

Footsteps of La Crosse

A JOURNEY THROUGH TIME & ARCHITECTURE



10th & CASS TOUR OVERVIEW

The Tenth and Cass Streets Residential Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2000, the second NRHP residential district in the City of La Crosse. Much smaller than the Cass/King Residential Historic District (1997), the Tenth and Cass Neighborhood is located to the west of the Cass/King Neighborhood and represents residential growth from an earlier time period, closer to the historic commercial downtown area. The Cass and Tenth District covers roughly four city blocks and includes 41 properties built between 1858 and 1940; 33 of which are considered contributing to the historic architectural character of the district.

The Tenth and Cass District developed on the nearly level flood plain about five blocks to the east of the downtown commercial district. As La Crosse grew in the decade before the Civil War, residential development developed on the edge of the business district. The earliest residences in the neighborhood were built in the late 1850s, but most were constructed between 1869 and the mid-1890s. The residences reflected the popular styles of the late 19th century and the neighborhood continues to display some of the best examples of Italianate and Queen Anne style homes in La Crosse. Several of the homes on this tour were completely made-over and “modernized”, indicating rapid changes in tastes and styles in the decades just before and after the turn of the 20th century. Several of the residences were designed by notable La Crosse architects of the late 1800s, and the district was popular with the city’s most prominent industrialists, professionals, businessmen and upper-middle class families from the 1850s to the 1920s.

By the early 20th century many of these prominent La Crosse residents were building further to the east into the current Cass/King Neighborhood. As a result, many of the homes in the Tenth and Cass neighborhood were converted into duplexes or multi-family units. Despite these changes that took place in the neighborhood in the later part of the 20th century, the majority of residences have survived in relatively good condition. Very few of the historically significant dwellings have been lost. In the past two decades a number of the houses in the Tenth and Cass District have been reclaimed and restored as well-kept single-family residences. The district includes eight local La Crosse Historic Landmark properties and two individually listed properties on the National Register of Historic Places. Enjoy your tour of this compact and attractive historic residential neighborhood.

Site 1: J. E. Wheeler House-Bentley/Wheeler Bed and Breakfast
950 Cass St.
Built in 1891

The highly visible three-story Bentley/Wheeler House is an elaborate patchwork of varying elements; one of the most unusual and significant examples of Queen Anne style architecture in the city. The towering irregular mass with multiple gables features distinctive recessed and projecting second story porches with lavish spindle-work. The multi-textured and colored surface, tall brick chimneys and neo-classical decorative detailing are typical of the Queen Anne style, which was widely popular in the 1890s. The carriage house with original exterior mostly intact is located just to the south of the dwelling.

Edward E. Bentley came to La Crosse in 1855 and served as president of the Batavian Bank for many years. Bentley was also one of the founders of the YMCA and active in other civic organizations. The Bentley family lived for many years in the much smaller vernacular Gable Ell home to the west at 938 Cass, built in the late 1850s. Bentley started construction on the large Queen Anne style house on the corner in 1884 and the initial phase was completed by 1887. Bentley had three sons including Percy Dwight Bentley (1885-1968), a noted local architect who brought Prairie Style architecture to La Crosse. E. E. Bentley sold the entire property in 1890 to John E. Wheeler a second-generation banker originally from Columbus, WI.

J. E. Wheeler was president of the La Crosse Exchange State Bank and owner of the Novelty Woodworks Co. in La Crosse. Wheeler hired local architects Gustav Stolze and Hugo Schick to embellish and add on to the home in 1891 completing the project in 1911. Parenthetically, John Russell Wheeler of Columbus, WI, son of J. E. Wheeler, hired

Louis Sullivan to build a bank in Columbus that is now recognized as one of the most significant Prairie Style buildings in Wisconsin.

For many years in the mid to late 20th century the J. E. Wheeler House was operated as a multi-family rental and home to many UW La Crosse students. Within the past ten years this landmark La Crosse residence was restored inside and out and is operated by the current owners with the adjacent Guest House at 938 Cass as the Bentley/Wheeler Bed and Breakfast.

Site 2: Frank Tiffany House

1010 Cass St.

Built in 1889

The Frank Tiffany House, a modest interpretation of the Queen Anne style, has a hip-roofed two-story mass, with a central gable ornamented with a segmented half-round window and wood shingle cladding. The two-story rectangular bay and wide, open porch are additional Queen Anne elements. The rounded rafter ends and narrow white strips on the central gable and corner bay are Late Victorian Stick details that add distinction to the overall appearance.

Mrs. Frank Tiffany was an active member of the Fortnightly Club, a women's literary society devoted to the study of literature. In 1898 she was instrumental in establishing a traveling library system in La Crosse County. The Frank Tiffany House was moved from 403 South 11th Street in 1998 to where it nicely complements the other late 19th century homes along the 1000 block of Cass Street.

Site 3: Frank Burton House

1018 Cass St.

Built in 1884

The Frank Burton House has a rectangular front-gabled mass with decorative gables, full-width open porch and small rectangular bay. Vertical and horizontal articulation in the gable ends and bargeboard decoration show some Late Victorian Stick elements but the asymmetry, open porch, colored glass windows and decorative cladding reflect the Queen Anne style.

Frank A. Burton (1847-1884) was a grain broker and customs agent who was born in Chicago in 1847 and moved to La Crosse in 1868. Burton was murdered by a disgruntled riverboat worker during a Republican Party campaign march in downtown La Crosse just days before he was to occupy the home. The murderer was subsequently killed by the angry mob that assembled after the assassination. This is reported to be the only lynching in La Crosse history. The visitation and funeral for Mr. Burton were held in his home and the eulogy was delivered from the front porch to a crowd of thousands who came to pay their respects. Burton's widow continued to live in the home and Burton family members resided here until the early 1960s when the single family home was converted to a duplex. A complete period appropriate interior and exterior restoration and conversion back to a single family home was accomplished in recent years. The Frank Burton House was listed as a La Crosse City Historic Landmark in 1998.

Site 4: James Vincent House

1024 Cass St.

Built in 1884

The James Vincent House is an exceptional blend of Late Victorian residential styles with an essentially unaltered exterior and interior. The basic stylistic palette of the two-story brick cross-gabled cruciform mass is Italianate; with tall narrow windows, bracketed eaves and classically ornamented open entry porch. In addition, two prominent bay windows with decorative iron balustrade add to the distinctive appearance. The polychromatic exterior with red brick walls and contrasting cut limestone lintels, arches, belt courses and foundation suggest a High Victorian Gothic influence. The decorative multi-gables with "rising sun" motif and cornice returns, oculus window with contrasting brick and limestone border and decorative chimney crown reflect an early Queen Anne influence. The interior features a mix of high quality woodwork crafted by the noted local firms of Egid Hackner and Selgelke-Kohlhaus.

The original plans for the house were drawn by Chicago based architect W. L. Carroll in 1879 and later modified by local architect William Parker in 1884. William Parker was a significant La Crosse architect who designed several important public and commercial buildings in downtown La Crosse including an early La Crosse County Courthouse (1867) and the ill-fated Romanesque Revival U. S. Post Office and Federal Building (1889-1980). A native of New York State and graduate of Cornell University, Parker opened an office in Milwaukee in 1876, based his practice in La Crosse from 1884 to 1893 and moved to Galesville in 1893. Several of Parker's designs remain in La Crosse, all showing an eclectic motif.

Pioneer settler and businessman James Vincent (1832-1911) was born in New York State, learned the carpenter trade and followed the Gold Rush to California in 1848. He arrived in La Crosse in 1855 and subsequently became very successful in the lumber and grain business. Vincent was one of the organizers of the City Street Railway in 1881. The James Vincent House was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988. Vincent's

descendants occupied the house until 2006. An extensive restoration of the interior was recently completed by the current owners.

Site 5: Minor-Noelke House
1003 King St.
Built in 1859/ca. 1920

The Minor/Noelke House is a very unusual combination of the mid-19th century Italianate Style with the early 20th century Prairie Style. Built in 1859 for A. A. Minor this wood frame residence likely had a square mass with low-pitched hip roof, paired brackets under the eaves, tall narrow windows and clapboard siding. The addition to the rear shows similar Italianate elements.

The facelift by piano dealer Carl Noelke in the 1920s added elements of the Early Modern period, which were very popular at the time. This remodeling was an attempt to update what must have looked like a very outdated style in the early 20th century. The hip roof was retained and then extended to cover a two-story enclosed porch with a row of windows that lends a more horizontal appearance to the façade. The recessed window frames indicate that the brick exterior was likely laid over the original wood siding. The prominent modillions under the eaves likely replaced the original Italianate paired brackets. The most obvious “modernized” element is the arched entry with tapered or battered corners; a hallmark of Early Modern design seen in many bungalows and American Foursquare homes in La Crosse built in the period between WWI and WWII.

Site 6: S. S. Burton house
929 King St.
Built circa 1865/1869-1871

The Italianate style S. S. Burton House with a two story cubic mass, low-pitch hip roof with paired brackets, tall narrow windows and clapboard siding has all of the stylistic elements of this popular mid-19th century architectural style. In addition there is a highly ornamented octagonal, grade level bay window with classical corner pilasters on the King Street façade. The east-side entry connecting the north and south sections of the house has decorative, arched openings with paired brackets, dentils under the eaves and corner pilasters similar to the bay window to the south. The original section of the home, which is shorter and more rectangular in mass, was built several years before the more ornate high-style addition to the south, built by Burton in 1869. The original pedimented gable roof of the older area can be seen on the east side of the house at the junction of the two sections. The pedimented roof and shorter stories of the original section show a vernacular Greek Revival influence that was typical of simple Civil War-era wood frame houses.

Samuel Seward Burton (1822-1892) was born in Manchester, Vermont, into a family with a long and distinguished history dating to the early-colonial days in New England. Burton came to La Crosse in 1858 and began a law practice soon thereafter. He was actively involved in a variety of civil and financial affairs including an appointment as County Judge from 1859-1865. He was referred to for the rest of his public life as Judge Burton although his later professional occupation was as head cashier of the La Crosse National Bank, which he co-founded in 1877 along with Gideon Hixon and several other prominent La Crosse financiers. Samuel and his wife Mary Ann Burton, (1829-1881) had one child, Munson Burton (1869-1949) .

During the first decade of the new century the house changed hands several times before being purchased by two young, German immigrant brothers in 1910. Arthur Beutler (1878-1965) and Theodore Beutler (1879-1965) ran a grocery business in La Crosse and lived in the house for over fifty years until 1963. After the departure of the Beutler brothers the house became a rental property and had a succession of owners over the next thirteen years. In 1976 the Burton House was rescued from the fate of many rental properties in the neighborhood when it was restored to a single-family residence. Over the succeeding years, this fine Italianate style house has been conscientiously restored and preserved as a fine example of a 19th century Italianate style residence. Original interior ornamentation has been preserved and inappropriate alterations were removed. The Burton House was designated a La Crosse City Historic Landmark in 2004.

Site 7: J. M. Loomis-George Ray House
928 King St.
Built in 1859/1891

Built in 1859 for lumber company owner James Loomis with a hip-roofed two-story cubic mass in the Italianate style; this residence was completed re-configured and enlarged thirty years later in the Queen Anne style that had become very popular for wealthy, prominent residents of La Crosse. The two-and-a-half story residence has a grandiose gabled mass, three-story round tower with scalloped cladding, and two-story bay that are typical of high-style Queen Anne houses. The open porch at the top of the tower and decorative scrollwork in the front gable-end are distinctive elements. The original highly decorative two-story open porch on the King Street façade has been replaced by a single story enclosed porch (see photos). The metal siding detracts somewhat from the historic character of the exterior.

George Ray was a lumberman and log dealer who later became involved in a number of business ventures in the area. He served as president of the State Bank of La Crosse and the Onalaska Woolen Manufacturing Company. Ray was

elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly in the 1890s. Ray died in 1910, but his family continued to occupy the house until the 1940s when it was converted to apartments.

Site 8: Thomas Spence House
918-920 King St.
Built in 1891

The Thomas Spence House has many of the architectural elements seen in Queen Anne style homes built in the last decade of the 19th century. The multi-gabled asymmetrical mass with a variety of projecting and recessed bays, narrow clapboard siding, scalloped cladding, open porches and towering decorative chimney are all consistent with this style. The original two-story open porch was replaced by a single story enclosed entry porch, but most of the exterior decorative and structural details remain intact. The residence was converted to apartments in 1945. Exterior restoration work in recent years has enhanced the stylistic appearance.

Druggist Thomas H Spence (1851-1929) arrived in La Crosse in 1871. Spence founded a pharmacy in 1874 that became the Spence-McCord Drug Company in 1905, the largest wholesale pharmacy supply company in the La Crosse area. The company headquarters was located on Front Street near the site of present day Spence Park. Spence Park was established in 1898 on the site of the primary steamboat landing in La Crosse. The construction of Riverside Park between Spence Park and the riverfront brought in tons of dredged fill, thus separating Spence Park from the water's edge in the early 1900s.

Site 9: Laverty/Martindale House
237 10th St. South
Built in 1859, 1869

The Laverty/Martindale House (commonly referred to as the Martindale House) complete with wooden fence and carriage house is the most visible and best-preserved example of mid-19th century Italianate residential architecture in La Crosse. The restored and exceptionally well-maintained exterior and interior add to the reputation of the Martindale House, which was one of the city's first bed and breakfast establishments. This home displays many of the Italianate stylistic elements including a cubic mass with low-pitched hip roof, broad eaves with paired brackets, wrap-around open porch with classical columns and bracketed eaves, tall narrow windows with ornamental hoods, and probably most significantly, a highly visible cupola with round arched windows and matching hip roof with single bracketed eaves.

The cupola on a high-style Italianate home is often referred to as a "belvedere", which in Latin roughly means "beautiful view". The term "widow's walk" is used incorrectly when referring to a belvedere or cupola. A widow's walk is a flat platform on the top of a roof surrounded by a metal or wooden railing; there is no enclosed super-structure as seen in a cupola or belvedere. An excellent example of a widow's walk is found atop the hip roof of the Manuel/Metzger House (1871) at 1025 Main Street; a fine brick two-story Italianate home located on the northwest corner of Main and 11th Streets.

Thomas Laverty was a sailor born in England who immigrated to La Crosse via New Brunswick, New York and Milwaukee. He came to Wisconsin in the late 1850s and, like many of his fellow Yankees, entered into merchandising in La Crosse in 1859. That same year Laverty contracted with fellow English immigrants Richard Moffat and Son for a two-story house on the site. The contract was later cancelled and the house was not completed when Laverty enlisted in the Union Army in 1861. He returned from the Civil War in 1863 a disabled veteran and sold the partially completed home to Stephen Martindale III in 1868.

Stephen Martindale III (1823-1906) was from a distinguished Vermont family that traced their lineage back to colonial times in the East. In 1849 he moved from his home in Wallingford, Vermont to Racine, Wisconsin after graduating from Middlebury College in Vermont and the National Law School in New York. He worked for a lumber company in Racine for five years before arriving in La Crosse in 1854 to form a partnership with lumberman Albert W. Pettibone. Martindale and Pettibone had various joint business ventures including a lumber mill in Black River Falls. Stephen served as a colonel and aide-de-camp in the Union Army during the Civil War. In 1868, he and his wife Catharine Howard Martindale (1827-1905) bought the house on Cass and Tenth Street from Laverty and completed work on the elegant two-story home. In the 1880s Stephen Martindale bought the G. R. Montague Agency of the Northwest Mutual Life Insurance Company and continued in the insurance and loan business for the rest of his career.

In 1883-1884 numerous additions and alterations were made to the home including an extension of the north wing and various interior improvements. Stephen Martindale IV (1859-1923) was born in La Crosse and graduated from Beloit College in 1880 where he met his future wife, Sophie Rosenblatt. They were married in 1883 and Stephen received a law degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1886. He practiced law in La Crosse for five years before joining his father in the insurance business with Northwest Mutual Life. Stephen Martindale III and his wife died during the winter of 1905-1906 and Stephen Martindale IV and his wife and three children moved into the family home. The younger Martindales "modernized" the home in 1906. Central heating, a modern bathroom and electric lighting replaced the old stoves, water closet and gaslights. Also at this time a sleeping porch was added over the rear porch and the partition between the two parlors was removed. The 1906 modernization and alterations were the last major changes made to the home until the restorations of the late 1970s. Katharine Martindale (1890-1977) continued

in the Martindale loan and insurance business and lived in the family home until her death, concluding over 100 years of Martindale family ownership and stewardship of the stately two story Italianate home on Tenth and Cass.

The Martindale House was individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and has been meticulously preserved inside and out by a series of owners since 1978. For most of the 1990s the home also operated as the Martindale House Bed and Breakfast and is one of the most photographed historic homes in La Crosse. The Martindale House is currently a private residence.

Site 10: William W. Crosby House
210 10th St. South
Built in 1886

The Crosby House is one of the finest and best-preserved Queen Anne style homes La Crosse. The towering two and one-half story multi-gabled mass with conical roofed turret, multiple ornamented chimneys, cut-away and projecting bays and irregular placement of stained and leaded glass windows are all hallmarks of this style. The variety of textured surfaces, with cladding and colored decorative detail distinguish this rather early high-style interpretation of the Queen Anne. The large open entry porch with classically influenced columns, balustrade with turned post and decorative dentils are also typical of this style. The ashlar limestone foundation blocks were likely quarried on Grandad Bluff. The original wooden carriage house was connected to the main house in recent years.

The elaborate interior of the Crosby House (see photos) features carved woodwork, stairway railing and newel post as well as unique lattice-work and screens. Doors, wainscoting and other woodwork shows contrasting light and dark woods using a mix of redwood, oak, cherry and mahogany. The redwood was shipped in from California. The interior contains seven fireplaces and is illuminated by exceptional stained and painted glass throughout the house. This landmark residence was designed by an architect named Mitchell from Milwaukee and built by local contractor F. Drake and Son for \$2670 in 1886.

William W. Crosby (1818-1892) was born of English ancestry in Massachusetts and arrived in La Crosse in 1854 seeking his fortune. He ventured into the lumber business and organized the Boom and Log Company on the Black River in Onalaska in 1855. In 1856 he partnered with Charles Hanscome to build the second sawmill in the vicinity called the Black River Improvement Company. Crosby was very successful in the lumber business and became very involved in social and civic affairs, serving for twelve years as a city alderman. Crosby's sister Sarah Crosby was Gideon Hixon's first wife (d. 1856), and W. W. Crosby encouraged Hixon to locate in La Crosse and enter the lumber business; which he did in 1856.

Site 11: Robert Kinnear House
220-222 10th St. South
Built in 1914

This two-story brick Prairie Style residence was designed to fit a narrow lot with the main entrance placed to the rear on the north side. The Roman brick façade is highlighted by a compressed stucco second story with bands of double hung windows. The intersecting low pitch hip roofs with exaggerated overhanging eaves are typical of the Prairie Style which still looks "modern" nearly one hundred years later. The contrasting vertical and horizontal mixture of broad flat chimney, brick piers and recessed bays displays a geometric complexity that is the hallmark of the Prairie School. The louvered windows in the two-story front porch are not original.

This residence was built for Dr. Robert and Nellie Kinnear to replace a home on this site that was destroyed by fire in 1914. Dr. Kinnear, a native of Canada, was trained as a physician in Boston and later at the Chicago Homeopathic Medical College. After completing medical school he began his homeopathic medical practice in La Crosse in 1890. He was considered a leading doctor of homeopathy and was also reportedly interested in providing medical and housing assistance to unwed mothers. The two-story residence has an upper level with an identical but less spacious floor plan, indicating that possibly the building was designed as a duplex. In 1916 a smaller two-story American Foursquare style residence was built just to the south and to the rear of the Kinnear House. The houses were divided into two separate parcels in the mid-20th century. The architect of the Kinnear House is unknown.

Site 12: N. D. Allen House
203 10th St. South
Built in 1868

Greek Revival style architecture was one of many interpretations of classical architecture found in residential, government and church buildings in the 19th century in America. Originating in New England in the 1820s and incorporating several of the design and detail elements found in classical Greek architecture, the Greek Revival style was said to have sprung from an early American impulse to symbolize ancient democratic ideals in architecture. The early Yankee settlers in the Mid-West would have been very aware of the popularity of this style and many early buildings in La Crosse were vernacular interpretations with little if any evidence of the high style columns and porticos seen in Greek Revival buildings in the East and South. Greek Revival went out of favor with architects and their clients soon after the end of the Civil War.

Only the oldest existing residences in La Crosse display Greek Revival elements. The N. D. Allen residence is one of those. The two-story wood frame front-gabled rectangular mass has a broad, plain entablature under the eaves, narrow corner pilasters and pedimented porch entrance with simple, narrow columns and brackets. The shallow, projecting window lintels are also indicative of the Greek Revival influence. Nelson Allen arrived in La Crosse in 1862 from Vermont and was the superintendent of the Colman Lumber Company, one of the earliest and largest lumber mills in La Crosse.

