

February 24, 2021

To the honorable Chair and Commissioners:

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The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance supports temporary historic designation of 2530 S. Superior Street as an excellent example of an increasingly rare building form of local historic significance: the Bay View Puddler's Cottage. We believe the building may have significance under criteria e-1 "exemplification and development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the city" for its association with Bay View's industrial history as one of the few remaining buildings that can tell the story of the Bay View Rolling Mill, and e-5 "embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen" as a largely intact example of early industrial worker housing.

While the mill itself was demolished in the 1930s, this property and its few neighbors remain to tell the story of the early economic and architectural development of the neighborhood. The building was very likely built in 1867 and served as affordable housing for mill workers forming molten metal into iron. It exemplifies the somewhat paternalistic tenor of industry at the time, where mill owner Eber Ward chose to provide his workers with housing based on a belief that homeownership improved worker productivity and encouraged civic responsibility. Terms of payment were easy and they were lowered or suspended when wages decreased or the mill closed temporarily. This building is one of a very few left to tell this story of the relationship between managers and workers in early Milwaukee industry.

While changes have occurred to the property over time, it retains integrity of location, design, setting, and association. Its existing listing description, along with its neighbors, as a contributing property to the 1982 National Register Bay View Historic District remains true today: "Although they have been altered somewhat, they are still clearly recognizable as the single-story, frame, gable-roofed, rectangular cottages built by the Milwaukee Iron Company on the land it purchased and subdivided to provide for employee housing." Especially in contrast with the properties surrounding it, the 20'x40' main block of the house is eminently recognizable.

Finally, it is important to note the vernacular character of the building. These "ordinary buildings" ([www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org](http://www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org)) can hold just as much cultural and architectural significance as their more high style kin and are an important component to ensuring the stories of the "ordinary people" who inhabited them are not lost. There is a long history of recognizing the historic significance of vernacular architecture in historic preservation, and thoughtful preservation practices recognizes the need for lesser integrity hurdles to ensure their stories are not lost.

For these reasons, we believe 2530 S. Superior St. deserves the further exploration that temporary historic designation would provide and urge the Commission to grant the designation.

Thank you as always for your hard work on behalf of the people and places of Milwaukee.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Ebersole  
Executive Director  
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance