

Welcome to Berlin Wis' Walking Tour.....



Established in 1848 this central Wisconsin city, situated on both sides of the upper Fox River, is rich in lovely 19th century homes. Most have been maintained in all their Victorian splendor. In May of 2005 the Nathan Strong Park Historic District was formed calling attention to this unique neighborhood.

Within a few blocks, the walking tour covers many fine examples of Berlin's early homes. In the center of this Victorian neighborhood is a charming park, a gift from

the city's founder, and features a band stand, a restored three tiered fountain, a Civil War monument flanked by a pair of authentic Civil War cannons and a State of Wisconsin monument to one of the city's more famous residents who lived in one of these homes. Nathan Strong Park has been the scene of band concerts, picnics, weddings, holiday events, and a daily stream of children and adults.

The business district, on both the east and west banks, boasts imposing buildings still used for shops and offices. Of special interest is the Town Clock tower, a well known Berlin landmark.

The Fox River, once a main travelway for Indians, voyageurs, merchants and residents, is still used by area boaters and sportsmen. Three more of Berlin's parks are located along its banks.

This guide will identify some of Berlin's outstanding Victorian buildings and give a brief description and history. Many people ask where the wealth came from to build these homes. As you read the histories you will see that many were involved in the cranberry industry. Wisconsin's commercial cranberry industry was started right here in the Berlin Area.

We invite you to walk either the Green tour or the Red tour, or both. The numbers and colors correspond to the numbers on the structures. The maps indicate the tour routes.

Remember, the homes are all private residences. PLEASE CONFINE YOUR VIEWING TO THE FRONT SIDEWALK. Thank you.

Green Symbol Tour

1. Nathan Strong Park

This block square was given to the citizens by Nathan Strong and was known as "City Park" for many years. The Civil War memorial was erected by the John H. Williams Post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the Woman's Relief Corp in 1894. This post was the oldest in the nation. The stone base features some of Berlin's own granite. The band stand was erected about the same time. The two cannons are on permanent loan from the U.S. government. In the 1960's the 3-tier fountain was rebuilt by the Grow'em & Show'em Garden Club.

2. 180 and 184 E. Huron St.

These twin Italianate homes were built in 1872 by brothers Horace and Henry Miner. They married the

Montaque sisters and built the mirror images homes on a lot and a half. Henry, whose house is the corner one, operated a notions store and Horace was a partner in a book store and a cranberry marsh. The 2nd house still sports its original front entrance and ornate portico.

Italianate 1840-1880

The Italianate style is a rectangular (almost square), two or three-story house with very wide eaves usually supported by large brackets, tall thin first-floor windows, and a low-pitch hip roof topped with a cupola or belvedere. The formal balance of the house often is accentuated by pronounced moldings and details. A central one-bay porch or long porches also are evident in the style.

3. 179 E. Huron St.

This two-story framed Italianate was built in 1858 by Nelson F. Beckwith and was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. Beckwith also built the hotel on the corner of Wisconsin and Huron in 1864 and named it "Beckwith House." (Now The Whiting which is also on the National Register). The house was purchased in 1929 by Fred Scobie who added the iron and brick fence, among other improvements and later sold to Lew & Virginia Walker in 1944 who put it on the Register. The Walkers owned this home until 2008 The present owners have renamed this 'Beckwith House' and offer it as a B & B.

4. 121 N. State St.

This Gothic Revival/Queen Anne home was built in 1854 as a wedding gift from her father, master craftsman, John Ayers, when Martha Ayers married Ezra Wheeler. Mr. Wheeler was an attorney, judge and politician. He is credited as being one of the men who brought the railroad to Berlin in 1857. He was a Democratic congressman during Abraham Lincoln's presidency.

A later resident, Jennie P. Brown established the Brown-Wilcox Retirement Home as a memorial to her husband and mother. Another owner, Dr. Earle Johnson was an optometrist in Berlin for over 50 years. When he retired he donated his collection of old eyeglasses and instruments to the Milwaukee Museum. The original two-story porch was replaced sometime in the early 1960's.

5. 165 E. Park Ave.

This eclectic mix home, typical of Victorian architecture, was built in 1875 by Deville L. Harkness who managed the Berlin Woolen Mills and also served as fire chief and mayor. Mr. & Mrs. Fred Wright added the wrap-around porch and the side pergola in 1908 when they purchased the home. Mr. Wright founded Berlin Finance Co. and later served as president of the First National Bank.

6. 169 E. Park Ave.

One of the oldest residences in the city, this Gothic

Revival was built in 1849 by John Ayers, a master builder who also built other homes in the city including the one at 121 N. State St. and the first Federated Church. The bargeboard trim is original to the home. It originally was further back on the lot but moved forward in 1885 by Hollis Stedman, second owner. The Stedmans operated steamboats traveling the Fox River between Berlin and Oshkosh. The Stedman children lived in this home until about 1965.

7. 181 E. Park Ave.

This only example of Romanesque Revival in Berlin was built by Mr. Charles Wright in 1893 and well documented in the local paper. He owned a sorghum and rye mill and cooperage. The mill building is still located near the Franklin St. bridge downtown and houses Saving Grace Salvage & Vintage. The brick home has examples of Berlin and Redgranite stone in the lintels, sills and trim and cost "upwards of \$6,000." The original entry was on State St. Charles was a brother of Fred Wright whose home was at 165 E. Park Ave. There was once a tank on the 3rd floor to catch rainwater for use in the house.

Richardsonian Romanesque 1870-1900

Richardsonian Romanesque houses, following the examples of H.H. Richardson (1836-1886), are characterized by a straightforward treatment of stone, broad roof planes and a select distribution of openings. The overall effect depends on mass, volume, and scale rather than enriched or decorative detailing. The façade is punctuated with transomed windows set deeply into the wall and arranged in groups in a ribbon-like fashion. Towers are short and chimneys are usually squat so as not to distract from the solid shape of the house.

8. 195 E. Park Ave.

This Colonial Revival eclectically combined architectural mix was built around 1866. It has a Berlin granite foundation and denticulated trim on the exterior. One thought is that this home's original entrance was also on State St. and moved when the porch was added. The etched glass front door was custom designed by a previous owner. The right parlor has 5 different woods used in the inlaid floor.

9. 199 E. Park Ave.

This Queen Anne/Shingle style home was built in 1894 by Henry Laing, a Scotsman and manager of one of the large cranberry marshes. His brother, James, who was a master ship builder, assisted in the building. It was originally a story and a half and expanded to a full two-stories in the early 1900's. It had a plain entrance on the east side of the house. Home was purchased in 1937 by the Barney Swans and extensively remodeled in the interior but mostly unchanged on the exterior. The present owners are only the third family to occupy the house.

Queen Anne Style 1880-1900

The Queen Ann style is a most varied and decoratively rich style. The asymmetrical composition consists of a variety of forms, textures,

material and color. Architectural parts include towers, turrets, tall chimneys, projecting pavilions, porches, bays and encircling verandas. The textured wall surfaces occasionally are complimented by colored glass panels in the windows. Elements and form from many styles are manipulated into an exuberant visual display.

10. 209 E. Park Ave.

One of our most photographed homes, this exuberant Queen Anne was built in 1882 by the Robert Holmes family on the occasion of their daughter's marriage to Mr. David Junor. Mr. Junor was the proprietor of the *Berlin Courant*, a local newspaper and later principal of Berlin High School.

It was sold to the Charles Morris' in 1887. Mrs. Lucy Morris was active in civic, state and national organizations during one of the most exciting periods of the women's rights movement. She helped found the Wisconsin Federation of Womens Clubs and served as its first president and served as secretary of the General Federation of Women's Clubs. Mrs. Morris added many embellishments to this impressive home. There is a marker in the park in front of the house commemorating Lucy's accomplishments.

It was later owned by Charles Smith, president of Truesdell Furs and his wife Louise Sacket Smith whose family owned one of the areas largest cranberry marshes. They added the side veranda and an elevator that is still in the home today. In 1964 it was sold to the Koch family whose son still owns the home today.

11. 217 E. Park Ave.

One of Berlin's best examples of Greek Revival architecture. It was built in 1854 by Horatio Ward and later home to several prominent families including George Sackett owner of one of the area's largest cranberry operations. His brother lived across the part at 204 E. Huron. Note the Greek pediment and heavy cornice. The porch was added in 1904 when adding a porch was universally popular. Windows along front are actually doors. The original carriage house/stable is located in the back.

Greek Revival 1820 – 1860

The Greek Revival style is an adaptation of the classic temple front employing details of either the Doric, Ionic or Corinthian order. The columns support a full entablature (part sitting on the columns) and a low pitch pediment. The rectangular transom over the door was popular and often was broken by two engaged piers flanked by side lights that surround the door.

12. 243 E. Park Ave.

A reasonably well-preserved example of a cube-form, low hip-roofed Greek Revival. This house has been updated in recent years, removing a summer kitchen and adding the new kitchen and great room. The front door came from a home on the west side that was torn down.

13. Berlin Quarries

(about 3 blocks to the East next to Oakwood Cemetery)

Berlin's quarries began to be mined in 1884 by the Wisconsin Granite Co. The stone is actually rhyolite with a crushing strength of 47,674 lbs. per sq. inch. Workers from Scotland, Wales, Italy and Poland came to work the quarries. In the peak years there were about 400 employees working here. The main use was for street paving but also buildings and monuments including President McKinley's tomb. Several examples of the stone are found around the city in foundations, walls and buildings. The quarries closed for good in 1924 when paving stone was rapidly being replaced by asphalt and concrete.

14. 246 E. Park Ave.

The first Catholic congregation organized in Berlin was St. Joseph's, formed in 1851 by about 15 Irish families. This church is faced with Berlin rhyolite and was built in 1908 on the site of an earlier church. It is no longer used by the Catholic church in Berlin and is privately owned. Note the beautiful round window at the front of the church.

15. 122 N. Church St.

The home was built by Henry Walker, a carpenter by trade around 1891 or 1892. The second owner was John Krahling who had a men's clothing store on Huron St. The present owners have lived here since the early 1940's.

16. 112 N. Church St.

This vernacular clapboard is almost as it was when built around 1895. There have been only 3 owners of this property with the first, the J.A. Murkley family owning it for 65 years. The house was added to during that time as the family grew. Porches and trim at the roof peaks are original. Note the pink stain glass window in the front.

17. 104 N. Church St.

This house was torn down in 2013 after a fire damaged the structure.

18. 104 S. Church St.

Arthur Johnson, an early Berlin businessman, bought this property in 1852 but did not build the house until about 1872. The property remained in the Johnson family for 101 years until 1953. Mr. A. Johnson came from Ireland and was one of the founders of the Masonic Lodge. He served as Berlin's Postmaster for ten years. The home is a mix of styles mainly Italianate. Note the unusual hooded window on the 2nd floor. Altered brickwork along the north wall indicates window changes perhaps when William Johnson inherited it around 1888.

18A. 212 E. Huron (not marked)

Robert A. Christie, President of the First National Bank in Berlin constructed this two story vernacular home built around 1897-98 on a mound to give it

even more prominence. During his tenure the bank greatly expanded and he oversaw the enlarging and modernizing of the bank facility. He had served as cashier for the bank for over 20 years before becoming President.

19. 204 E. Huron St.

Mr. Fred Sacket, the builder of this home, was one of the owners of the Sacket Cranberry marsh north of Berlin. It was one of the largest of the early marshes. The home was built around 1885. Only the gable trim is original. Sacket kept very detailed records and receipts were found that indicated the porch was added for a cost of \$84.35 in 1895. The property was owned by the Sacket heirs until around 1951. The 2nd owners had it from 1951 to the early 2000s. His brother, Charles, once lived in the house across the park at #11 217 E. Park.

20. 116 S. State St.

Originally the Union Church, this exceptionally fine example of stick style Queen Anne was built in 1898. It replaced an earlier church with the stained glass windows coming from this earlier church. The bell

in the tower came from an even earlier church built in 1851. Interestingly there has never been a one denominational congregation using this church hence the name 'Union' and now 'Federated.'

Eastern Stick Style 1860 – 1890

The asymmetrical composition of the Eastern Stick style is highlighted by functional-appearing decorative 'stick-work.' Steeply pitched gable roof, cross gables, towers and pointed dormers, and large verandas and porches are also characteristic. The resulting pattern of vertical, horizontal and diagonal boards applied over horizontal siding becomes highly decorative. Oversized and unornamented structural corner posts, roof rafters, brackets, porch posts and railings complemented the decorative 'stick-work.'

This guide is courtesy of The Berlin Area Historical Society

berlinareahistoricalsociety.com

