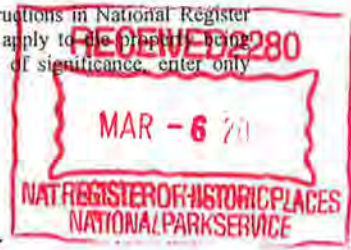


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

157

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: Beardsley, Ezra E. and Florence (Holmes), House

Other names/site number: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1063 Holmes Road

City or town: Bronson Township State: MI County: Branch

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A ___ B x C ___ D

March J. Matlock 2/23/15

Signature of certifying official/Title: _____ Date

MI SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ Date

Title: _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

for Edison H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

4-20-15
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Domestic: single dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Stick/Eastlake

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Wood/weatherboard, wood/shingle

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Beardsley House survives today as one of the largest and finest Eastlake houses in Branch County and the outstanding example in Bronson Township. The house stands on a two-acre site within a farm and woodland property of 445 acres located two miles west of the city of Bronson and faces northeast on Holmes Road. The 1887 clapboarded two-story house stands on a cut fieldstone foundation and has a hip and cross-gable-roof front section and a slightly lower gable-roof rear wing. The main front part of the house has an asymmetrical, almost cross-shaped footprint, with a hip and gable-roof front part and wider side-gable-roof section that projects outward to either side behind it, and a short gable-roof part at its back. The front façade features a projecting slant-sided two-story bay on the left, capped by a front-gable roof that cantilevers over the slanting corners, supported on large brackets, and a flat-fronted right-hand side topped by the main hip roof. The front face of the hip roof is capped by a second, centrally positioned front-facing gable of the same design as that above the façade's slant-sided projecting south bay, and the gables on the short gable-roof northwest and southeast side projections also display the same design. A shed-roof porch, with gable over the entrance, extends across the house's front to the projecting bay's right and across the front part of the northwest façade. The central part of the main section's back projects slightly to the southwest and terminates in another gable. A short

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and slightly lower rear wing, with its own gabled roof, extends out behind the main section's center. An open hip and shed-roof porch spans the rear extension's west and south sides and also the short west face of the main section's southeast wing. The house displays octagon-butt shingling in the front gables and elaborate Eastlake detailing including turned-post porches with spindlework railings and friezes; gable ornaments with paneled, slotted, and chamfer-edge trim and diagonal boarding; and paneled and bracketed friezes below the eaves. The interior features fireplaces displaying highly ornamental mantelpieces and a central stair hall containing a double-run staircase with Eastlake newels and railings.

Narrative Description

The house stands in an approximately two-acre yard on the southwest side of Holmes Road that is part of a 445-acre parcel of land under the same ownership. The nearly level property spans Holmes Road and extends well north and south of the house. The former Michigan Southern Railroad line crosses the property a short distance north and crosses Holmes Road northwest of the northwest-to-southeast-running road. About one-half mile to the southeast Holmes intersects US Route 12, the one-time main Detroit-Chicago road, and the nearest community, Bronson, is located about two miles farther east. Bronson Township is largely rural, containing a mixture of farm and wooded land along with scattered mostly residential development. The Beardsley House stands by itself with the nearest development hundreds of feet away. Its grounds contain a number of large old conifers, including four 100-foot tall white pines in front (a fifth was removed in 2013 after wind damage), along with older deciduous trees to its right/northwest. The open field across the road to the northeast from the house once contained Mr. Beardsley's horse race track, but no evidence of it is now visible. The grounds behind (southwest of) the house contained a large barn and chicken coop until recent years, but both were severely deteriorated and eventually collapsed.

The house's front faces northeast toward the road, and its sides face to the northwest and southeast. To simplify the complicated explanation of directions, the following description will have the house's front facing east and the sides north and south.

The house has an irregular footprint, with maximum dimensions of approximately sixty-two feet in length and forty-four feet in width. It has broad eaves supported by large ornamental brackets and the wall surfaces are clapboarded, with decorative octagon-butt shingling in the gables in the front section. The large windows are primarily double-hung in single and paired configuration, with the attic windows displaying tinted glass margin lights. A dramatic six-large-light window with upper sash displaying art glass margin lights frames the main second-story staircase. The house's sides display the same level of decorative detail as the front.

Presently repairs to the exterior of the house are being completed, and the house will be painted in a multi-hued color scheme appropriate to the time period when it was constructed. The house's wood exterior siding and trim is being preserved and, where necessary, new components

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are being fabricated out of cedar and Azek. Existing details and historic photographs are being used to guide the replication of deteriorated or lost architectural elements.

Interior

The house's east-facing front contains the primary double-door entrance into the front foyer located in the front (facing the street) of the north side projection. The doorway is located at the back of the part of the wraparound front porch that extends along the house's side. The gabled entry to the front porch's corner is aligned with it, and reached by a seven-step staircase. In addition to the L-plan front porch, there is also a smaller south side porch, in the angle between the south-side projection and the front section's side wall, accessible only from the front room in the house's southeast corner.

The double-door front entrance leads into a small entry hall and then through another set of double doors into a large stair hall that occupies much of the central part of the house's main front section and is oriented north-to-south. Six doors from it open into the primary downstairs rooms on the east, south, and west. The front/east part of the lower story contains two connected parlors; the south side, in that side's projection, a bedroom, with attached bath, next to the south parlor; and the north side, in that side's projection, the dining room. A second bathroom in the first floor is located adjacent west of the downstairs bedroom's bathroom. A back hallway, with the two bathrooms to its left/south, connects the large stair hall's west side with the kitchen, located in the rear wing. A narrow rear staircase to the second floor runs alongside this hallway, separating it from the dining room to the north. The dining room is entered both from the stair hall to the front/east and the kitchen to the rear/west.

The large central stair or grand hall (twenty-eight feet by twelve and one-half feet) contains the dramatic double-run main staircase to the second floor. The staircase, with north-south runs of stairs and a mid-level landing against the north exterior wall, rises from the south to a broad landing seven steps up from the main floor. The stairway railing exhibits Eastlake design with turned spindlework and large square-plan newel posts. Overlooking the landing and rising above wood paneling is a large square-head window twelve feet six inches in height and sixty-seven inches wide. The lower sash contains six large lights, while the three foot tall upper sash is a margin-light one with a single center light outlined by twenty-two small art glass lights. The staircase continues along the hall's west side up southward another eleven steps to the second-story main hall. The hall's first floor is illuminated by a brass electrified antique chandelier with four antique glass shades.

The first or north parlor, entered from the hall by a six-foot wide and eight-foot six-inch tall double pocket door, measures fifteen by fifteen feet. The doors, like the rooms, are finished in ash on the hall side and cherry on the parlor side. This parlor contains along its north side an elaborately trimmed sixty-four inch wide by fifty inch high cherry wood mantelpiece, with paired stylized fluted columns on each side supporting brackets that in turn support a projecting, scalloped-edge shelf. Short paired spindlework columns similar in design to the longer ones support an upper shelf. The backdrop between the shelves contains small mirrors separated by panels of carved woodwork. Original maroon hued square tiles – two of them containing facial representations of the two Beardsley children, Walton and Jessie, reportedly painted by Florence

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Holmes Beardsley – outline the firebox. The original mosaic tile hearth, finished in rectangular and square purple, mauve, and green tiles, with deep purple ones around the periphery, remain in place.

From this north parlor, another set of eight foot six inches by six-foot double pocket doors leads into the south parlor. Like the north parlor, it is also finished in cherry. There is also a single six-panel cherry and ash door connecting this parlor with the main stair hall, and a second six-panel door connecting this room with a bedroom to the immediate west. This second parlor measures twenty by fourteen feet. Its front or east wall is the front façade's slant-sided bay. The second parlor contains a fireplace on its southeast wall, but the ornate walnut-trimmed mantelpiece was stolen around Thanksgiving 2010. Some of the original green and black tiles around the firebox and hearth remain intact, but most are lost or broken. Just to the right of the fireplace, a quarter-sawn oak door has replaced the original floor-to-ceiling double-hung window located there to provide better access to the small south-facing side porch.

Across the main stair hall from the north parlor is the dining room, which occupies the back right-hand (northwest) corner of the main section of the house. Measuring seventeen by sixteen feet, it is entered from the hall through eight-foot six-inch ash pocket doors and has two doors, separated by a cabinet, in its west wall leading into the kitchen in the rear wing. The north wall contains a large tripartite double-hung window with narrow sides flanking a wider central window. The dining room houses an original slate mantelpiece. The mantelpiece was vandalized and partially broken when it was torn off the wall, but has been repaired and reinstalled. The mantelpiece has a slightly raised pier on either side, each with a bracket supporting the projecting shelf. The design also includes vertical fluting in the piers and below the shelf. The mantelpiece had a painted, marbleized finish, but most of that is no longer present, leaving the underlying green and charcoal grey slate surface visible. The firebox contains a black decorative cast iron grate, and the hearth retains the original brown, yellow, and black ceramic tile in larger octagon and small square shapes.

The first-floor bedroom, inside the south-side façade, measures thirteen feet six inches by twelve feet eight inches. This bedroom can be entered either from the main hall or from the second parlor through six-panel cherry doors. The bedroom has both an east-facing window, overlooking the side porch, and a south-facing window. Original cherry woodwork with picture rails and doors match the décor of the two parlors.

Another room, approximately thirteen by thirteen feet, located immediately west of this bedroom has now been renovated into two side-by-side bathrooms. The room had served as a combined laundry room and bathroom beginning in the 1970s, but the laundry room has now been relocated to the basement. The new east bathroom, reached by a door at the south end of the bedroom's west wall, utilizes components from the original second-floor bathroom. These components include the oak toilet cabinet, oak toilet seat, and tin bathtub (seventy-nine inches long and nineteen high) with original catalpa wood housing. The original top deck covering of the tub's housing had been destroyed, and a new one has been fabricated of granite. Antique nickel-brass fixtures for the tub and hand-held shower are of early 1900s date but not historic features of this property. Trim for the baseboard and single window is the original cherry wood

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and catalpa. To the immediate west, entered from the rear hallway, is the main first-floor bathroom.

The rear hallway, entered from the south end of the hall's west wall, connects the central stair hall with the rear kitchen. This hallway, sixteen feet in length and three feet wide, contains the entrance to the main first-floor bathroom, located along the south side next to the kitchen, and the rear second-story staircase, whose lower end is off the hallway's north side near the central stair hall.

The kitchen, located in the narrower section at the back end of the house, measures fourteen feet by twenty-two feet. It has an entrance from the rear hallway, a doorway leading to a basement staircase, and two doors from the dining room, which it adjoins on the northeast. An expansive rear L-plan porch encircles the kitchen's southwest and southeast sides. The entry from the porch is located at the south end of the west/rear façade. The original door from the porch was ruined in the 2011 burglary and replaced with a replacement door that matches the original style. The kitchen occupies the same footprint as the older one, but with modifications. The original kitchen had a small partitioned-off pantry across its north side, with a low porcelain sink and simple cabinets forming the partition. This structure was removed as not salvageable because of its state of disrepair. The room retains some original window trim, and an old brick chimney for a wood stove remains visible through a glass-fronted cabinet. Otherwise the previously existing kitchen has been almost entirely rebuilt to provide modern kitchen service while retaining something of old-style finishes.

Second Story

The second story has two sections. The main front section contains four bedrooms reached from a large central hallway, which is similar in layout and size to the downstairs main hall. The four bedrooms reached from the main hall overlie the two front parlors, the downstairs bedroom, and the dining room. Each of these four bedrooms has a closet with original wrought iron wall hooks. The rear section of the second floor houses two bathrooms, over the downstairs bathrooms, and a rear bedroom, located over the kitchen.

The largest of the front section's four bedrooms measures approximately seventeen by sixteen feet and is located directly above the dining room. Its woodwork is of ash and cherry and the floors are of refinished wide plank pine. The entrance is off the upper stair hall in the room's east wall. The south wall contains a (non-original) decorative Florence wood stove, with chimney. The bedroom has two north-facing windows.

A second bedroom, located directly above the north parlor, is entered from the upper stair hall's east side through a six-panel ash and oak door. Painted in two shades of yellow, this fifteen feet four inches by fifteen feet five inches room has two original windows in the east (street-facing) wall and a single window on the north wall. Part of the north wall juts out into the room to accommodate its fireplace chimney structure. The fireplace features an original oak mantelpiece and mirrored structure above the shelf. Seventeen five-by-five-inch tiles depicting flowers in vases on either side surround the firebox and are incorporated into the lower mantel's wood structure. The mantel measures sixty-four inches wide and forty-eight high and the mirror above

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measures thirty-three inches in height. The mirror has three components, with a large central rectangle and two flanking side mirrors. Original mosaic gold-yellow tile squares five by five inches in size with one-and-one-half-inch black squares inserted into the corners of the larger tiles form a diamond pattern for the fireplace's hearth. The woodwork is of hardwood carved in Eastlake styling with a floral pattern in wood above the fireplace. This bedroom has its own seven-foot by thirty-nine-inch walk-in closet directly over the front entrance alcove. The closet has a window, overlooking the northwest side roof of the front porch. All woodwork and doors are original; the soft maple floors have been refinished.

The third bedroom is located above the south parlor in the house's south front corner. It measures approximately fourteen feet three inches by seventeen feet and has three windows in the slant-sided bay in the east wall. Painted a muted blue to coordinate with its fireplace tiles, it is entered through a small arched alcove off the southeast end of the upstairs hall. This arched alcove has a peak height of eight feet and the opening is fifty-six inches wide and forty-one inches in depth. The room's fireplace is located against the south wall. Its Eastlake mantel measures sixty-three inches in width and forty-eight in height and its firebox is decorated with seventeen original blue rectangular tiles in a floral motif. The shelf is topped by a mirrored structure another forty-two inches in height that contains a large central mirror with small upper and lower ones to either side framed by small lower and upper shelves supported by brackets and small turned balusters similar to the house's exterior balusters. At the top is a wood panel carved with stylized plant forms and capped by a narrow shelf with decorative wooden fringe below and finial-topped pierced-work wood railing with a central panel contained floral forms carved in relief. The fireplace's hearth is composed of a series of original white, blue, brown, and gold tiles in rows. All woodwork and doors are original; the soft pine floors have been refinished.

The fourth bedroom is located above the first-floor one in the center of the house's south side. It is entered from the south wall of the central hall and measures thirteen feet four inches by thirteen feet six inches. It has original woodwork with two windows, one facing south and one east. This bedroom is the most simple, having no stove or fireplace.

The second story of the rear wing is reached both through a hallway from the south end of the west wall of the second-floor upper stair hall and via the second or rear staircase from the first floor. The rear section of the second story includes two bathrooms, each individually entered from the rear hallway, and a single bedroom. The house's one original bathroom was in this second-floor area in a thirteen by thirteen room just west of the fourth bedroom. Its floor, fixtures, and plumbing were in such disrepair that total renovation was necessary. Historically this bathroom housed a large heated hot water reservoir system elevated off the floor approximately four feet. This reservoir area was enclosed by two sets of large ornate doors forming a ten-foot by five-foot water chamber room within the bathroom space immediately to the right of the bathroom entrance. Over the years the structure for the heated cistern leaked, causing flooding and eventual collapse of the ceiling below and damage to the wood floor of the rooms below. This original second-floor bathroom space was converted into two separate bathrooms, a master and a smaller bathroom, designed with Victorian-style elements, to accommodate the five upstairs bedrooms. The entry door to the master bathroom is the original door to the original bathroom with its trim. The door and trim for the newly constructed entrance

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to the smaller bathroom was reutilized from a closet door from the kitchen and perfectly matches the master bath door. Components from the original upstairs bathroom including the oak toilet cabinet, tin-lined bathtub, and catalpa wall beadboard have been reutilized in the first-floor master bathroom.

The westernmost end of the second-story hallway leads to the fifth bedroom in the second floor. The upper landing of the rear staircase is located one step down from the hall, and just to the west this landing leads to the alcove entrance of the fifth bedroom in the house's west wing.

The fifth bedroom occupies the entire second story of the rear wing. It measures fourteen by twenty-two feet and has a similar footprint to the kitchen below it. Originally this space contained two smaller rooms, presumably bedrooms for live-in help. The entrance to this bedroom area contains two doors at ninety degree angles to one another within an arched alcove similar to the alcove at the entry to the southeast bedroom. A brick chimney, with non-original wood stove, stands along the south portion of the room's west wall. A large walk-in closet is located in the southeast corner adjacent to the entryway. The original soft pine floors and woodwork have been preserved where possible. The old nine-foot high ceiling was unstable and not salvageable, and in place of it the ceiling was rebuilt as a cathedral ceiling up to the underside of the roof.

Attic

The attic is a dramatic unfinished space, with the roof structure exposed to view. Historically the 1900 square feet of space was used for dances, dinners, and even basketball. The attic is reached via a straight enclosed staircase rising from a landing inside a doorway off the second-floor rear hallway's east end. The attic space is illuminated by two sets of double-hung paired windows on the east (front) side, two double-hung windows each on the north and south side, and a single window on the west side. All the windows except the western one have original tinted glass margin lights defining the periphery of the upper sash. The ceiling's peak height is eighteen feet. As part of the present renovation project, several of the roof's structural beams have been replaced with laminated beams, the largest beams formed of four two-by-twelve-inch twenty-eight-foot long laminated beams used where two roof slopes intersect. The old soft wood flooring, infiltrated with bat guano, has been removed and replaced to allow for installation of insulation above the second story ceiling.

Basement

A full basement underlies the house's entire 2200-square foot footprint. The exterior walls are of fieldstone, and fired red brick interior walls define five rooms. One of them, the furnace room, had a poured concrete floor, but the rest retained their original dirt floors. As part of the ongoing renovation project, new concrete floors were provided to all rooms, with drains accessing the pre-existing floor tile system feeding two individual sump pump reservoirs. The fieldstone and brick foundation walls were repointed or repaired as necessary, the stone walls sealed below grade, and French drains dug and placed at four and one-half or five foot depths along the entire perimeter of the house. Through these efforts, springtime flooding in the basement has ceased and the problem of excessive humidity within the house has been solved.

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Plumbing, Heating, Electrical

The plumbing, heating, air-conditioning, and electrical work have all been brought up to code and replaced or repaired as appropriate. Originally the house had gas lighting fixtures supplied by an in-house gas generator and piping through the walls in the first and second floors. Two early twentieth-century electrical chandeliers (converted from gas) remain in the main stair halls in the first and second stories.

A huge brick furnace in the basement was the earliest known main source of heat for the house, which had central air ducts, excepting the two unheated rear rooms of the second floor. This central system augmented the five fireplaces and five stoves, three in the kitchen and two in upstairs bedrooms. This furnace was eventually replaced by a self-contained coal stoker furnace. In the 1970s this furnace was replaced with an oil and wood-burning furnace, used until 2005. In the present renovation, two modern high efficiency propane furnaces and electric air conditioners have been installed. The central heating system has been preserved and modified to include new feed ducts where needed, cold air returns from the second floor, as well as entirely new ducts to service the second-floor south bedroom, which previously did not have any central heat. The old cast-iron louvered grates for many of the air ducts remain and, where missing, or where new ducts were installed, antique cast-iron grates in a style nearly identical to the old ones have been installed.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1887

Significant Dates

1887

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Beardsley House is the outstanding Eastlake house in Bronson Township and one of the largest and most architecturally distinguished Eastlake houses in Branch County, ranking with a handful of outstanding examples in Coldwater located in the already national register-listed East Chicago Street and West Pearl Street Historic Districts.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The future location of Branch County was inhabited by members of the Pottawatomie tribe prior to white settlement. In 1821 the federal government purchased this area as part of a larger purchase of the Indian title in southern Michigan under the Treaty of Chicago. In 1825 the government directed the opening of a road along the old Sauk Trail route between Detroit and Fort Dearborn, at the future site of Chicago, and by 1830 mail stages were running along the road through the area as far west as Niles. This "Chicago Road," the future US-12, soon became an important transportation artery for new settlers moving west and for freight and passenger traffic – Collin's 1906 Branch County history called it the "central axis and directing force" for settlement in Branch County (42). Boundaries for a future Branch County were established by the Michigan Territory legislature in 1829. Jabe Bronson, the first white settler both in what became Bronson Township and in all of Branch County, located on "Bronson's Prairie," the future site of the village of Bronson, in 1828, and more settlers arrived in Bronson and at Coldwater Prairie, the future site of Coldwater, beginning in 1830. In 1833 Branch County was formally established and the county divided into two large townships. Prairie River Township initially formed the western half of the county. Between 1837 and 1845, through the setting off of new townships from it as settlement increased, the township was reduced to the present single Congressional township size. In 1837 Prairie River was renamed Bronson Township. Within the township a village named Bronson grew up around the site initially settled by Jabe Bronson in 1830 and developed rapidly in the 1850s and 60s after the Michigan Southern Railroad line was built through the area. Bronson, located in the township's northeast corner, was incorporated as a village in 1866 (Collin, 38-44, 60-61, 104-05).

The Beardsley House and the large property historically associated with it are located in Bronson Township about two miles west of the west edge of the now city of Bronson. Ezra A. Beardsley (1839-1916) was born in Monroe, Fairfield County, Connecticut, the son of Elisha E. and Laura A. (Burroughs) Beardsley, both also natives of the state. His father was a farmer but also

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“extensively engaged in the lumber trade” (Chapman Brothers, 583). Ezra settled in Yonkers, New York, and “Here for about six years he was engaged in the business of hat manufacturing” (*ibid.*). Becoming dissatisfied with what he came to see as limited opportunities in the business, he came to Michigan in 1870 or 71 and bought 650 acres of land in Bronson Township that became part of a tract that comprised 1100 acres by 1888. Beardsley’s 1906 biography states that “He engaged in the stock business when he came to Branch county in 1870...” (Collin, 771), suggesting that he had come to this area with the idea of raising high quality stock in mind, and entered into this business when he arrived.

In 1874 he was married to Florence A. Holmes (1853-1924) of Bronson, the daughter of Jonathan and Mary (Taggart) Holmes (Chapman Brothers, 583-84; Collin, 771). Florence’s father, Jonathan Holmes, was an early settler and prominent resident of Bronson Township. He and another family member purchased a recently built sawmill on Swan Creek in section 17 just west of the future Beardsley property in 1836 and came here from New Hampshire the following year. In addition to this early sawmill, Jonathan Holmes also established the township’s first grist mill in 1839 (Collin, 43-44). The Chapman Brothers biography says of Florence Beardsley, “Miss Holmes was educated at Hillsdale College, and has, since leaving that institution, realized the abundance of opportunity in life for the utilization of every part and particle of education obtainable” (584). What specifically this means is not clear, but it does suggest that she took advantage of every opportunity to further educate herself.

Beardsley likely carried on a broad range of agriculture on his very large Bronson Township farm, but became well known in the area as a stock farmer, specializing in “the raising of high-grade and blooded stock, but more especially horses, and those of favorite Hambletonian breed of international renown. ... In Mr. Beardsley’s stables may be seen at all times not less than fifty horses of very high grade, and bred principally with a view to speed” (Chapman Brothers, 580). At least one report in the Bronson newspaper, the *Independent*, notes the success of Beardsley’s horses at the Branch County Fair. At 1885’s fair, “In the races Wednesday, Bronson’s horses were at the front. E. E. Beardsley’s two year old Belmont colt Weldon winning 1st premium, ... In the four year old class, Lady Clara, also owned by Beardsley, took first place, winning in three straight heats in 2:52, 2:40 and 2:39 ½...” (9/25/1885).

Another report, from the 1886 county fair, concerns cattle Beardsley exhibited at the fair: “Mr. E. E. Beardsley of Bronson, a noted breeder of horses, is also some on cattle. He shows a pair of twin steers better in every respect than any man in Branch county can show, and we doubt if their equal can be produced in the state. Both have a white shield in the forehead, and looking at them from the front no man can tell ‘tother from which.’ Although having been handled they work like an old team, both in and out of the yoke, and if a mistake is made in yoking them there is no kicking and everything moves just as smooth. Mr. Beardsley has a fine farm and knows how to run it” (*Bronson Independent*, 10/1/1886, copied from *Coldwater Courier*).

The Beardsley House

The construction of the existing Beardsley house is documented only by a couple of notices in the local newspapers. In its October 28, 1887, issue the *Coldwater Republican*, commenting on an inaccurate previous report in the rival *The Coldwater Courier*, stated: “The Courier is

Beardsley, Ezra A. & Florence (Holmes), House

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mistaken in saying that E. E. Beardsley, of Bronson, would build the finest farm house in Branch County next summer. He has already built it and will occupy it in about two weeks. It is an undisputed fact that it is the finest in appearance in Branch County and has all the modern conveniences to make it in every way complete." The *Bronson Independent* noted in its December 2, 1887, edition that "Mr. E. E. Beardsley has moved into his magnificent new mansion in west Bronson." Along with Ezra and Florence Beardsley and their two children, the house apparently also initially accommodated Mrs. Beardsley's mother, Mary (Taggart) Holmes (Mrs. Holmes' husband, Jonathan Holmes, had died in 1884 (Chapman Brothers, 513)).

The highest praise heaped upon the then brand new house was that of Mr. Beardsley's biographer in the 1887 Chapman Brothers history:

The property of Mr. Beardsley occupies one of the most eligible sites in southern Michigan, and upon it he has recently erected a house that can hardly be surpassed by any country residence in the state. In architectural design, in harmony of artistic color and decoration, it is a monument to the correct judgment and taste of its projectors, and cost our subject not less than \$10,000. The interior is finished in a variety of hardwoods which are allowed to retain their natural colors. The artist in furnishing and upholstering has supplemented by the riches of adornment at his command the work of his brother artists, who had so well performed their parts, the whole bespeaking a refined sensibility, cultivated taste, and accuracy of judgment, that reflects the greatest praise upon our subject and his family. In internal arrangement and convenience it is perfection, being supplied with numerous modern ingenious contrivances, designs and inventions calculated to make life bright, easy, elegant, happy and healthful (583).

Notwithstanding that Mr. Beardsley's lengthy biography that includes such praise for his new house, as well as the full page drawing of the house that faces page 580, were presumably prepared for the book at the Beardsleys' order and cost, the house was and is an outstanding landmark among the county's houses built in the later nineteenth century. While today's city of Bronson retains one very fine brick Eastlake house at 240 West Chicago Street (among other fine but now vinyl-sided homes from the same general time period, particularly along West Chicago and North and South Matteson streets), there are none in the city or township to compare with the Beardsley House in overall size and level and quality of Eastlake detailing. Other communities in Branch County including the villages of Quincy and Union City each also contain some notable examples. Quincy's are located primarily along East and West Chicago Street, while Union City's most distinguished example, located at 615-17 North Broadway, is notable for its large pyramid-roof corner tower. While all of these houses are fine examples of Eastlake styling, none matches the Beardsley House for the richness of detail.

Coldwater's East Chicago Street and West Pearl Street historic districts contain the finest concentrations of Eastlake houses in Branch County. These two districts contain four outstanding Eastlake houses, the 1884 Ralph E. Clark House, 281 E. Chicago; Frank L. and Ella Van Volkenburg Skeels House, 199 W. Pearl; Robert G. Chandler House, 200 W. Pearl; and 208 W. Pearl – the latter three all built c. 1886. These are very large, rambling cross-gable-and-hip-roof (mansard rather than hipped in 200 W. Pearl's case) buildings and display a great variety of

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ornament including elaborately detailed turned-post porches. In its overall opulence of finishes, the Beardsley House appears to be the equal of any of these. Local Coldwater architects designed two of the four houses – Marcellus H. Parker the Clark House at 281 E. Chicago and Ebenezer B. Saxton, who designed the still standing Clarke Library and the (demolished) Branch County Courthouse, did the Skeels House at 199 W. Pearl. Parker’s Clark House is so similar to the house at 208 W. Pearl that Parker may well have designed it, too. Who designed the Beardsley House is not known, but it seems clear the Coldwater designers were capable of this quality of work. Along with the Coldwater examples, the Beardsley House is one of the key Eastlake homes of at least Branch County.

Beardsley House Subsequent History

Ezra and Florence Beardsley resided in the house, called by the family “The Evergreens” according to Beardsley’s 1906 biography (Collin, 772), for the rest of their lives. The Beardsleys’ only son, Walton H. Beardsley (1875-1956), was associated with his father in the stock-raising business by 1906 and, following his father’s death in 1916, continued running the farm until shortly before his death. Jessie Beardsley (born 1877), the only daughter, died in 1961. In the early 1960s the Beardsley property, then encompassing 445 acres, was sold to James Placetka, a Bronson lumberyard owner. After several years experiencing vandalism to the house, Mr. Placetka abandoned his attempts to refurbish the house and sold the property to the present owner’s parents, Michael and Marjorie Berkman, and aunt, Cecile Edelstein, in 1968. The present owner, William Berkman, spent that summer at the house beginning repairs, primarily repairing windows. Over the next three decades the Berkmans made some headway in repairing the main house, with the parents having extended weekend stays from their home in Chicago. In the 1990s Cecile Edelstein sold her interest to Michael and Marjorie Berkman. Michael Berkman passed away in 2007 and Marjorie Berkman in 2010, leaving the property to son William Berkman. Since that time Mr. Berkman has been restoring the house’s exterior and interior and providing updated utilities suitable for possible future bed-and-breakfast use.

Beardsley, Ezra A. & Florence (Holmes), House
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Berkman, William A. Email, 11/17/2014, concerning property's history subsequent to the Beardsleys. Copy in working file.

Branch County Genealogical Society. *Cemetery Inscriptions and Records, 1839-1985, Branch County, Michigan*. Vol. 3 of 4 (Bronson Cemetery). 1985.

Branch County Reconnaissance Level Survey (for SHPO). Summer 1978. Conditions of houses discussed in significance statement field verified December 2014.

Bronson Independent, Bronson, MI.

- 9/25/1885: Beardsley's prize-winning horses.
- 10/1/1886: Beardsley's twin steers at the county fair.
- 2/11/1887: "Bronson's Heavy Tax-Payers."
- 12/2/1887: Has moved into his magnificent new mansion.

Bronson Journal, Bronson, MI

- 1/12/1956: "Death Claims W. H. Beardsley, Rites Saturday."
- 2/9/1961: "Funeral Services Held Sunday for Jessie Beardsley."

Chapman Brothers. *Portrait and Biographical Album of Branch County, Mich., Containing Full Page Portraits and Biographical Sketches of Prominent and Representative Citizens of the County, Together with Portraits and Biographies of All the Governors of the State, and of the Presidents of the United States*. Chicago, 1888.

Coldwater Courier, Coldwater, MI.

- 11/5/1887: House is already completed.

Coldwater Republican, Coldwater, MI

- 10/28/1887: House is already built.

Collin, Rev. Henry P. *A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Branch County, Michigan*. Chicago-New York: Lewis Publishing Co., 1906.

Eckert, Kathryn Bishop. *Buildings of Michigan*. Buildings of the United States series. NY: Oxford University Press, 1993.

National Register of Historic Places nomination forms:

- East Chicago Street Historic District, Coldwater. 1974.
- West Pearl Street Historic District, Coldwater. 1990.

Beardsley, Ezra A. & Florence (Holmes), House
Name of Property

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Previous documentation on file (NPS): None

- 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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acrcage of Property About 2 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Beardsley, Ezra A. & Florence (Holmes), House
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- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.864864 | Longitude: -85.246749 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at the west corner of the intersection of the rights-of-way of Weaver Road and Holmes Road; thence west-northwesterly along south-southwesterly line of Holmes Road 3450 feet to Point of Beginning; thence 300 feet west-northwest along south-southwest edge of Holmes right-of-way; thence at right angle west-southwesterly 300 feet; thence at right angle east-southeasterly 300 feet; thence north-northeasterly 300 feet to Point of Beginning. Nominated property is a square 300 feet on each side, with NNE side ranged along SSW Holmes Road right-of-way.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the house and associated yard area but excludes the rest of the property historically and currently under the same ownership because it lacks standing and known historic resources.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: R.O. Christensen, national register coordinator
William A. Berkman, property owner
organization: MI SHPO
street & number: 702 W. Kalamazoo
city or town: Lansing state: MI zip code: 48909
e-mail christensenr@michigan.gov
telephone: 517/335-2719
date: Dec. 2014

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer,

Beardsley, Ezra A. & Florence (Holmes), House

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photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Ezra E. and Florence (Holmes) Beardsley House

City or Vicinity: Bronson Township

County: Branch

State: MI

Photographer: William Berkman

Date Photographed: October 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1. Front and north side.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0001
2. Front.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0002
3. Front detail.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0003
4. South side.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0004
5. South side porch detail.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0005
6. North side.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0006
7. North side gable.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0007
8. Rear.
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0008
9. Main staircase
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0009
10. Main staircase
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0010
11. 2nd floor landing/staircase
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0011
12. North front parlor
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0012
13. Parlor fireplace
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0013
14. Pocket doors 1st floor
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0014
15. North front upstairs bedroom
MI_BranchCounty_EzraEFlorenceHolmesBeardsleyHouse_0015

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Ezra E. and Florence (Holmes) Beardsley House, 1063 Holmes Road, Bronson Township, Branch County, Michigan

Lat: 41.864864

Long: -85.246749

































PRUNING

THE BURN





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Beardsley, Ezra E. and Florence (Holmes), House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Branch

DATE RECEIVED: 3/06/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/31/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/15/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/21/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000157

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4.20.15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

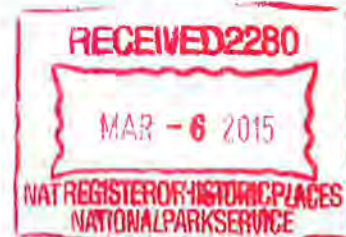


STATE OF MICHIGAN

RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

WAYNE WORKMAN
ACTING-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



February 9, 2015

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed is a national register nomination form for the Ezra E. and Florence (Holmes) Beardsley House in Branch County, Michigan. This property is being submitted for listing in the national register. No written comments concerning this nomination were submitted to us prior to the submission of this nomination to you.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Robert O. Christensen, national register coordinator, by phone at 517/335-2719 or email at christensenr@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Martha MacFarlane-Faes
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer