room and den and replacing the original first floor mantelpieces and ceiling lighting fixtures with later examples.

The interior of the Beckwith house still contains most of those architectural and decorative elements which make the interior of this house one of Berlin's best examples of the Italianate style. Entrance to the interior is gained by passing through the already described outside entrance door into the vestibule which, as a result of the 1869 remodeling, had assumed a central position on the main facade. The inner vestibule door is made of heavy wood construction and has two tall, thin plate glass lights placed above a paneled lower portion. Both lights are made of clear glass and are decorated with an elaborately etched vase and flower pattern as is the rectilinear transom light above the door. The rectangular entrance hall beyond is approximately 20 feet deep and 10 feet wide and the ceilings here and elsewhere on the first floor are 10½ feet tall. The main staircase is placed along the left-hand side of this hall and ascends in a straight flight to a radiating termination at the top of the run. To the immediate left of the entrance door is another paneled door that opens into a coat closet framed into the enclosed space beneath the stairs. This closet was added between 1929 and 1944 and it replaced a tall niche that was originally used to display an appropriately large piece of statuary.<sup>9</sup> The balustrade of the staircase begins from a large turned and tapered newel post and continues in an uninterrupted flight upwards and around the open well of the stairs before terminating against the west wall of the second floor hall. This balustrade is composed of tall, thin taper-top balusters which support the traditionally styled wooden handrail. Elaborately scroll-sawn decorative brackets are placed under the returned nosings of the open string stairs. The wide baseboard that encircles the base of the walls in the entrance hall is original and is just over 1 foot tall and it is echoed by the crown moldings above. The ceiling light fixture was added between 1929 and 1944 and hangs from the hall's original plaster circular pattern ceiling rosette. The hall furniture was brought to the house by the current occupants and is appropriate both in size and design.

<sup>9</sup> Letter from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker. July 20, 1948. In the possession of Mrs. Walker.

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Two large floor-to-ceiling height semi-circular-arched four-panel pocket doors are placed facing each other on the right (east) and the left (west) walls at the north end of the hall. Structural considerations precluded the use of the double pocket doors which more typically fill openings of this size so both doors were made in one piece instead. Each door has a semi-circular-arched opening enframed by wide moldings similar to those used in the baseboard of the hall and the right-hand door opens into the 35-foot-long by 15-foot-wide living room. This room has been altered twice since the house was built. The major remodeling occurred when the Harmon family bought the house from the Beckwiths in 1869 and the room was later redecorated when the Scobie family bought the house from the Harmons in 1929. Originally, this space consisted of two smaller rooms but the Harmons removed the partition between them in 1869 in order to create this space. The unequal size of these original rooms is still evident. The west wall of the living room on the left side of the entrance door opening projects approximately one foot deeper into the room than the corresponding wall on the right side and the resulting corner of this projection makes a 90° quarter-round turn immediately to the left of the entrance door. Tall pairs of French doors are centered on the north and south walls of the room and an identical pair is placed to the right of the living room fireplace which is located on the east wall of the room directly opposite the entrance door opening. Originally, there was also another pair of French doors to the left of the fireplace but these were removed by the Harmons in 1869 and replaced by the deep polygonal bay window that now occupies the same position.

The tall ceiling and French doors of the Italianate style room the Harmons occupied already had a somewhat "French" appearance which was emphasized in the redecoration the room received shortly after the Scobie family bought the house in 1929. The most obvious sign of this redecoration is the excellent white marble mantelpiece that now decorates the room's fireplace. With its classically inspired design, its finely carved supporting console brackets below the mantelsheath, and its flat-arched opening, this mantelpiece is distinctively French in appearance and it replaced the earlier mantelpiece in use when the Scobies bought the house.<sup>9</sup> The Scobie family also made other changes to the living room besides replacing the original mantelpiece. The mirrored overmantel also dates from the 1929 remodeling as do the pair of built-in bookcases that flank the French doors on the north wall. These

<sup>9</sup> This mantelpiece and another one in the dining room were added by Mrs. Florence Case Scobie who purchased the house with her husband, Fred Scobie, in 1929 and lived there until 1944 when the present owners bought the building. Both mantelpieces and other items in the house such as the built-in bookcases that flank the window at the north end of the living room are believed to have come from the Gallun family mansion in Milwaukee. Mrs. Scobie's sister was Helen Case Gallun who in 1929 was the widow of Arthur Gallun, a member of the family that operated the Trostel & Gallun tannery (NRHP 1984) and the A. F. Gallun Co. tannery in Milwaukee. Mrs. Gallun is known to have been active in helping her sister restore and remodel the Beckwith house and she is believed to have made some of the furnishings from the Milwaukee house available to her sister.

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bookcases are identical and are half as tall as the room and each is surmounted by a simplified entablature having a carved vine motif affixed to the frieze panel. The walls of the living room were also altered to create a more formal appearance. These walls are made of a very hard, smooth plaster which the Scobies had covered with a fine linen canvas, as they did all the other unpapered walls in the main block of the house. Afterwards, thin strips of wood molding were applied to the walls in such a way as to form rectilinear patterns suggestive of the raised molding found on the simplest wood-paneled walls.<sup>10</sup> A chair rail was also added to the walls and the crown molding was somewhat reduced in size. Finally, an earlier light fixture placed in the center of the ceiling was replaced with the fine crystal chandelier that is still in place today. Fortunately, the Scobies retained the elaborately pierced metal rosette set in a circular plaster surround that the original chandelier hung from. This remodeling resulted in a room that is formal in feeling without being overly elaborate in design.

A smaller, flat-arched doorway is located on the west wall of the living room to the left of the principal entrance and opens into a small, rectilinear plan room located behind and to the north of the entrance hall. When the Harmon family owned the house this room was called the nursery and it was used as a bedroom and playroom for children. Since the Scobie family acquired the house this room has been used as a combination library and den because it contains the very fine carved bookcase and an equally fine desk that Mrs. Scobie had built into the room after she acquired them from Mrs. Gallun. The elaborately carved German Renaissance Revival style tall-front desk is now attached to the wall on the northerly side of the door opening that leads into the living room. The equally elaborate but stylistically less well defined ceiling height bookcase is placed diagonally across from the desk on the west wall of the den just to the left of a second doorway that leads into the kitchen beyond. Both the desk and bookcase have been painted since they were installed but are otherwise intact. Light is admitted to this room through the previously mentioned triple window group that replaced the room's original window sometime in the first quarter of this century.

The doorway in the west wall of the den leads into the main kitchen of the house. This L shaped room occupies approximately half of the first floor of the north wing and was created after 1929 when the full-width rectilinear space used for everyday dining by the Harmons that originally made up the southernmost third of this floor was combined with the original kitchen which occupied the east half of the middle third. The western half of the middle third of this floor contains a small room called the sewing room, the northernmost portion of the floor contains a small bathroom and the old summer kitchen of the house, which is differentiated from the other rooms in this wing by having unfinished, roughly cut clapboard covered walls.

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<sup>10</sup> This was a popular decorator's device in the late 1920s and in the 1930s and it was often used on the interior walls of French Provincial style houses of the period.

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Just to the left as one enters the kitchen from the den is a doorway placed in the south wall of the kitchen. This door opens onto an enclosed staircase that ascends to the second floor of the north wing and the run of this staircase parallels the south wall of the kitchen and terminates in a small, enclosed hall at the top of the stairs. A door in the north wall of this hall opens into a large, rectilinear room whose steeply sloping ceiling walls echo the shape of the main roof above. This room has been used for storage since the Harmon's occupancy and a door in its north wall opens into a second and smaller rectilinear room once used as a maid's room during the Harmon's period of ownership and now also used for storage.<sup>11</sup> All the walls in the upstairs rooms of the north wing and the walls of the staircase that leads up to them are made of the same smooth, hard plaster found elsewhere in the house and exist in their original raw, unpainted state.

A second doorway located at the opposite end of the south wall of the kitchen opens into a four-foot-deep passageway between the kitchen and the formal dining room of the house. A doorway on the left (east) side of this passageway opens onto an enclosed stairway that descends to the basement. On the wall opposite this door is a built-in china cupboard designed to serve the dining room. This cupboard dates from the Harmon's tenure and has two tall doors having tall, basket-handle-arched panels inset into them placed above two very large drawers.

The last room on the first floor of the main block is the formal dining room. The principal entrance to this room is through the left (west) pocket door at the north end of the entrance hall and this rectilinear room is approximately 22 feet long by 15 feet wide and it is lit by the large rectilinear bay window which takes up almost all of the south wall of the room, and by two pairs of French doors on the west side of the room which flank the fireplace. Like the fireplace in the living room, this one has a tall, flat-arched opening and the mantelpiece surrounding it is also distinctively French in appearance and replaced the earlier mantelpiece in use when the Scobie family bought the house.<sup>12</sup> This example is made of a distinctively veined blue and white marble and has tapered and fluted pilasters on either side of the opening which support an entablature having a fluted frieze topped by a cornice formed by the mantleshelf; this is then surmounted by a large mirrored overmantel framed in wood molding. The walls are covered in a brocade pattern Lincrusta paper that was hung in the 1920s. Otherwise, the room is totally original and has its original baseboards and chair rail. The most striking of the original features of the room is the tall built-in china cupboard located towards the south end of the east wall. This cupboard reaches almost to the ceiling and it has two tall, narrow doors, each of which has a tall, narrow semi-circular arched glass panel inset into it. These doors are enframed by a shouldered architrave surmounted by a tall,

<sup>11</sup> Letter from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker. July 20, 1948. In the possession of Mrs. Walker.

<sup>12</sup> The dining room mantelpiece is engraved with the legend "Made in France" on the underside of the mantleshelf.

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segmental-arched entablature which gives the cupboard an Italianate style appearance.

The second floor of the main block is reached by the staircase in the entrance hall. The continuation of the stair rail encircles the open well of this staircase and terminates against the west wall of the large, rectilinear plan second floor hall. At the top of the staircase the west wall of the hall makes a large 90° quarter-round turn as this wall joins the front wall of the house and a small semi-circular arch niche is set into the curve of the wall at this point. The second floor hall is almost identical in size with the first floor hall and is lit by the tall paired French windows on the south wall and by a lamp hanging from the ceiling. The appearance of this hall today is almost identical to the appearance it had after being modified by the Harmon family in 1869 and the hall still contains its original baseboards, door surrounds, and crown moldings.

Three paneled doors are placed on the east wall of the hall and the first and third doors open into two good-sized bedrooms that occupy the northeast and southeast corners of the floor. The middle door of the three is the entrance to the staircase that leads up to the rooftop cupola. On the north wall of the hall is a single paneled door that opens into a large bathroom that was originally another bedroom before being converted by the Scobie family in 1929. Rectilinear white tiles were used to cover the walls of this room half way up to the ceiling and these tiles were surmounted by a course of small colored tiles placed just below the terminating course. The floor was also covered with small square white tiles, a fine pedestal sink was installed on the north wall opposite the door, and a sunken tub was installed in a tiled recess to the left of the door. These changes resulted in a room having a distinctive 1920s appearance and it has been well maintained by the present owner of the house.

The west wall of the hall has a single paneled door which opens into the master bedroom of the house. This large rectilinear plan room takes up two-thirds of the length of the west side of this floor with the remaining portion being occupied by an adjoining trunk room. The walls of this bedroom, like the walls of the living room downstairs, were altered by the Scobie family in 1929 when thin strips of wood molding were applied to them in such a way as to form large, rectilinear patterns suggestive of the raised molding found on the simplest wood paneled walls. This change gave the room a sense of formality that was then accentuated by the furniture chosen for the room. Also, unlike the French windows found in the other rooms on this floor, the tall windows which light the master bedroom are double-hung even though they are carried down to the floor.

The Beckwith house still retains its original rectilinear corner lot and this lot is now enclosed on its east and south sides by a simple wrought iron fence that is set in a raised brick base and supported at its ends by brick piers. This fence was added by the Scobie family in 1929 and they also had the path to the entrance door

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altered at the same time. This resulted in the straight concrete walk which ran from the sidewalk to the front door being replaced by the semi-circular brick walk that is still in place today. The only other change of note that has altered the lot was the addition of a concrete driveway running along the north edge of the property leading to a fine two-car garage located on the northwest corner of the lot. Both of these resources were constructed in the last years of the Harmon's ownership.<sup>13</sup> The garage is rectilinear in plan and is sided in weatherboard and its hip roof is asphalt shingle-covered and has wide overhanging eaves supported by exposed rafter ends. Both the north and south-facing elevations of this building have a single triple window group containing three six-over-six light windows centered on them, while the sectional roll-up overhead door that faces east is probably a replacement for the original doors.

The present owner of the Beckwith house, Mrs. Virginia S. Walker, has been meticulous in maintaining the building since she and her late husband acquired it in 1944 but has otherwise done almost nothing to alter it. As a result, the house today still looks remarkably the way it did when occupied by both the Beckwiths and the Harmons.

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<sup>13</sup> The exact date of the construction of this garage is unknown but it does not appear on the 1911 Sanborn-Perris Company fire insurance map of Berlin and does appear on the next (1926) Sanborn-Perris map. A date somewhere between 1911 and 1926 is also consistent with the general appearance of the building.



8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: \_\_\_\_\_ nationally \_\_\_\_\_ statewide  X  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A   B   X   C   D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A   B   C   D   E   F   G

Areas of Significance

| (enter categories from instructions) | Period of Significance | Significant Dates          |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| <u> Architecture </u>                | <u> 1858-1869 </u>     | <u> 1858<sup>1*</sup> </u> |
|                                      |                        | <u> 1869<sup>2*</sup> </u> |

| Cultural Affiliation |
|----------------------|
| <u> N/A </u>         |

| Significant Person | Architect/Builder |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| <u> N/A </u>       | <u> Unknown </u>  |

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Significance

The Nelson F. Beckwith house is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its local significance under National Register (NR) criterion C. More specifically, the Beckwith house is being nominated because of its association with the area of Architecture; a theme which is also identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). Research was undertaken to assess the NRHP potential of the Beckwith house utilizing the Greek Revival style and the Italianate style subsections of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP. The results of this research is detailed below and confirms that the Beckwith house is locally significant under NR criterion C as a residence whose design is an excellent example of the transition taking place in the middle 1850s from the Greek Revival style to the newly fashionable Italianate style. The first owner of the house was Nelson F. Beckwith, a prominent local businessman who moved to Berlin with his wife and children from nearby Omro, Wisconsin in the mid 1850s. Beckwith operated a saw mill in Berlin as he had previously in Omro and built his house on Huron Street in 1858. By 1862 he was well enough off financially to build the Beckwith House hotel (extant) three blocks further to the west on Huron Street. This building served as Berlin's leading hotel for nearly a century under a variety of different names and kept Beckwith's name alive in Berlin long after the man himself had passed from the scene. The Beckwith family's residence is located on the corner of Huron Street and State Street opposite the city of Berlin's oldest public park and it is one of the most prominent houses in an area which has been Berlin's most elite residential neighborhood since before the Civil War. Berlin is fortunate in having a number of other excellent examples of both the Greek Revival and the Italianate styles, most of which are located within a few blocks of the

<sup>1\*</sup> Abstract of Title for 179 East Huron Street. In the possession of Mrs. Virginia S. Walker, the current owner of the house.

<sup>2\*</sup> Letter from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker. October 3, 1948. In the possession of Mrs. Walker.

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Beckwith house. The Beckwith house is one of the oldest of these buildings and one of the most intact, and it is also one of the few examples in Berlin that illustrates the transitional phase between the two styles. In addition, the house possesses a largely intact, well maintained and potentially significant interior.

Historic Context

The city of Berlin owes its existence to the fact that its site is the location of the narrowest part of the channel of the upper Fox River for a number of miles in either direction. As a result, this site was chosen in January of 1846 as the crossing point for a road whose route was being surveyed between the city of Fond du Lac, located on Lake Winnebago, and the village of Plover, located on the Wisconsin River in Portage County just south of the city of Stevens Point. This road, like many others of the period, was intended to create an overland linkage between several of Wisconsin's inland waterways and reflects the high priority the early citizens of Wisconsin gave to the creation and improvement of Wisconsin's water transportation routes. Indeed, so great was the importance attached to access to transportation--especially to water transportation--that proximity to a transportation route was often the single most important factor in establishing the location of a community and was also a principal determinant in a community's subsequent success or failure. Consequently, sites located where land and water routes met, as they did at Berlin, were especially prized since they seemed to offer a community a double chance for success.

It is hardly surprising that a number of Wisconsin cities were founded by the men who originally surveyed these early transportation routes and were therefore the first to recognize the opportunities for future settlement some sites contained. Such was the case of Berlin, whose site was first seen on January 1, 1846 by a party of road surveyors consisting of Nathan H. Strong, Hugh G. Martin, Hiram Barnes, and William Dickey. This same group had explored the sections of the Fox River above and below this point the year before and had decided to claim and settle the land that surrounded the site of any suitable river crossing they found.<sup>16</sup> Their faith in the ultimate success of any site they might choose was backed by their belief in the importance of the proposed development of a ship canal between the Fox and Wisconsin Rivers. This canal was designed to facilitate the movement of water transport between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River and its history is discussed in the Inland Waterways subsection of the Transportation study unit in the CRMP.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Portrait and Biographical Album of Green Lake, Marquette and Waushara Counties. Acme Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1890, Pgs. 234-236.

<sup>17</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2, 2-1 (Transportation).

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The territorial and the federal government's involvement in the various canal proposals then under discussion must have made the future of any settlement located on the Fox River seem all but assured to the men who first saw the eventual site of Berlin. Consequently, claims for lands on the east side of the river (the west side was still unceded by various Wisconsin Indian tribes) were duly entered and Nathan Strong erected a building on his portion in the following year, becoming the first permanent citizen of a settlement which originally went by the name of "Strong's Landing". Others arrived to join Strong and soon a ferry and later a float bridge was built in order to span the river. Strong soon platted his land under the name of "Strongsville" and the new community quickly began to benefit from its position astride land and water transportation arteries. In 1851 the village voted to rename itself "Berlin" and the real growth of the village followed afterwards.

The bridge and road spurred Berlin's growth, for they funneled the trade from the north and west to the city, and in 1849-1850 they were incorporated into an important road (the fruition of the original Fond du Lac-to-Plover road) laid out to Stevens Point. Very soon there were stage lines with daily or every-other day service from Berlin to Stevens Point, Oshkosh, and Waupaca.

River and rail transportation also funneled business to Berlin, which became an important transfer point. In 1857, after mounting a considerable campaign, Berlin businessmen persuaded the Milwaukee and Horicon Railroad to extend its Milwaukee branch from Ripon to Berlin. Over the next fifty years repeated attempts were made ... to extend the line beyond Berlin, which still (1976) is the terminus of the line, now the Milwaukee Road.

Boat service ... had brought settlers as well (as commerce) to the community from an early date. ... Within a few years of the city's founding, regular daily steamers ran to and from it to Oshkosh. A great deal of heavy freight was hauled by barge, and the Fox also became a part of a government waterway upon which millions of dollars were spent for dams and locks and other improvements. ... The transportation advantages and commercial potential resulted in phenomenal early community growth. The first settlers arrived in 1847 and by 1850 there were 250 persons in the village. By 1857 there were 2800 and Berlin was incorporated as a city."<sup>18</sup>

Among those attracted to Berlin by this rapid growth was New York state native Nelson F. Beckwith (1815-?), who arrived in 1857 with his wife and their children.<sup>19</sup> Beckwith had first settled in this area in 1847 at the nearby Fox River town of Omro, in Winnebago County. His wife was a daughter of David Humes, the

<sup>18</sup> Gillett, Lulubelle C. Early Houses in Berlin, Wisconsin. Worzalla Publishing Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1976, Pgs. ix-x.

<sup>19</sup> U. S. Census of 1860. Wisconsin, Green Lake County, City of Berlin. See dwelling house No. 319, family No. 277, Pg. 35.

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first settler of the Village of Omro. Humes was a resident of Janesville when he first saw the future site of the village in 1846. He returned to this site in the spring of 1847 and staked a claim to lands along the river and just inland from it, then built a log house for his own use, after which he returned to Janesville in order to bring back his family. He then set about attracting other settlers to the area. At that time all the land to the north and west of the Fox river was covered by dense forest and Humes was quick to realize that the new roads then being constructed across this land would provide access to this timber. Humes also realized that this timber could be transported by either land or water to the Fox River where it could be fashioned into lumber by water-powered sawmills and then shipped to market--again via the river. Not surprisingly, Humes decided that the land he owned should be the focus of this activity. Among those he convinced was his son-in-law, Nelson F. Beckwith, who built the first sawmill (non-extant) in the new settlement in 1847 in partnership with W. C. Dean. The new firm operated under the name of Dean and Beckwith but Beckwith soon became dissatisfied with this arrangement and built his own sawmill (non-extant) on that portion of the riverfront owned by his father-in-law. In 1849 Beckwith joined with Joel V. Taylor and Elisha Dean to plat the village of Omro, a portion of which was known for many years as "Beckwithtown".<sup>20</sup> Beckwith soon built his own house (non-extant) in the Omro and although the particulars of his subsequent years there are unknown, he appears to have done well in the lumber trade before moving to Berlin with his family in 1857.

The particulars of Beckwith's life in Berlin are scanty but the Property Abstract for 179 Huron Street shows that Beckwith purchased his double lots there on June 1, 1857 and tax rolls show that he built his house on these lots the following year. The 1860 U. S. Census listed him as a lumber dealer whose real estate was valued at \$6000 and whose personal property was valued at \$3000--both amounts well in excess of the norm in Berlin at that period. Whether or not he still retained his Omro holdings at this date or had acquired similar operations after locating in Berlin is not known but his stay in his new home was apparently a profitable one; so much so that he was able to buy the prominent downtown site of the recently destroyed (January 19, 1860) Fox River House hotel located on the northwest corner of Huron Street and Wisconsin Avenue late in November of 1862.<sup>21</sup> Beckwith quickly announced plans for the erection of a new and grander hotel building on the site to be named the Beckwith House and ground was broken in April of the following year.<sup>22</sup> The third and final story of this brick-veneered, rectilinear plan commercial vernacular style building was completed by August and the hotel was opened to the public in March of 1864.<sup>23</sup> The Beckwith House soon became the pride of the city although

<sup>20</sup> Wright, P. M.. Omro, Wisconsin: A Brief Sketch of its Past and Present. Pg. 5. An undated pamphlet (Ca. 1876) in the collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Note: the author's name is handwritten below the title.

<sup>21</sup> Berlin City Courant. December 4, 1862, Pg. 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. April 14, 1863, Pg. 3.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. March 31, 1864, Pg. 3.

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Beckwith himself apparently considered it as an investment property since the operation of the hotel itself was always leased to others during the period of his ownership. This ownership continued until August of 1870 when Beckwith sold the hotel to Frank F. Flyer, who reopened it as the Flyer House.<sup>24</sup>

At the time of the sale Beckwith was not residing in Berlin; he and his family having moved away from the city following the sale of their Huron Street house to Mrs. Hester A. Harmon (1822-1930), on April 7, 1869. Mrs. Harmon was the wife of Solomon C. Harmon (1818-1887), a native of New York state who had just purchased the firm of Ruddock and Palmeto which had sawmills located in Berlin and Pittsville. Harmon originally came to Wisconsin in 1840 and had purchased and worked a 240 acre farm in Walworth County. He married his wife in 1845 and they lived on the farm until 1865 when they and their son moved to the city of Racine, where they lived for two years in semiretirement until Harmon purchased the already mentioned sawmills. The Harmons subsequently moved to Berlin and the mills Harmon had purchased became the nucleus of the firm of S. C. Harmon & Son, proprietors of several lumber-related business ventures including the Berlin barrel stave factory which Harmon and his son established in 1874.<sup>25</sup>

Solomon Harmon died in Berlin during the month of July in 1887, at the age of 70. During the years he spent in Berlin, the city grew steadily in population from 2778 in 1870 to 4007 in 1885 but the period of greatest growth in the city's history was already over. This reflected the structural transformation that was then altering the business life of Berlin as the city underwent a transition from a transportation center to a manufacturing town. By the 1880s, the real winners of the rush to develop Wisconsin's transportation systems were emerging and these cities had already begun to supersede less well-placed or financed cities like Berlin as regional distribution centers.

The community's (Berlin's) transportation advantages determined the character of the early trade, especially before 1872. Until then, there was no railroad service north and west of Berlin, which was the end of the line. But that year, a competing line to the west was completed, linking Portage and Stevens Point, and drawing from Berlin some of its freight traffic. Freight from outlying

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<sup>24</sup> Berlin City Courier. August 23, 1870, Pg. 3. During the years that followed, this building was consecutively known as the Flyer House, the Dunnam House, the Woodworth House, the Bellis House, and the Hotel Whiting. The building still survives today although the interior and portions of the exterior have been substantially changed. A good overview of the history of the hotel up to 1976 can be found in an article entitled "The Story of a Hotel" which was written by Joyce Bennett Stemler and published in the August 17, 1976 edition of the Berlin Journal.

<sup>25</sup> History of Northern Wisconsin. The Western Historical Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1881. Vol. 1, Pg. 356.

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areas was brought by wagon to towns with railroads or, in Berlin's case, waterways. For the first fifty years of its existence, the buying, selling, and shipping of all sorts of farm products were the most important contributors to Berlin's growth. ... Wholesalers in all lines set up warehouses in Berlin. They served, among others, the growers who had brought their produce to Berlin, and then would return home with goods such as groceries, liquor, hardware, and agricultural implements. Retailers, especially druggists and general merchandisers, prospered.

Small factories were established as a demand grew for articles like shingles, barrels, boots and shoes, tanned leather, plows, wagons, cigars, woolen goods, pumps, and furniture. These could be made locally and in small quantities at a profit, in competition with distant, large-scale manufacturers, whose transportation costs reduced their pricing advantage.<sup>26</sup>

Hester Harmon was 66 years old at the time of her husband's death and she continued to live on in the Huron Street house for another 40 years until 1928, when ill health compelled her to move to Milwaukee. She died there on November 1, 1930 at the age of 108 and was acknowledged to be the oldest woman in Wisconsin at the time of her death.<sup>27</sup> Mrs. Harmon also outlived her son, Edward T. Harmon (1850-1926), who had died in Milwaukee four years previously at the age of 76.<sup>28</sup> E. T. Harmon had been associated in the lumber industry with his father and remained active in related industries until his death at which time he held major interests in five wallpaper mills in Wisconsin and other states. He had also been the president of the First National Bank of Wisconsin Rapids in 1904 and the manager of the Biron paper mill in that city. His mother was an active investor in both these and other enterprises and was reputed to be Berlin's wealthiest woman at the time of her death. She left an estate valued at over \$200,000 but her wealth was in sharp contrast to the simplicity of her life-style. In her later years she successively adopted four young girls as her wards and they lived with her as unpaid companions. The last of these companions was a six-year-old orphan of African-American descent named Helen who Mrs. Harmon brought to Berlin in the late 1890s and who remained until about 1912 when she turned 18. During this time the house was without electricity and was also without heat in most of the rooms.<sup>29</sup>

Mrs. Harmon sold the Huron Street house to Mr. and Mrs. Fred C. Scobie in 1929. Mr. Scobie owned an insurance agency in Berlin which was subsequently purchased by Llewellyn J. Walker and his wife, Virginia S. Walker, in 1939 and renamed the Walker

<sup>26</sup> Gillett, Lulubelle C. Early Houses in Berlin, Wisconsin. Worzalla Publishing Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1976, Pg. xi.

<sup>27</sup> Berlin Journal. November 3, 1930, Pg. 1. Obituary of Hester A. Harmon.

<sup>28</sup> The Milwaukee Sentinel. September 13, 1926. Obituary of Edward T. Harmon.

<sup>29</sup> Letter from Mrs. Helen Harmon Taylor to Mrs. Virginia S. Walker. February 7, 1949. In the possession of Mrs. Walker.

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Agency. On September 4, 1944 the Walkers purchased the Scobie house on Huron Street as well, becoming the fourth owners of this historic Berlin residence. The Walkers raised their family in this house and Mrs. Walker, a former member of the University of Wisconsin's Board of Visitors, continues to live in the house today, forty-five years after she and her husband first purchased it.

Architecture

The architectural significance of the Nelson F. Beckwith house lies in its being an excellent example of a transitional design which incorporates elements that are salient characteristics of both the Greek Revival and the Italianate styles. This significance is enhanced by the highly intact condition of both the exterior and the interior of the house which permits both the similarities as well as the differences between the two styles to be readily assessed and evaluated. The original clapboard-sided frame construction main block of the Beckwith house was built between 1857 and 1858 and both its designer and builder are still unknown as of this writing. This block was rectilinear in plan with a shallow-pitched hip roof surmounted by a square cupola. The four main corners of the block are covered with corner pilasters, the main cornice and lesser cornices feature denticulated molding, and the south-facing principal facade is two-bays-wide and two-stories-tall and has an asymmetrically placed entrance door having a transom light and sidelights. A number of these specific elements, including "The low-pitched roof, classical cornices, doorway with transom and sidelights", and the "formal" and "orderly" nature of its appearance are all characteristics of the Greek Revival style that are specifically cited in the Greek Revival style subsection of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the gable-roofed, one-and-a-half-story-tall kitchen wing in the rear of the house displays the "Prominent gables ... framed with heavy moldings" and the frieze band windows that are also characteristics of the style. At the same time, other elements of the original main block such as the "Distinctive wide eaves with numerous brackets, gently-sloping hipped ... roofs, and ... square cupola atop the roof", as well as the "boxy proportions" of the whole, are all characteristics of the Italianate style that are specifically cited in the Italianate style subsection of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP.<sup>31</sup>

The resulting design is almost equally weighted between the two styles with the more flamboyant Italianate style elements being largely confined to the cornice and the roof of the main block while the rest of the house displays the more symmetrical proportions and the less exuberant details that characterize the Greek Revival style. The Architectural Styles study units of the CRMP cited above make it clear that examples of both styles are numerous in Wisconsin and note that examples of the

<sup>30</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2, 2-3 (Architecture).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. Pg. 2-6 (Architecture).

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older Greek Revival style were constructed from 1830-1870 while examples of the later Italianate style were constructed from the late 1850s through the late 1870s. This places the construction date of the Beckwith house at the beginning of the period when Italianate style houses were being built in Wisconsin and may explain why there are Italianate style elements in the house's design.<sup>32</sup>

Beckwith built his house on the corner across from East Side Park, whose site had been donated to Berlin by the village founder, Nathan Strong, after his death in 1852. The location of the park is only four long blocks from the Fox River. Even so, building development was centered close to the river in 1852 and it represented something of an act of faith in its own future for the young community to develop a park so far from the center of town. Indeed, the 1867 bird's-eye view of Berlin shows that even by that date only six houses (including the Beckwith house) and a church had been built on the streets that encircle the park. Still, the fact that East Side Park was located on Huron Street, Berlin's principal thoroughfare, guaranteed the eventual success of the surrounding neighborhood and by the time the next bird's-eye view was printed in 1892 this area had become Berlin's "best" neighborhood and had acquired its present-day appearance.

The Beckwith house was one of the first houses to be built in this area. Only two other houses that front on the park were built earlier: the Ezra and Martha Wheeler house (1854), located at the opposite end of the block from the Beckwith house at 122 North State Street; and the Horatio and Harriet Ward house (1854) located at 217 E. Park Avenue. Both of these houses are worthy of note, not only for their early date of construction but because of their design. The Ward house is Berlin's best example of the Greek Revival style while the Wheeler house is Berlin's best example of the Gothic Revival style and was constructed for the Wheelers by Mrs. Wheeler's father, master builder John Ayers, whose own Gothic Revival style-inspired house (Ca. 1849) is located around the corner at 169 E. Park Avenue.<sup>33</sup>

Even though the Ward and Wheeler houses were designed in styles that were beginning to fall out of fashion in Berlin and elsewhere in Wisconsin, they helped to establish standards of size and quality that future houses built around the park would be influenced by. The first of these houses was the residence built by Nelson Beckwith three years later in 1857. The sources of the Italianate style influences in Beckwith's design are still unknown. Possibly Beckwith became familiar with this style through his involvement with the building trades that resulted from his sawmill and lumber dealings or the source may have been a pattern book or his

<sup>32</sup> Buildings combining both Greek Revival and Italianate elements can be found in many communities in Wisconsin. Another excellent residential example is the Elisha Morrow house in Green Bay (345 S. Adams St., BR 81/08) built in 1857, the same year as the Beckwith house.

<sup>33</sup> Gillett, Lulubelle C. Early Houses in Berlin, Wisconsin. Worzalla Publishing Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1976, pgs. 7-9, 20-22.



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builder. Whatever the source, the building that resulted is among the earliest known residences in Berlin that utilizes elements of the Italianate style, making Beckwith a forerunner in the use of a style that was to be a major influence in the shaping of the appearance of 19th century Berlin.

Berlin has an unusually large number of Italianate style residences for a community of its size, and fortunately, most of these buildings still exhibit a high degree of integrity. Many of these buildings are also located in the vicinity of the Beckwith house and provide an excellent context in which the significance of Beckwith house can be appreciated. One of the earliest of these buildings is the excellent Dewitt and Sarah Noyes Benham house (1858) located at 156 N. Adams Street. Although built of brick and having fewer Greek Revival style elements than the Beckwith house, the Benham house bears a strong resemblance to its neighbor and even features a cupola or strikingly similar design. Another residence having a strong family resemblance to the Beckwith house is the Asa Newell house (1859-1860) located at 179 N. Adams Street. This is also a brick house and it has even fewer Greek Revival elements than the Benham house, but the general plan of the house and the cupola (now removed from the roof and used as a gazebo) are very similar to the 1857 appearance of the Beckwith house. Other outstanding neighborhood examples of the Italianate style include: the mirror image Horace Miner and Henry Miner houses (1872) located at 180 and 184 E. Huron Street directly across the street from the Beckwith house; the diminutive brick Arthur Johnson house (1872) located at 104 Church Street; and the excellent frame construction Deville L. Harkness house (1875) located at 165 E. Park Avenue and now owned by Mr. Jeffrey Walker, the son of Mrs. Virginia S. Walker, owner of the Beckwith house.<sup>34</sup>

In 1869 Solomon Harmon, the second owner of the Beckwith house, built an addition across the west-facing elevation of the main block which had the effect of adding a third bay to the main facade, giving the house its present appearance. Harmon also added a polygonal bay window to the east-facing elevation. These 1869 additions were clearly intended to harmonize with the original design of the house and utilized design elements that are either identical to those used on the original block or that represent variations on the same themes. Otherwise, the only changes subsequent owners have made to the exterior of the house have been confined to altering windows on the rear of the first floor of the main block and on portions of the kitchen wing, adding an exterior chimney on the west side of the main block, and increasing the size of the front porch. As a result, the exterior of the Beckwith house today is virtually identical to its 1869 appearance and its integrity has been enhanced by the excellent maintenance program followed by the current owner. The house also possesses an interior which, with the exception of the second floor bathroom and the kitchen, has received mainly cosmetic changes since the major additions were made in 1869.

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<sup>34</sup> Gillett, Lulubelle C. Early Houses in Berlin, Wisconsin. Worzalla Publishing Company, Stevens Point, Wisconsin, 1976, Pgs. 28-42.

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The extent of any archeological remains that may exist on this site are unknown at the present time. No information was discovered during the course of this research that suggests that any previous dwellings or buildings occupied the site and the date of the platting of the neighborhood so soon after the village was rounded makes it unlikely that any unrecorded buildings would have been present here before the Beckwith house was built.<sup>35</sup> No information pertaining to the existence of any remains dating from pre-European cultures or from prehistoric periods was discovered either. However, if any archeological remains still exist on this site there is some chance that they are still intact since only a small portion of the house has an excavated basement beneath it.

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<sup>35</sup> Portrait and Biographical Album of Green Lake, Marquette and Waushara Counties. Acme Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1890, Pg. 245. The plat of the First addition was officially filed in 1855 but was actually platted much earlier.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Abstract of Title for 179 East Huron Street

Berlin City Courant. December 4, 1862; April 14, 1863; March 31, 1864; August 23, 1870.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

X See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:
X State Historic preservation office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other
Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1.00 acre

UTM References

A 17b 324412/0 487100/0/0 B 1 111111 1111111
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
C 1 111111 1111111 D 1 111111 1111111

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots number 8 and 9 in Block number 6, in the First Addition to the City of Berlin (formerly Strongsville), according to the recorded plat thereof. Said portion of this plat is located in the SW of Section 3 in Township 17 North, Range 13 East.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries enclose all that portion of land historically associated with the Nelson F. Beckwith house.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy F. Heggland/ Consultant

For: Mrs. Virginia S. Walker

organization 179 E. Huron St., Berlin, WI date May 11, 1989

street & number 212 Highland Avenue telephone (608) 238-3010

city or town Madison state WI zip code 53705

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Portrait and Biographical Album of Green Lake, Marquette and Waushara Counties. Acme Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1890.

Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps of Berlin, Wisconsin. Sanborn-Perris Map Company, New York, New York, 1895, 1905, 1911, and 1926.

U. S. Census of 1860. Wisconsin, Green Lake County, City of Berlin. See dwelling house No. 319, family No. 277, Pg. 35.

Wright, P. M.. Omro, Wisconsin: A Brier Sketch of its Past and Present. Pg. 5. An undated pamphlet (Ca. 1876) in the collection of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2.