

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2006 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS



Polo Resto, Voyageur Park, De Pere

In 1925 on the north side of De Pere, Charles Hall built one of the first filling stations between De Pere and Green Bay, and named it “C-Hall 4 Service”. In an effort to catch the attention of the passing motorist, gas station from this era were designed in a rather exotic fashion that resembled pagodas or English cottages. Soon afterwards, he added another destination for motorists when he built a sandwich and soda shop next door. Starting in 1931, the field across the street (on the site of what is now St. Norbert College’s Minihan Field) became the De Pere Polo Field, and he decided to build some cabins and a pasture next to and behind the sandwich shop to accommodate the players and their horses. His complex of buildings soon came to be affectionately known as the “Polo Resto”

In the 1950s or 60s, ownership and use changed, and the buildings eventually became the Village Gate Shopping Center, which more recently included a bird feeder store (the old gas station), a flower shop (the old sandwich and soda shop), and an antique store. In 2004, the property was sold and the buildings were slated for demolition, and any attempt to save the Polo Resto buildings would require that they be moved. While moving the sandwich shop would have been a major project, it was felt that a relocation and restoration of the smaller gas station could be accomplished, and a drive was mounted to save this part of the Polo Resto. Concerned citizens, with the cooperation of the De Pere Historical Society, initiated a campaign to move the building down the hill to Voyageur Park along the Fox River Recreation Trail. The former gas station, restored to include original gas pumps from that era, now serves as a trail rest stop and information center run by the De Pere Historical Society.



Lyga Residence, 602 South Huron Street, De Pere

In 2002, newlyweds Chris and Teri Lyga set out to find themselves a new home in a nice neighborhood, hoping to find an affordable Victorian style house with many original features still intact. While it was obvious that the 100 year old house on South Huron needed work, they felt that they had found their home. Chris has meticulously researched the history of the house, uncovering nearly a dozen owners over the years. Significant changes had been made over the years, including removal of the covered front porch, and a conversion to a two-family dwelling in 1949 and a conversion back to a single family in the 1980s. Many details survived, however, including hardwood maple floors downstairs and simple wide plank flooring upstairs, leaded and etched glass windows, an ornate paneled front door with intricate scrollwork, and the original claw-foot bathtub. Exterior renovation work has included replacement of a stairs, repainting the porches and trim, and complementary landscaping. The to-do list is still long, but they feel that the efforts required to bring the house closer to its Victorian beginnings has been worth the time, effort, and investment.



Johnson Residence, 924 Emilie Street, Green Bay

In 2003, Teri Johnson went to an estate sale on Emilie Street. Oblivious to all the possessions on the tables and the floors, Teri’s attention was directed upwards at the house’s architectural features and solid construction. Having restored several houses in the Milwaukee area, she knew exactly what she and her husband Jonathon would be looking for in their next project/home. She called him on the phone and proclaimed “John, it’s straight and really has potential!”. Thus began a labor of love as they started to reclaim and restore the house. Designed in the 1920s by local architect Henry Foeller, the house was built by his brother Joe Foeller to be his own residence. But soon after completion, Joe sold it to Dr. W.C. Kelly and his wife, whose family occupied the house until just recently.

John’s first task was to obtain a copy of the original Foeller design drawings that were still in the archives of Berners-Schober Associates Inc. (the descendent company of Foeller’s original firm). With the original design in hand, John and Teri identified and preserved the original features of the house. The kitchen and bathroom were completely gutted so that heavily corroded piping could be replaced with new free-flowing copper. The bathroom was restored to its original layout, while the kitchen was modernized in a style in keeping with that of the house. The rest of the house was repainted inside and out, with dated interior wallpaper replaced with a fresh paint scheme. Over the years, the width of the side alley had “expanded” to within inches of the house, and the backyard had become overflow parking for the neighbors. John located and identified the legal limits and easements of the lot, and reclaimed and restored the back and side yards to once again accent the house. The residence is once again an attractive jewel in the Astor Neighborhood.