



2013 Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures Field School

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Scope and Project Summary

Recounting stories of everyday places where we live and work can spur active engagement with others who share these spaces with us, revive interest in our built environment, and encourage stewardship of this patrimony. The need for collaborative storytelling to create a public culture takes on a sense of urgency when established traditions and ways of life disappear and new ones emerge. Milwaukee's neighborhoods such as the Historic Water Tower Neighborhood is not only known for its rich history but also for its current engaged citizenry, innovative economic practices, and vibrant cultural life. Merely documenting past histories is not enough in such instances - rather residents could be inspired to contribute to a collective retelling of their new and old stories.

The objective of this project is to work with neighborhood residents in order to 1) produce an inventory of sites that have historical value and current cultural significance, 2) collect oral histories of long term and current residents and 3) to suggest interpretive ways of reading these sites. *Our intention is to focus on everyday and ordinary spaces (not architecturally significant monuments). While much has been written about famous and significant edifices in this neighborhood, we have less information about the mundane spaces of such as smaller residences, stores, and public spaces in this neighborhood.*

At the end of our project we also hope to have designs for a series of interactive neighborhood historic markers. (Construction of these markers across the neighborhood will not be part of the field school.) We hope to achieve our objectives by implementing a two-staged data collection and interpretation process. We intend to complete this research during a 5-week long BLC Field School in summer 2013 involving UWM and Madison students, local and national humanities scholars and community members.

This project is significant because it has the potential to promote an easily accessible and free public forum for urban residents to share, interpret and disseminate place-stories of this neighborhood. We expect that such a process could increase awareness of neighborhood history and preservation of the built environment. This project is innovative because it focuses on making expert ways of reading the city available to non-specialist users, city officials, residents, neighborhood groups, and citizens of Milwaukee, thereby seeking to create a critically informed citizenry who can serve as advocates and stewards of our urban built heritage.

Why Historic Water Tower Neighborhood?

The history of this neighborhood is important because it is central to Milwaukee's history, its ethnic diversity, and the way we see our city. Much has been written about the architectural significance of this neighborhood. On the one hand, the history of this neighborhood is part of a larger story of urban development along the lake. The five designated historic districts within this neighborhood speak of its diversity and rich traditions. But on the other hand, it is intrinsically linked to the development on another (perpendicular to the lake) axis - along North Avenue and the Milwaukee River. The latter is part of an industrial history of this city. The two geographically inflected stories place Water Tower neighborhood in the center/nexus of Milwaukee urban history.

In the recent past however we have seen major economic, demographic and architectural changes impacting this neighborhood. We have seen how the preservation efforts of the residents have impacted architectural preservation practices of this city. Our interest in this neighborhood stems from our focus on



historical change and what that means to our understanding of place and history. As a result, we are interested in finding out how residents see such changes, and how it impacts their sense of place and neighborhood identity. Multiplicities of views, perhaps sometimes contradictory, produce a true account of the civic diversity and live grassroots democratic practices of this neighborhood –such stories can be an exemplar for other neighborhoods.

We will approach the story of this neighborhood as an ecological story that engages humans, nature and water as an interconnected system. The proposed field study will approach the neighborhood history through a lens of environmental history – that is as a landscape that tells us much about the interconnected and intertwined ecology of the region. This project will be the first in a series of local water related architectural ecologies that we hope to examine in the next 5 years.

If we decide to focus on this neighborhood then one of my doctoral students may begin a pilot project as early as Fall 2012 as part of her doctoral research project.

Project personnel

We expect to contact the following collaborators to join us in this project. They will bring academic, research, technical, and practice experience necessary for the successful completion of this project.

Arijit Sen, Associate Professor of Architecture will serve as project director. He teaches American cultural landscapes and urbanism.

Anna-Marie Ogenorth, Executive Director of Historic Milwaukee Inc. a private, non-profit educational organization whose mission is dedicated to increasing awareness of and commitment to Milwaukee's history, architecture and the preservation of our built environment will volunteer resources to the Picturing Milwaukee team, promote the project to the organization's members and contacts, lend marketing support, and assist in content creation.

Evelyn A. Howell, Professor of Landscape Architecture at UW Madison is interested in ecosystem conservation and restoration ecology. She brings a solid background in plant community ecology to several courses and also co-teaches with faculty trained as landscape architects.

Project Associate **Chelsea Wait**, doctoral student at UWM has much experience with organizing field schools will coordinate documenting (measuring and drawing) physical spaces, oral history recordings and community workshops, facilitate discussions and interviews and coordinate with local advisors and collaborators. She and an undergraduate paid intern will coordinate editorial work with the principals.

External humanities advisor **Jeffrey Klee** is an architectural historian at the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Klee will serve as a consultant for the field school and fly into Milwaukee for 1 week during Summer 2012 to teach students and researchers the art of field documentation.

Dr. Michael Frisch, Professor of American Studies and History/ Senior Research Scholar at the University at Buffalo, SUNY is a leader in the field of American Studies and oral history. **Judith Weiland**, Director of Operations, with expertise in institutional projects, local history, media production, and technology will accompany Dr. Frisch. They will fly into Milwaukee and direct the oral history project during the second week. (<http://www.randforce.com/company.asp>).

Jeramey Jannene, President at Fresh Coast Ventures, LLC will lead the design and development of the database and website, as well as the software for connecting the database with publicly accessible interfaces such as the website.

Erin Dorbin is a local filmmaker and digital history specialist who will organize the final multi-media documentaries of this neighborhood.



➔ Participation of a community organization is central to success of this project. *We hope to seek involvement of the Historic Water Tower Neighborhood Association in 1) identifying a wide cross-section of storeowners, community leaders, and residents who will let us measure and document their properties, 2) help us get access to public spaces and buildings of relevance, 3) actively advertise events via their newsletter, website and fliers, 4) provide us with a temporary room while we are in the field.*

Institutional Support and Resources

The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee will offer space, administrative and classroom support for this project. The project team will gain from faculty expertise in the new intercampus Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures doctoral area (www.blcprogram.org) and the UWM public history program. This project will gain from the GIS expertise located in the school. The associated Preservation Program has digital equipment for field measurement and data collection that is available to the project team for documentation and building measurements. We also have access to camcorders, multiple cameras and digital audio recorders for documenting the oral histories. UWM centers such as the Community Design Solutions will contribute knowledge and services, upon request, to assist us with design and planning documentation, education, and training to conduct community-based data collection.

Detailed Plan of Work: We hope to achieve our project objective by organizing the following events and activities.

1. Fieldwork activities during a summer field school in order to document spaces and places of cultural relevance in the Historic Water Tower neighborhood. (June-July 2013, 5 weeks)

This 5-week long 6-credits summer field school/studio, attended by students enrolled in the University of Wisconsin (Milwaukee and Madison) Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures program (www.blcprogram.org), will also involve program faculty and associates described above. During the first three weeks of this field school, students will receive training in site documentation with photographs and measured drawings, primary source and archival research of buildings, water ecology, and oral history and ethnographic interviewing. Students will fan out across the neighborhood to identify, document, and create an inventory of significant buildings and spaces. The criteria for choosing these buildings include representative vernacular building styles, historical significant locations, spaces of worship, parks and recreation spaces, important neighborhood stores, and important cultural institutions such as schools and community centers. Students will conduct audio and video interviews with residents using a list of residents produced in consultation with the neighborhood association.

2. Public workshops and storytelling sessions to engage residents in documenting and interpreting places of cultural relevance in the neighborhood. (June-August 2013, 3 events)

Working with the local neighborhood association and Historic Milwaukee Inc. we plan to hold 3 community workshops and storytelling sessions to introduce residents to different ways of documenting and describing local places that matter to them. During these workshops audience members will lead site walks to locations that are culturally significant to them and engage in a discussion of multiple ways of representing and describing these places.

3. Cataloging information into digital database. (August 2012-December 2013)

We will input information into a relational database. University of Wisconsin's Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures program will maintain the database on a long-term basis. This basic database will include information categories such as architectural details, social history, photographs and maps, urban and location analysis, data on demographics and public culture. The relational database will be publicly available through a Representational State Transfer Application Programming Interface (also known as REST API) that is a term used to describe a software architecture that creates an information retrieval system that enables a user to gain or provide access to texts, audio and video recordings, photographs and computer graphics related to particular subjects. It will also make the database independent from any of the user interfaces, delivering a greater long-term viability for the database itself. Jeramey Jannene of Fresh Coast Ventures, LLC, will lead the technical development of the software solutions for the project



integrating his expertise of database-driven web software development with his knowledge of properties of the built environment.

Project Outcomes

At the conclusion of this project we will have the following deliverables:

1. A data base of oral histories of local residents
2. Visual and architectural documentation of buildings and landscapes
3. Multimedia digital documentaries showcasing the neighborhood
4. A website with documentations and documentaries

Project assessment

HWTN association will track feedback from the community and keep us connected with local residents through their newsletter, website and fliers. An extensive evaluation of the entire event will take place a week after the event by the project staff. We will survey our humanities experts about the workshops; what they think worked best; and how they might do it differently in the future. We also intend to survey our organizational partners about how the event met or failed to meet their expectations. We will also ask our student volunteers to comment on their experience. This will be in the form of a brainstorming session sometime after the event.

| Tentative Budget based on current costs | Need to seek funds | Total Funds |
|--|---------------------------|--------------------|
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| Fees and Honorarium | | |
| Project Director: Arijit Sen | | 0 |
| PhD Student Project Assistant, Chelsea Wait | ✓ | 3360 |
| Undergraduate Hourly Student coordinator | ✓ | 1000 |
| Consultant Evelyn Howell, PhD, UW Madison | ✓ | 1000 |
| Humanities Consultant, Jeffrey Klee, Colonial Williamsburg | ✓ | 1000 |
| Humanities Consultant, Michael Frisch, PhD, University at Buffalo | ✓ | 1000 |
| Humanities Consultant, Judith Weiland, PhD, Randforce Associates | ✓ | 500 |
| Humanities Consultant, Erin Dorbin | ✓ | 500 |
| Local Consultant, Michael Gordon, PhD | ✓ | 300 |
| Website Consultant, web site design, web platform programs downloads, domain names, and other expenses associated with digital dissemination | ✓ | 2000 |
| | | |
| Travel | | |
| Jeffrey Klee, PhD 1 roundtrip Richmond, VA - Milwaukee | ✓ | 349 |
| Michael Frisch, PhD 1 roundtrip Buffalo, NY - Milwaukee | ✓ | 385 |



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| Judith Weiland, PhD 1 roundtrip Buffalo, NY - Milwaukee | ✓ | 385 |
| Evelyn Howell, Madison – Milwaukee (mileage) | ✓ | 50 |
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| Lodging | | |
| Jeffrey Klee, Ph.D. 6 days @\$80/day | ✓ | 480 |
| Michael Frisch, PhD 6 days @\$80/day | ✓ | 480 |
| Judith Weiland, PhD 6 days @\$80/day | ✓ | 480 |
| Evelyn Howell, PhD 6 days@\$80/day | ✓ | 480 |
| Student Housing – we will need to find housing for Madison and out of state students if we need. | | |
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| Food | | |
| Jeffrey Klee, Ph.D. 6 days @\$50/day | ✓ | 300 |
| Michael Frisch, PhD 6 days @\$50/day | ✓ | 300 |
| Judith Weiland, PhD 6 days @\$50/day | ✓ | 300 |
| Evelyn Howell, PhD 6 days @\$50/day | ✓ | 300 |
| Field School community event-food | ✓ | 2000 |
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| Supplies and Equipment | | |
| Supplies: 15 field work supply kits (\$50/kit) Number of kits depend on enrollment | ✓ | 750 |
| | | |
| Totals: | | 17700 |