


City, Village or Town: Kaukauna	County: Outagamie	Surveyor: M. Betz	Date: 4/22/83
Street Address: 104 River Road		USGS Quad and UTM Reference: See Continuation Sheet	Acreage: 2

Current Name & User: Private Residence	Current Owner: Lester W. Abel
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Film Roll No. 17		Current Owner's Address: 104 River Road
Negative No. 4		Legal Description: Lot 6 and the S½ of Lot 5, Block 2 in A.C. Black's Add.
Facade Orient. W		
Affiliations		

Original Name & Use:	Source	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source
Merritt Black House	A	A.C. Black	1897-1898	Residence	A
Dates of Construction/Alteration 1898	Source B	Merritt Black	1899-1975	Residence	A
Architect and/or Builder: Smith Brothers, Appleton, Wisconsin	Source D,F	Lester Abel	1977-	Residence	A

3 Architectural Significance <input type="radio"/> Represents work of a master <input type="radio"/> Possesses high artistic values <input checked="" type="radio"/> Represents a type, period, or method of construction <input type="radio"/> Engineering <input type="radio"/> None	4 Historical Significance <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with lives of significant persons <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with significant historical events <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with development of a locality <input type="radio"/> Other: <input checked="" type="radio"/> None Period of significance:
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Architectural Description and Significance: See Continuation Sheet	Historical Background and Significance: See Continuation Sheet
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5 Sources of Information (Reference to Above) A See Continuation Sheet	6 Representation in Previous Surveys <input type="radio"/> HABS <input type="radio"/> LDMK <input checked="" type="radio"/> WIHP <input type="radio"/> NRHP <input type="radio"/> other:
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B	7 Condition <input checked="" type="radio"/> excellent <input type="radio"/> good <input type="radio"/> fair <input type="radio"/> poor <input type="radio"/> ruins
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C	8 District: <input type="radio"/> pivotal <input type="radio"/> contributing <input type="radio"/> non-contributing
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D	9 Opinion of National Register Eligibility date: 4/22/83 initials: MB <input checked="" type="radio"/> eligible <input type="radio"/> not eligible <input type="radio"/> unknown <input type="radio"/> national <input type="radio"/> state <input checked="" type="radio"/> local
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E	
F	

Street: River Road
 Parcel: 104
 Town: Kaukauna
 Range:
 Section:
 Map Name: City Engineer
 Map Code: 17/4

Architectural Statement:

Description: According to the original plans and specifications dated 1898, the house at 104 River Road was to be built "in the best and most substantial manner, all of which must be wrought from the most thoroughly seasoned materials of every kind." All of the stone was to be supplied by the owner, J. Merritt Black, who concomitantly owned a quarry near the site of the Grignon House on Augustine Street. With its south facade facing the Fox River, this two story, twelve room Queen Anne house with its masonry exterior and three story tower (northwest corner) measures 53' x 36' with a 28' wing.^(F)

Two bay windows with wide pane glass and sidelights run up through both stories thus providing ample light for the sitting room, dining room, and two chambers. Windows in the parlor and front chamber are formed by the circle of the tower with three windows in each. The large pane glass windows of the dining room (which has a built in china cabinet and connecting pantry) and sitting room (which has an open fireplace) are of beveled plate glass with transoms of cut and polished plate glass. The hall windows and two of the outside doors at the front of the house have beveled plate glass transoms.^(G)

The interior finish of the house is in hardwoods with solid oak doors and casings, and maple floors. Four lower level rooms and a hall have an inlaid border of black walnut and maple in a diamond pattern. Unfortunately, all of the wood floors have been covered over in recent years. The stairways, both front and back as well as the attic, are oak. The front stairs, with 1 1/8" treads and 7/8" risers, have solid oak newel posts.^(F) The back and cellar stairs are of pine.

The front hall and three rooms are all connected by wide sliding doors. All doors in the house are at least 1 3/4" thick with the ground level doors at least 2" thick.^(F) All door trimmings, lock-plates, and knobs are in solid copper.^(F)

Under the house is a frost proof cellar with various rooms originally used for vegetable and fruit storage as well as the laundry and furnace room. Broad piazzas originally extended around two sides of the house and part way across the front. Today only the front porch remains. The foundation of the old barn is still visible on the property near the River.

Gus Keck was the contracting carpenter, Joseph Schwenderman, the mason builder, and Walter Cuel the painter.^(G)

Significance: In 1898, the Kaukauna Times boasted that Mr. and Mrs. Black "are almost to be envied the possession of the beautiful home which is to be occupied by them."^(G) Indeed, this house is an elegant example of Queen Anne architecture with its large three story tower. Its masonry exterior is unique - local people affectionately call the house the "Black Castle".

Historical Statement:

The "Black Castle" is a visible symbol of the community growth of Kaukauna as reflected in the activities of one of its pioneer families.

Merritt Black House
House at 104 River Road
Intensive Survey Form - Continuation Sheet (2)

The family founder, Andrew C. Black, was born in Ohio of Scottish-American Virginia pioneers. He first came to Wisconsin Territory when he was twenty-one years old, in 1846, traveling through the Great Lakes to Milwaukee, then following on foot an Indian trail through the Fox Valley to Green Bay. He was among the first purchasers of U.S. government land in present north Kaukauna, acquiring 256 acres. After several years of buying and selling livestock and working in a general store in Ohio, he returned to Wisconsin on horseback in 1848 and purchased more land. In 1849 he settled on his home farm in North Kaukauna, which fell within the city limits when Kaukauna was incorporated in 1885. In addition to farming, Andrew Black engaged in real estate, especially buying and selling farmlands. At one time he bought sixteen quarter sections, and had extensive holdings throughout northern Wisconsin.^(H)

Andrew and his bride of 1851, Mary Merritt Black, had thirteen children, four of whom survived their father.^(C) The younger surviving son, J. Merritt Black, helped with the family farm and in 1898 built this handsome home at 104 River Road from local stone.^(A,F) Besides operating one of the local quarries, the second generation Mr. Black worked as a well driller in 1901, farmer in 1908, and a realtor in 1910, after the death of Andrew Black in 1907.^(E)

After J. Merritt's death in the late 1930's, Merritt A. Black of the third generation expanded the family real estate business into insurance, and lived at 104 River Road.^(E) The Black Insurance Agency was a respected business in Kaukauna into the 1970's, and the Black family was well known for their community leadership in charitable and professional activities.^(E) The three generation growth of Black family activities from agriculture and real estate into local commerce paralleled and encouraged the development of Kaukauna as a modern community.

Black Street and the Black Addition on Kaukauna's north side are named for this pioneer family.^(C)

Sources of Information

- A Kaukauna Tax Assessment Rolls 1897-1982.
- B Residential Appraisal Card.
- C Tanner, H.B., History of the Streets of Kaukauna, 1929; pp. 6 and 7.
- D Kaukauna Sun, Lion of the Fox River Valley, 1891, p. 48.
- E Appleton, Outagamie County City Directories 1901-1972.
- F Original plans and specifications, 1898.
- G Kaukauna Times 1898.
- H Commemorative Biographical Record of the Fox River Valley, pp. 508-509.

USGS Quad and UTM Reference:

UTM: Zone 16
Easting: 398040
Northing: 4903960
USGS Kaukauna Quadrangle
1:24,000