

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
William Spence Houses 1&2
August 12, 2021

I. NAME

Historic: N/A

Common Name: William Spence Houses 1 & 2

II. LOCATION 2275 & 2279 North Summit Ave

Legal Description **2275:** Tax Key No. 3560219000
GLIDDEN & LOCKWOOD'S ADDITION in NW ¼ SEC 22-7-22
BLOCK 16 S W'LY ½ LOT 7 & N E'LY 10' LOT 8

2279: Tax Key No. 3560218000
GLIDDEN & LOCKWOOD'S ADDITION IN NW 1/4 SEC 22-7-22
BLOCK 16 N E'LY 1/2 LOT 7

III. CLASSIFICATION Sites

IV. OWNER E North LLC
1731 Alysén Ln
Waunakee, WI 53597

ALDERMAN Ald. Nik Kovac 3rd Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR Dawn McCarthy

V. YEAR BUILT 1889
(City Directories, Milwaukee Tax Rolls)

ARCHITECT: A.J. Sheben (builder)

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

THE AREA

From the North Point South Historic District report: The district has remained exclusively residential in character and is bounded by Lake Michigan to the east, St. Mary's Hospital to the north and a mixed neighborhood of commercial, retail and apartments to the west and south. North Point South is filled mostly with large, masonry, single-family homes, but includes a number of duplexes on the side streets as well as former mansions that have been converted into multi-family dwellings.

Description of 2275-79 North Summit Ave

The houses that are the subjects of this nomination are addressed at 2275 & 2279 N. Summit Avenue and sit at the west side of the T-intersection of N. Summit Avenue and E. Wyoming Place. Originally constructed in 1889, the general dimensions of the houses each measured 22 ft. by 42 ft.

2275 is a one-and-a-half-story vernacular gable end cottage with subtle Queen Anne detailing. It has a green asphalt roof. Permit and map records suggest it was built as a substantial twin to the house to the north. The original porch was demolished and replaced with the current one in 1935. The southeast elevation of the house features a covered porch with a hip roof and unoriginal windows. The top story's gable arch is covered by a brown bargeboard that matches the connecting gutters. The soffit for the bargeboard appears to be shiplap drop siding and is supported by a modest wooden bracket. The southeast and northwest sides of the top story each have a cross-gable dormer with two non-original single hung windows. The first story is covered by beige aluminum siding, while the house's dormers are covered in square shake siding.

2279 is a one and a half story folk Victorian style house in the form of a one-and-a-half-story vernacular gable end cottage with a gray asphalt roof. The front elevation of the house features a smaller porch with a flat roof, with a dentil course cornice. The top story's gable arch features a white, pointed bargeboard with a Prussian blue trim, as well as a white rake board and soffit. The ends of the bargeboard each have a blue decorative pendant that is either engraved with an S or a Z, and the entire bargeboard is supported by a modest wooden bracket on each end. The top story of the southeast and northwest sides has a cross-gable dormer with two non-original hung windows. The foundation of the house is made of Prussian blue-painted brick to match the house's since-removed siding. The siding's removal has exposed the original octagonal wooden shingles on the top floor, as well as the square shake siding on the main floor.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

These buildings from 1889 are similar in character, if of smaller scale, to those included in the designation report for the North Point South report. These houses are located in Glidden and Lockwood's Addition as are the ones in the district across the street. Like the residential buildings across the street these houses are single-family homes with brick and wood shingle siding and gabled roofs. The lot size and setback are also similar, as the homes sit tightly together on one original lot within the same subdivision as the rest of the historic district. Many other homes are built in just such tight arrangements.

The house at 2275 likely started as a copy of 2279. Building permits suggest that it reached its present appearance around 1935 when the porch was enclosed. It now is more of a vernacular cottage with some surviving Queen Anne details. This change was so long ago that it adds to the story of the neighborhood where few houses have had a stylistic change (cf., 2549 N. Terrace Avenue).

The separation of these houses on the west side of Summit appears to be the result of a misinterpretation of the historical record that. Fire insurance maps of the era show no discontinuity between the character of this block and that of the established North Point South District. As late as 1951, single family housing in Glidden and Lockwood's subdivision continued to Prospect Avenue. There was no "completely different land use at Summit" as noted by McArthur and Perrin (1978, p. 7). Even with the development of the apartments on Wyoming, this was no justification for excluding this block from the district, as many other apartment buildings and multi-family buildings on Lake Drive were included without any apparent concern or architectural disparagement.

The nominator mentioned in her supporting documentation that the exclusion of this block may have been classist, and this is likely true. Richard Perrin, one time city development director, was not subtle about his architectural opinions and his quotations at the end of the *North Point Districts* cannot be viewed kindly within a modern understanding of preservation and equity. Among other things, he was dismissive of the whole North Point North district and implied it was of similar quality to these houses on Summit (McArthur, 1981, p. 214).

History of 2275-2279 North Summit Ave

William Spence was the original developer of these two homes. Prior research by this office has noted the following about the developer William Spence:

There were several William Spences in the city directories, but it appears that the William G. Spence associated with [these properties] was the carpenter who is listed in the city directories in the late 1860s as living with his widowed mother and his brother Thomas. William G. Spence is later listed as a carpenter-joiner and in 1881 as a contractor-builder with his business located near the southwest corner of Jefferson Street and Juneau Avenue. For several years beginning in the mid-1880s, Spence is listed without an occupation. It was during this time that William G. Spence began to devote himself exclusively to real estate development projects.

From 1888 to 1891 William G. Spence was in partnership with Wade H. Richardson. The firm of Richardson and Spence handled financial matters and investments from their offices on West Wisconsin Avenue. In 1892 Spence formed Spence, Ziegler & Traeumer with confectioner George P. Ziegler and George P. Traeumer to handle real estate investments, loans, and insurance. After Traeumer's departure, the firm became Spence & Ziegler. In 1893 the firm moved their offices into the Iron Block building on East Wisconsin Avenue and organized the Spence & Ziegler Land Co. In 1895 the business moved to the Sentinel Building and in 1902 to the University Building, both on Mason Street. In 1902 Spence became vice-president of his brother's company, Rundle-Spence Manufacturing, after Rundle stepped down. William G. Spence remained the vice-president of Rundle-Spence until 1931 when he retired.

Among his many other real estate interests, Spence headed the Prospect Hill Land Company, which platted much of the area around Shepard Avenue on the city's upper east side. Spence also had extensive holdings in downtown Milwaukee real estate. William G. Spence died on January 19, 1935, at the age of 82 (Vollmert & Hatala).

Additional research for these properties has located advertising for Spence's real estate investment activities in 1892's *Industries of Milwaukee* and a brief biographical blurb in the same text (Anderson & Bleyer, pp. 218 & 274). As a final note, William and particularly his wife Estella were deeply involved with fundraising efforts for the Protestant Home for the Aged (now Eastcastle Place) (Vollmert & Hatala; 19th Century Newspapers Database).

REAL ESTATE  LOANS.
WILLIAM SPENCE,
137 GRAND AVENUE.

PART OWNER OF AND AGENT FOR
Cream City Land Co., St. Francis Park Co.,
Cottage Home Co., Belt Line Realty Co.,
Commercial Land Co., West Side Realty Co.,
Forest Park Co., West Side Land Co.,
South Side Realty Co., Ridgeland Co.,
Forest Lawn Co., Superior Land Co.,

BESIDES LOTS IN
Cold Spring Heights, Paine and Stacy's Subdivision,
Merrill Heights, Merrill Park, Mitchell Heights, Daisy Field,
Riverside Park, and other East Side Plats.

LOTS SOLD ON MONTHLY PAYMENTS. HOUSES BUILT FOR PURCHASERS.

Anderson & Bleyer, 1892

Occupants and Owners

James H. Comstock rented the 2275 residence (then 477) from 1890 to 1894, while the property belonged to J.A. Becher, who was a real estate and money broker. Comstock was a brass finisher during this period and eventually purchased the house from Becher in 1894. After living there for an additional five years, Comstock sold the property to Franklin and Janet Gormley in the fall of 1899. Franklin worked as a bookkeeper during this period before switching over to a credit man position in 1903. George and Kate Petersik succeeded the Gormleys and owned the home from 1918 to 1949. George worked as a traveling wholesale furniture salesman and was the primary wage earner in the home. John and Lois Harris took ownership over the house starting in 1949. John worked as a plumber for Knauer Plumbing & Heating. The home belonged to the Harris family for over fifty years until Lois moved to the Milwaukee Catholic Home in 1998. Sally D Holt purchased the home in 2003.

Arthur and Julia Montzheimer rented 2279 (then 479) from JD Irwin in 1900. Arthur and Julia occupied the space with their three children and servant (Maggie Lechner). Arthur worked as a civil engineer and superintendent for the Chicago and North Western Railway, where he was credited for inventing multiple railroad-related devices. Arthur's most famous patent was for the mail crane in 1896, and he was a Milwaukee representative in the 1900 Annual Convention of the American Railway, Bridge and Building Association. Engelbert and Catherine Blonien moved into 479 Summit in 1909. Engelbert worked as a hardware clerk and a messman until his death in 1928. Catherine lived at the house for another eleven years before selling it to Wendelin and Elizabeth Dreyfuss in 1939. Wendelin worked as a traveling salesman in pharmaceuticals and was part owner of Ardmore Pharmacy at the corner of N. 16th and W. Wisconsin in Milwaukee. Elizabeth stayed at the house for another four years after the death of Wendelin, and then sold it to Vera K Lee in 1945. Lee worked at the Annie Laurie Shop and later shared the residence with Carrie W. Stein. Stein was widowed by 1940 and lived with Lee until Royal and Loraine Lobotzke took ownership of the property in 1953. Royal was a supervisor at the Schlitz Brewery before passing in 1982. Loraine continued to live at the residence for many years and was known for her involvement in the Milwaukee County Historical Society's Women's Auxiliary.

VIII. ARCHITECT/BUILDER

Andrew J. Sheben

The permit records list "A. J. Sheben" as the builder. Research has indicated that this was Andrew J. Sheben, a carpenter and man of many apparent talents. Sheben was born in Prussia in 1848 and was present in Milwaukee by 1874 when he married Bridget Purcell. He consistently lived on the near south side and appears to have been a member of the St. Patrick Church (723 W Washington St.).

His career trajectory, as traced through census and directory records, is unusual. From 1875-1882 he is listed as a carpenter. For the next few years (1883-1887) he was involved in various livery-related positions, most often listed as a driver. By 1888, he had returned to carpentry, only to start a confectionery with his wife, Bridget, in 1889 and then return to carpentry in 1890. Bridget carried on the confectionery until at least 1891, at which point neither she nor the confectionery received further listing. Sheben appears to have kept up several of these businesses simultaneously in the late 1880s, as he made a claim against the city for "damage to a hack" for an extraordinary \$50. Comptroller records indicate that it was paid. By 1893 he had returned to livery as an "expressman" eventually creating the firm of Sheben & Son with his eldest son Joseph. Sheben died of a heart condition in 1898 (Ancestry.com).

Newspaper records indicate that he was affiliated with prominent architect Henry J. Van Ryn for a project involving a "cottage of five rooms" in 1889 (MJ 18 June 1889). The permit for subject two cottages was filed in October 1889. Unfortunately, there is nothing further to connect Van Ryn to these particular cottages and this brief mention is not enough for a formal attribution to Van Ryn. Van Ryn grew to fame later primarily for his work on schools. No other buildings could be readily attributed to Sheben. However, given his many years of listing as a carpenter or carpenter contractor in the directories and residential development practices of that

period, it is likely that dozens of homes could be attributed to him upon an extensive review of the city's permit records.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the William Spence-owned houses be given temporary historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-4, e-5, and e-8 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

e-4. Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.

e-5. Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

Criteria 4 and 5 are impossible to separate with reference to these two properties. These cottages are significant survivors of the type of worker housing that was being built at the end of the 19th century. Cornell scholars Gottfried and Jennings (2009) categorize this type of one-and-a-half-story gable-end cottage as typical of middle and working-class housing throughout the United States. It is this that they represent, as the housing of the middle-class and their housing during this era.

Few of these houses survive in the city and even fewer have local preservation protections. Most such surviving houses are in the unprotected Walker's Point and Lower East Side neighborhoods. The subject houses have higher integrity of design and higher design quality than most of the buildings in those comparable, unprotected areas. Apart from Garden Homes, this Commission has not tended to designate the homes of lower to middle socioeconomic status people. While it is clear that the owners and tenants of these properties would have never been considered poor, they do represent a different aspect of Milwaukee's history as a mostly blue-collar history that is different from what this Commission has traditionally recognized.

e-8. Its relationship to other distinctive areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on a historic, cultural, or architectural motif

The homes are of the same architectural design character as the rest of North Point South, but represent blue-collar home ownership, a history that has largely been erased in the neighborhood by redevelopment that started as early as the 1920s. These homes appear to have been excluded from the North Point South historic district by flimsy explanations that ignored historical data and the history of the neighborhood's development. The original surveyors may have been distracted by the recent construction of the Brittany House at 2260 N. Summit Avenue in 1966. The apartment buildings along Summit that separate the subject houses from North Point South are fully in character with other apartment buildings that were considered to contribute to the historic district. One large, intrusive building does not create a historic district boundary that holds weight under federal standards that were formalized in the mid-1990s, long after the original study of this area (Seifert 1997). Discontiguous designations are possible both under federal standards and our own.

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Preservation Guidelines

William Spence Houses 1 & 2

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the temporary historic designation of the William Spence Homes on Summit Avenue. The intent of the commission is to preserve the historic, existing exterior features of the building and guide any changes and restorations that might be done on the exterior.

Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. Any exterior changes including repair of ornamental trim but exclusive of routine painting will require a certificate of appropriateness. Most certificates are issued on a staff-approved basis and only major new construction or alteration requests typically will go before the Historic Preservation commission. The Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. The proliferation of gables and dormers is a major feature of the building's design and they are to be retained. The installation of skylights where they would be visible from the street are not permitted as they would have a negative impact on the building. Skylights, however, may be added to roof slopes if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. No changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, the roofline or its pitch. Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible at all from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. If the building gets re-roofed, consultation with historic preservation staff is required to review and approve the new roofing material, flashing, and gutters. The minimum standard for re-roofing is a 3-tab asphalt shingle. Very light colors or very dark colors such as black are not permitted. Architectural shingles are permitted. Proposed materials for re-roofing will be considered on a case-by-case basis as some of the products are not compatible with Victorian-era houses. Any new gutters should be of the half-round style as they function and look best on a house with crown moldings on the eaves. Should a satellite dish be installed it should be placed where it is not visible from the street, preferably at the rear northwest corner of the roof. Removal of the rooftop chimneys are not allowed as they are a dominant feature of the design of the house. No rooftop construction or addition is allowed, as this would have a negative impact on the historic character and proportions of the building. The construction of other rooftop features requires review by Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick or stone must not be painted or covered. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, etc.) is not allowed. No painting of the limestone foundation is permitted.
- b. Re-point defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width. See the masonry chapters in the books, As Good As New or Good For Business for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. Using much harder, contemporary Portland cement mortar will not make a lasting repair and can damage the historic brick and stone. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Do not use mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic

preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any re-pointing.

- c. In the future should masonry cleaning be necessary it should be done only with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high-pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (baking soda, nut shells, dry ice, etc.) on limestone, pressed brick or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. The use of accepted chemical products to clean masonry is allowed and a test panel is required before general commencement of the work. Work should be done by experienced individuals as the chemical cleaning process can have a negative impact on the masonry. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness are required before any cleaning would begin.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated masonry with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. The use of EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems), which is synthetic stucco, is not permitted. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. The character defining feature of this house is its use of wood for cladding and decorative detail. Do not remove architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.
- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated elements is encouraged rather than complete removal and replication. Structural wood epoxies are suggested for the lasting repair of damaged or decayed areas of wood and wood trim. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and material of the originals, including the species of wood.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings and original doors and windows within those openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore them to the original condition. Do not make additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Do not change the size or configuration of the original window panes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. The use of structural wood epoxies is strongly encouraged to repair any minor damage or decay to wood windows.
2. In the event any windows need to be replaced, consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to determine appropriate glazing patterns. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. New windows must be made of wood. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Basement windows have been covered with wood

panels and these can remain. If the wood covering were to be removed, the glass windows can be restored to their original appearance. Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. Where slider windows or new units have been previously installed they can remain. Any changes will require a Certificate of Appropriateness and appropriate wood windows.

Any original windows on the building must be retained and repaired if at all possible. Vinyl, vinyl clad, metal, and metal-clad or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted. Wood combination/storm screen units or fixed storm windows that fit the shape of the original opening are permitted. Any replacement doors must be appropriate to the historic period of the building. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed where they are visible from the street. If permitted, the doors or grates must be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for this type of installation.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing historic trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. A replacement feature must match the original member in terms of scale, design, color, appearance and wood species. Existing historic trim must not be removed unless it is for the purpose of repair. Spot repair is preferable to wholesale replacement of details. Wood epoxy repair is often highly desirable for permanently repairing smaller areas of decay or damage to wood trim. Repair can also be done to metal surfaces. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

Given that these houses occupy almost all of their respective lots, no additions will be permitted. The roof may not be removed or reconfigured to allow for an addition. Should a small addition be contemplated, approval shall be based upon its compatibility with the primary building in terms of window proportion and placement, building height, roof configuration, scale, design, color, and materials. Additions must be smaller than the original building and not obscure the historic building.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture on the front of the building or its lawn shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to assist in the selection of exterior fixtures. Plastic internally illuminated box signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, or fencing shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building. Should a fence be considered in the future examples of appropriate fencing can be found in As Good As New and Living With History. No retaining wall is permitted along the property. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before starting any work that would involve the landscape features, parking, walkways, or driveway.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. However, since these properties are almost landlocked on their sites, it is doubtful that any new construction will take place. These guidelines are included, however, to be consistent with the guidelines for all locally designated historic properties. Small-scale accessory structures, like a gazebo, garage/parking pad or fountain, may be permitted depending on their size, scale and form and the property's ability to accommodate such a structure. Any request to construct a new garage/parking pad would be subject to review for code compliance and appropriate design and would require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

1. Site work

New construction must respect the historic site and location of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to the historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the building. New construction is to be smaller in size and shorter in height than the historic building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the historic building as a freestanding structure.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic building should be compatible with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained and materials not available when the building was constructed should be avoided.

I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 11(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair. This would generally be in case of a major fire or a natural catastrophe.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

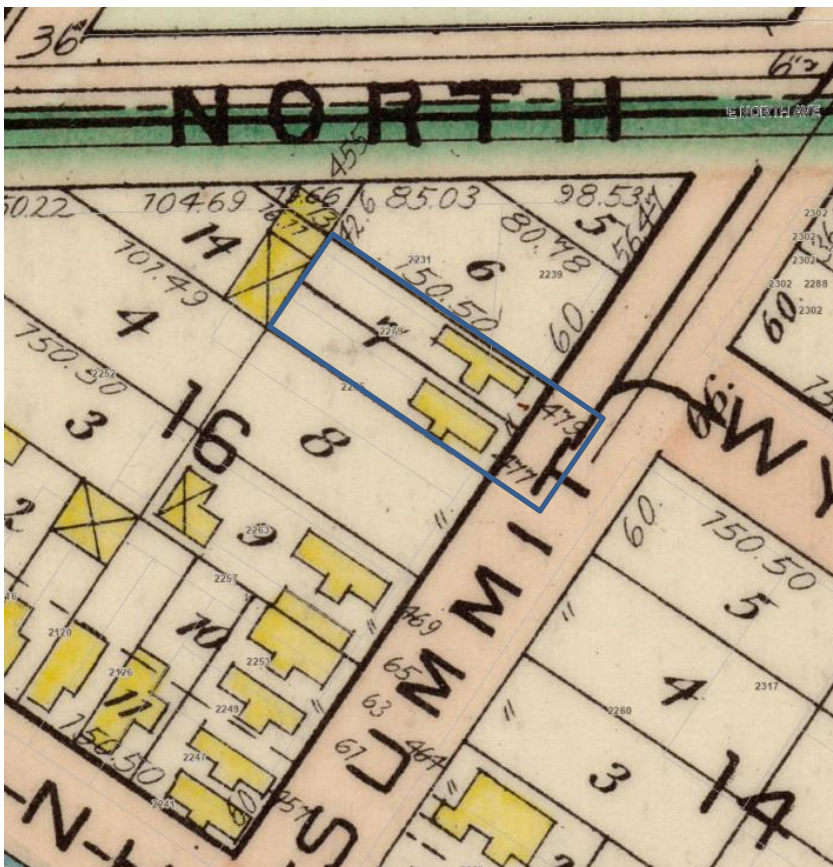
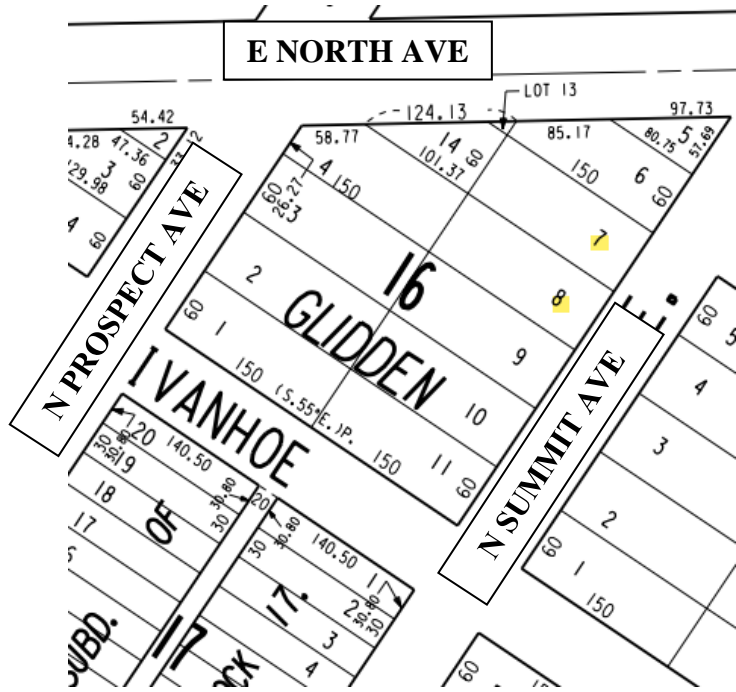
Consideration will be given to whether or not the building or portion of it contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.



1890 Baist's Property Atlas

2275 N Summit



2279 N Summit

