



**PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT**

**ST. MARCUS PARSONAGE / MATHIS HOUSE**

**212 EAST NORTH AVENUE**

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

## PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

### I. NAME

Historic: **St. Marcus Parsonage**

Common Name: **Mathis House**

### II. LOCATION **212 East North Avenue**

**Legal Description -** Tax Key No. 322-0241-100  
JOHN B A KERN'S SUBD in SE 1 /4 SEC 17-2-22  
LOTS 11 & 12 & E 16' LOT 13

### III. CLASSIFICATION **Site**

### IV. OWNER **Colleen Mathis Christian/Colleen Mathis (Apparent heir to estate) 3391 N. 22<sup>nd</sup> Street Milwaukee, WI 53206**

**City of Milwaukee**

**ALDERMAN** **Ald. Milele Coggs, 6<sup>th</sup> Aldermanic District**

**NOMINATOR** **LuAnn Paul, 2430 N. Hubbard Street**

### V. YEAR BUILT **1926 (permit number 14452 dated June 11, 1926)**

**ARCHITECT:** **Hugo C. Haeuser (permit number 14452 dated June 11, 1926)**

### VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The former St. Marcus Parsonage is located at the northwest corner of East North Avenue and North Hubbard Street in the John B. A. Kern Subdivision. The original parcel on which the parsonage was built consisted of a 46 foot by 100 foot lot with an additional 16 feet from the adjacent lot to the west. The current 108 foot by 100 foot parcel is the result of the purchase of the corner lot, once addressed at 222 E. North Avenue. The house on that lot was demolished around 1971. Both properties are now under one tax key. The neighborhood is predominantly residential in character with houses dating from the 1880s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with styles including the Queen Anne, Victorian Gothic and Arts and Crafts. The houses along the north side of North Avenue tended to be large and showy examples of their styles, although many have been demolished or unsympathetically remodeled. Most of the houses are of frame construction so the St. Marcus parsonage stands out due to its brick exterior. Some corner commercial buildings were constructed along the south side of North Avenue. A number have been demolished, a few remain. A new restaurant building has recently been completed at the southwest corner of Palmer Street and E. North Avenue.

The St. Marcus Parsonage building is a two story, hip roofed, brick veneered house with elements of the Prairie and Gothic Revival styles. It was built in 1926. The house is set back from the city sidewalk a number of feet and features foundation plantings. There is a slight berm to the front yard and four concrete steps and a concrete walk lead to the front porch. The

## VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The St. Marcus Parsonage is significant as a fine, and previously undocumented example of the work of prominent Milwaukee church architect Hugo Haeuser. The parsonage was constructed about a block away from the congregation's main campus of buildings, located at the northwest corner of N. Palmer Street and E. Garfield Avenue. Haeuser cleverly designed the parsonage to fit into its residential setting. Not overtly religious in appearance, the parsonage reads as a large residence with features of both the Prairie style and the Gothic Revival. It would be at home in most of the North Point neighborhoods. The parsonage is made of the high quality materials, brick, stone, leaded glass, detailed Gothic porch, for which Haeuser was known. Haeuser designed over 300 churches in his career, many of which were for Lutheran congregations, the denomination in which he was raised, and he also designed additions and alterations to churches designed by other architects.

## VIII. HISTORY

### St. Marcus Congregation

The St. Marcus Congregation has been associated with Brewers Hill from its inception. Although the plat of Sherman's Addition (most of it now part of the Brewers Hill Historic District) was recorded in 1837, making it one of the earlier subdivisions in the city, the neighborhood experienced only sparse settlement until the first portion of the Rock River Canal was constructed along with a dam across the Milwaukee River in 1842. The resulting flour mills and sawmills that located along the canal attracted hundreds of workers and soon there were tanneries and breweries in the vicinity as well. Many of those business owners and workers settled in Sherman's Addition building their own dwellings. Investors also purchased lots and constructed rental cottages and houses in the neighborhood that came to be known as Brewers Hill. By the 1870s the population in the area had grown to a critical mass and churches began to be established. A Catholic monastery was established in 1869 between 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, Brown and Reservoir Streets, and a parish followed known as St. Francis of Assisi. Its first church was built in 1870. In 1865 a Czech/Bohemian Catholic parish was established called St. Johannes de Nepomuc. Its 1859 rectory still stands on 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The Second German Methodist-Episcopal Church was established in 1865 and located on Third Street, then later at Second and Garfield. The Zion Evangelical Church was established in 1869 at Fifth and Walnut Streets. The German Evangelical Trinity Church, a Moravian or Brethren's Church that reorganized as an independent Lutheran church, was organized in 1865 and built a church at Sixth and Vine Streets. Christ Church was a mission church that built at the corner of Fifth and Walnut in the late 1850s then relocated to Fourth between Walnut and Vine in 1873.

St. Marcus Congregation was established in 1875. Its founding members included laborers, skilled tradesmen and a professional gardener. The surnames, Harrass (or Harras), Puestrow, Helm, Erdmann, Krueger, Engel, Bismark, and Jeske, among other, show that these individuals were of German ethnicity and city directories indicate that they lived and worked in the greater Brewers Hill area. After some informational meetings, Ferdinand Harras was elected as president on June 13, 1875. Their first service was held on July 4 of that year. Soon thereafter, the congregation purchased a frame school building at the northwest corner of Garfield and Palmer Streets from St. John's Lutheran. St. John's was the oldest congregation of the Wisconsin Synod, having been established in 1848. Located at Fourth and Highland at the time, St. John's erected a branch school at Garfield and Palmer Streets in 1873 as it was outgrowing its old location. The new congregation purchased this school building from St. John's with the stipulation that they join the Wisconsin Synod. The congregation resolved to adopt the name "German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of St. Mark." A teacher named J. B. Denninger was hired to organize a school, but he left after a short tenure. An organ was purchased and a choir was organized in 1875. Late in the year reverend Westenberger of Prairie du Chien was hired as pastor and he had the school building converted into a sanctuary. The first service in their own church was held in January, 1876.

spelled Beneree) and his wife Elna on August 11, 1969. Reverend Benefree was in charge of the Episcopal Diocese of Milwaukee. The Benefree's held ownership of the parsonage for only a brief time and sold the building to Edward and Louise Mathis on November 10, 1971. The house next door, addressed at 222 E. North Avenue/2307 N. Hubbard Street, was demolished around 1973, and it appears that the city of Milwaukee sold the lot to the Mathis's in 1979. During their ownership, the Mathis's constructed a 12 by 12 foot storage shed in what was now their side yard for \$400 in 1985 and clad the dormers in vinyl siding in 1991 for \$6,361. (Deeds Reel 493:Image1350; Reel 622 Image 575; Reel 1214 Image 323; Permit records, City Directories)

Edward Q. Mathis died on August 26, 1999. Louise Mathis died December 6, 2003. (Social Security Death Index) The property was owned by their estate/descendants. It has been vacant for a number of years and has recently been acquired by the city for delinquent taxes on July 20, 2009. The Department of Neighborhood Services started a raze file on the property on March 31, 2009. There have been numerous service requests to clean up garbage and debris, high weeds and grass, to board up the house, to get rid of squatters living in the house, and violation orders have included repairing gutters, downspouts, doors, windows and painting as well as repairing service walk steps, replacing missing bricks, repairing the garage and so on. It was concern over potential demolition that prompted the nominator, LuAnn Paul, a neighborhood resident, to file the petition for interim designation.

## THE ARCHITECT

Hugo Haeuser (1882-1951) was nationally prominent in the field of church design. He made a specialty of Gothic and Neo-Gothic Revival style buildings and reportedly designed more than 300 churches across the United States. His trademark materials were lannon stone from the quarries in the Lannon/Sussex Wisconsin area and red tile roofs, often by Ludowici. Unless required to use brick or frame, Haeuser would ship Wisconsin lannon stone to his projects around the country. Local examples of his churches include Our Savior's Lutheran, 3022 W. Wisconsin Avenue; St. John's Lutheran, 7809 Harwood Avenue in Wauwatosa; Luther Memorial, 2840 S. 84<sup>th</sup> Street in West Allis, Christ United Church of Christ, 915 E. Oklahoma and Pentecost Evangelical Lutheran Church at 5226 W. Burleigh Street.

Hugo Haeuser was born in Milwaukee on January 14, 1882 and attended West Division High School. After graduation he worked from 1898 to 1904 as an apprentice architect and draftsman for the prestigious Milwaukee architectural firm of Ferry and Clas. Between 1905 and 1918 he worked as chief draftsman for the prominent firm of Alexander C. Eschweiler & Co. During the years of World War I when the Eschweilers were in military service, Haeuser served as the firm's chief designer. He is known to have designed some houses on Lake Drive during this time as well as the first pagoda style filling station for Wadhams Oil. The senior member of the firm, Alexander C. Eschweiler might have participated in the design of the Wadhams prototype, but Haeuser continued to receive commissions from Wadhams for most of their stations once he had set up his own practice in 1919. His offices were located at 759 N. Milwaukee Street from 1919 through 1945 then moved to 2051 W. Wisconsin from 1946 through 1951.

Haeuser was known to have been an admirer of architect Ralph Adams Cram who had offices in both New York and Boston. Like Cram, Haeuser had a love for the art and philosophy of Gothic architecture but did design in other styles like the Colonial Revival for the Christian Science churches in Waukesha and Ft. Atkinson. Haeuser was called upon to design auxiliary spaces for existing churches as well and did additions for such congregations as Epiphany Lutheran Church (All People's Gathering Lutheran Church)( locally designated January 18, 2000).

Haeuser was a master of architectural detail and particularly demanding about the quality of the stonework that went into his buildings. His son recalls many field trips to construction sites where his father would critique the quality of the work and actually pick up tools to show masons exactly how the stone should be laid. A multi-talented man, Haeuser designed the leaded and stained glass windows (which were manufactured by Milwaukee art glass companies) and light fixtures for

Social Security Death Index. Online Index <http://ssdi.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/ssdi.cgi>

Wisconsin Architectural Archive. Architect Biography Card for Hugo Haeuser.

## **IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the St. Marcus Parsonage/Mathis House be given permanent historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-5, e-6 and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

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

Rationale: The St. Marcus Parsonage/Mathis House is a fine example of a large, well-crafted parsonage building that exhibits characteristics of both the Prairie and the Gothic Revival styles. The Prairie style is evident in the shirtwaist proportions, the horizontal emphasis of the stone beltcourse and the broad, monolithic hip roof. Gothic features include the front porch and corner buttresses. The front porch is the signature feature of the building, with highly detailed and ornamental bargeboards and timberwork framing that is reminiscent of English design. It plays off against the simpler body of the house in a manner that shows its architect was a masterful designer.

- e-6. Its identification as the work of an artist, architect, craftsperson or master builder whose individual works have influenced the development of the city of Milwaukee, state of Wisconsin, or of the United States.

Rationale: Architect Hugo Haeuser had national prominence as a church designer. He trained in the studios of Milwaukee's best architects of his day and went on to design over 300 churches, many in the Midwest and Wisconsin, and many for Lutheran congregations. Haeuser also designed auxiliary buildings and additions to existing churches, as the St. Marcus Congregation Parsonage. The parsonage was built away from the main church campus and used different color brick and because it was set between existing houses, it combined both secular and ecclesiastic details. His preference for Gothic design is evident in the outstanding porch at the St. Marcus Parsonage. His insistence on expert craftsmanship in construction is also evident in this commission.

- e-9. Its unique location as a singular physical characteristic, which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city of Milwaukee.

Rationale: The former St. Marcus Parsonage stands out among the other houses on East North Avenue. Its size, masonry construction and bold Gothic detail are unique among the surrounding buildings from earlier decades.

## **X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**

experienced individuals. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before any cleaning would begin.

- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Do not use new material that is inappropriate for the time period when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry. The masonry portion of the front porch and the brick knee walls flanking the front steps may not be removed or covered over with other material. The front porch may not be enclosed or altered from its historic appearance.

## 2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. 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. Do not cover architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Ornamental wood details, from the front porch bargeboards to the front oriel window and elsewhere may not be removed or altered except to restore their appearance. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated bargeboards, timberwork, porch ceilings, and other wood elements is encouraged rather than complete removal and replication. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and wood species of the original. Retain rear airing porch with its brackets and tongue-in-groove soffit. New railings can follow examples in Living With History and require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

## C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore 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 windowpanes 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.
2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design and material of the original window sash or door. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures (garden sheds, storage sheds, and gazebos) shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building and requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. Any rear deck or patio installation requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. No retaining wall is permitted along the front of the property. The current chain link fence may remain. If replacement is considered, new fencing will follow the examples in Living With History and As Good As New. The current concrete driveway was placed in its location before the acquisition of the lot to the east. It may remain. Any changes to the location of the drive will require consultation with preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness. The garage at the rear of the property was built shortly after the parsonage and is part of this nomination. Work on the garage, such as roofing, new garage doors, masonry repair and so on will require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before starting any work that would involve the landscape features, the position of the driveway and service walks and new construction.

#### 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. No principal dwelling or structure shall be constructed in the rear yard. Small-scale accessory structures, like a gazebo or fountain, may be permitted depending on their size, scale and form and the property's ability to accommodate such a structure. No large, multi unit residential or commercial, industrial, office, medical or religious development can be built in the east, side yard. A single family house had once stood on that site; it was later converted to multi-family. Any request to construct a new garage or small scale single family house, or moving an existing historic house to the site would be subject to review for code compliance and appropriate design and would require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

##### 1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting 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 a 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 building as a freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and receded from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic building if they are in close proximity to it.

##### 4. Materials

212 E North Avenue  
 St. Marcus Parsonage  
 July 2009



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Department of City Development AT