

The Bloodgood and Hawley Houses

The Bloodgood House, 1139 East Knapp Street, and the Hawley House, 1249 North Franklin Place, share a family bond.

Francis Bloodgood bought this corner lot in 1896. This lot had been vacant since its purchase by Henry Mann in 1867, the year Knapp Street was cut through from Astor to Franklin. Bloodgood chose the then popular French Chateau style for his home and it is one of only a few examples of this style remaining in Milwaukee. Built in 1896, it is actually two houses joined by a party wall. The northern half was built by Bloodgood which fronts on Knapp Street and his wife's aunt, Mary B. Hawley, built the south half which has a Franklin Place address. Mary Hawley purchased the identical lot on the same day in 1896.

Both dwellings were designed by one of Milwaukee's first formally educated architects, Howland D. Russell. The Bloodgood half holds interior and exterior design elements drawn from the early 16th century transitional period between the French Gothic and the Renaissance with the emphasis on Gothic. The Bloodgood half is built almost to the lot line and, being on a corner, has two "fronts". The long north side is the entrance front and is divided into three bays with the two end bays, or pavilions, projecting slightly. These have steeply inclined, wedge-shaped roofs characteristic of the period. Seven dormers project from the roof and give the house its picturesque skyline. Each is decorated with three pinnacles (the small pointed spires). Each pinnacle is encrusted with small stylized leaf forms called crockets which seem to climb each side. Including those on the window lintels and gable cornices, there are 450 crockets at the roofline, a feature which is purely Gothic and which establishes the basic character of the house. The ogee-arched hood molding over the window is made of sculptured buff terra cotta.

The central bay of the north façade forms an entrance with two elliptical arches made from pressed brick moldings. A limestone column with a carved octagonal Gothic capital supports the center of the opening. Sculptured ornament in terra cotta is used to complement the yellow/gray pressed brick and limestone masonry. One such piece dates the building (1896) on a ribbon in Roman numerals (MDCCCXCCVI), and another sign it with a monogram on a shield with four fleurs-de-lis. The monogram has the entwined letters, B & H, for Bloodgood and Hawley.

This home has a higher or "stilted" English basement only a few steps below ground. This makes for a brighter kitchen but necessitates a substantial climb to enter the first floor. The upper house is distinguished by a skylit open well over the staircase and beautiful paneling on the first floor. The east living room is paneled in mahogany with a rubbed glass-like finish. The rest of the interior is largely oak.

The Hawley side was occupied by its builder for less than five years and helps explain its less ornate design. Mary Hawley traveled extensively and therefore rented the house for many

years. William G. Herbst bought it in 1929 and remodeled the building to serve as offices for his architectural firm.

Two recent changes have altered the otherwise original appearance of the houses. In 1960 an oriel, or bay window on the Hawley side was removed. That picturesque half-octagon structure, with its chiseled roof, was covered with sheet metal but its wood framing had become dangerously rotten. About the same time the beautiful red clay tile roof on the Bloodgood side had to be replaced.

The Hawley House was purchased by the Bradley Foundation in 1999 which at the time had suffered through many years of neglect, disfigurement and poor interior reconstruction. Over the years, most of the internal details had been lost by adaptive uses of the building which ranged from apartments to a day care center to office space. Externally, the façade had been badly denatured by the aforementioned removal of a distinctive oriel window on the second floor above the entrance. Unlike the Lion House, extensive internal restoration was not a practical option. The Foundation directors and the Uihlein-Wilson architectural team evolved a plan that called for a complete renovation of the interior to maximize the usefulness of the space. The front parlor on the first floor retained original oak paneling. This room was restored as the Executive office. On the second floor, a Boardroom was created and decorated in period with the house. The remainder of the offices, spaces and rooms in the building are more contemporary in nature and designed for comfort and functionality.

Utilizing original photographs and old plans and drawings, the exterior of the Hawley House was restored to its original appearance. One of the singular challenges was the re-fabrication of the oriel window and its installation in such a manner that it would not suffer the fate of its predecessor which was removed when the interior timbers rotted. Other architectural details were recreated in copper, and new windows and doors were designed to replicate the originals where possible.

To facilitate movement between the Hawley House and the Lion House, as well as to provide a more efficient entranceway, an addition was grafted to the rear of the Hawley House, and a passageway constructed between the houses. The addition mirrors the architectural style of the Hawley House as well as the materials used and, to the modern viewer, is virtually indistinguishable. The bridge between the two buildings was designed to provide a subtle linkage that would not impinge in the character of either house.

Now restored to its original architectural beauty and intent, the Hawley House, along with the Lion House, present a fully integrated and functional working plan that harkens back to the city and neighborhood so well known to Lynde and Harry Bradley.

The renovations of the Lion House and the Hawley House were undertaken between 1995 and 1999. According to the Beyer Construction firm, "The goal of the renovation was to recreate as closely as possible the splendor of the mansions when they were first built. Carpenters rather than general laborers handled some of the demolition to preserve intricate

millwork, ornamental pieces, wood carvings, and cornices for restoration by experts in the craft.”

The current owner, Wisconsin Securities Partners LLC, received approval from the Historic Preservation Commission to make a series of exterior alterations including the removal of the wood-framed addition on the west end of the Bloodgood House. A non-functional chimney is also being removed but the bricks will be reused to restore the façade of the house after the 150-square-foot addition is removed. The addition came decades after the two-and-a-half story house was built by Bloodgood in 1896.