

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

| |
|------------------|
| STATE: |
| COUNTY: |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| ENTRY DATE |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Guertler House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Bruch-Guertler House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 101 Blair St.

CITY OR TOWN: Alton CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 20th Findley

STATE: Illinois CODE: COUNTY: Madison CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY (Check One) | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure | <input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both | Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered | <input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate) | | | Yes: |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment | <input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Unoccupied</u> | | | |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: The Bruch Foundation, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER: c/o Ruth Means, President R. R. 1

CITY OR TOWN: Alton STATE: Illinois CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Madison County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Edwardsville STATE: Illinois CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Open Space and Historic Site Preservation Study - Madison et al Counties

DATE OF SURVEY: 1973 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: The Alton Council, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER: 413 Henry Street

CITY OR TOWN: Alton STATE: Illinois CODE:

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|--------------|
| STATE: |
| COUNTY: |
| ENTRY NUMBER |
| DATE |

See attached Form 10-300a

7. DESCRIPTION

| | | | | | | |
|-----------|------------------------------------|---|-------------------------------|--|---|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One) | | | | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
| | (Check One) | | | (Check One) | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered | | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Dressed stone lintels shaped to suggest a pointed arch are the instantly recognizable trademarks of the Bruch-Guertler House. The front block of the house was constructed in the Federal-style, 3 bay, off-center entrance hall plan still used in Alton in the 1850's but usually interpreted in brick. In this case, the construction material is 19" thick stone quarried on the site and a unique application of the stone mason-master builder's art appears in the treatment of the entrance door and window openings on the North and West sides of the structure; the lintels in the pointed arch form are somewhat related to late Gothic called the Tudor arch or the depressed four-centered arch. A joined Gothic arch appears on the double second floor windows on the West (Alby St.) facade but the East facade's single window on the second floor does not employ the arch form.

Facade stonework on the entrance front begins at the foundation with large dressed stones, and as the courses proceed upward the stones become smaller and much less finished above the window and door lintels, which because of stone placement appear to have 'ears' just below the peak of their arches. A projecting course of stone announces the second floor level (Ground Floor ceilings 10'). At the roof line two separated courses of stone form a banded projection below at the facing board to 'support' the rather massive soffit which extends around the corners of the building below the wide eave facing boards. Originally two stone stacks with projecting stone courses provided flues for stoves. One stack is now replaced with brick. The stone stoop is magnificently dressed and contains two massive stone 'railings' their faces intricately carved by the master-mason into a stylized pattern of intertwined oak leaves and acorns.

Beneath the front block, reached by a flight of stone steps at the north front, is a 9' ceiling ante-basement. Through iron banded doors down an additional 4' across a massive stone slab is an arched ceiling stone vault, half carved out of bedrock, ventilated by tiny airshafts on the E. and W. and under the majority of the front block of the house.

The interior window and entrance door mouldings follow the openings of the exterior arched lintels. Other mouldings of inner wall doorways have the slightly arched theme common in 1850 and 1860 Alton houses. There were no fireplaces or mantels in the house. There are 3 principal rooms on two floors in the front block of the house. In addition, a front-to-back 1st floor entrance hall contains an open staircase leading to a second floor hall and one storage and one sleeping room both unlit under the eaves on each side of the large double-windowed 2nd floor chamber. A dormer is a turn of the century addition to the sleeping room. No plumbing or concealed wiring has even been installed in the structure.

The two story wing adjoining the main front block on the South is an enigma, since it cannot be conclusively proven whether:
 1)...the 2 story wing is older than the front block and was 1/3 larger than its present size, partially razed to allow construction of the 1854 front block, when ante-basements and vault were dug, OR
 2)...the 1854 front block was constructed with a single story wing, porch, and loft later restyled in the 1870's to the two story structure when more space was needed for an expanded family, OR

See attached Sheet 10-300a

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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3)...a stone foundation uncovered at the rear of the property was a former remote kitchen structure rather than a farm outbuilding, and in order to increase kitchen efficiency the entire 2 story wing was constructed at the same time in a 'chalet' style after Swiss-born Peter Guertler's marriage to the stone-mason's widow.

Set afire by vandals in 1971, the wing's 2 story porch as well as half of its roof have been removed exposing the structure to the weather. A flight of stone steps leads from the outside to a basement room once under the porch. Entered through a stone separating wall, the wine cellar contains 3/4 of the body of the circular stone cistern, and the remnant of an interior stair to what functioned as the kitchen directly above. This cellar has no connection with the vault-basement in the front block where another interior staircase was later dropped from a closed under the main staircase to connect ground floor and basement there. Above the kitchen forming an entire second story is a 10' ceiling chamber which for many years served as the master bedroom of the dwelling, entered from the front block across the second floor porch through a small crawl hole cut thru the stone below the soffit. The North wall of this chamber built above the eaveline of the front block is constructed in the very old technique of brick and timber, however the stone facades on E. and W. appear to have been partially razed where this wall of the second story wing abuts the front block. The exterior of the brick and timber is covered by vertical batten-board siding now under layers of tar paper. The roofline of the 2 story wing was designed to symmetrically cover both structure and 2 story porch. A Swiss style balcony projects with simple rail and spindle from the Alby St. facade to fill the recess between wing and front block. This facade has two types of stone lintels - below are nicely dressed blocks over door and window and above are keystone arched segments. On the E. facade, below are a more minor block, not as nicely dressed, over window only and above well dressed blocks over both door and window. The E. facade ground floor doorway lacking any lintel at all is not directly under the second floor porch doorway, perhaps hinting at a remodeling. The level of the entire wing is two rises above the front block reflected by the sloping site. Evidence of a hatch cover in the floor of the 2nd floor chamber hints at an interior staircase above the remnant of the basement to ground floor staircase. The kitchen wainscoting is wide paneled board below ornate trim.

Around 1860 a frame single story summer kitchen was added to the porch facade of the wing and the stone stairs to the basement were incorporated into its floor over ground. By 1890 this wing was extended farther out making a total wing of approximately 40 feet off the South wing. A staircase made its appearance in the two story gallery; the gallery was enclosed in frame; the frame deteriorated and was razed; the summer kitchen was reenclosed and with the gallery deteriorated and rotted by 1967; finally they both burned in the 1971 fire.

The immediate rural environment of the structure, built on the corner lot of 7 lots, is much the same today as the original farm setting. At the base of the 75 foot bluff which is also part of the 1.2 acre plot, a barn and various out-buildings had either badly decayed or were removed by 1969; however the lots are now in grass and extend from the remnants of the small smokehouse near the house, adjoining the dressed stone well cover and what was once a fine grape

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harbor. Stone paths lead from and to the front stoop, although stones are still unexcavated since the yard level has risen as much as 4 feet in some areas. The raising of the level of both Alby and Blair Sts. has necessitated the removal of some of the fine old trees along Alby, however the stone garden wall still manages to retain the embankment, forming a passage-way between itself and the house at the ground floor level. Just beyond what was once a white picket fence across Blair St. the headwaters of the Little Piasa Creek form a sunken stream bed parallel with Blair, flowing beneath Alby in a more-than-century-old stone culvert. Another c. 1850 stone structure, smaller and less rich in detail can be seen to the Northwest and across the Little Piasa in a dense woods is a primitive c. 1835 stone cottage.

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

| | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other, (Specify) <u>Environment</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

THE BRUCH-GUETLER HOUSE IS THE UNALTERED WORK OF A MASTER-MASON-BUILDER.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Ignaz Bruch (1822-1860) arrived from Europe at a peak time of German and Swiss immigration in the late 1840's and early 1850's. His wife Odelia arrived from Germany in 1846. There is record of Bruch in Alton as early as 1851 and in 1853 he purchased the 3 lots nearest the corner of Blair and Alby Sts. where study of the old tax receipts found on the premises, show the residence was constructed the following year. In 1854 he purchased two more lots nearby and in 1856 the lot which connected his properties. On September 3, 1852, Bruch began advertising his stonemasonry in the Weekly Alton Courier. His activities as a stonemason included flagging, paving, setting curb stones, building monuments and vaults, carving tombstones, steps, window sills, and constructing box culverts and watertables (visible interior and exterior stone parts of a building's foundation). He worked in Edwardsville, Wanda, Carlinville, Godfrey, Jacksonville, Salem and Chicago Illinois and in St. Louis Missouri. His record book kept from 1852 to his death 8 years later shows that he worked for Monticello Female Seminary and Jacksonville Female College and prominent Altonians such as Captain Simeon Ryder and Barth Runzi. His drawings for the stonework on the first courthouse at Salem, Illinois are in the possession of the C.W. Heck family of Salem.

THE BRUCH-GUETLER HOUSE, ARCHITECTURALLY AND ARTISTICALLY, IS A UNIQUE WORK. DURING THE INFANCY OF THE BRIEF NEO-GOTHIC REVIVAL, A TRADITIONAL MATERIAL AND FAMILIAR BUILDING FORM FORMED THE BASIS FOR A NEW BUT REMINISCENT DECORATIVE ELEMENT TO BE APPLIED IN AN ENTIRELY FRESH MANNER.

By the 1850's the Federal house plan had already been amplified by Classic Revival plans and was beginning to be replaced by much more complex room arrangements and shapes lending themselves to the Romantic Revivals. Stone had always been the choice medium for the great European interpretations of the Gothic: and in stonemason-builder Bruch's possession was the 1852 Carpenter's Assistant filled with "The Gothic Villa", yet there is nothing of the monumental, the sham or the quaint about this cottage. Unlike other architects and builders before and after him, Bruch was able to resist throwing extraneous and distracting motifs at the powerful and restrained stone facades he had created himself and achieved a simple dignity and even nobility from the combination of fine details on his stone cottage at the bottom of Piasa Valley.

THE BRUCH-GUETLER STRUCTURE AND SITE, ALTHOUGH IN AN URBAN AREA, CREATE IN THEIR UNALTERED, UNDISTURBED STATE A RARE EXPERIENCE FOR THE ALTON VIEWER --

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Page A.

A SENSE OF BEING PLACED WITHIN ANOTHER AGE: AN AROUSAL OF CURIOSITY ABOUT THE BUILDER AND THE OCCUPANTS OF THE STRUCTURE: AN AESTHETIC VIEWING EXPERIENCE OF ARCHITECTURAL FORM, DESIGN, AND RELATIONSHIP TO NATURAL ELEMENTS.

The structure and site have been a constant source of public comment - from Altonians and outsiders viewing them for the first time. A 5 line ad was run in the classified section of the local paper announcing that the house would be open for several hours not long after its 1960 purchase from the same family which had held it 118 years. Hundreds appeared on the property to glimpse the interior of the house. Hundreds more, unable to find parking places, caused accidents and traffic tie ups. To many it is the symbol (or embodiment to those who are not consciously aware) of the urgent necessity to act to secure what binds us to our past before it vanishes. Undoubtedly it is the best known antique house in Alton - "the little stone house at the bottom of Alby St. Hill"

THE BRUCH-GUERTLER HOUSE IS A VISUAL REMINDER OF THE ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL IN AMERICAN LIFE - IN SHAPING AND MAINTAINING HIS ENVIRONMENT DURING THE SETTLEMENT AND BUILDING OF THE MIDWEST.

Bruch died on July 14, 1860 at the age of 38. He appears to have been ill, since on July 9 his usual vital handwriting is extremely weak. Strangely, the records show he was buried in St. Patrick's Cemetery Oct. 29, 1860 almost three months after he died. Several years after his death his widow married Swiss born Peter Guertler. She left the house to her only son, Peter Guertler, Jr. In turn his son Walter Guertler inherited the property. When purchased in 1969 Kathleen Guertler was caring for her invalided husband Walter in the house without concealed wiring or plumbing of any sort, where a coal-stoked boiler had deteriorated years ago and even the stove stacks were brittle and broken. In 1973, 4 years after its purchase, it was deeded to the Bruch Foundation, Inc., a non-profit incorporation created for the following purpose:

To Establish and Sustain educational-cultural-recreational Facilities on lots 1 thru 7 O.M.Adams addition to and in Alton, Illinois as a Center for Children and Young People reflecting the Spirit of American Life and Individualism on the Midwestern Frontier 1835-1860.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Coombs and Elgin, Historic Building Survey, Rotary Club of Alton 1967
 Introductory Letter; p.A-75
 Gebauer, Gerald, Writings of Gerald Gebauer
 Swick, Norman, Writings of Norman Swick
 Papers, Deeds, Records, Drawings, Account Books: Found on Premises

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY | | | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES | | |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|---|-----------------|-------------------------|
| CORNER | LATITUDE | LONGITUDE | LATITUDE | | LONGITUDE |
| | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees | Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |
| NW | ° ' " | ° ' " | | | |
| NE | ° ' " | ° ' " | 38 | 54 03 | 90 10 58 |
| SE | ° ' " | ° ' " | | | |
| SW | ° ' " | ° ' " | | | |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **1.2 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Ruth Means** **Phil Poehner**

ORGANIZATION: _____ DATE: **Jan. 22, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER: **R. R. 1** **413 Henry St.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Alton** STATE: **Illinois** CODE: _____

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

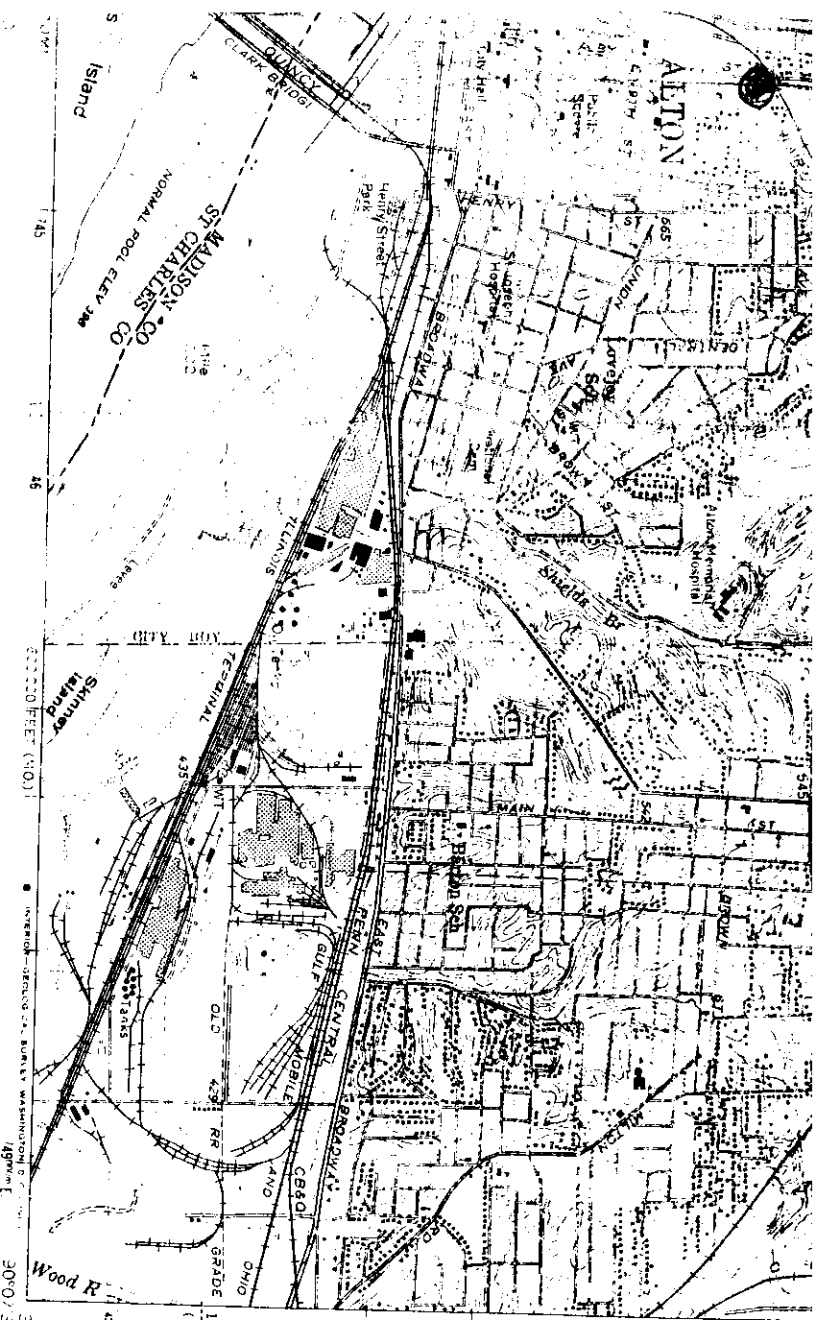
Date: _____

ATTEST: _____

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



LAT.
 38°54'03"
 LONG.
 90°10'58"

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
 Heavy-duty ————
 Medium-duty - - - -
 U.S. Route ————
 State Route ————
 Light duty ————
 Unimproved dirt ————

STATE OF ILLINOIS
 DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
 DIVISION OF HIGHWAYS
 PROJECT NO. 100-1000
 ALTON, ILLINOIS
 PROJECT NO. 100-1000

ALTON ILL. MO.
 NW 1/4 ALTON 1ST QUADRANGLE
 N 88S 15 - W 90 07 51 75
 1954

AMS: 2961 | NW: SEYMES 7463