Milton Hotel, Milton, Wisconsin

Volume 27, Issue 1 March 2013

# Wisconsin Landmarks Newsletter

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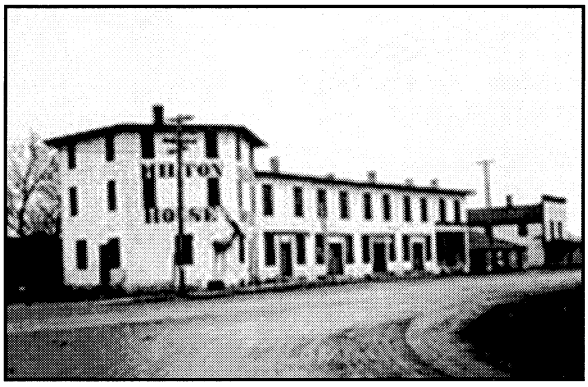
Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions

## 2013 Spring Conference

The annual Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions' Spring Conference will be held April 27, 2013 at the Milton House in Milton.



In 1838, Joseph Goodrich filed a claim for the land that was to become the city of Milton. He started construction of the Milton House in 1844. Goodrich designed a hexagonal tower and a long wing that extended from it; creating arguably the first concrete building in the United States. He constructed it with a mixture of sand, lime cement and gravel in a wet mixture, which he poured into wooden forms to create a fireproof material. The Milton House was the source and inspiration for Orson Squire Fowler's The Octagon House: A Home for All, which sparked the octagon fad of the mid-nineteenth century.

Joseph Goodrich, a staunch abolitionist and member of the Seventh Day Baptist Church. Goodrich also constructed a dirt tunnel between the inn and the 1837 log cabin to the rear of the inn. Goodrich secretly harbored runaway slaves in the cellar of the Milton House using the tunnel as the exit and entrance to the cellar. Here he and his family would provide assistance to them. Goodrich and his family also conducted freedom seekers to other stops as they continued the journey toward the Great Lakes and on to Canada.

The House is owned and operated by the Milton Historical Society. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972 and was granted National Historic Landmark status in 1998. It is also a Recognized Station on the Underground Railroad, by the National Park Service: National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom

## VA "Soldiers Home" Named as National Treasure

The cluster of historic buildings known as the "Soldiers Home" located on the campus of Milwaukee's Clement Zablocki VA Medical Center has been named a National Treasure by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. National Treasures are irreplaceable and threatened places where the National Trust is making a significant investment of resources to protect these places, promote their history and significance and engage local preservationists to help advance the cause of preservation nationally. To help raise awareness of these buildings and the threats they face, and encourage the public to get involved in the effort to preserve them, the National Trust and its partners are launching a series of new initiatives.

continued on page 3

Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions

## WAHPC Board

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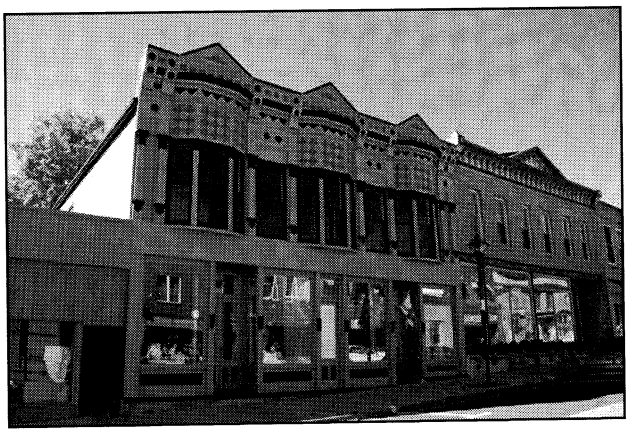
# Metal Mesker Façade Gets Makeover

*from Wisconsin Trails*

Ried Knapp is proud that the two-story building he meticulously restored this year in Mineral Point is a "feast for the eye." Painted in earth tones to highlight the 1891 facade's intricate design that includes medallions and hanging wreath patterns, the building has captured the attention of passersby since it was completed earlier this year.



When it comes to the eye-catching ornamentation that covers the front of the building, most people don't even realize what they're looking at. Designed to look like the carved wood, stone or sculpted terracotta building facades that were in vogue in big cities in the late 1880s, Knapp's facade consists of thin panels of pressed metal known as Mesker house or storefronts. Even among architectural historians who know the history of these metal buildings, few are aware of how they were sold. All fronts were ordered from catalogs mailed by Mesker factories in Missouri and Indiana.

Mesker storefronts were erected in every state between 1880 and 1910, says Darius Bryjka, an expert on Meskers, who is a consultant for historic preservation projects and has a degree in architectural studies from the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign. Some Meskers were new construction, but many were simply put over the front of an older wooden building.

Many remaining Mesker buildings have been remodeled, with decorative Mesker columns and window treatments on the first floor often eliminated or covered. As a result, many cornices or window hoods remain on the second floor of the buildings, without evidence of what originally existed at street level. Even without such evidence, a Mesker is an architecturally interesting and significant building and is often the most noticeable one on a block.

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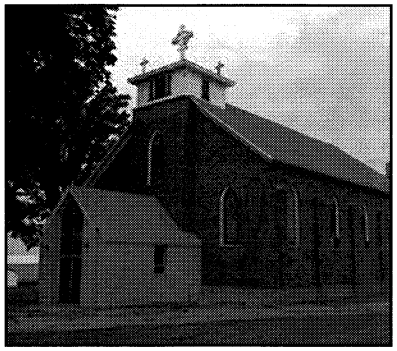
# Sustainability Grant Awarded to Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation

*from Door County InStyle Magazine*



The Door County Community Foundation recently presented a Sustainability Grant to the Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation. The grant is part of an ongoing effort to restore St. Mary of the Snows, a church that was founded in 1860. The St. Mary of the Snows Church has been rechristened as the Belgian Heritage Center. This grant of $1,500 is being used to help convert the sacristy of the former church into a community kitchen.

St. Mary of the Snows was where Abbot Bernard Pennings first served after arriving in the United States. Pennings would later go on to found St. Norbert College in DePere, Wisconsin.

The Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation acquired the former St. Mary of the Snows Church building in August 2010 from the Catholic Diocese of Green Bay. The Church is the cornerstone of the Namur National Landmark Historic District in Door County which was designated in 1989

The Namur Belgian Heritage Foundation is dedicated to the preservation of Door County's unique Belgian-American culture and history in Northeast Wisconsin.

This Sustainability Grant is funded out of the Community Foundation's Historic Preservation Fund and the Clifford and Clara Herlache Heritage Foundation.

*VA "Soldiers Home* continued

To underscore the large number of people positively affected by the Soldiers Home over the years, the coalition has launched the #MySoldiersHome campaign. This is an online effort to capture stories, photos and other remembrances of the Soldiers Home to help raise awareness of the district in the community and demonstrate the impact it has had and continues to have on veterans and their families.

Also, beginning in 2013, members of the public will be able to experience the Soldiers Home for themselves through self-guided walking tours offered by the National Trust and the Milwaukee Preservation Alliance. The walking tours will give the public its first opportunity in many years to experience the Soldiers Home and see its historic buildings up close.

More information on all of these initiatives can be found at www.SavetheSoldiersHome.com.

# Changes Made to Milwaukee's Historic Preservation Ordinance

*From JS online*

Changes in how Milwaukee buildings are designated as historic, including a provision to allow economic hardship claims to try to avoid preservation work, were unanimously approved in December 2012 by the Common Council.

The city preservation ordinance says buildings designated as historic can't be demolished or have their exteriors changed without approval from the Historic Preservation Commission. Any denials by the commission can be overturned by a two-thirds council vote. The revised ordinance adds requirements for the commission and its staff to take various actions within specific time frames, and provides more details on appeal procedures.

Also, the ordinance now includes a provision allowing property owners to claim economic hardship to avoid preservation requirements. It contains a specific hardship rule, and requires owners to provide information about the building's value, income and other business aspects.

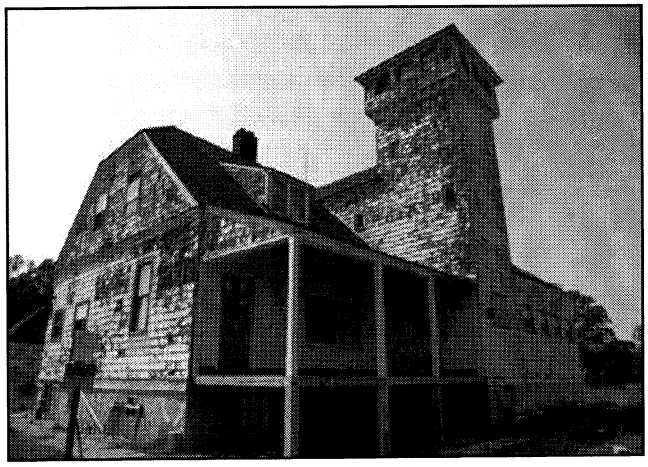
Other proposed changes include providing city building inspectors with enforcement powers to prevent owners of historic properties from allowing them to deteriorate to the point where they can no longer be preserved. Also, developers seeking to demolish a historic building to build a new structure must prove they have the financial resources to build that new building

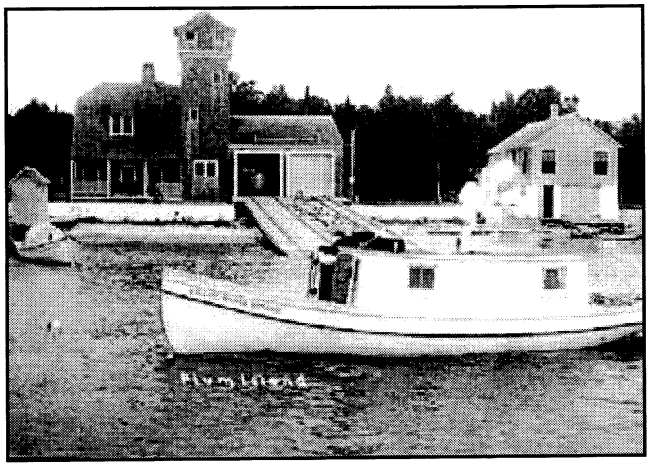
The changes were sponsored by Alderman Bob Bauman, a preservation commission member, and Alderman Terry Witkowski. They called it a compromise, with Bauman saying the economic hardship provision is "a bitter pill" for preservationists because it opens the door for more attempts to avoid preserving historic structures.

The preservation ordinance was part of last year's debate over whether some 19th-century buildings should be demolished to make way for a 200-room Marriott hotel near the southwest corner of E. Wisconsin Ave. and N. Milwaukee St.

# Priorities Discussed for Plum and Pilot Islands

*by Tim Sweet*





The Friends of Plum and Pilot Islands (FOPPI) met with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) in Horicon and via teleconference on December 8, 2012 to discuss setting priorities for the Green Bay National Wildlife Refuge located in northern Door County, Wisconsin. These two groups formed a partnership in 2007 when jurisdiction of Plum and Pilot Islands was transferred from the Coast Guard to USFWS.

Plum Island's historic 1896 life-saving station is in need of attention. A contractor has stabilized the front porch of the building earlier this fall. The restoration of the porch will be finished in the spring of 2013. Money has been set aside to replace the windows in the watchtower of the unique Duluth-style station, the only one remaining on the Great Lakes. It was further decided to restore the interior and exterior of the structure's watch room from the decorative cornices to the tip of its roof. It is hoped this project will continue to draw attention to the importance of preserving the rich maritime history of both Plum and Pilot Islands. A fund-raising effort needs to be directed at the rest of the life-saving station's roof in order to keep the building protected from the elements. 1929 has been selected as the period of interpretation for this building.

Materials have been purchased for the stabilization of the Pilot Island Fog Signal Building. Its roof has completely collapsed. FOPPI will seek to hire a contractor willing to remove the collapsed debris and construct bracing to support the walls from crumbling, thus buying time until more money can be raised to rebuild the roof.

All of the buildings on Plum and Pilot Islands are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. That means stabilization and restoration work planned must first receive approval from the State Historic Preservation Officer in order to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's standards for the rehabilitation of historic buildings.

FOPPI has submitted a grant application to the Wisconsin Coastal Management Program for an evaluation of the Plum Island boathouse pilings, pier, walkway, and breakwater. An announcement is expected in April of 2013 as to whether or not the application was approved. This is a step toward ensuring the safety of volunteers and other visitors to Plum Island. Public access to this island is expected following the approval of a 15-year management plan currently being reviewed in Washington, D.C.

More work is on tap for Plum Island's trails during the summer of 2013. Another priority is the addition of an outdoor bathroom facility. If you would like to get involved with the Friends group, please visit: www.plumandpilot.org or https://www.facebook.com/plumandpilot.

# 2013 Spring Conference

Milton House, Milton, WI

Presented by the Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions
with support from the Wisconsin Trust for Historic Preservation

Saturday, April 27, 2013

## Agenda

Registration ..... 8:30 – 9:00

(Coffee, Tea, refreshments)

Welcome and Introductions ..... 9:00 – 9:15

*Bill Weinshrott, President, Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions*

What's Happening in Milton with Their Preservation Program..... 9:15 – 9:45

*Cori Olson, Director, Milton House*

Update on Historic Resources Survey of Milton now underway

*Carol Cartwright, Historic Resources Consultant*

The Ins and Outs of Designating Local Historic Properties..... 9:45-10:30

*A short primer on how and when to locally landmark a single property or historic district. Rick Bernstein, Field Services Representative, Wisconsin Historical Society*

Break ..... 10:30 – 11:00

Legal Strategies for Historic Preservation Commissions .....11:00-noon

*Chip Brown, Local Government Assistance Coordinator, Wisconsin Historical Society*

Lunch..... Noon

*WAHPC business meeting including elections*

*Presentation of Historic Preservation Excellence Award*

Regional Roundtable .....1:00 – 2:00

Tours..... 2:00

*(Milton House, Northleaf Winery)*

# 2013 Spring Conference Registration

Registration Deadline: April 20, 2013

name _____

commission _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____

phone _____

email _____

## Fee:

- ☐ Members: $40
- ☐ Non-members: $50
- ☐ Madison residents: $30

$10 fee will be added for on-site registration.

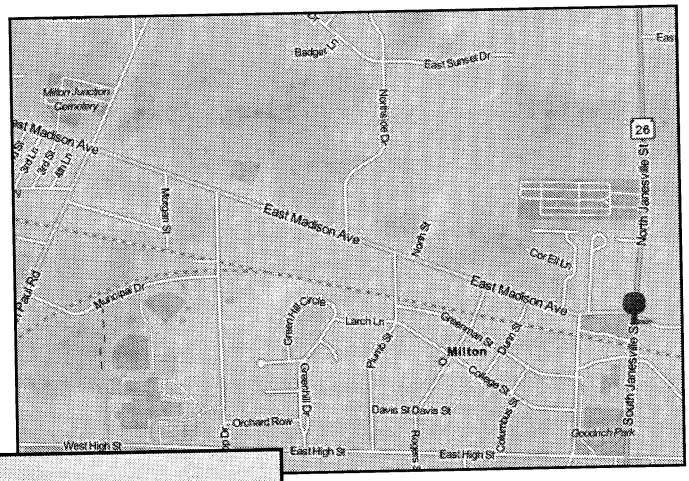
## A Buffet lunch has been arranged.

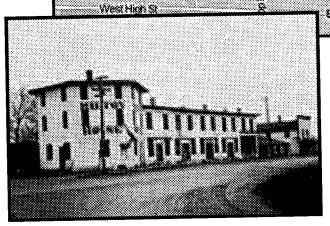
☐ Check here if you would prefer vegetarian plate.

Fee includes morning refreshments and lunch:

**Send this form & check payable to WAHPC to:**

WAHPC, PO Box 166, Winneconne, WI 5498



18 S. Janesville St.
Milton, WI 53563

(608) 868-7772
miltonhouse@miltonhouse.org

# It's Time to Renew for 2013.

If you are interested in History it's time to take the next step and become a member of Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions. Join a vibrant community that enjoys, and takes pride in Wisconsin history. Help to ensure that we continue to support preservation for generations to come.

Please check one: ☐ Commission membership $40.00
Please include a copy of commission members name, address, phone and e-mails.

☐ Individuals and Groups $25.00

Send this form with check payable to WAHPC to:
WAHPC, PO Box 166, Winneconne, WI 54986

2013 Membership Form

commission name _____

contact person name _____

address _____

city _____ state _____ zip _____

phone _____

email _____

web address _____

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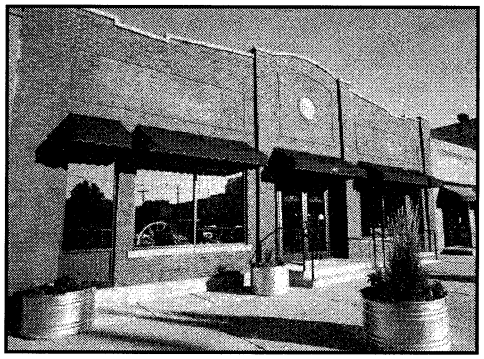
# Historic Preservation Excellence Award



Frey Carriage Company, Todd Frey, recipient of the 2011 Historic Preservation Excellence Award

The Wisconsin Association of Historic Preservation Commissions is accepting nominations for this year's Historic Preservation Excellence Award. Nominations can be for individuals, owners of locally designated landmarks or any notable effort or project related to your commission.

Nominee name _____

Nominee address _____

Reason for nomination: _____

Historic property name and background (as it applies)

_____

_____

_____

_____

Preservation achievement _____

Submit form with pictures by April 10, 2012 to:
WAHPC, PO Box 166, Winneconne, WI 54986

Wisconsin Association of
Historic Preservation Commissions
PO Box 166, Winneconne, WI 54986

Contributors
Tim Sweet and Kathy Grace

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## Have a Story to Tell?

Have a story or historical tips you'd like to share? Put it in Wisconsin Landmarks. We are always looking for contributions or ideas for stories from our readers. Contact Kathy Grace at 920-582-3256 or by e-mail at gendiva@charter.net.

Wisconsin Landmarks Newsletter is published quarterly to inform and update local Historic Commissions and Indivdiuals on new historic information and up coming programs.

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# Upcoming Events of Interest

## Life After Vinyl Siding

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation workshop

When: 03/07/13 @ 7:00pm
Cost: $10
Call: 441-8864
Web: www.madisonpreservation.org

Location: Gates of Heaven Synagogue in James Madison Park.

Preservation architect Elizabeth Cwik will talk about safely removing worn and deteriorated synthetic siding materials, and what comes next. She'll discuss treatment options for newly exposed original siding, options for replacement of original materials, and how to deal with unexpected surprises.

## Exterior Finishing & Painting

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation workshop

When: 04/04/13 @ 7:00pm
Cost: $10
Call: 441-8864
Web: www.madisonpreservation.org

Location: Gates of Heaven Synagogue in James Madison Park.

Habitual building restorer and old-building expert John Martens will discuss all aspects of exterior refinishing, including lead paint abatement, repair of exterior materials, products and application, and the key to a durable paint job - preparation.

## 2013 Local History and Historic Preservation Conference

Friday, October 11 – Saturday, October 12, 2013

Location: Hotel Mead, Wisconsin Rapids