

HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDY REPORT

ISAAC LEISTER HOUSE

(Written Summer, 1983)

I. NAME

Historic: Isaac Leister House

Common: Same

II. LOCATION

11142 West Bradley Road

Legal Property Description: Lands in the SE ¼ SEC 7-8-21, COM S L1 & 962.04'e OF SW COR OF SD ¼ SEC-TH E 179.65'-TH N 2 DEG 36 MIN 46 SEC E 250.26' – TH W 179.65'-TH S 2DEG 36 MIN 46 SEC W 250.26' TO BEG EXC S 24/75' FOR ST

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

Willard J. Langenohl
11142 West Bradley Road
Milwaukee, WI 53224

V. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Isaac Leister House is a Greek Revival farmhouse that was built about 1855. Located on Milwaukee's far northwest side in the former Town of Granville, it was built for the original 80 acre Leister farm. In 1956, almost 76 acres of the farm were sold to the Milwaukee County Park System and is now part of Dretzka Park Golf Course. The Leister House currently occupies less than one acre of the original farm. The surrounding area is still largely rural in character with small-scale crop and truck farming that is interspersed with low-density residential development.

The Leister House is a rectangular block that measures 24 feet wide by 32 feet long. It is 2-1/2 stories high with a gable roof and sets on a foundation of massive boulders that is underlain with natural deposits of gravel. The walls are of solid limestone construction laid in random ashlar. They measure 30 inches thick at the basement and taper for a 14-inch thickness at the attic. The first and second floors average 20 inches in thickness. The roof is framed with hand-hewn oak timbers of mortise and tenon construction. A distinctive feature of the Leister House is the classical oak entablature. It consists of a wide, plain architrave and frieze that is topped by a projecting, beveled cornice. The entablature extends the full length of the house on both the front and rear with returns at the gable ends suggests the temple-

front pediment that was commonly used in more formal interpretations of the Greek Revival style.

There have been numerous alterations to the Leister House, but it has retained its integrity of form and appearance. In 1944, when the house was purchased by its present owner, a rear wing that had been used as a summer kitchen was removed. This addition, built at the turn of the century, was 1-1/2 stores high with a gable roof and of balloon, wood frame construction. It extended from the north elevation and as wide as the full length of the original house to form a "T" plan. It was covered with clapboards and the east elevation was an open veranda like porch with the wall surface covered with stucco. Also in 1944, the end interior chimneys were removed and a new exterior one was built on the east elevation.

In the 1950's the house underwent major renovations. Sometime in the 1870's or 1880's an Italianate style porch was added as well as the six over six sash were removed and replaced with two over two sash on the south and west elevations. The porch and the entire sash were removed in the 1950's and the entrance was rebuilt with Federal style moldings and the windows were replaced with modern six over six wooden sash and aluminum storm window combinations that resemble the original in appearance. Also added to the windows were fake Colonial style shutters. The original oak sills and pedimented lintels were removed because of rot and replaced with cast concrete members. Originally all of the wall surfaces were covered with plaster and scored to give the appearance of rusticated stonework. This was removed and the actual random, ashlar limestone was exposed.

VI. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Date Built: c.1855

Architect/Builder: Unknown

The Isaac Leister House is a significant example of Greek Revival architecture as manifest in a Wisconsin pioneer farmhouse. When compared to those examples cited in Richard W.E. Perrins', *Historic Wisconsin Building: A survey in Pioneer Architecture 1835-1870*, the Leister House is of statewide notoriety for its architectural quality. This well preserved residence not only clearly exemplifies the style, but is also demonstrative of pioneer construction methods and uses of materials. The Leister House is one of the few remaining Greek Revival houses extant in the city and is possibly the only structure of solid limestone construction remaining from the period. Historically, the house is important for its association with Isaac Leister. He was one of the original settlers of the Town of Grandville and the farm remained in his family until 1944 when it was sold to the present owner.

VII. HISTORY

Isaac Leister was a native of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania where he was born in 1817. He came to the Wisconsin territory in 1839 with his brother, Charles. They purchased in that year a 160-acre quarter section in the Town of Granville at what is now the northwest corner of West Bradley Road and Highway 100. Charles farmed the east half and Isaac the west half. Originally, Isaac constructed what was probably a log house. This is evidenced by the foundation stones that remain at the site. The current house was built about 1855 and remained in the Leister family until 1944 when Walter Leister, Isaac's grandson, sold the house to its present owner, Willard J. Langenohl.

VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Isaac Leister House be designated a historic structure in accordance with the provisions of Section 2-335 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances. This recommendation is based on the building's significance as a contributing example to the state's pioneer architecture and for its historical association with Isaac Leister, an early Milwaukee County pioneer settler.

IX. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principle concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the Isaac Leister House. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

2. Wood

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features such as the cornice and entablature. This is an

essential part of the building's character and appearance that must be retained.

- b. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings on all elevations. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, lintels, sills, doors and hardware except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash.
2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials like glass block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not in proportion to the openings or that are historically out of the character with the building. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

D. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

There shall be no changes to the existing porches, trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. The historic architectural fabric includes primarily the full oak entablature and cornice returns found on the front and back of the house. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design and material.

E. Additions

The south, east and west elevations are integral to the structure's architectural significance. No additions may be made to these elevations. Additions to the north elevation require the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon all elevations.