

City, Village or Town: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BELOIT	County: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ROCK	Surveyor: Richard P. Hartung	Date: July, 1981	Street Birch and Carpenter
Street Address: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 205, 215 Birch Avenue and <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 206, 216 Carpenter Avenue		Legal Description: Lots 58, 59, 60, 61, Shorecrest Subdivision	Acreage: 1.475	
Current Name & Use: Edgewater Apartments		Current Owner: William Voss		
Film Roll No. RO-90 *RO-118	Affix Contact Prints	Current Owner's Address: 407 Central Avenue, Beloit, Wisconsin		
Negative No. 18 *29, 30, 31		Special Features Not Visible In Photographs: UTM: Zone 16 Easting: 332430 Northing: 4709540 USGS Beloit Quadrangle/Scale: 1:24,000		
Facade Orient. E		Interior visited? <input type="radio"/> Yes <input checked="" type="radio"/> No		

Original Name & Use: (preferred) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fairbanks Flats (Beloit MRA)	Source E	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source	Town  Range
Dates of Construction/Alteration period of historical sig- nificance: 1917 - 1930	Source D					
Architect and/or Builder:	Source					

<b>3</b> Architectural Significance <input type="radio"/> Represents work of a master <input type="radio"/> Possesses high artistic values <input type="radio"/> Represents a type, period, or method of construction <input type="radio"/> Is a visual landmark in the area <input checked="" type="radio"/> Other: <u>None</u>	<b>4</b> 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 checked="" type="radio"/> Other: <u>Assoc. w/development of Beloit black community and community planning</u> <input type="radio"/> None	Section:  Map Name City Engineer's
Architectural Statement:  See Continuation Sheet	Historical Statement:  See Continuation Sheet	

<b>5</b> Sources of Information (Reference to Above) <b>A</b> Book of Beloit, p. 209 <b>B</b> Beloit City Council Proceedings, July 26, 1917, pp. 72-74 <b>C</b> Beloit City Council Proceedings, August 20, 1917, p. 87 <b>D</b> Beloit Tax Rolls, RCHS Archives <b>E</b> Beloit City Directories, 1919-1954 <b>F</b> "Black Historical Background," n.a., Unpublished manuscript, RCHS, p. 4	<b>6</b> Representation in Previous Surveys <input type="radio"/> HABS <input type="radio"/> NAER <input checked="" type="radio"/> WIHP <input type="radio"/> NRHP <input type="radio"/> landmark <input type="radio"/> other: <b>7</b> Condition <input type="radio"/> excellent <input checked="" type="radio"/> good <input type="radio"/> fair <input type="radio"/> poor <input type="radio"/> ruins <b>8</b> District: <input type="radio"/> pivotal <input type="radio"/> contributing <input type="radio"/> non-contributing initials: _____ date: _____ <b>9</b> Opinion of National Register Eligibility <input checked="" type="radio"/> eligible <input type="radio"/> not eligible <input type="radio"/> unknown <input type="radio"/> national <input checked="" type="radio"/> state <input type="radio"/> local initials: _____	Map Code CE 90/18
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ARCHITECTURAL STATEMENT:

Description: Severely utilitarian in appearance, these four apartment buildings are located on the west side of the Rock River, overlooking the River and clearly visible from the east bank. Identical in plan and detail, each building is constructed of concrete block with shed roofs and parapetted side walls. Each building is divided into six two-story units, with bracketed canopies overhanging the paired entries, one-over-one sash windows (paired on the first story) and an absolute exclusion of ornament.

HISTORICAL STATEMENT:

Associated with the history of community planning and the growth of the black community of Beloit: A rare example of segregated company housing built during World War I, Fairbanks Flats is historically significant both as an example of the role of private corporations in community planning during an era of rapid industrialization, and as the nucleus of Beloit's twentieth century black community. The only known company housing built exclusively for black workers in Wisconsin, the property has state-wide significance.

Although Beloit had a strong manufacturing base throughout the late 19th century, the economic expansion fostered by the advent of World War I greatly increased the size of both Beloit's industrial plant and its industrial work force. In large part, that growth resulted from the expansion of Fairbanks-Morse, the city's largest employer. An engine manufacturing firm, the company began production of a marine diesel engine in 1914 and experienced a boom in production during the ensuing war years. In response to that boom, "undreamed numbers" of workers arrived in the city. (A) But demand soon outstripped supply, and in the spring of 1917, the company "brought hundreds of colored workers to be employed at the factory." (B)

The question of housing these workers posed an immediate problem for both the company and the community, but Fairbanks-Morse was quick to respond. In an age when private industry still assumed (or failed to assume) many of the responsibilities later delegated to governmental agencies, Fairbanks-Morse proposed to house the newly arrived workers in bunker-like "flats" to be built on the far northern edge of town. But if the proposal seemed forthright, its implementation was not simple. Not only did the plan raise the spectre of racial segregation at a time of nationwide racial conflict, it also dramatized the conflict between Beloit's need for housing and its need for more park space.

Under a specially organized subsidiary--Eclipse Home Makers, Inc.-- Fairbanks-Morse purchased vacant land in the McGavock Tract of the Edgewater Addition, located on the west side of the Rock River (opposite the east side factory) and north of an existing working class community. In accordance with the mores of the times, the company hoped to contain "the large number of negroes in one place" on the outskirts of town. (B) (Significantly, Fairbanks-Morse was planning a white community, known as Eclipse Park, at the same time. Designed in 1917 by architect George B. Post, Eclipse Park was a suburban neighborhood of single-family cottages and curvilinear streets located on the east side. A good distance from the Flats and a far cry from its design,

FAIRBANKS FLATS (205, 215 Birch/206, 216 Carpenter)

Intensive Survey Form - Continuation Sheet (2)

HISTORICAL STATEMENT (continued):

the difference between the two projects was a telling sign of racial attitudes.) Although the idea of segregation proved popular with the Beloit community, the site of the "settlement" did not, for reasons unrelated to the race issue. Opponents of the Fairbanks project--including an alarmed mayor--saw the decision as a direct threat to the city's plans for a park system. Throughout the early 20th century, Beloit had attempted to create an extensive park system, complete with boulevards, on the west side of the river. But the pressure of development had consumed much of that land for residential and industrial purposes. The city's best hope was centered on the McGavock Track, an open space located at the north end of Fourth Street. (B)

But Fairbanks-Morse was interested in the same property and in the spring of 1917, just weeks before the city planned its own purchase, the company bought the McGavock Tract. Angered at Fairbanks-Morse's unilateral decision--the deal was transacted without consulting any city officials--Mayor H. W. Adams called an emergency session of the city council and predicted that if a "settlement for colored people is carried out the entire park system for the west side will have to be abandoned." Moreover, the mayor warned, the housing could ignite "class bitterness that will be enduring and most undesirable for years to come." (B)

Despite official concern--and private pleas--Fairbanks-Morse continued in its plans. Even the city's threatened condemnation proceedings, generally conceded to be without strong legal precedent, were ignored. (C) By the end of 1917, the construction of Fairbanks Flats--four concrete block apartment buildings containing a total of 24 two story units--had begun, owned by Eclipse Home Makers and rented to the black employees of Fairbanks Morse. (D)

But the Flats was more than just an issue of housing: the concentration of black workers in the Flats created the nucleus of a black community that would shape Beloit housing patterns in the decades ahead. The residents of the complex were newly arrived workers, many of whom were unskilled laborers, who formerly lived in the South. But, the Flats also housed blacksmiths, molders, oilers, and at least one foreman. (E) So central did the Flats become to the black community that shortly after the construction of the apartments, Fairbanks-Morse brought J. D. Stevenson from Tuskegee Institute to found a black YMCA near the Flats. (F) As late as 1929, the apartments--by then known as Edgewater Flats (later Edgewater Apartments)--were administered by company officials working out of the black YMCA. (D)

As a rare--and probably unique-- example of company housing in Wisconsin built exclusively for newly-arrived black workers, the Fairbanks Flats is of state-wide significance.

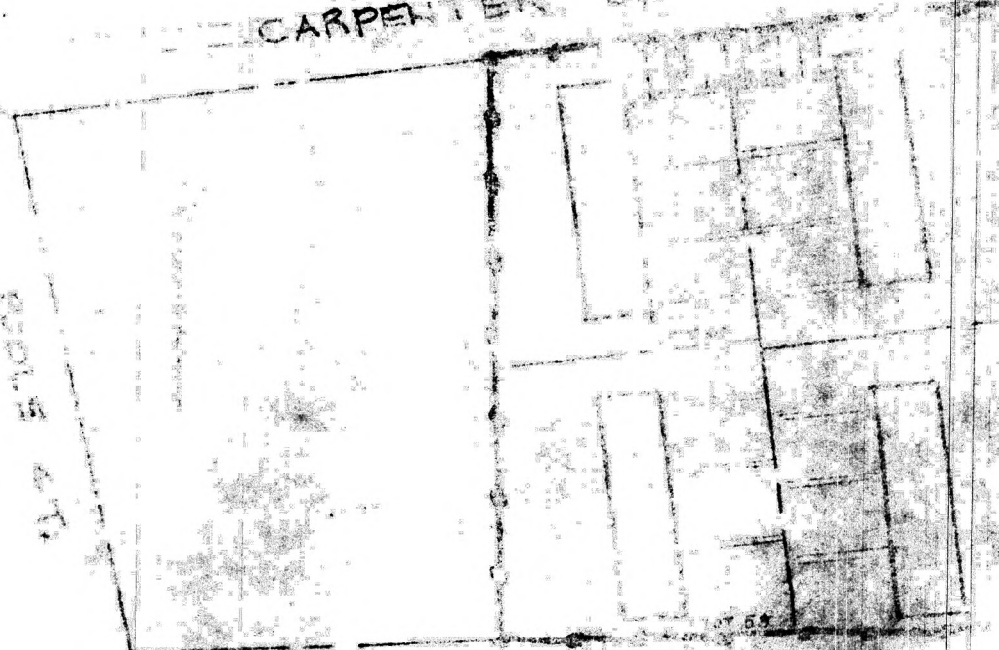
FAIRBANKS FLATS (205, 215 Birch/206, 216 Carpenter)

Intensive Survey Form - Continuation Sheet (3)

HISTORICAL STATEMENT (continued):

After World War II, ownership of the Flats changed hands and many of the residents, while still industrial workers, were no longer exclusively the employees of Fairbanks-Morse. (E) Today, the rental units, managed by the Voss Agency realty firm, are rented without regard to place of employment, but the Fairbanks Flats remains a predominantly black housing complex in the heart of one of Beloit's black communities. Identical in construction, appearance, history, condition, and ownership, the Fairbanks Flats, although four separate buildings, are properly considered a single entity (or complex) and thus are nominated as a single entry to the National Register of Historic Places under the category "buildings(s)."

CARPENTER ST.



BIRCH

FAIRBANKS FLATS

205 + 215 BIRCH & 206 + 216 CARPENTER

BELOIT, WI.

SCALE 1" = 80'

N

boundaries