PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

BEULAH BRINTON HOUSE

2590 AND 2594-2598 SOUTH SUPERIOR STREET

JULY, 2018

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BEULAH BRINTON HOUSE
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I. NAME

Historic: Beulah Brinton House

Common Name: Beulah Brinton House

II. LOCATION

2590 and 2594-2598 S. Superior Street

Legal Description - Tax Key No.: 500-0724-000-4 and 501-0204-000-4
Phillip M Pryor's Add'n in NE ¼ Sec 9 & NW ¼ Sec 10-6-22 Block 3 lot 7 & Lot 1 BL 3 W J Pryor's Add'n (2590 S. Superior)
W J Pryor's Add'n in NE ¼ Sec 9 & NW ¼ Sec 10-6-22 Block 3 Lot 2 (2594-2598 S. Superior)

III. CLASSIFICATION

Site

IV. OWNER

Bay View Historical Society

ALDERMAN **A**ld. Tony Zielinski, 14th Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR Bay View Historical Society

V. YEAR BUILT

1872-1873[1]

ARCHITECT: Not Known

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Beulah Brinton House is located at the northeast corner of S. Superior Street and E. Pryor Avenue in what is known as the Bay View neighborhood, approximately three and a quarter miles from the Central Business District, along Lake Michigan. The property is approximately 152 by 101 feet in dimension and consists of two parcels, each with its own tax key. Each parcel is approximately 50 by 152 feet in dimension. The frame, L-plan, Gothic Revival Style house is located on the north parcel and fronts west/southwest, sitting approximately 30 feet back from the sidewalk behind a grassy lawn with shrubs and foundation plants. The south parcel along Pryor Avenue is vacant, bordered by shrubs and serves as a side yard for the house. The surrounding neighborhood is residential in character with mostly one and two story frame houses of varying 19th and early 20th century styles including Italianate, Queen Anne and Arts and Crafts.

[1] Town of Lake Tax Rolls, P. M. Pryor's Addition (Platted March 6, 1871) and Wm. J. Pryor's Addition (Platted May 2, 1872), 1872-1873.

The Beulah Brinton House is clad in horizontal wood clapboards and sits on a brick foundation. The roof is sheathed with asphalt/cement asbestos shingles laid in a diamond pattern. Two chimneys rise from the roof, one at each wing of the house. The north chimney retains much of its original corbelling while the south chimney has been shortened. A small one story wing with hipped roof is located at the rear or east elevation. Windows are arranged to conform to interior spaces and consist of two-over-two sash on the first story and one-over-one on the second. A modern picture window with smaller sidelights is located on the rear wing. A large window at the front porch features a sixteen light sash.

The main or S. Superior Street façade is the most elaborate. The short wing of the L-plan is located to the right or south and parallels Pryor Avenue. Its gable end fronts the street and there is a three-sided bay at the first story. The long wing of the L-plan is located on the left or north and parallels S. Superior Street and has its gable end fronting north. A Colonial Revival Style porch with fluted Ionic columns is nestled along the long wing and features a simple frieze and cornice articulated with modillions. It is topped with a wood balustrade consisting of turned balusters and square posts. The porch is skirted with wood and metal grates fill in the openings. The entrance is located in the middle of the façade, in the crook of the L, and is brought flush with the plane of the short wing. It is framed by two free standing and two engaged fluted Ionic columns. The door itself is a fifteen or eighteen light door (the storm door obscures the bottom of the primary door) and is framed by five-part sidelights and a three-part transom. Gothic detail is concentrated on the front gable face of the south wing. It consists of bargeboard trim, a bracketed hood with saw tooth trim above the paired second story windows and saw tooth trim at the cornice framing the three sided bay at the first story.

The north elevation continues the same ornamentation as the main façade. A bracketed hood is located above paired windows on each story. The brackets are elaborate and feature turned drop finials like the front of the house. The same saw tooth trim is used as well.

The south elevation is simpler in design. The two first story windows feature small hoods with a cut out ornament at the center of each. Upper story windows are stacked directly above those on the first and feature no ornament.

The rear elevation is utilitarian in character. A door is located at the north face of the one story wing and opens onto a small open porch. A small skylight is located at the apex of the hip roof. Bulkhead doors to the basement are located below the large picture window.

At the rear of the property is a 25 foot by 38 foot garage built in 1983 and set back about 10 feet from the alley.[2] The structure features a side gable roof and vinyl siding. Two large flush garage doors are located at the east or alley side of the structure. A pedestrian door and three windows are located on the façade that faces the house. The side gables feature rectangular openings in the ends that mimic the appearance of closed hayloft doors.

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[2] Milwaukee City Building Permit records, 2590 S. Superior Street, permit number 483018, dated August 2, 1983.

Alterations to the house have been minimal over the last 132 years. Historic photos in the collection of Bay View resident John Ebersol, the Bay View Historical Society, and from the c. 1904 picture book, Some Homes of the Evening Wisconsin, at the Milwaukee County Historical Society show that the front porch was originally Gothic in detail with elaborate trim and chamfered posts. Short wing walls once framed the steps. A handsome square-picket fence with prominent end posts also graced the front of the property. Numerous historic photos at the Milwaukee County Historical Society show that the current porch was put in place before Beulah Brinton's death in the 1920s. The c. 1904 photo also shows that the two second story windows on the south and west elevations were originally smaller and oval in shape, a very characteristic feature of Milwaukee houses of the 1870s. Changes to the windows were made prior to Brinton's death as well. A third chimney once graced the roof of the short south wing, and was located above the line of the west windows on the south elevation. It appears to have been removed by the 1920s. The second, remaining chimney on the south wing has been altered in more recent years. Finials once graced the apex of the gables and pinnacles enlivened the gable ends. The c. 1904 photograph also shows an interesting use of color. In keeping with the late 19th century interest in polychromy, the house was clearly painted in a three-color palette with medium color body, light trim and dark sash. By the time of Brinton's death the house had attained its current white color. Historic photos also show that striped awnings once graced the front porch.[3]

The side yard features an open-sided gazebo with bell-shaped roof. It was constructed sometime after 2005 when the Brinton House was last considered for local historic designation.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Beulah Brinton House is significant for both its history and architecture. Beulah Brinton was the most well-known and beloved of the early residents of Bay View. She opened her home to the immigrant workers of the Bay View Rolling Mill and taught sewing, reading and other skills to several generations of residents both adults and children. Her home and grounds served as a place of recreation and as a social center for the community. Although Beulah considered her efforts to be simple Christian neighborliness, they paralleled the pioneer settlement house movement in the country, which sought to acculturate new immigrants to American ways and provide life skills for needy residents. Beulah's activities actually preceded the establishment of such famous settlement houses as the University Settlement in New York City (1887) and Hull House in Chicago (1889) and led to the creation of a formal social service center in Bay View that was named in her honor in 1924. Beulah Brinton was a well-read woman for her time and joined other activist women in lecturing on morality in politics and civic life, participating in political rallies and hosting many lectures at her home for members of various women's organizations connected with Trinity M. E. Church. The Brinton home is likewise the most intact remaining wood frame residential example of the Gothic Revival Style in Milwaukee. We know from historic photographs that the style was once popular in Milwaukee from the 1850s through the 1880s but virtually all known surviving examples have been significantly altered. The Brinton House retains its hooded windows with the elaborate brackets and spiky trim, as well as ornamental bargeboard at its gable ends. It is a contributing

[3] Milwaukee County Historical Society, Historic Photograph Collection, Bay View and Superior Street.

building in the Bay View Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 23, 1982.

VIII. HISTORY

Beulah Brinton has long been recognized as the most significant woman of Bay View. Her efforts to assist community residents over the course of thirty years earned her the respect and gratitude of generations of Bay Viewers. Her residence is still known under her name and there is to this day a social center and playground named in her honor. Born Bulah Tobey (her first name was changed later to reflect the popular spelling of the day) on December 12, 1836 in upstate Jay, New York, in a log cabin, Bay View's first lady had a hard childhood. Just short of her 18th birthday, Beulah married Warren Brinton in Westport, New York on November 27, 1854. Warren was a native of Salisbury, Connecticut who had been born there August 12, 1825. Brinton's work as a foundryman took them to a variety of locations during the first decades of their marriage including Pittsford, Vermont, and Pilot Knob, Missouri. In 1862 the family moved to Wyandotte, Michigan, the location of the Eureka Iron Works owned by Beulah's cousin Eber Brock Ward. Ward lived in nearby Detroit and it is thought that Warren Brinton secured work at the iron works. After the Civil War ended, cousin Ward decided to establish an iron works in Wisconsin, just south of the City of Milwaukee. In 1867 he purchased 114 acres and set aside 27 acres for the site of a large iron mill and platted 76.5 acres into residential lots under the name "Bay View". This was the first large industrial complex in the Milwaukee area and hundreds of workers poured into the new community. The Milwaukee Iron Company, as it was first called, was the pivotal development that led to Milwaukee's rise as an industrial city.[4]

It seems likely that Eber Brock Ward had something to do with the Brinton's move to Bay View around 1870. Warren secured work at the new mill, and although written accounts describe him as the mill superintendent, the city directories list him as a machinist (1872-1873), laborer (1878, 1880), bookkeeper (1879), timekeeper (1891) and weighmaster. Warren is most consistently listed as a weighmaster after 1881.[5]

It is interesting to note that the Milwaukee Iron Company did not build a company-controlled town like Pullman, Illinois, when it established its huge plant and set aside lots for its workers. Rather, as an incentive to keep good workers and establish a settled community, the Milwaukee Iron Company encouraged its workers to build houses although, for those who could not afford to build, the company erected numerous small cottages for families to rent. Many of these rentals were sold to workers within a decade or two. The Milwaukee Iron Company did initiate deed restrictions on its property, however, that prevented the sale, manufacture and dispensing of alcoholic substances as well as controlled other noxious enterprises within the community. Although considered paternalistic today, the restrictions were rooted in the need to have sober workers handling the blast furnaces and other dangerous functions at the factory complex. This was an attempt to curb the long tradition of alcoholism associated with industrial communities that tended to have negative consequences on both the workers and their families. In Bay

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[4] Daisy Estes Kursch, "Beulah Brinton of Bay View," Milwaukee History, Summer, 1987, pp. 38-39.
[5] Ibid.; Milwaukee City Directory, 1870-1895; Jerome A. Watrous, ed., Memoirs of Milwaukee County, Vol. II, p. 838.

View, as in other dry towns, however, saloons soon opened outside of the area controlled by the Milwaukee Iron Company.

When it came time for the Brinton's to build their house they chose two parcels located at the northeast corner of S. Superior and E. Pryor Avenue, just two blocks from the mammoth factory complex. The parcel known as 2590 S. Superior Street today (roughly 50 feet by 152 feet) actually straddled two subdivisions, the P. M. Pryor's Addition and the Wm. J. Pryor's Addition. The Milwaukee Iron Company had purchased the south part of the lot from William J. and Elizabeth M. Pryor on May 15, 1872 for $437.12 and presumably purchased the north potion of the lot from P. M. Pryor at the same time.[6] The Milwaukee Iron Company conveyed the property to Warren Brinton on December 13, 1872, the day after Beulah's 36th birthday.[7] The adjacent parcel, known as 2594-2598 S. Superior Street today (the side lot to the south of the house) was purchased by Warren Brinton from William and Elizabeth M. Pryor at a cost of $400 on May 4, 1872.[8] Interestingly, the Town of Lake Tax Rolls show that Warren Brinton (spelled "Brentan") was already paying taxes on the fractional part of 2590 S. Superior in 1871 but that the parcel had no improvements. Some improvements were begun at 2590 S. Superior in 1872, coinciding with Brinton's purchase of the land, and then a big jump in assessment from $500 to $1,000 occurs in 1873 when their house was completed. The $1,000 valuation remained constant after that year.[9]

The house that the Brinton's built was quite a bit different from the Italianate houses and workers cottages that were rapidly being built in the shadows of the giant industrial complex. As befitting his higher-level status at the rolling mill, Brinton's house was larger and more elaborate than most of those around it although a few substantial masonry houses would be built by mill officials in the vicinity. The Brinton's chose the Gothic Revival Style for the design of their house, and their house had decidedly more intricate detail than their neighbor's. The L-plan house features dramatic gable ornamentation, bracketed hoods at the second story windows at the front elevation and bracketed hoods above the first and second story windows of the north elevation, fringe-like saw tooth trim, three prominent chimneys, and a large porch extending across the north portion of the front elevation. Compared to the dirt-floored cabin the family had occupied while in Pilot Knob, Missouri, this house would have been a veritable mansion, filled with the latest conveniences. It is evident that the Brinton's always intended the side lot to remain undeveloped and it was said to have been lined with apple trees.[10]

The Brinton family would maintain the ownership of this property through a number of generations and it was here that Beulah Brinton's public life flowered. The Brinton's had five children, three of whom lived to adulthood. It is not known if daughters Beulah (b. March 4, 1864) or Addie (b. June 24, 1856) spent any time in the Bay View house. Daughter Emily (b. February 4, 1861) and son Warren Dillon (b. February 20, 1868) grew up here as well as the last child born to the Brinton's, Daisy (b. August 16, 1876).[11]

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[6] Milwaukee County Register of Deeds, Vol. 127, p.4.
[7] Ibid., Vol. 131, p. 5.
[8] Ibid., Vol. 124, p. 495.
[9] Town of Lake Tax Rolls, 1871-1876.
[10] Kursch, pp. 39-40.
[11] Ibid., p. 39.

Beulah was an intelligent, well-read, spirited woman with strong religious convictions. Her interests were far ranging. She published two novels about the Civil War, Man is Love (Lippincott and Co., 1873) and Behold the Woman (Bay View Herald Publishing Co., 1887) that carried "mystical religious themes." She and her son Warren were also publishers of the Bay View Herald in the mid-1880s.[12]

It was for her role as a community leader that Beulah is most remembered today. An interviewer from the Milwaukee Journal stated that "Like Ruskin, she pictured the working man as the hope of the world, and living as she did close to the steel mills, she saw him as a mill worker."[13] When Beulah saw that the mill workers' wives, mostly immigrants from England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales and, later, Italy, were lonely and homesick and in need of education, medical care and recreation, she opened her home to her neighbors and taught them English, cooking, sewing and child care. She even served as a midwife. Reading sessions were also an important aspect of her activities. Her own library was made available to mill workers who congregated at the Brinton home to listen to Beulah read to them. Her collection of books numbered at least 300 and circulated out of the parlor of her house as the community's first library. They eventually were housed in the Dover Street School and moved to the Llewellyn Library on E. Russell St. in 1914. Brinton's efforts received no municipal or foundation support, but were conducted informally as part of what she considered "being neighborly." Her efforts paralleled the activities offered later by settlement houses but preceded the University Settlement in New York City (1887) and Hull House in Chicago (1889).[14]

Beulah Brinton also saw recreation as an important activity for the community. She set up a tennis court in her side yard to teach Bay Viewers the sport, which was new to the U.S. in the 1870s. The tennis rackets were kept in a box on the back porch. Beulah also encouraged theater and dancing and played the piano for couples to dance.[15]

It appears that husband Warren Brinton was supportive of his wife's efforts. We do not know a lot about him. He was known as a "kind, gentle man with a warm smile hidden under his beard." He is said to have died suddenly of a heart attack while resting in his favorite armchair on December 31, 1895 at the age of 70. He left an estate of $4,000 to Beulah with son Warren as executor.[16]

Beulah continued to occupy her S. Superior Street home for some years after Warren's death. Daughter Emily had married Albert E. Pickard on August 16, 1883 and lived at least part of her married life in Bay View, running a candy store on Kinnickinnic Avenue with her husband Albert, who also worked as a clerk or insurance agent. There is reference to Beulah having been visited by A. E. Pickard from East Jordan, Michigan in 1894. For a brief period in 1898 it appears that the Piccard's lived with Beulah Brinton on Superior Street. Their son Charles also lived with grandmother Brinton in 1908.[17]

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[12] Ibid., p. 43; Milwaukee City Directory, 1886.
[13] Kursch, p. 43.
[14] Ibid., p. 42.
[15] Ibid., pp. 40-41.
[16] Ibid., pp. 39, 43; Milwaukee City Directory; Milwaukee Sentinel, 1896 January 10 page 2.
[17] Wisconsin Register of Marriages, Pre-1907. On microfiche at the Milwaukee Central Library; Milwaukee City Directory; Milwaukee Sentinel 1894 August 26 page 14.

Beulah's youngest daughter Daisy married William Worcester on August 15, 1901 and moved to Washington D.C. She visited home in 1902 and while in Milwaukee died of walking typhoid in 1902 at the age of 26.[18]

Son Warren Dillon attended the local public schools and then attended Ralston University in Washington, D.C. At the age of 16 he began work at the Illinois Steel Company (later owner of the Milwaukee Iron Company) and worked his way up to superintendent. He was sent to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for two years. He then became auditor of accounts for the International Harvester Company of Chicago in 1904. Although he resided in Chicago he considered the S. Superior Street house to be his legal residence and city directories show him listed here through 1910. Great granddaughter Daisy Estes Kursch indicated that Beulah would close up the Superior Street house for part of the year to winter in Chicago with her unmarried son. Newspaper accounts document Beulah visiting Chicago in 1895 and 1896 as well as friends and relatives in Michigan. She was in her 60's at the time.[19]

In 1907 granddaughter Mabel Pickard scandalized the family by eloping to Waukegan, Illinois with Ira Ray Estes, the grandson of Bay View pioneers Elijah and Zebiah Estes whose house once stood where South Shore Park is now located. Grandma Brinton forgave them and Mabel and Ira would come to live in the Superior Street house starting around 1910. It is about this time that Beulah relocated to Chicago to keep house for her son. The Milwaukee homestead, complete with furnishings, books and records, was left to the younger generation.[20]

Beulah Brinton's work in the community had been completed by this time. The early needs of the workers had been met and formal, municipally run social centers were in place to assist families. In 1924 the community she worked so hard for honored Beulah Brinton by naming the neighborhood's first community center after her. The Milwaukee School Board, in charge of the social centers, had determined that the oldest portion of Bay View, the neighborhood east of the Chicago North Western tracks and closest to the factory complex, was the most congested section and warranted a center where recreational and educational activities could take place. In an early example of adaptive reuse, they chose a decommissioned firehouse at 2455 S. St. Clair Street to house the center. A gymnasium, showers and classrooms were added and the building was formally dedicated on October 19, 1924. The center soon became a second home to many members of Bay view's Italian community where they studied English and homemaking and participated in the Marry Playmakers. Beulah Brinton came up from Chicago for the event and presented a flag while a number of speakers summarized her accomplishments including establishing a home for newsboys in Detroit and shipping food to the survivors of the 1871 Chicago Fire in addition to her work in the Bay View community.[21]

After a stroke in 1926, Beulah returned to Milwaukee to live with her granddaughter Mabel Pickard Estes at the S. Superior homestead. Her last years were filled with numerous visitors who came to reminisce and thank her for her assistance. One visitor recounted that Beulah gave temporary shelter to a family named Tracy whose rented flat was

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[18] Wisconsin Register of Marriages; Kursch, p. 43.
[19] Watrous, pp. 838-839; Kursch, p. 44.
[20] Kursch, p.44.
[21] Les Vollmert, Carlen Hatala, Paul Jakubovich, Bay View Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey, City of Milwaukee Department of City Development, 1990, pp. 286-288; Kursch, pp. 44-45.

damaged by a fire. Their son Spencer, then about 5 years of age, is said to have turned photos and "played havoc with the furniture." No one dreamed he would become a famous actor. Beulah Brinton died at the age of 92 on March 18, 1928 and was buried in Forest home Cemetery.[22]

Granddaughter Mabel Pickard Estes and her husband Ira Ray Estes would occupy the S. Superior house for many years. It was probably under their occupancy that some of the known changes were made to the house. A book entitled Some Homes of the Evening Wisconsin, published c. 1904 and located at the Milwaukee County Historical Society, shows a view of S. Superior Street with the Brinton house in the foreground. The original porch with its Gothic detail and chamfered posts is just visible behind a bush that obscures part of the house. Oval windows were located at the second story of the south elevation facing Pryor Avenue. Finials and pinnacles enlivened the roof. These more blatant Victorian features were removed or replaced before the time of Beulah's death and reflect the change in taste away from the more elaborate forms of the late 19th century. A new porch with classical fluted columns replaced the original, lending a touch of Colonial Revival character to the otherwise Gothic structure. In keeping with the times, a flat roofed garage was built behind the house sometime in the early 20th century. There are no permit records to document these changes.[23]

Although Daisy and Ira Estes lived in the house, Warren Dillon Brinton continued to own the property. He remained in Chicago for many years and then moved to St. Petersburg, Florida where he set up residency. Finding his health improved after spending time back in Milwaukee, Warren Dillon changed his residency back to Milwaukee as of October 30, 1944 and moved back into the family homestead on S. Superior Street. The homestead, complete with furnishings, pictures, books and household property, was left to Mabel Pickard Estes when Warren Dillon died on December 10, 1948. Mabel's children, Daisy Estes Tucker (later Kursch) and Albert W. Estes were also beneficiaries as were, Arthur Roderick Emery and Warren B. Emery, the children of a deceased niece.[24]

Mabel Pickard Estes was widowed between 1956-1960 but city directories show her at the house into the 1970s. She sold the property to Robert G. and Audrey Quinsey on July 17, 1974. The Quinsey's have been the owners ever since. They made some changes to the property during their stewardship of the house. A gabled roof was added to the rear, flat roofed garage. That structure was later demolished and the current garage was built in 1983. Permit records show that they converted one of the front bedrooms into a bathroom in 1995.[25]

Beulah Brinton's legacy has continued to the present day. The original Beulah Brinton Community House in the former fire station was demolished around 1979. A new larger facility was begun in 1980 at 2555 S. Bay Street, on the west side of the Chicago North Western tracks and just about opposite to the site of the earlier center. The facility is now called the Beulah Brinton Community Center. There was also a playground named in her honor on Wentworth Avenue but it was abandoned and the current Beulah Brinton

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[22] Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 25, p. 161; Kursch, p. 42.
[23] Some Homes of the Evening Wisconsin, c. 1904, catalogued as Album 19 at the Milwaukee County Historical Society, p. 12; Milwaukee City Directory.
[24] Deeds, Vol. 2755,p. 518.
[25] Milwaukee City Building Permits, 2590 S. Superior Street, permit number 1153426 dated November 30, 1981, permit number 483018 dated August 2, 1983, and permit number 246580 dated March 7, 1995.

Playground, constructed in 1978, is located between E. Potter, S. Bay and E. Conway Streets adjacent to the community center.

Note: Alderman Tony Zielinski originally submitted an nterim Designation nomination in 2005 in response to the pending sale of the Beulah Brinton House. There was neighborhood concern that the two lots could be sold separately and new development could occur on the side yard that factored so prominently in the life of Beulah and Warren Brinton. At the public hearing before the Historic Preservation Commission the nomination was withdrawn because the Bay View Historical Society had entered into negotiations for the purchase of the property. They were able to purchase the property. Since their acquisition, the Bay View Historical Society has used the house for its meetings, for special events, and as a repository for their collections. Repairs have been done, the front porch rebuilt to retain its early 20th century appearance, and a gazebo was constructed in the side yard.

The Gothic Revival

The Gothic Revival had many manifestations in the 19th century. It followed in the wake of the Greek Revival, a form that for many years had well represented the ideals of the new republic. Classical temple forms and fluted columns were now supplanted by irregular plans and dramatic massing and spiky Gothic detail. The Gothic Revival looked back to what was considered a more naturalistic era during the Middle Ages when buildings were ornamented with forms taken from nature and were part of their picturesque landscapes rather than dominate them. It was a shift away from the rational toward the romantic. In the wake of the religious revivals of the era, the Gothic Revival was also viewed as a more "Christian" form and a style more appropriate for churches than classical temples.

Gothic details had been used as decorative motifs in the 18th century on random structures and whimsical garden follies but serious recreations of the English rural medieval church began with the spread of the ecclesiastical movement from England to the United States in the 1830s. A rural Gothic style evolved here as well for residences and "had no real architectural model, but was loosely based on the English country cottage of the same period and popularized by a rash of very popular architectural pattern books aimed at the middle-class home-builder."[26]

English writers and designers such as A.W. Pugin and John Ruskin promoted the Gothic through publications beginning in the 1830s and the American reading public and designers took their principles to heart. American based publications likewise were popular. Alexander Jackson Davis' Rural Residences (1837) and The Architecture of Country Houses (1850) as well as Andrew Jackson Downing's Cottage Residences (1842, reprinted numerous times) were the runaway bestsellers of their generation and the images of small and large houses with Gothic ornament, set into romantic landscapes, soon spread the style from coast to coast. As late as 1878, pattern books like S.B. Reed's Village & Country Residences and How to Build Them showed examples of the Gothic Revival, a testament to the enduring popularity of the style.[27]

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[26] James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, "Gothic Revival", The Old-House Journal, November/December 1988, pp. 33-34.

[27] Ibid., 34; S. B. Reed, Village & Country Residences and How to Build Them, originally published by Orange Judd Company in 1878, reprinted by The Lyons Press, 2000, p.92.

The Gothic Revival was not a static form and residential styles in wood varied from the more elaborate masonry houses and public buildings and churches. There was even a later form, known as the High Victorian Gothic, popular in the 1870s, that took its design cues from the medieval buildings of Italy. Trained architects turned out very skillful renditions of the Gothic, based on travels abroad and publications on the historic buildings of England and Europe. Local carpenters relied on Davis and Downing and the numerous pattern books published on the subject. Many clients and carpenters alike saw the Gothic Revival not as a philosophical statement but as a series of design motifs that were attractive and more modern than the columned porticoes of the Greek Revival.

Elements of the style that are often seen in wood frame houses included steeply pitched gable roofs with an emphasis on the vertical, pointed or Tudor arches, gables with bargeboard trim showing Gothic motifs (cusped forms like trefoils and quatrefoils, collar braces, collar ties, king posts), ornamental one story porches supported by posts that have chamfered edges and with spandrels having lace-like cut-out designs, prominent corbelled chimney tops, finials, drop pendants, hood moldings over windows and doors, bracketed hoods over paired windows and vertical board and batten siding. Windows frequently held diamond paned leaded glass sash. Larger masonry houses often included square or polygonal towers with battlements and large pointed church-like windows with leaded or colored glass.

In Milwaukee we know that the Gothic Revival had arrived at least as early as 1855 in residential design when the Russell Bennett House was built in the style at 3317 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue. Other examples appear later, into the 1870s and 1880s. Historic photos indicate that the Gothic Revival manifested itself mostly as ornamentation on frame L-plan houses and small cottages where spiky and curvilinear detail was applied to gables, window hoods, trim and porches. Over time, the lack of skilled carpenters to replace damaged features as well as changing taste and the efforts to clad houses in substitute siding, have resulted in the loss of virtually all examples in Milwaukee.

The Beulah Brinton House is an excellent example of the Gothic Revival and our most intact frame example of the style. Despite the Classical Revival porch that was added in the early 20th century, the Brinton Hose still reads as Gothic. While using traditional horizontal clapboard siding and an L-Plan form, the house was dressed up with elaborate bargeboards, elaborate bracketed hoods over windows, spiky trim, and chimneys elaborated with corbelled tops. It seems unlikely that the house was architect designed since that information would have been well publicized over the past century. It is more likely that the house was built by one or more of the many talented carpenters who poured into Bay View following the establishment of the Milwaukee Iron Company's great rolling mill complex. We will never know whether the Gothic Revival just an attractive form for the Brinton's or if they choose it out of associations connected to their deep religious conviction.

SOURCES

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IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Beulah Brinton House at 2590 and 2594-2598 S. Superior Street be given permanent historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-3, e-5 and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320.21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

e-3. Is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Milwaukee.

Rationale: Beulah Brinton (1836-1928) remains the first lady of Bay View. Her tireless service to several generations of community residents included education and medical care as well as instruction in sewing, childcare, cooking and reading, all done in her home on S.

Superior Street. She mobilized neighbors to assist the survivors of the 1871 Chicago fire, helped her local church and played piano for the residents so that they could enjoy some culture and recreation. Beulah Brinton even introduced the new game of tennis to the community with a court set up in her side yard. Her personal library became the nucleus of Bay View's first lending library. Her efforts brought culture, education and needed skills as well as an identity to a burgeoning factory town that later became its own village and then became part of the City of Milwaukee. Perhaps the words of John Gurda, eminent Milwaukee Historian and Bay View resident sums up Beulah the best: [Beulah's activities] "were clearly not the tasks that the average business executive's wife tackled in the 1800s – or in any century, for that matter. But Beulah was hardly an average executive's wife. She saw herself as a representative type of "new woman" working to bring forth a "new world" from the squalor of the old."

e-5. Its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

Rationale: The Beulah Brinton is Milwaukee's best and most intact remaining wood frame residential example of the Gothic Revival. The house retains all the hallmarks of the style including its ornamental bargeboard, decorative hoods above windows and spiky, sawn ornament that literally drips from the house.

e-9. Its unique location as a singular physical characteristic which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city of Milwaukee.

Rationale: Sited at a prominent corner at the intersection of S. Superior Street and E. Pryor Avenue, the Beulah Brinton House is one of the most visible residences in Bay View. The side yard allows full appreciation of the house's style and character and gives it an estate like quality that is missing from other properties in the Bay View neighborhood.

X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the permanent historic designation of the Beulah Brinton House. The intent of the commission is to preserve the historic, existing exterior features of the building and guide any changes and restorations that might be done on the exterior.

Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. Any exterior changes including repair of ornamental trim but exclusive of routine painting will require a certificate of appropriateness. Most certificates are issued on a staff-approved basis and only major new construction or alteration requests typically will go before

the Historic Preservation commission. The Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. No changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, the roofline or its pitch. The installation of skylights where they would be visible from the street are not permitted as they would have a negative impact on the building. Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible at all from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. If the building gets re-roofed, consultation with historic preservation staff is required to review and approve the new roofing material, flashing, and gutters. The minimum standard for re-roofing is a 3-tab asphalt shingle. Very light colors or very dark colors such as black are not permitted. Architectural shingles are permitted. Proposed materials for re-roofing will be considered on a case-by-case basis as some of the products are not compatible with Victorian-era houses. Any new gutters should be of the half-round style as they function and look best on a house with crown moldings on the eaves. Should a satellite dish be installed it should be placed where it is not visible from the street. Removal of the rooftop chimneys are not allowed as they are a dominant feature of the design of the house. No rooftop construction or addition is allowed, as this would have a negative impact on the historic character and proportions of the building. The construction of other rooftop features requires review by Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness. Retain ornamental ridge caps when re-roofing.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

a. Unpainted brick or stone must not be painted or covered. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, etc.) is not allowed. No painting of the brick foundation is permitted.

b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width and mortar strength. See the masonry chapters in the books, As Good As New or Good For Business for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any repointing.

c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (baking soda, nut shells, dry ice, etc.) on limestone, terra cotta, or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. The use of accepted chemical products to clean masonry is allowed and a test panel is required before general commencement of the work. Work should

be done by experienced individuals as the chemical cleaning process can have a negative impact on masonry. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before and cleaning would begin.

d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. The use of EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems) which is synthetic stucco is not permitted. Avoid using other new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry.

2. Wood/Metal

a. Retain original material, whenever possible. The wood cladding and decorative details are character defining features of the house. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance such as the front porch, three-sided bay, bargeboard trim, bracketed window hoods, smaller window hoods, and the saw tooth trim at the hoods and bay window.

b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated elements is encouraged rather than complete removal and replication. Structural wood epoxies are suggested for the lasting repair of damaged or decayed areas of wood and wood trim. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and material of the originals, including the species of wood.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings and original doors and windows within those openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore them to the original condition. Do not make additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Do not change the size or configuration of the original window panes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. The use of structural wood epoxies is strongly encouraged to repair any minor damage or decay to wood windows.

2. Respect the building’s stylistic period. In the event any windows need to be replaced, consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to determine appropriate glazing patterns. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. New windows must be made of wood. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal

sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. Any changes will require a Certificate of Appropriateness and appropriate wood windows.

Any original windows on the building must be retained and repaired if at all possible. Vinyl, vinyl clad, metal, and metal-clad or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted. Wood combination/storm screen units or fixed storm windows that fit the shape of the original opening are permitted. Any replacement doors must be appropriate to the historic period of the building. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. If permitted, the doors or grates shall be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for any security doors or window guards.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and appearance, and wood species that is decay resistant. Given the level of detailing on the building, the intricate saw tooth trim, brackets with large pendants, bargeboard trim, etc., it is recommended that existing trim be repaired with epoxies or consolidants or by inserting matching species of wood rather than entirely removed and replicated. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before repairs are undertaken as there is often misunderstanding as to what constitutes a repair.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the west (front), north, or south elevations, as this would destroy the character defining features of the building. Any other addition requires the approval of the Commission. Ideally an addition should either compliment or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of window size and placement, building height, roof configuration, scale, design, color, and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations or is visible from the public right of way. Additions must be smaller than the house and not obscure the historic house.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted. The lawn sign existing at the time of this nomination can remain. Any new sign, or any additional signage or lighting (on the building, in the landscape) will require approval from the Historic Preservation Commission.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building if visible from the public right of way. Should a fence be considered in the future examples of appropriate fencing can be found in As Good As New and Living With History. No retaining wall is permitted along the property. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before starting any work that would involve the landscape features, parking, walkways, or driveway.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. No principal dwelling shall be constructed on the side yard, otherwise known as 2594-2598 S. Superior Street. This parcel played a significant role in the history of the community and served as a recreational area and gathering spot for residents of the Bay View community. It is important for the interpretation of the property as it functioned during Beulah Brinton's lifetime. This section does allow for the recreation of the original tennis court on the site or the construction of a secondary outbuilding such as a shed, summer house, and the like, located at the rear or east end of the grounds, near the alley. The garage behind 2590 S. Superior Street was built in 1983 and has no architectural or historic significance. It may be removed and replaced with a new accessory structure that would be compatible with the house.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the historic building from the street as a freestanding structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the historic building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the historic building as a freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and receded from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic building if they are in close proximity to it.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the building should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained. Non-similar new materials not appropriate would be such products as wood-grained cement board siding, metal cladding,

metal panels, panels with faux wood grain and other patterns, and EIFS among others.

I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 11(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair. This would generally be in the case of a major fire or natural catastrophe.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

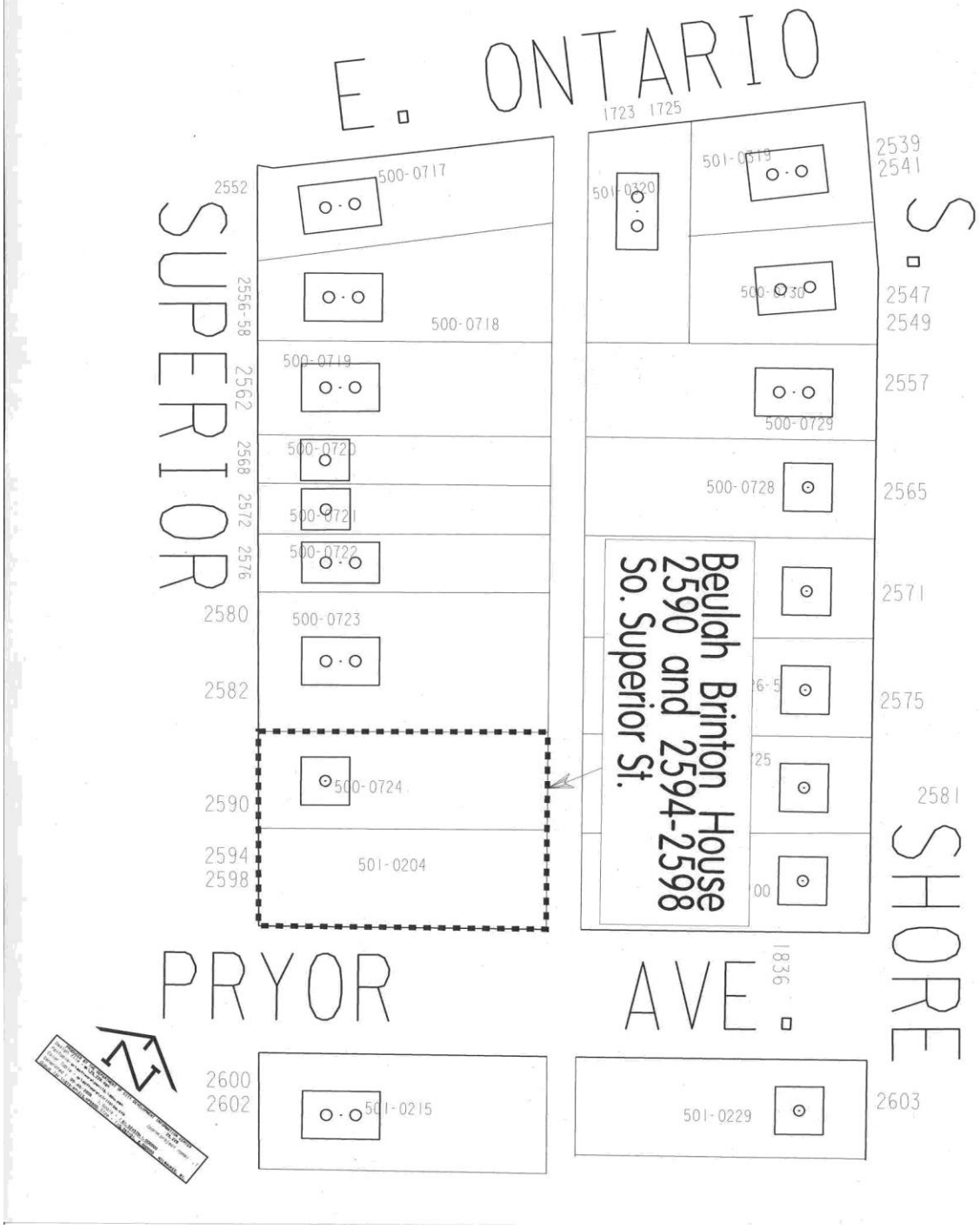
Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.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PRYOR AVE.
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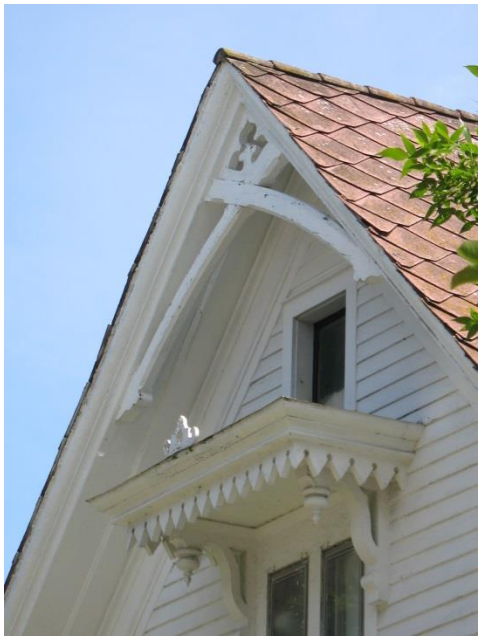

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Photos of Beulah Brinton c. 1925 Rear addition at arrow was location where Beulah placed her tennis rackets. This addition is no longer extant. Courtesy John Ebersol.