

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT
PLAQUE APPLICATION

HPC Meeting Date:
Ald. District 3 Ald. Nik Kovac
Staff Reviewer: Carlen Hatala

PROPERTY
Cornelius Leenhouts House
3118 North Marietta Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

OWNER/APPLICANT
Lynn Griffith
3118 North Marietta Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

PROPOSAL
Approval for a City of Milwaukee Historic Plaque for the above property

STAFF COMMENTS
The property at 3118 North Marietta Avenue is a contributing building in the Kenwood Park-Prospect Hill National Register Historic District that was listed March 7, 2002.

The house was constructed in 1908 and designed by notable Milwaukee architect Cornelius Leenhouts. It served as his residence from the time of construction until around 1931 when he moved to Fox Point. He died at his Fox Point home on January 14, 1935.

Cornelius Leenhouts (1864-1935) was born in Milwaukee, the son of Cornelius Leenhouts and Elizabeth Beckens. The Leenhouts family was of French Huguenot descent. The Leenhouts ancestors had fled to Holland in the sixteenth century to escape religious persecution. Cornelius Leenhouts, Sr. came to America and Milwaukee with his family in 1847. The young Cornelius was born in Milwaukee in 1864 and his siblings included Peter, Isaik, William and Jane.

Cornelius Jr. attended public schools after which he worked for three years as a student in the office of architect W. H. Parker, who was a graduate of Cornell University. City directories indicate that Leenhouts was working for local architect H. C. Koch as a draftsman by 1883. A published biography indicates that Leenhouts also worked for three years for local architect James Douglas and two years for E. T. Mix & Co. Between 1890 and 1896 city directories show he was employed as a draftsman for the local firm of Crane and Barkhausen. His biography indicates that he worked on drawings for the Agriculture and Transportation Buildings for the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1892. In 1897 Leenhouts went out on his own and formed a brief partnership with Frank J. Voith, who had worked with A. C. Clas from 1887 to 1893. The partnership ended with the untimely death of the twenty-eight-year-old Voith on January 26, 1899.

Leenhouts subsequently formed a partnership with High Guthrie that lasted until his own death at the age of 70 on January 14, 1935. The

firm became Leenhouts, Guthrie and Leenhouts with the inclusion of Leenhouts' son Willis in 1930.

The firm's offices were first located at the northeast corner of Broadway and East Wisconsin Avenue but in 1913 they relocated to larger quarters at 730 North Jefferson Street (razed). Leenhouts was a member of the Wisconsin chapter of the American Institute of Architects and of the national organization, was a charter member of the City Club, and was a member of various Masonic orders.

The partnership of Leenhouts and Guthrie produced many projects including a large number of small commercial buildings and residences on the North, East and West sides in a variety of Colonial, Tudor, Georgian, and Arts and Crafts styles. Some of their larger projects included a commercial building at 1213 North Water Street (1906), the Grand Avenue Methodist Church (1908, razed), the Milwaukee rescue Mission at 1023 North Fifth Street (1909, razed), the YMCA Building on Fourth Street (razed), the Milwaukee House of Correction (1913), the Kenwood Masonic Lodge at 2648 North Hackett Street (1915), the Weiss Funeral Home at 1901 North Farwell Avenue (1926). The firm also had designed about thirty large apartment buildings by 1922 including the Blackstone at 709 East Juneau Avenue (1915), the Leiland Apartments at 2244 North Prospect Avenue at the corner of Ivanhoe Place (1923) and the Georgian Court Apartments (now Lanterne Court Condominiums) at 2007-2011 North Prospect Avenue built for George F. O'Neil in 1917.

Leenhouts' daughter Sarah Elizabeth worked with her father's firm beginning in 1919. She worked as a draftsman through 1924, is listed as a student in 1925, and worked the following year as a draftsman for architect Thomas S. Van Alyea. She subsequently returned to Leenhouts and Guthrie once again, and was sometimes listed as a designer and sometimes as a draftsman. Information about her career after her father's death is somewhat sketchy, as she is alternately listed in the directories as designer, architect, or without an occupation. Her brother Willis joined the firm as a draftsman in 1922 or 1923 and also worked one year for Van Alyea in 1925. In 1930 Willis became a partner in the Leenhouts and Guthrie firm and worked at the Jefferson Street offices until the firm was dissolved upon his father's death in 1935. Willis subsequently worked for Harry W. Bogner in the Colby-Abbot Building and after World War II practiced with his architect-wife Lillian.

Cornelius Leenhouts lived at a number of locations over the course of his life. He lived with other family members at the northwest corner of North 21st and Brown Streets through 1885 (razed), at the rear of 468 10th Street 1887-1889 (old number, razed), 458 8th Street from 1890-1892 (old number now Hillside Housing), 626/628 17th Street from 1893-1907 (old number, razed). He moved to the new house he designed at today's 3118 North Marietta in 1908 and lived there through 1930 after which he moved to 7828 North Beach Drive in Fox Point. He died there on January 14, 1935.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Recommend that HPC support the installation of the plaque.