

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAR 6 1986
date entered APR 3 1986

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Bonnie Brae

and/or common Bonnie Brae Estate

2. Location

street & number 78 Snake Road _____ not for publication

city, town Town of Linn _____ vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county Walworth code 127

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N.A.	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John F. and Elizabeth A. Grant

street & number 9600 South Winchester

city, town Chicago, IL 60643 _____ vicinity of state IL

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Walworth County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Elkhorn _____ state Wisconsin 53121

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places
title Geneva Lake Intensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison _____ state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(1898)	date _____
		(1881)	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Bonnie Brae is located high on a lawn-covered hill dotted with tall trees, overlooking Geneva Lake's north shore. Stone sign posts on Snake Road mark the entrance to Bonnie Brae's private road, which leads a quarter of a mile to a circular drive ending at the substantial estate's west facing main entry. This late Queen Anne style, 1898 section of the house is linked by a bi-level passageway to the original, smaller house on the site, built in the Shingle style in 1881.

The clapboard and wood-shingled two-and-a-half story Queen Anne portion is distinguished by a massive irregular roofline which includes a dominant central hipped portion with a south-facing clipped gable. Cross-hipped roof sections with slightly flared eaves and dormers extend from the central roof mass. A wide, open porch with square and paired round columns wraps around three sides of the first story, and balconies on the second story create open porches outside the lakeside bedrooms. Openings include arched and grouped windows and door surrounds with sidelights. The north side of this part of the house introduces rough stone as facings on the first floor, which continues as the connecting passageway's ground floor fabric. The graceful upper level of the passage, called the "summer walk," is open, with simple squared porch railings, frieze and posts, under a gabled roof. The 1881, original house is one-and-a-half stories, and depicts the irregular roofline, compact massing, grouped windows, wide proportions and wood shingles typical of the Shingle style. The exterior is intact.

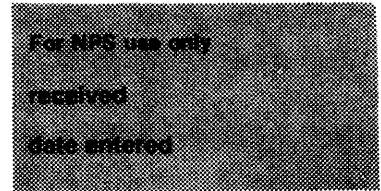
The interior of the late Queen Anne portion of Bonnie Brae remains intact, with the exception of the present kitchen, which originally served as a parlor. (When this second house was built, all the kitchen, storage, laundry facilities, and servants' quarters were located in the older house.) The generous entry hall features a wide dark oak stairway composed of delicate balusters. The large, main parlor facing the lake includes French doors which open to the porch, the original wood molding frieze near the ceiling in a Greek key and egg and dart design, and a paneled fireplace across the east wall. Two smaller parlors on the lake side are accessible from the hall. Every room in this part of the house has a fireplace. Each is uniquely detailed with wood surrounds and imported glazed tiles. Views of the lake are emphasized on the first floor by windows with unbroken lower expanses and upper portions of multiple small panes. Period lighting fixtures remain intact throughout this part of the house. On the second floor are four bedrooms, including a large master bedroom featuring a pink glazed fireplace with a low-bas relief pastoral scene. Baths, some of which contain the original marble fixtures, accompany each of the bedroom suites. The third story includes several bedrooms and baths clustered around a spacious landing lit by high windows. One of these bedrooms features a rounded bay containing a curved three-part window composed of small panes.

The summer walk connects the two houses from the first and second floors of the 1898 house. On the lower level, the passageway's west wall is a continuous ribbon of three-quarter length diamond-paned casement windows overlooking the rock garden between the two houses. A stairway to the wine cellar descends from the north end of the passage. From the lower passageway, a short stairway leads to the handsome square stairway hall of the 1881 house. Wood details include fluted newel posts with octagonal caps. The hall opens into a panelled dining room. Leaded bay windows overlook the rock garden, and beyond, the lake. Opposite the window wall is a panelled fireplace wall. The floors are polished hardwood. Beyond this intact part of the house as it was remodeled by the Ryersons in 1898, further remodeling has occurred to provide separate living quarters for a previous tenant. A modern kitchen was installed; other rooms were

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partitioned, but some pantries remain from the earlier era. A number of small bedrooms and baths are on the second floor. There is an attached garage on the north side.

The grounds of Bonnie Brae appear unchanged, except for maturation of plants, from the 1898 rebuilding. Early photographs depict the wide sweeping lawn, now dotted with mature shade trees and evergreens.¹ The rock garden provides a quiet and appropriate link between the two portions of Bonnie Brae. Plans for the now unoccupied earlier part of the estate include possible condominium use, while the main house is still used as a summer residence by the present owners.

1. Ann Wolfmeyer and Mary Burns Gage, Lake Geneva: Newport of the West (Lake Geneva, 1976), pp. 69-70. These photographs are dated 1885 in the captions, but actually show the portion of the house that was built in 1898.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	X social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
X 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
1881-1932		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1881-1932¹ **Builder/Architect** C. A. Alexander¹

(Construction date- Ryerson's death)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Bonnie Brae is architecturally significant as a nearly intact example of a typical late 19th century summer residence of an affluent Chicago family. It is also significant in the social/humanitarian area because of its historical association with the Martin Ryerson family whose philanthropic activity in Chicago and Lake Geneva significantly affected the cultural and social atmosphere of those communities.

Architecture

The Bonnie Brae estate represents a significant example of late nineteenth century summer home design in the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles. The development of the Lake Geneva area as a summer colony for Illinois residents began in the 1860s. Located sixty miles north of Chicago, the deep, spring fed lake surrounded by twenty miles of wooded shoreline was made more accessible after the opening of a permanent rail line from Chicago in 1871. From that time until the 1920s, affluent Chicago families built lakeshore summer estates which reflected high standards of architectural design and quality. Increased maintenance costs and changes in ownership have resulted in the elimination of numerous lakeshore estates. Loramoor, one of two lakeshore estate properties on the National Register, was razed in 1984. The recent Geneva Lake Intensive Survey and Report has raised the community's awareness of the area's rich architectural and cultural history, but economic pressures still encourage the destruction or conversion of estates for the sake of real estate development.

Bonnie Brae attained its present appearance in 1898 when a major expansion of the original 1881 house on the site took place. Charles A. Alexander, a Chicago architect, designed the 1881 Shingle style "cottage" for Judge Thomas Withrow. The name was chosen to honor the Withrows' daughter, Bonnie.¹ Alexander also designed another Lake Geneva estate, Snug Harbor (not extant) at about the same time, but no biographical information on the architect was found. He was listed in Chicago Business Directories for the years 1873 through 1887 with an office on Dearborn, and an 1887 issue of the American Architect and Building News (January 8) includes a plan and drawing by Alexander, confirming his Chicago-based practice at that time. The purchase of Bonnie Brae by the Martin A. Ryersons in 1897² and the subsequent incorporation of the original house in a major \$70,000 expansion³ determines an additional, later architectural significance for the property. The name of the Ryerson's architect was not divulged in the local newspapers, although reference was made to "a Chicago architect" who designed a boathouse for the Ryersons in 1898.⁴ (The boathouse has been converted into a separate dwelling and is not included in the nomination.)

Bonnie Brae is one of about twenty nearly intact estates remaining on Lake Geneva. Its significance lies in the excellence and integrity of the Queen Anne and Shingle styles it represents. Few Shingle Style houses were built in the Geneva Lake area. The style's popularity in 19th century east coast resort communities did not apply to the midwest.

(Continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Gage, Mary Burns and Wolfmeyer, Ann, Lake Geneva: Newport of the West, Lake Geneva, 1976.

Lake Geneva Regional News, April 20, 1939.

Lowe, David, Chicago Interiors: Views of a Splendid World, Chicago, 1979.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property _____ 3.05 acres

Quadrangle name Lake Geneva - WI

Quadrangle scale 1:2400.0

UTM References

A

116	37831210	41711411810
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point on shore Geneva Lake located 450' east of west lane Lot 1 Bonnie Brae Subdivision, NOD 30' west 5; NOD 30' 313', N9D47' W67.45; N9D26' west 107.20', N30D52' E 124.85' to POB, N1D27' W 505.44'; N87D07' E 299.20', S54D16' W 31.50; S54D16' W 156.13; W 169.59;

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries (see Continuation)

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sharon Crawford and Pat Butler

organization Preservation Consultants date _____

street & number 5 South Kenosha Drive telephone 608-233-5627

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53705

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title _____ date 2/21/86

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the →
National Register

date 4/3/86


Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

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The 1881 portion of Bonnie Brae, with its emphasized front gable, rambling profile, low and volumetric massing, window bands, and wood shingle and clapboard fabric is unusual. Other area extant Shingle Style houses include the much larger but less complex in form Flowerside Inn (1898), designed by the Chicago architects, Wilson and Marshall, and the Joseph Lyman Silsbee-designed Fair Oaks (1889), which has lost its original Shingle Style characteristics through numerous alterations. Bonnie Brae's 1898 addition is a fine example of a transitional, late Queen Anne house, with Colonial Revival elements. The dominant, irregular roofline is unique in the Geneva Lake area. Its clipped gable form and the use of classic detail--round and square columns, the pedimented entry, and interior Greek key patterned detail--signal the Colonial Revival style. Unlike the more formally correct lakeshore Colonial Revival designs which appeared around the turn of the century, including the side-gabled, symmetrical and clapboarded Fairlawn and Knoll estates on the south shore, Bonnie Brae's design remains suggestive of the Queen Anne period, with the irregular exterior fabric of stone, patterned wood shingles, and clapboard, and the extensive and irregular fenestration. Both architectural periods represented in the estate depict high standards of quality and design. The present integrity of site and architecture reflect the elegance of turn-of-the-century summer homes at Geneva Lake and evoke a unique feeling of time and place.

Social/Humanitarian

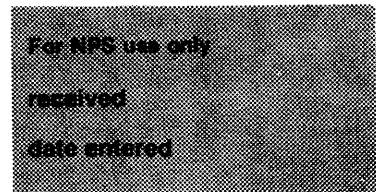
Bonnie Brae is significant because of its association with Martin A. Ryerson, a Chicago banker and philanthropist who spent his summers there from the time he bought the property in 1898 until 1932, the year of his death. The Ryerson's primary residence was a mansion in Chicago, but since their Chicago home has been converted into a Franciscan monastery, Bonnie Brae is now the only house associated with Ryerson which continues to serve as a single family residence. Ryerson was born in 1856, the son of a Chicago lumber magnate. He became the director of the Illinois Merchants Bank after an extended education in Paris. One of the original trustees of the University of Chicago at its founding in 1890, he served as president of the University from 1892 to 1922. Ryerson was among the directors of the 1893 Columbian Exposition; after the exposition, he was active in the plan to use part of the fair site for a natural history museum, and was elected First Vice President of the new Field Museum. He also served as director of the Chicago Art Institute, and contributed many valuable works of art to that institution. Among his early contributions to the University of Chicago was the Ryerson Physical Laboratory, which helped to establish the University as a leader in scientific studies. At the time of his death it was revealed that Ryerson had donated over a million dollars to the University during his lifetime. His will provided that his estate of approximately five million dollars be divided among the three institutions after providing life-long financial support to his widow and a niece.

On Geneva Lake, the Ryersons joined the society of wealthy summer residents who gave of their time and money to maintain the scenic and environmental qualities that had originally drawn them to the lakeshore. A member of the Lake Geneva Country Club, he was donor of the Bonnie Brae Cup. The Ryersons also contributed to the Holiday Home Association,

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an organization of summer residents who established and funded a summer camp on Geneva Lake for poor Chicago children. As a member of the "tree committee" for the newly constructed Yerkes Observatory in Williams Bay, Ryerson was instrumental in obtaining the services of the nationally renowned Olmsted Brothers landscape architectural firm to design the observatory grounds in 1905.¹⁰

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1. Ann Wolfmeyer and Mary Burns Gage, Lake Geneva: Newport of the West (Lake Geneva, 1976), p. 70.
 2. Deed, Walworth County Courthouse.
 3. Lake Geneva Regional News 4-20-1939.
 4. Lake Geneva Herald 10-28-1898.
 5. David Lowe, Chicago Interiors: Views of a Splendid World (Chicago, 1979), p. 66.
 6. Joseph and Caroline Kirkland, The Story of Chicago, Vol. II. (Chicago, 1894), pp. 230, 261, 270; Thomas W. Goodspeed, University of Chicago Biographical Sketches, (Chicago, 1922), pp. 56, 96-7, 111.
 7. Ryerson obituary, Chicago Tribune 8-13-1932.
 8. Lake Geneva News Tribune 8-25-1932.
 9. Wolfmeyer and Gage, p. 70.
 10. Lake Geneva Regional News 3-9-1978.

ITEM 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal boundary description and justification: S16D 25'W 50.03' S34 D07'W 138.66' to POB.

EXHIBIT A

BONNIE BRAE CONDOMINIUM ASSOCIATION

PLAT OF SURVEY OF

EAST 1/4 CORNER SECTION 4, T1N, R17E

A PARCEL OF LAND BEING PART OF LOT 1 OF BONNIE BRAE, A SUBDIVISION LOCATED IN SECTIONS 3 AND 4, TOWN 1 NORTH, RANGE 17 EAST, WALWORTH COUNTY, WISCONSIN, AS DESCRIBED IN VOLUME 191, PAGE 825 OF RECORDS AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

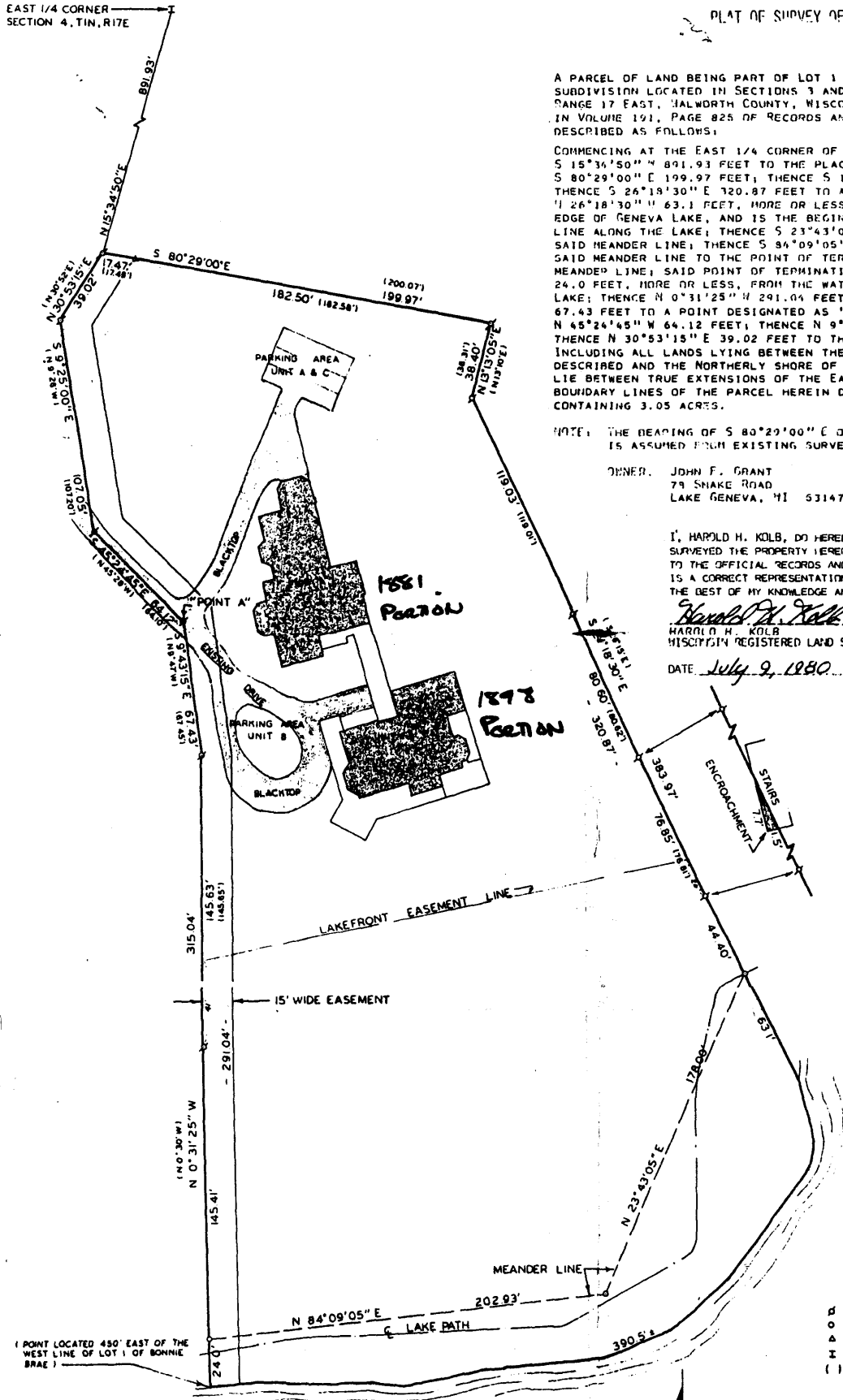
COMMENCING AT THE EAST 1/4 CORNER OF SAID SECTION 4; THENCE S 15°34'50" W 891.93 FEET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING; THENCE S 80°29'00" E 199.97 FEET; THENCE S 13°13'05" W 38.40 FEET; THENCE S 26°18'30" E 320.87 FEET TO A POINT WHICH IS 1' 26" 18' 30" = 63.1 FEET, MORE OR LESS, FROM THE WATER'S EDGE OF GENEVA LAKE, AND IS THE BEGINNING OF A MEANDER LINE ALONG THE LAKE; THENCE S 23°43'05" W 178.00 FEET ALONG SAID MEANDER LINE; THENCE S 84°09'05" W 202.93 FEET ALONG SAID MEANDER LINE TO THE POINT OF TERMINATION OF SAID MEANDER LINE; SAID POINT OF TERMINATION BEING N 0°31'25" W 24.0 FEET, MORE OR LESS, FROM THE WATER'S EDGE OF GENEVA LAKE; THENCE N 0°31'25" W 291.04 FEET; THENCE N 9°43'15" W 67.43 FEET TO A POINT DESIGNATED AS "POINT A"; THENCE N 45°24'45" W 64.12 FEET; THENCE N 9°25'00" W 107.05 FEET; THENCE N 30°53'15" E 39.02 FEET TO THE PLACE OF BEGINNING. INCLUDING ALL LANDS LYING BETWEEN THE MEANDER LINE HEREIN DESCRIBED AND THE NORTHERLY SHORE OF GENEVA LAKE, WHICH LIE BETWEEN TRUE EXTENSIONS OF THE EASTERLY AND WESTERLY BOUNDARY LINES OF THE PARCEL HEREIN DESCRIBED, SAID PARCEL CONTAINING 3.05 ACRES.

NOTE: THE BEARING OF S 80°29'00" E ON THE NORTH LINE IS ASSUMED FROM EXISTING SURVEY RECORDS.

OWNER: JOHN F. GRANT
79 SNAKE ROAD
LAKE GENEVA, WI 53147

I, HAROLD H. KOLB, DO HEREBY CERTIFY THAT I HAVE SURVEYED THE PROPERTY HEREIN DESCRIBED ACCORDING TO THE OFFICIAL RECORDS AND THAT THE PLAT HEREON IS A CORRECT REPRESENTATION OF THE LOT LINES TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF.

Harold H. Kolb
HAROLD H. KOLB
MISCELLANEOUS REGISTERED LAND SURVEYOR, S-187
DATE July 9, 1980



(POINT LOCATED 450' EAST OF THE WEST LINE OF LOT 1 OF BONNIE BRAE)

KOLB LAND CONSULTING, INC
LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN 53147

GENEVA LAKE