

# 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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 travel way 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. ***Please remember these are private homes - confine your viewing to the front sidewalk. Thank you.***

## Red Symbols

### 1. Nathan Strong Park

The land for the >Public Square= later called >City Park= was donated by Nathan Strong, the founder of the city. It was renamed at the time of Berlin's Centennial. The first city school was located here, opening in the spring of 1849, in a log shanty. Miss Tryphena Bignall was the teacher. The building was also used for church services by traveling preachers and for community meetings. The Civil War memorial was erected by John H Williams Post of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) and the Women's Relief Corp in 1894. This post was the oldest in the nation. The band stand was erected around the same time. The two authentic cannons were used in the Civil War and are on permanent loan from the U.S. government.

### 2. 156 N. State St.

This story and a half Greek Revival was built in 1871 by John Husted. The massive rough-hewn lintels and sills are of Berlin granite. Since the house pre-dates the opening of the quarries, they must have been formed by a local craftsman. 2<sup>nd</sup> owner, Albert Hoeft, a cabinetmaker and builder added the >T= portion containing a dining room, kitchen and porch. Exterior has been little changed since then.

### 3. 170 E. Noyes St.

This 1860 Greek Revival has an unusual three-story campanile with arched windows. Rev. Lark Southgate Livermore, a Baptist minister built the home. Shortly after, he left to become a chaplain in the Civil War. The tower was added by Rev. Ira Clark, the next owner. It was later owned by J.J. Woods, a prominent businessman, author and historian. His wife was one of a group of ladies that helped form the Wis. Federation of Women's Clubs with Lucy Morris. His daughter, Annabel, also a respected historian, lived here until the late 1960's.

#### ***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.*

### 4. 159 Oak St.

Built in 1900 by the Jenne family, the exterior is little changed except for the squaring off of the once rounded porch. The six-sided tower, prominent gable, irregularity of plan, and variety of window shapes and sizes, characterize it as Queen Anne. The Jenne's owned an agricultural implement and creamery business. The matching garage was once a barn. A no longer used tank for storage of water is located in the attic. Two past owners were both elected to the State Assembly more than 50 years apart.

#### ***Queen Anne 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.*

### 5. 151 Oak St.

Chosen from an architect's pattern book, this home was built in 1903 by E. G. Longcroft on the newly opened street. Mr. Longcroft was a jeweler by trade and opened a store here in 1876. His children owned and lived in this home until about 1965. Their estates provide for projects benefitting the youth of Berlin. The local construction firm of August Ceman and August Kramp were the contractors. Mr. Kramp delighted in executing difficult architectural solutions and he built an ingenious support for the central staircase by using a suspension beam from the roof to bear some of the load. Basically a 2 ½ story

rectangular, symmetrical house on a high foundation, the dwelling has a shape distinctly different from those built a few years before.

### 6. 151 E. Park Ave.

This unusual Queen Anne was built in 1881 by William D. Williams, a wholesale produce dealer and commission broker. The peculiar hat-like tower houses ducts that go from basement to roof, with opening into the rooms – an early attempt at air conditioning. The former front doors were extra large and thick requiring three hinges per door. All hinges, doorknobs and other hardware are brass. Parquet floors were added around 1910 using four different kinds of wood. The woodwork in all the rooms is noteworthy. Eleven different moldings are fitted together to form the coves around the ceiling in the parlor, living room, dining room and hall. A later owner, the Harry Hamiltons loved to entertain and one afternoon tea and reception in the side yard for 125 guests is well reported in the local paper.

### 7. 123 E. Park Ave.

The First Baptist Church claims its organization date as March 18, 1849. The original church building built on this lot was moved and the new brick church was dedicated in 1865 at a cost of \$7,000. It twice suffered major damage by fire and had to be rebuilt. A bell tower was removed in 1948. The congregation merged with the Union Church in 1974 and it became the Federated Church. The building served as Berlin's Senior Center for a number of years but is now privately owned.

### 8. 145 N. Adams St.

Jane Shumway, wife of Dr. D. H. Shumway, is listed as the first owner of this property. The home has gone through several redos. In 1851 it was a small story and a half Greek Revival with a single gable facing the street. In 1886 the house received the first of several remodels adding the second floor and more than doubling the size of the house. The pressed tin mansard roof gave it a Second Empire appearance. That owner, Lew Smith, was one of the founders of the Berlin Fire Department in 1871. Lu Gillett, well known Berlin historian and author, made her home here with her family from 1937 to 2003. She grew up in the house at #11 – 157 N. Adams.

### 9. 144 N. Adams St.

A Gothic Revival and Queen Anne mix, Elijah Wadsworth built this home in 1871. Mr. Wadsworth was the first superintendent of schools for Berlin. The home has an enclosed spiral stairway that has remained intact through many owners and renovations. The next owner was George Fitch, then mayor of Berlin and a private banker with the firm of Sacket and Fitch. This bank became the First National Bank of Berlin. Mr. Fitch also was a partner in 2,500 acres of cranberry bogs. The home served as a two family dwelling for a time.

### **10. 151 N. Adams. St.**

This bungalow was built in 1914 by Fletcher Tallcott who started a sand pit east of town. The stucco exterior with half-timbers front gable is original. This lot was formerly part of the estate next door at 159 N. Adams.

#### ***Bungalow Style 1890 – 1940***

*The typical bungalow is a one-story house with gently pitched broad gables. The lower gable usually covers an open or screened porch and a larger gable covers the main portion of the house. Rafters, ridge beams and purlins extend beyond the wall and roof. Wood shingles are a favorite exterior along with stucco or brick. Exposed structural members and trim work usually are painted but the shingles are left in a natural state or treated with earth-tone stains. Shingled porch railings often terminate with a flared base.*

### **11. 156 N. Adams St.**

Dewitt Benham, Berlin's first attorney, built this Italianate in 1858 of local brick. The exterior looks much as it did when it was built. Mr. Benham married Sarah Noyes, daughter of Thomas Noyes, Nathan Strong's partner in the establishment of Berlin. Theirs was the 2<sup>nd</sup> wedding in the new settlement. The Benhams sold the house in 1861 when Benham enlisted for the Civil War. Stillman Wright was the next owner, a Berlin businessman in a number of enterprises. He and his sons ran a flour mill for a number of years. He died in 1903 and his widow continued to live in the house for 19 more years. Frank Chapman purchased the home in 1924 and rescued it from its derelict condition. Mr. Chapman founded the Berlin Chapman foundry, a major employer for many years. Typical of Italianates the first floor windows are all doors. The belvedere is reached by a winding staircase to the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

### **12. 159 N. Adams St.**

This 1863 Italianate was built by Reese T. Reese a local businessman. Its current owners used old photographs of the home to restore it to its original grandeur including rebricking with 22,000 new bricks and building a new belvedere to match the original. The veranda along the front was also replaced having been removed by a previous owner. The interior was greatly freshened by the new owners also. All rooms on the first floor were painted green when they bought it.

#### ***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, (which are really doors) 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.*

### **13. 169 N. Adams St.**

A fine example of vernacular Eastlake, a common classic style of home built in Berlin in the Victorian era. Eastlake design elements are carried throughout the entire house, both interior and exterior. The front porch was restored in the late 1990s.

### **14. 175 N. Adams St.**

Employing the Ionic order of Greek architecture this house illustrates the Neo-Classical Revival style, a new look in buildings replacing the Victorian styles going into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This home was built in 1911 as a wedding gift to Nancy Argall on her marriage to Charles Hitchcock. Nancy had inherited the property from her aunt, Mrs. Anna Stewart, who lived next door at 179 N. Adams. She ran a bird banding station here for a number of years. The wide facade of this Colonial Revival creates an illusion of great size but the sides are only two rooms deep. Mr. Hitchcock had an insurance agency but is most remembered for his participation in local politics having served 6 terms as Mayor.

#### ***Neo-Classicism 1900 - 1920***

*Neo-Classicism is based on primarily the Greek and to a lesser extent the Roman architectural order. It is distinguished by symmetrically arranged buildings of monumental proportions. Colossal pedimental porticos may highlight the facade flanked by a series of colossal pilasters. When windows are employed they are large single-light sashes.*

### **15. 179 N. Adams St.**

This solidly built Italianate was built by Asa Newell, a retired lumber dealer in 1859. All the walls are made of brick, some as thick as 18". In 1868 it was bought by the Hulls for their daughter Anna, when she married Latham A. Stewart. Over the years much of the trim deteriorated and was removed. The belvedere was lowered to the lawn and used as a playhouse for quite a number of years. It was replaced to the roof in the last few years. Another owner was Doc Betchkal who ran the Opera House and raised harness racing stock, the most famous, Don Amillo The Lone Pacer, performed at fairs and exhibitions.

### **16. 127 E. Moore St.**

This petite Queen Anne was built in 1903 by August Kramp for Perry Niskern, a prominent lawyer and county judge. The vertical siding was a new innovation at the time as Mr. Kramp delighted in doing unusual things. Note the unusual bay windows and how the windows >pierce= the gables. There is beautiful oak trim throughout.

### **17. 102 W. Moore St.**

Established in 1870, the Polish Catholic congregation of St. Stanislaus erected the new cream colored brick church in 1886, east of the first church, built in 1872.

It is a High Victorian Gothic style. The limestone entrance façade was added in 1925. Originally it had centered stairs flanked by brass, globed lamps. The steeple is the highest in the city and can be seen from several miles away. It is now privately owned and no longer used as a church.

### 18. 167 N. Wisconsin St.

Built in 1878, the hip-roofed cream brick Italianate served as a rectory for St. Stanislaus parish. Note the brick segmental arches and stone keystones over the windows. The Craftsman porch was a later addition. It still serves the Catholic community as a home for their priest.

### 19. 170 N. Wisconsin St.

This Second Empire home was built in 1881 by Gilbert Rounds and is a unique style to Berlin. Mr. Rounds took care to select only the best for his new home, importing materials from Europe. Note the front dormer on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor which used to look out over a balcony. It had to be removed around 1936 because of unsafe condition. The Rounds had some furniture made to fit their rooms; one bed had a headboard so high it was left behind by each succeeding owner. Mr. Rounds also built the first steam tug for use on the upper Fox River and he owned and operated one of the major cranberry marshes in the area among many other enterprises. He also used a steam boiler to heat his house.

### *Second Empire 1860 – 1890*

*The Second Empire style house is an imposing two or three story symmetrical square block with a projecting central pavilion often extending over the rest of the house. The distinguishing feature is the mansard roof covered with multicolored slates or tinplates. Classical moldings are details such as cornices, and belt course having great depth and are dramatized by different textures and colored materials. Windows are arched and pedimental, sometimes impairs with molded surrounds. First floor windows are usually very tall.*

### 20. 160 N. Wisconsin St.

August Frohne built this large Eastlake style home in the early 1900's. It was later sold to M.W. Tusten who engaged Louis Stetter to install parquet floors throughout the home. 5 different woods were used in the design in the floors. Mr. Stetter created the floors for many of the Victorians on these tours. The entrance to the 1<sup>st</sup> parlor is framed with an unusual wood column and fretwork frame typical of the time.

### *Eastlake style – 1875 – 1895*

*This style is named after the famous English designer, Charles Eastlake, who was famous for making furniture decorated with fancy spindles. It serves as the transition between the Carpenter Gothic style of the mid- 19<sup>th</sup> century and Queen Anne style that it evolved into and superseded it by the*

*1890's. Eastlake details can be found on a variety of Victorian house styles. Some of the more fanciful Stick style have Eastlake buttons and knobs combined with the angular stickwork. Eastlake style homes can include a square tower, incised panels, machine cut friezes and decorative motifs. Stick Eastlake cottages and homes included some of these motifs but have no tower.*

### 21. 133 N. Wisconsin St. (not marked)

Although not numbered this large frame home was built in the early 1900s by Frank Russell, one of a pair of brothers who figured large in Berlin's leather industry. The Russells built a large and modern factory just down the block on Park Ave. to house their businesses, Russell Glove Co. and Russell Moccasin Co. It stayed in the family well into the 1960s. Note the unusual double balconies at the front. Russell Moccasin Co. is still in operation today and known world-wide shodding princes, presidents and movie stars.

Hope you enjoyed your time in Berlin. Thank you for taking the tour(s). Contact the Berlin Area Historical Society at [berlinareahistoricalociety.com](http://berlinareahistoricalociety.com) or the Berlin Chamber of Commerce for any further information.

