

PS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8/86)
Wisconsin Word Processor Format (1331D)
Approved 3/87

JAN 11 1993
NATIONAL
REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Merrill Avenue Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2 Location:

Street & number: 103, 107, 111, 115 Merrill Avenue N/A Not for Publication
city, town: Beloit N/A vicinity

state: Wisconsin code WI county: Rock code: 105 zip code 53511

3 Classification

Ownership of property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>4</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>4</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register none

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 12/11/92
Signature of certifying official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

 Signature of commenting or other official Date
 State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register.

 removed from the National Register.

 other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register

[Signature] 2/19/93

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals

Materials
(enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone

walls aluminum

wood

roof asphalt

other concrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X See continuation sheet

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Section 7. Description

The Merrill Avenue Historic District is located on the north side of the 100 block of Merrill Avenue. It is bordered by Fourth Street to the west and Third Street to the east. An eclectic mix of houses and a church flank the district to the north and south.

The district is comprised of four houses, built in 1891,³ to house factory workers employed in the industries that flanked the west side of the Rock River. The houses' unaltered settings and architectural uniformity provide key elements in interpreting this working class city streetscape. The district is distinguished from its environment by its visual coherence. Three empty lots, a commercial strip, a church, and a river outside of the district set the block apart as a complete unit. The district is part of a larger residential area. The houses on Second and Third streets are generally two-story vernacular frame buildings, some with late Victorian picturesque detailing. Many of these houses have been converted to multi-family dwellings. One limestone Greek Revival gabled-ell house remains on Third Street. Fourth Street, which flanks the district on the west, is characterized by small commercial businesses, many in automobile service.

These houses, known locally as Brasstown Cottages, are uniform and simple in design. Each of the one story side-gabled vernacular dwellings rests on a limestone foundation. The porch foundations are concrete block. The T-plan features a main block which is three bays wide and two bays deep, but which is two rooms wide and three rooms deep in plan. The T extension to the rear is a two rooms deep. A dormer centered over the main entrance defines this house type. Original windows are one-over-one double-hung wood sash. On the east elevation of the main block, the windows into the parlor are paired to provide more light. The original siding is clapboard.

Clapboard-sided 103 Merrill Avenue features a decorative dormer vent made of thin lathes and enframed in an arched molding, a full front porch with shed roof, turned posts with knee braces, and retains its original porch railing and balusters.

³Beloit City Tax Rolls 1880-1910, Rock County Historical Society Archives, Janesville, Wisconsin.

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107 Merrill resembles 103 Merrill Avenue, although the porch railing and balusters have been replaced with two-by-fours.

115 Merrill Avenue has been sided with aluminum siding, and has had the porch posts, rails, and balusters replaced with wrought iron. A new cinder block foundation supports the porch.

111 Merrill Avenue has been sided with aluminum siding, and features a new porch only as wide as the dormer above it.

All of the houses retain integrity of location, design, setting, feeling, and association. 103 and 107 Merrill Avenue also retain high integrity of materials and workmanship. Although some alterations have been made to the properties, they do not adversely affect the perception and understanding of the four houses as "Brasstown Cottages". The surviving massing, plan, and identifying dormer of each house are the crucial elements to the integrity of this district. There are no intrusions nor non-contributing properties in the district.

8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria X A B X C D

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions) Period of Significance Significant Dates

 ARCHITECTURE 1891¹ 1891

 SOCIAL HISTORY 1891-1942²

 Cultural Affiliation

 N/A

Significant Person Architect/Builder

 N/A unknown

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

 X See continuation sheet

¹Date of construction from Beloit City Tax Rolls 1880-1910, Rock County Historical Society Archives, Janesville, Wisconsin.

²Date of construction (see above) to National Register fifty year cut-off date of 1942; continuous occupation by industrial labor force during this period.

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Section 8.

Statement of Significance

The Merrill Avenue Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A of the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the lifeways of the industrial labor force in Beloit. The houses provided the laborer and his/her family with a respectable, self-contained home, and reflected the era's emphasis on home as a haven from the outside world.

The district is also locally significant under Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places as a concentrated intact example of a local form of worker housing (Brasstown Cottage) built during the industrialization of Beloit. The simple side-gabled houses are reflective of worker housing as it developed in the rural South and semi-urban Middle-West context, in contrast to the cramped multi-family dwellings of industrialized cities in the East.

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Introduction

The houses built on Merrill Avenue between Fourth and Third streets are visual representation of Beloit's housing solution during a period of vast industrialization. The north side of the block contains residential structures which convey the domestic life of the Beloit factory worker employed at one of several heavy industries that flanked the west side of the Rock River and were located on Second and Third streets. The residential area surrounding these factories was largely populated by enclaves of ethnic settlement; Irish and Norwegian in the late Nineteenth Century and Black in the post World War II era. The Merrill Avenue Historic District remains an area of Black settlement.

The block contains four vernacular side-gabled houses that are cohesive in design and setting. In addition, while their simple design provided for the fundamental living needs of the factory workers, they occasionally featured decorative details perhaps supplied by the renters or owners. These houses, set on full city lots with front yards, were single-family dwellings.

Historic Background

The original settlers in Beloit were pre-historic Native Americans who built effigy mounds on the bluffs of the Rock River's east side, still evident today on the campus of Beloit College. Their probable descendants were the Winnebago Tribe whose settlement along the bluffs of the Rock River and Turtle Creek became known as Turtle Village. After the last battles of the Black Hawk Wars in early years of the 1830s, white settlers began to push Native Americans away from the rich Rock River Valley. The first white settler in Beloit was the French Canadian trapper Joseph Thibault; he sold his cabin and land claim to Caleb Blodgett, a Vermonter, who arrived from the western frontier of Chicago in 1836. Accompanying him were his wife, daughter, and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. John Hackett. This small family group planted many of the seeds for Beloit's later development - they built a dam and a mill along Turtle Creek and also constructed a mill race. No less important was John Hackett himself who, in 1842, built the first house on the west side of the Rock River. Interestingly, the land on the west side of the Rock River was open for sale from the government land office before the area on the east side of the Rock River; this west side land was largely unavailable for settlement in the 1830s because it was quickly purchased

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by speculators, one of whom was the first mayor of Chicago, William B. Ogden.⁴

In 1837, a group of Yankee settlers, called the New England Emigrating Company, arrived from Colebrook, New Hampshire, and bought land from Caleb Blodgett in order to establish a community on the east side of Beloit between the Rock River and Turtle Creek. The New England Emigrating Company platted this land in a grid of streets and rectangular lots with two public squares. The topography of the river's east side predicted the development of two distinct neighborhoods: one was on the hilltop overlooking the river, the other on the river's flats below. The later was the first area of settlement. By 1839 it had quickly become the commercial center of the village, with residences, stores, public landings, boarding houses, mills, and a schoolhouse.⁵

By 1844, Beloit's growth on the east side of the Rock River was sufficiently large to warrant the construction of a bridge to cross to the west side, with it, the commercial area near the river's east bank spread to the west. Two years earlier, to the north of this west side commercial center, a dam was constructed on the river and a race way was dug from the river. This area soon became the industrial center of Beloit.⁶

Beloit's industrial history followed the pattern of other cities in Wisconsin where the first industries were flour and sawmills, followed by the manufacture of agricultural implements providing for westward expansion, and then by heavy industry where specialized machinery and paper production fulfilled the needs of mass-production.⁷

Up until 1890, the leading industries in Beloit manufactured agricultural implements. As early as 1848, Beloit was known as an important manufacturing

⁴Richard P. Hartung, editor "Intensive Survey Report: Historic Resources of the City of Beloit, WI" Department of Community Development, City of Beloit, 1984, pp. 19-20. Thematic Section 16.

⁵Ibid..

⁶Ibid., Thematic Section 14.

⁷Beloit Intensive Survey, pp. 126-130.

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center in the Rock River Valley. The city rapidly specialized in producing farm tools such as hoes, threshing machines, and plows, and was able to ship these products to Chicago by railroad after 1853. The impetus for starting agricultural manufacturing increased due to increased profits made by area farmers using rail transportation.⁸

While the Gaston Scale Works was the first agricultural implement industry in Beloit, the Eclipse Windmill Company, founded in 1873 was more influential in the city's development. In 1880, the company was reorganized as the Eclipse Wind Engine Company, and again in 1893 as Fairbanks, Morse, and Company, as they began to produce pumps and engines in addition to windmills.

Foundries and machine shops manufacturing machinery and papermaking products developed at the same time. Sereno T. Merrill founded Beloit's first paper mill, the Rock River Paper Company, in 1858. About 1860 Merrill started a machine shop called the Merrill & Houston Iron Works to efficiently repair his paper milling machinery. It quickly served other paper mills as well. In 1885, it was reorganized as the Beloit Iron Works.⁹

Joel B. Dow, lawyer and real estate agent, was responsible for bringing both the Union Brass Works, from which the name "Brasstown Cottage" may derive, and the Berlin Machine Works to Beloit in 1890 and 1887 respectively - heralding the city's largest period of growth. During the next twenty years most of the extant Brasstown Cottages were built.

Dow and a syndicate named the Beloit Land and Investment Company promoted a large undeveloped section (Dow's Addition) of the city on the north end of Fourth Street above Merrill Avenue. In addition to grand residential subdivision plans, the syndicate offered free land with side track railroad service to factories that would locate there. 1600 house lots were offered for sale on an installment plan of \$5 down and \$15 a month.¹⁰

⁸Beloit Intensive Survey, pp. 126-130.

⁹Ibid., Thematic Section 14.

¹⁰"Beloit Land and Investment Company" advertisement, Beloit City Directory, 1890; J.B. Dow, "Beautiful Beloit", Beloit College Archives, Beloit, WI, c. 1890.

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The Beloit Land and Investment Company never accomplished their goals. The grand Olympian Boulevard was never completed, the Union Brass Works only operated for two years, and many of the subdivided house lots remained undeveloped. Although Brasstown Cottages were never built in great numbers in Dow's Addition, J.B. Dow's promotion of single family houses for the working man through advertisements, industrial promotion, and loans offered through the Beloit Co-Operative Loan and Building Association, associated him and his Union Brass Works with the side-gabled T-plan house called "Brasstown Cottages". The Beloit Co-Operative advertised that it could provide a "Home for the Homeless...so that every family May Eat, Drink, Sleep, and Worship God under their own vine and fig tree". Moreover, the Co-Operative stated that anyone who could save fifty cents a month could join the association and reap the benefits of home ownership.

While the dream of single family ownership was not realized for many of Beloit's workers, for those that could afford the payments, Brasstown Cottages provided a keen sense of upward mobility for the worker. Unlike many of the over-crowded tenements and flats seen in the large eastern cities, these were dwellings of privacy with yards and separate living spaces for family members - the ideal of middle class family life. The use of applied millwork on gables and porches emulated the ornament seen on larger houses of the city and suggested a lifestyle of middle-class taste. The wide expanse of the facade-spanning porch on many of the Brasstown Cottages appealed to the Victorian taste for the picturesque.

Beloit's population grew in response to the increasing employment opportunities provided by the rise of industry. In 1880 Beloit's population was 4,790. By 1890 it was 6,315. Modestly built frame houses, predominantly located on the west side, accommodated this growing population. Some neighborhoods developed as ethnic enclaves. Norwegian and Irish families lived on the upper end of Third Street, the area where the Merrill Street Historic District is located. Black migration occurred in Beloit during World War I, supplying a work force for the demands of war-time industrial expansion. Housing was segregated. The nucleus of the Black community was formed at Fairbanks Flat, which had been constructed by Fairbanks, Morse, and Company for its Black workers. Generally, after World War II, Black families lived in dispersed areas throughout the city which included the Merrill Avenue Historic District. This block remains a settled area of the Black community. The New Zion Baptist Church was organized in 1917 and built the church on Merrill Avenue in 1953.

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The cottages in the Merrill Avenue Historic District were originally owned by John Kline. Kline was a saloon keeper. In 1892 his residence and business was at 300 Bridge Street. He rented out the cottages. He also had five other rental houses built on Liberty Avenue. Kline was a well known local athlete and ran a school for pugilists on Sixth Street.¹¹

Many of the city's new residents and laborers found homes in Brasstown Cottages, as evidenced in the occupant history of the houses in the Merrill Avenue Historic District.¹² During the first decade of the cottages' existence, there was fairly high turnover of occupants, although in later periods within the period of significance longevity of occupancy is increased. The longevity begins in the 1920s by Black residents who owned, rather than rented, their houses.¹³

Stephen Kline, probably a son of John Kline, lived at 103 Merrill Avenue from its construction through 1895. He worked at John Kline's restaurant in 1892, but had his own saloon at 318 State Street in subsequent years. In 1900, the house was occupied by four men, Arthur Laab, Charles McCrillis, Frank McCrillis, and Orville Pierce, all identified as "laborer" in the directory. In 1924, H.J. and Margaret Rook lived in the house. H.J. Rook was employed at the P.B. Yates Machine Company. From 1926 through 1943, Alfred and Minnie Bolton lived in the house. Alfred worked for Fairbanks, Morse and Co. The Boltons and two other households (the Swards and the Evans') on the block were black.

¹¹Beloit City Tax Rolls, 1885-95; Rock County Historic Society, Janesville, WI.; Beloit City Directories, 1891-95; Beloit Historical Society Archives; Beloit, WI, "Beautiful Beloit", p. 5, Beloit College Archives.; "Hometown" p. 54.

¹²This information was compiled from City Directories housed at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Library. Directories were not available from 1901 to 1923. As indicated by Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and in the introductions to the City Directories, the addresses of the houses were changed about 1926. Originally, Merrill Avenue was divided into East and West at Fifth Street. Consequently, the houses' original addresses were 209 [now 117], 213 [115], 217 [111], 221 [107], and 223 [103] East Merrill Avenue.

¹³Home ownership is first indicated in the City Directory of 1933.

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107 Merrill Avenue was occupied by Anton Hanson, a moulder at the Berlin Machine Works in 1892. In 1895, two Jewish men lived in the house. Julius Fried was a merchant tailor, and Saul Levy was the proprietor of the Beloit Bazaar. In 1900, the extended Ramsey family lived in the house. The family consisted of Edith Ramsey, Nancy Ramsey (a widow), William Ramsey and William F. Ramsey. William Ramsey was a bottler. In 1924, E.D. Fonda, who worked for Fairbanks Morse Co., lived in the house. From 1926 to 1943, John J. Seward and his wife Anna lived in the house. John Seward was employed by Fairbanks Morse and Co.¹⁴

In 1892, 111 Merrill Avenue was occupied by Herbert Sickler, whose occupation is unknown. In 1893, W. H. Beath, employed by Berlin Machine Works, lived in the house. George Atkinson, a barber, lived in the house in 1895. Mechanist James Erdahl lived in the house in 1900. C.H. Davis, employed at P.B. Yates Machine Company, and his wife Martha, lived in the house in 1924. Elmer Evans, a teamster for Beloit Lumber, Martha Evans, and Carl Evans, lived in the house in 1926. Hosie, Tishie, and Hernon Cameron, a Black family, lived in the house in 1930. Hosie Cameron worked for Fairbanks Morse Company. In 1933, A.R. and Myrtle Rounds lived at 111 Merrill Avenue. Mr. Rounds worked at Beloit Iron Works. From 1937 to 1943, Arthur Bader, a crane operator at Fairbanks Morse and Co, and his wife Grace, lived in the house.¹⁵

115 Merrill Avenue was occupied in 1893 by Louisa Baldwin, a widow; Arthur Cole, employed by R.J. Dowd (knife makers); and Jesse Cole, also employed at Dowd. In 1895, eight people lived in the house. Apparently two extended families, they were Carrie Cadman, dressmaker; E.G. Cadman, carpenter; F.A. Cadman, carpenter; Hattie Cadman; Anna Enking, dressmaker; John Enking, employed at the Berlin Machine Works; Minnie Enking; and Otto Enking, also employed at the Berlin Machine Works. Five years later, John Cormany, glazier, was the sole occupant of the house. From 1924 through 1933, Edward Keasow (also spelled Kiesow), employed at Dowd knife occupied the house. In 1924, Anna Keasow, a widow and presumably his mother, lived with him. In 1930, Alta Keasow, perhaps his wife, lives in the house as well. In 1933, it appears that Keasow took in Simond Worden White as a boarder. Marvin and Lillian Haynes lived in the house from

¹⁴Beloit City Directories, 1892 - 1943.

¹⁵Ibid..

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1937 through 1943. Marvin Haynes was a piper at Fairbanks Morse and Co.¹⁶

The Merrill Avenue Historic District remains a block of historic architectural integrity; one that has been providing housing for the ethnic mix of Beloit's working people for over one hundred years.

Architecture History Context

Two phases of Brasstown Cottage building took place in the areas surrounding the industrial center of the city. The first, from circa 1870 to circa 1890, started close to the industrial center bounded by the Rock River race and Second Street to the east, Fourth Street to the west, C Street (Portland Avenue) to the north, and Bridge Street (West Grand Avenue) to the south. The cottages were built as infill on the few available lots along Third and Fourth streets between Bridge Street and C Street, along the Chicago and Northwestern railroad tracks on Fifth Street, and west on Vine, Elm, and Oak Streets.¹⁷

The second phase of Brasstown building began circa 1890 and lasted until circa 1910. At this time, the form was consciously promoted as suitable housing for the working man and was an aspect of a huge land speculation plan that sought to bring large industries to the city and to develop land north and west of Merrill Avenue.¹⁸

The Brasstown Cottages contained in the Merrill Avenue Historic District are side-gabled vernacular frame houses. This plain type of building is simple in form and characterized by a rectangular plan and a gently pitched gable roof. The long wall of the house, the front elevation, runs parallel to the street, while the two gable ends are perpendicular. Although the form has been seen on

¹⁶Ibid..

¹⁷Beloit Intensive Survey Map Illustrations of the city of Beloit: Kelsou Map 1837, Hopkins Survey 1840, Hobart Map 1858, Stone View 1874, Dow-Bergendahl Map 1887, Perspective Map 1890, Foote Map 1891; The Rock County Historical Society Archives, Janesville WI; Beloit City Directory, 1890, Beloit Historical Society Archives, Beloit, WI n.p.

¹⁸Ibid..

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the American landscape since the Colonial period, with the invention of light framing techniques and the coming of the railroad, the type has been seen in many parts of the country, especially in the rural south.¹⁹

Beloit's 134 side-gabled Brasstown Cottages follow the configuration of the side-gabled vernacular form and are characteristic of other side-gabled houses found in the state. They are distinctive in the city, however, because they were chosen as an appropriate dwelling for workers' housing and were built frequently. In addition, although they are found in the same form and configuration, they vary greatly in their size ranging from the diminutive to the large, and exhibit the individual preferences and economic limitations of owner and builder.

Brasstown Cottages are mainly found on the industrialized west side of the city. They are symmetrical and often characterized by a center chimney. They are one to one-and-a half stories high, two rooms wide and two to five rooms deep. They have a rear T extension on which additions are generally added in a linear fashion. The T extension will sometimes have a chimney located at the gable end of the house. Sometimes wings have been added to the T addition, creating an irregular-shaped plan. One variation of the form (subtype 5) is characterized by a shed extension creating a "saltbox" configuration.

Beloit's Brasstown Cottages exhibit either a full front central gable or a three-quarter front dormer. Windows on the houses are irregularly placed and vary in number of sash, size, and ornament. However, the front elevation always exhibits symmetrical window placement with a window located on each side of the centered door. One exception is found in sub-type 3 where the front elevation displays a half-enclosed front porch. Many of the Brasstowns exhibit a boxed bay window found on the side elevations.

Typically, the house will exhibit a full-front porch spanning the entire length of the house. This porch will usually have its own shed or hipped roof built separately from the main roof. The porches usually display turned posts, knee braces, brackets, and exposed rafters. Front entrances are usually built low with stoops of two or three steps.

¹⁹Wyatt, Barbara, ed. Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin: Vol. 2, pp. 3-3, 1986; Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses, New York: Knopf, 1984, p. 94.

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The decorative elements on Brasstown Cottages are reserved for the most visible portions of the houses - front gables and dormers, bay windows, and porches. Typically Brasstown Cottages have an embellished central front gable. Sometimes the gable is decorated with imbricated siding, shingles, patterned panels, or applied millwork. Other times it is seen with a vent of louvered slats enframed in an arched or circular molding. In its most stylized version, it is decorated with incised motifs. The central gable can also enclose an attic story window which is usually topped with decorative moldings and triangular panels. The side gables can also exhibit some embellishments similar to the central front gable. Some of the Brasstown Cottages display wide cornice boards that surround the house; a few of these are patterned cornice boards. It is very likely that all of the houses were originally sided in clapboard. Unfortunately, most of the Brasstown Cottages in Beloit have been resided in asphalt, asbestos, aluminum, or vinyl. The use of the latter two has marred some of the character of the houses, leaving none of their decorative features visible.

Although all of the Brasstown Cottages are side-gabled vernacular forms, some of the houses display stylistic details that are indicative of the period in which they were built. Most of the cottages with detailing exhibit Queen Anne Style influence, although Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, American Craftsman, and Colonial Revival details are also evident.

The plans of eight Brasstown Cottages have been documented (see sketch plans of 103 and 115 Merrill Avenue in the attachments) and some general characteristics prevail: The first floor interior is divided into five to six rooms. The front entrance always opens into the largest room in the house - the parlor. The dining room is located behind the parlor and is in some examples the same width as the parlor but only three-quarters the length. In some properties the dining room is located on the first block of the T extension. The doorways between the parlor and dining room are always wide and open. On the opposite side of the parlor and dining room are smaller rooms usually divided into two bedrooms and a bath or three bedrooms.

The kitchen is always located off the rear of the house as the last block of the T extension. Sometimes this block is divided into a kitchen and bath. Storage sheds and garages are sometimes added to the rear or side of the kitchen block of the T extension. Side porches can also be found off this T. Front porches are sometimes enclosed but typically this is a later alteration. Some of the examples have double closets located between the first and second bedrooms. Interiors exhibit very high ceilings, of ten feet to twelve feet. Embellishments

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include door and window molding surrounds and wide base boards. Door knobs are ceramic in white, brown, or black. Free standing stoves heated by coal or wood once served as the heating system in these houses, but most now have central heating. 103 Merrill Avenue is a notable exception, with a free-standing gas stove located in the living room. Cold storage cellars are found under the kitchens and dining rooms of the houses located at two houses, including 103 Merrill.

Subtypes

The 1991-92 Intensive Survey of Brasstown Cottages in Beloit provided the basis for categorization of the cottages into eight subtypes. In general, houses in the subtypes exhibit similar elements of design and date from the same time period. Whether or not the houses in each subtype were constructed by the same builder is not known.

Subtype 1. Brasstown Cottages characterized by verticality with a narrow main block and a short, broad front gable. These houses date from the early period of Brasstown building between the late 1860s to the mid 1870s.

Subtype 2. Brasstown Cottages characterized by a small rectangular configuration. Many of these date from the early period of Brasstown Cottage building.

Subtype 3. Brasstown Cottages characterized by a half enclosed front porch.

Subtype 4. Brasstown Cottages characterized by a spanning front porch and one story in height.

Subtype 5. Brasstown Cottages characterized by a small rectangular configuration with a rear shed extension.

Subtype 6. Brasstown Cottages characterized by a high peaked front gable and covered entry.

Subtype 7. Brasstown Cottages characterized by verticality and a wide main block.

Subtype 8. Brasstown Cottages characterized by a broad front gable, generally built between 1895 and 1910. These are the most typical Brasstown Cottages, having the same approximate size and proportions.

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Architectural Significance

The cottages in the Merrill Avenue Historic District are all of subtype 4. Each of the one-story side-gabled vernacular dwellings rests on a limestone foundation. The T-plan features a main block which is three bays wide and two bays deep, but which is two rooms wide and three rooms deep in plan. The T extension to the rear is a single room. A dormer centered over the main entrance defines this house type. Original windows are one-over-one double-hung wood sash. On the east elevation of the main block, the windows into the parlor are paired to provide more light. Original siding is clapboard.

The Merrill Avenue Historic District is a distinctive concentration of a significant vernacular residential type, known locally as the "Brasstown Cottage," constructed during a period of industrial expansion in the city of Beloit. These cottages embody the distinctive characteristics of the Brasstown Cottage type and illustrate an important local period of design from 1890 to 1900 when these houses were built for the working class of Beloit. They illustrate Beloit's unique solution to the problem of housing the rapidly increasing number of laborers which flooded the city as Beloit developed its industrial base. These Brasstown Cottages represent a specific vernacular convention reproduced with few variations for a period of more than ten years.

Although some alterations have been made to the properties, they do not adversely affect the understanding of the four houses as "Brasstown Cottages". Conversely, the grouping provides an excellent representation of the types of changes Brasstown Cottages have experienced throughout the period of significance. The surviving massing, plan, and identifying dormer are the crucial elements to this house type. The four houses, all contributing to the district, are typical of, and the best concentration of Subtype 4.

Social History Significance

The Merrill Avenue Historic District is significant as a representation of the lifeways of the industrial labor force in Beloit. The houses provided the laborer and his/her family with a respectable, self-contained home, and reflected the era's emphasis on home as a haven from the outside world. Construction of the houses boomed in the decades around the turn-of-the-century with the industrial development of Beloit as a response to the great demand for satisfactory housing. These simple side-gabled houses are reflective of worker housing as it developed in the rural South and semi-urban Middle-West context,

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in contrast to the cramped multi-family dwellings of industrialized cities in the East. The building type provided a physical retreat from the noisy, dirty factories. Simple in massing, applied decoration could individualize the house. While meant for, and typically used for, single family occupancy, the houses also provided a home for large numbers. The resident profile of a least one house (115 Merrill Avenue), indicates that extended families could be accommodated for a short time while getting themselves established.

The district illustrates an important historical pattern in the lifeways of the working class of Beloit. The form and arrangement of living spaces in these houses reveals the historic living conditions and lifestyles of the industrial working class of Beloit and is an important reflection of their economic, social and cultural positions in the community.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): X See continuation sheet

- 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:
 X State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 1 1/2 acres

UTM References

A 1/6 3/3/2/6/4/0 4/7/0/8/1/4/0 B / / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

C / / / / / / / / / / / / / / / D / / / / / / / / / / / / / / /

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point at the southwest corner of 115 Merrill Avenue (partial lots 1 & 20, block 2, Merrill's Addition), then east along that property edge to end of block to southeast corner of 103 Merrill Avenue (partial lots 1 & 2) and turning north on Third Street along property edge of 103 Merrill Avenue to northwest corner of same. Turning west along the back property edges of 103, 107, 111, and 115 Merrill Avenue to northwest corner of 115 Merrill Avenue and turning south along west property edge of same to POB.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Merrill Avenue Historic District includes the entire property boundaries that have historically been associated with these Brasstown Cottages.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rebecca Sample Bernstein, with research by Sarah Davis McBride
 for the City of Beloit
organization Department of Community Devel. date August 15, 1992
street & number 100 State Street telephone (608) 364-6708
city or town Beloit state WI zip code 53511

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Merrill Avenue Historic District
Beloit, Rock County, Wisconsin
Photographer: Sarah D. McBride
May, 1992

Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison,
Wisconsin.

Photograph 1 of 6
111 and 115 Merrill Avenue
View looking North.

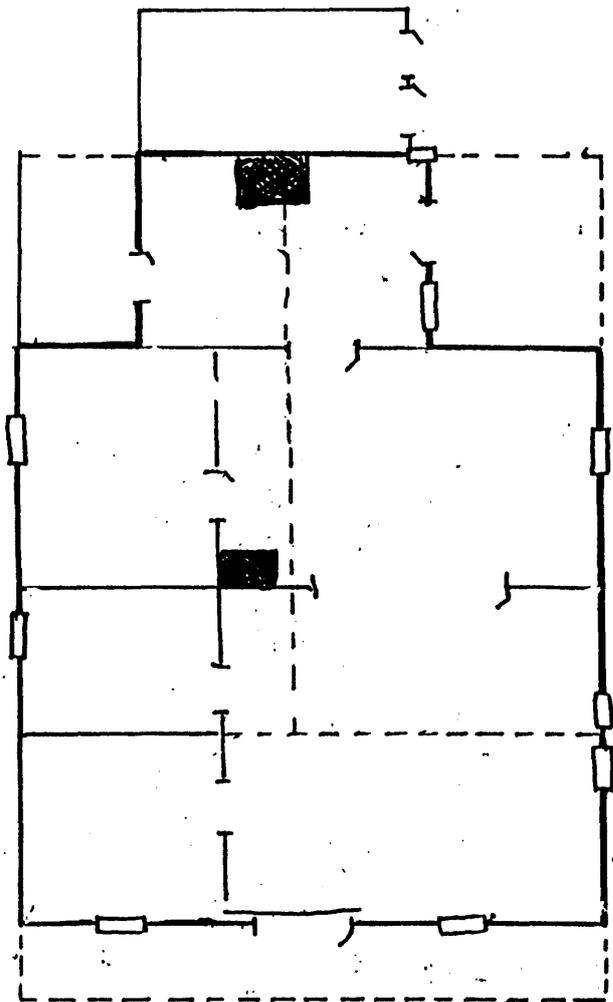
Photograph 2 of 6
103 and 107 Merrill Avenue
View looking North.

Photograph 3 of 6
View looking Northeast

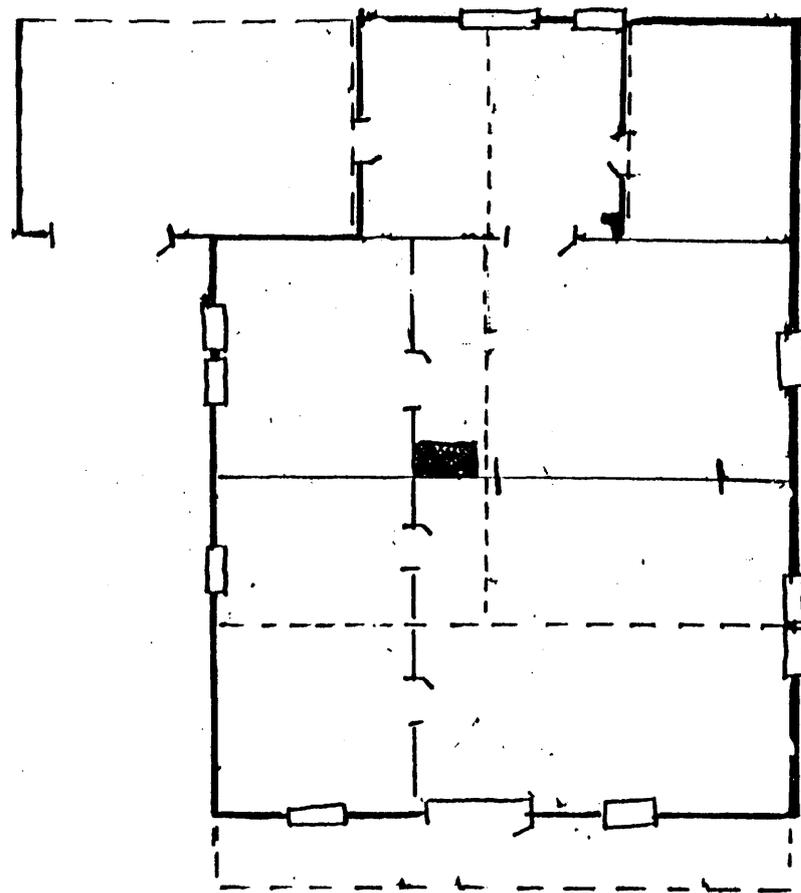
Photograph 4 of 6
View looking Northwest

Photograph 5 of 6
Rear of properties
View looking Southwest

Photograph 6 of 6
Rear of properties
View looking South



103 Merrill Avenue
Contributing



115 Merrill Avenue
Contributing



SKETCH MAP
MERRILL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT
BELOIT, ROCK COUNTY, WI

(Not to Scale)

----- Roof Line

MERRILL AVENUE RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

BELOIT, ROCK COUNTY, WI

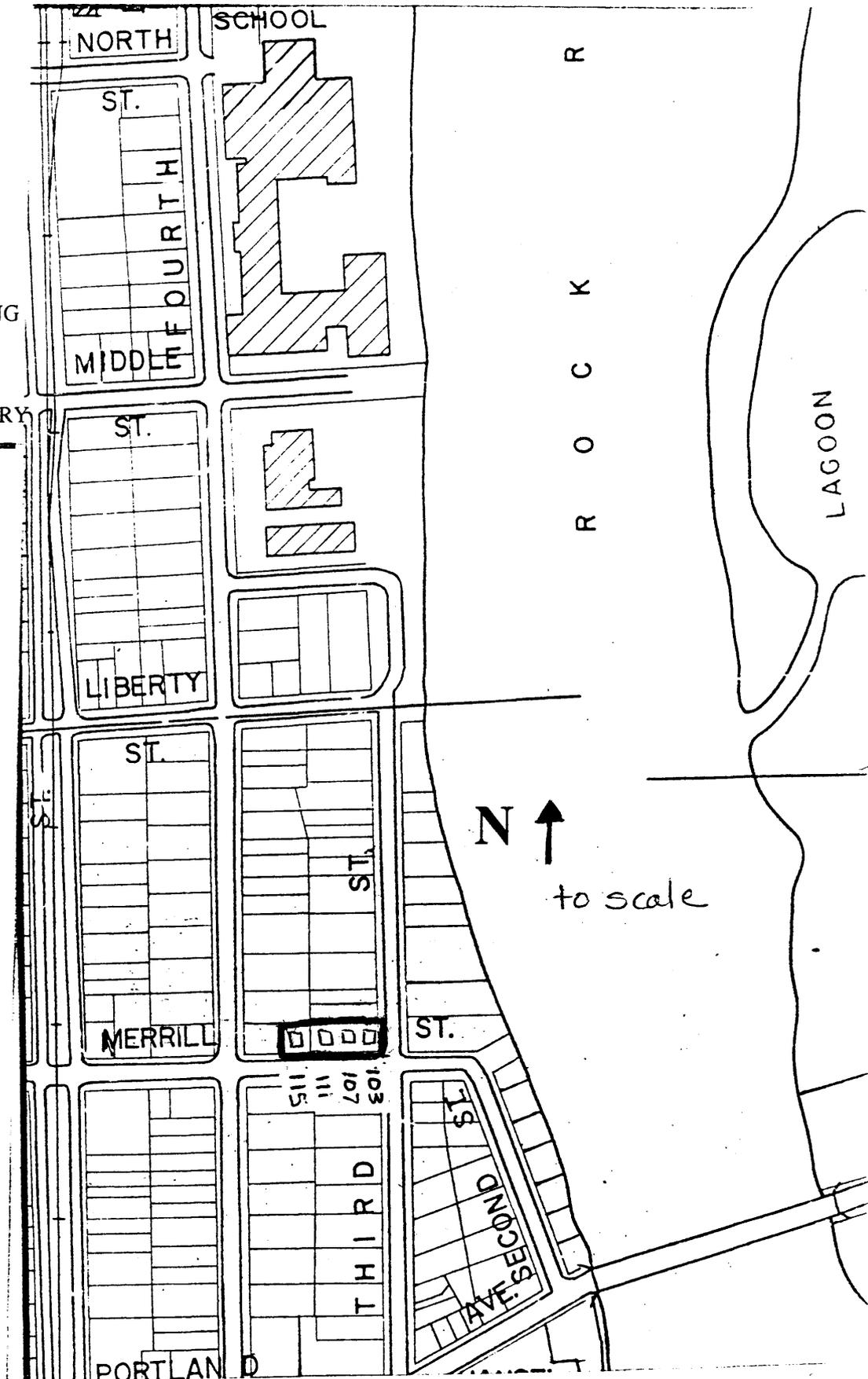
CONTRIBUTING



NON-CONTRIBUTING



DISTRICT BOUNDARY

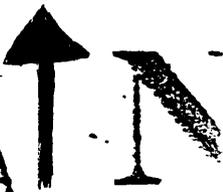


MERRILL AVENUE RESIDENTIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT
BELOIT, ROCK COUNTY, WI

LIBERTY

ST.

NOT TO SCALE



FOURTH STREET

ST.

THIRD STREET

MERRILL

ST.

MERRILL AVENUE

103
107
111
115

ST.