



2841 W. Richardson Place

2841 W. RICHARDSON PLACE HISTORY

The small house at the end of Richardson Place may be unassuming in appearance but has an interesting story to tell with its roots reaching back to the pioneer era of the city. Located in a part of Milwaukee that was originally outside the city limits and semi-rural in character, the house is the sole survivor of a handful of residences that fronted what was known as the Watertown Plank Road. A major thoroughfare that connected Milwaukee with Watertown, the plank road was chartered as a private, improved roadway in 1848. It was completed to Watertown in 1853, one of the few plank roads that actually reached its destination. The plank road roughly paralleled today's State Street but had a few dips and jogs. State Street was laid out in a straight line but a small jog of the plank road remained between 27th and 29th Streets and became known as Dunbar Place and later, in 1975, Richardson Place. Maps show that the plank road was bordered by long, narrow parcels, some of which had houses.

No. 2841 sits within a narrow, north-south plat known as Emma's Subdivision, created in 1883. Emma's Subdivision parallels the east side of 29th Street, south of State Street. The simple, vernacular Greek Revival style house we see today was, however, already a fixture on the land when the subdivision was platted and had probably been built around the time the plank road was constructed. We know it is an early house for a couple of reasons. Its form, mouldings and proportions are consistent with known examples of pioneer era Greek Revival houses, for example, the Daniel Richards House, built between 1836 and 1841 (no longer extant). The house also sits on a parcel larger than the other lots to the south. This is evidence that the subdivision was created around the house, something that was commonly done when platting around a pre-existing building like the Kubbernuss House at 222 E. Burleigh Street (locally designated July 27, 2004).

The very first owner/occupant of the house remains a mystery but is currently being researched. We know from maps that Stephen A. Harrison owned the land going back to at least 1876. He does not appear to have lived in this house, however, and had a dwelling in the city. On June 23, 1883, just two months after he platted the subdivision, Harrison sold all of Lot 1, except for the south 60 feet, to Timothy D. Wadsworth for \$1,950, a sum indicating that the property had a structure on it. An old news clipping from a later date confirms that the Wadsworth house had been a fixture on the plank road for generations.

Wadsworth was a homeopathic physician who had his office in this house. He had graduated from the New York Homoeopathic Medical College (now New York Medical College) in 1866 and practiced in Southington, then moved to St. Louis, Missouri in 1868. We do not know what prompted him to locate in Milwaukee. Wadsworth was a widower at the time of purchase and living with him were his children T. Benjamin, Frances S., Grace S. and Hattie (Harriet).

City directories tell us and fire insurance maps show that during Wadsworth's ownership, the house fronted 29th Street, also known then as Queen Anne Place. Behind the house

was a sizable carriage barn. It is likely that the house was realigned from the former plank road to front 29th Street when Emma's Subdivision was created in 1883. The small remnant of the plank road had now become a minor thoroughfare after State Street was created, while 29th Street was intended for fine residences.

Dr. Wadsworth retired around 1900 and on May 17th sold off the back of his lot, with the barn, to an adjacent owner, Marion H. Dunbar, wife of Thomas J. Dunbar. That parcel is the narrow 30-foot by 71.69-foot parcel addressed today as 2841 N. Richardson Place. Permits show that a Mrs. T. J. Dunbar took out a permit to move a residence to this lot seven months later on December 21, 1900. It is likely that this house was Wadsworth's former dwelling and that the barn had been removed from the site. The house was realigned once again to front on the remnant of the old plank road.

By this time, Dr. Wadsworth had returned to Connecticut and he subsequently died unexpectedly at Warehouse Point on December 17, 1901 at the age of 63/64 (sources vary). The Wadsworth heirs, by now living in various states, sold off what was left of their father's Milwaukee lot to Charles Dixon on March 5, 1906. A few days later, Dixon conveyed the property to Albert F. Bingenheimer. Bingenheimer then built two duplexes on the parcel, No. 942-944 N. 29th Street (August 1906) and No. 948-950 N. 29th Street (January 1907).

Members of the Dunbar family would own No. 2841 Richardson Place through 1925. Thomas J. Dunbar was a colorful figure, well known in racing circles as an excellent trainer of horses. In 1878 he managed the Cold Spring Driving Park (now McKinley Boulevard) and bought land on the remnant of the old plank road. Dunbar went on to live in a variety of cities before returning to Milwaukee in the 1890s. Fire insurance maps show that the Dunbars then built several dwellings as well as a very large livery barn on their holding. No. 2841 was used as income property for the family and fire insurance maps also show that a rear addition, no longer extant, once housed a dress-making business. The remnant of the old plank road was later named after the family, Dunbar Place.

The small house at No. 2841 would see further modifications under the Dunbars. In 1915, they underpinned the house, added stairs to the rear, rearranged interior partitions and clad the exterior in stucco at a cost of \$1,700. It may have been at this time that the rear dressmaking wing was removed. The Dunbars sold the house to Joseph M. Giuli and his wife Emma in 1925.

Research is currently underway on the early history of the property as well as the 20th century history of the property.

2837 2832 2828 2825 2824 2820 2818

6" W. PIPE

(2814 (1894) use 2 of 4 p. 201

112

70'

60'

2835

2831 STATE

2825

2825

2819 STATE

2809

2807-05

2841 N. Richardson Place
Fire Insurance Maps 1894

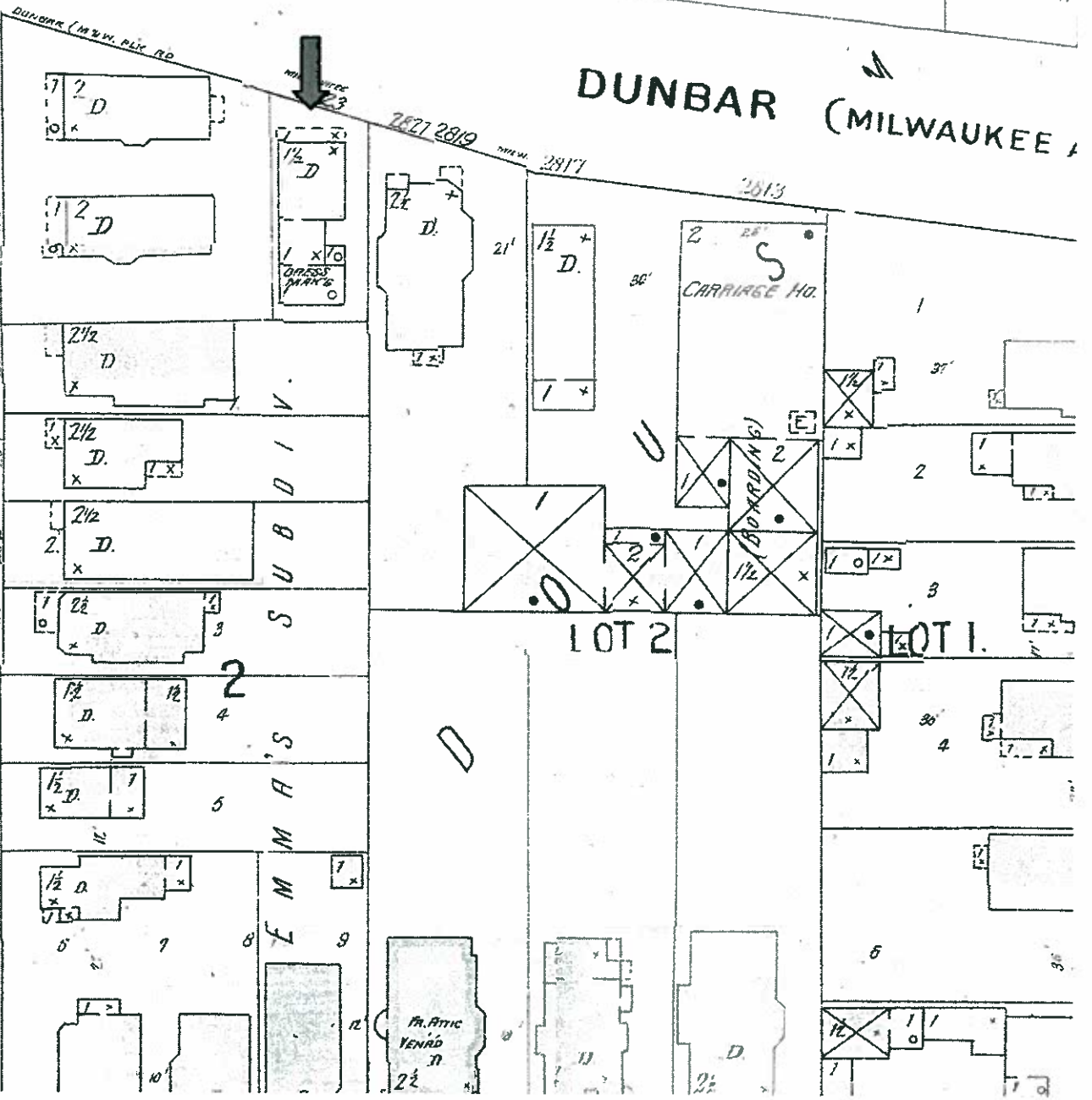
50'

DUNBAR (MILWAUKEE PL. RD)

DUNBAR (MILWAUKEE PL. RD)

QUEEN ANNE PL.

6" W. PIPE
270
266
264
262
260
258
257
256
254



FR. ATTIC
VENARD
22'

LOT 2

LOT 1

SUBDIVISION

CARRIAGE HO.

(BOARDING)

