

BROWN COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY 2009 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARDS



Riverside Ballroom, 1560 Main Street, Green Bay

The Riverside Ballroom has been an entertainment fixture on the east side of Green Bay since it was built in 1935. The Riverside has heard all the big band sounds, including Lawrence Welk, Sammy Kaye, Jimmy Dorsey, and Glenn Miller, and saw one of the last performances of Buddy Holly before he died the next evening in the infamous plane crash (“the day the music died”). Replacing a ballroom built in 1929 and destroyed by fire, the new Riverside was touted as “the finest and best equipped ballroom in America”. The hall lost much of its grandeur in the 50s and 60s until it was purchased by John and Anne Kafka, who did extensive restoration and renovation. Owner Ken Tedford, who joined the Kafka family as a dishwasher and was later the long time head chef, recently purchased the Riverside and looks to maintain the traditions of this Green Bay landmark.



St. John the Evangelist Parish Hall, 411 St. John Street, Green Bay

The St. John’s School was built in 1932 to replace the previous dilapidated building that was condemned and demolished. After the school was closed in 1977, the building served as a home for religious education, a Multi-Cultural Center, and a Montessori school. By 2007, the building piping was nearly unserviceable and the heating plant was limping along. Around the same time, they opened the gymnasium to area homeless people. While this act of Christian kindness surprisingly received mixed political reactions, it also generated an upwelling of community support and donations, to the point where renovation of the building was made feasible. The roof, windows, mechanical piping, and electrical wiring were all replaced. Over the years, the west wall had settled 4”, resulting in cracked walls and sloped floors. The wall was jacked up and stabilized, and the floors leveled. The building has now been preserved to foster the St. John’s mission and serve the Green Bay community.



Bellin Building, 130 East Walnut Street, Green Bay

Dr. Julius Bellin built his seven story office building in 1915 as a rental space for physicians, dentists, and other medical professionals. In 1924, he added the eighth story and a penthouse to surpass the height of the Minahan-McCormick Building constructed across the street. Over the years, its landmark tenants included WHBY (the first radio station north of Chicago) and The National Cheese Exchange, which set cheese prices for nearly the entire country. As the neighborhood surrounding the building transitioned to an entertainment district, the new owners decided that the Bellin Building could play a role. The small offices on the first and second floors were relocated, and much of those spaces were opened up to create a modern coffee shop and an upscale bar on the first floor, with a grand staircase leading up to a second floor restaurant. The building exterior has been cleaned and restored, and the exterior lighting once again identifies the Bellin Building as a high profile address.



Joannes House, 902 South Madison Street, Green Bay

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the four Joannes brothers found success in the Green Bay wholesale grocery business, and that continuing prosperity enabled the brothers and their children to build several of the landmark homes in the Astor Neighborhood. In 1900, Mitchell Joannes built his impressive red brick mansion that was designed by renowned local architect Henry Foeller. In 1917, he provided the house with an apartment for his daughter Arleen and her husband Dr. McCarey, and the family continued to live there until 1956. Later, the upstairs ballroom was also turned into an apartment. Recently, Jim Neceda, Joe Aprile, Rick Koenig, and Paul Ebel purchased the home and started restorations back to a single family residence. They replaced the roof and rotted trim, updated the wiring and HVAC, and converted the upstairs apartment back into a family space accessible from the main stairs. The house has been beautifully preserved as an Astor Neighborhood showpiece.



Celestine Jeffreys

By the late 1860s, the buildings of the decommissioned Fort Howard were being moved or demolished to clear for the railroad. Several were moved into the surrounding neighborhood, including the Guard House to 410 Bond Street as the VandenBrook family’s residence. By December 2008, the house was abandoned, dilapidated, and subject to a city Raze or Repair Order. While the absentee landlord, bank, and city argued over mortgage and tax arrears, historical groups felt helpless as the building seemingly neared demolition. Understanding early on the historical importance of the building, Alderwoman Celestine Jeffreys coordinated with the city, On Broadway, the Brown County Historical Society, and Heritage Hill to ensure that the building would survive until a solution was found, and then helped secure city funding for its December 2009 move to Heritage Hill. The Guardhouse is now safe and secure, awaiting a historic restoration that will help tell the rich story of Fort Howard.