



# Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District

PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT

CCF 240423

AUGUST 2024

**GRAND AVENUE APARTMENTS  
PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT  
AND PRESERVATION GUIDELINES  
AUGUST 2024**

**PROPERTY NAME**

Historic: Grand Avenue/West Wisconsin Avenue  
Common: Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District

**LOCATION**

Addresses: 3120 W. Wisconsin Ave., 3200 W. Wisconsin Ave., 3212 W.  
Wisconsin Ave., & 3226 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
Classification: District

**Under s. 320-21-9-c of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances, this district was reviewed for its effect on low- and moderate-income housing within its boundaries. To the knowledge of staff only one of the buildings is presently occupied as housing. The historic designation will not have a negative effect on low- and moderate-income housing.**

**NOMINATION DETAILS**

Owner: 3120 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
AJ FRANKLIN LLC  
200 W. Main Street  
Waukesha, WI 53186

3200 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
MODERN CITY DEVELOPMENT, LLC  
PO BOX 341531  
Milwaukee, WI 53234

3212 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
BWB AMHERST PROPERTIES LLC  
PO BOX 691  
Dayton, OH 45409

3226 W. Wisconsin Ave.  
BWB AMHERST PROPERTIES LLC  
PO BOX 691  
Dayton, OH 45409

Nominator: Laura Sue Mosier  
Aldersperson: Ald. Robert Bauman, 4<sup>th</sup> District

## DISTRICT DATA

YEARS BUILT 1903-1923  
ARCHITECTS Ferry and Clas, Rosman and Wierdsma, Leiser and Holst  
STYLES Neoclassical/Beaux Arts, Arts & Crafts, Tudor Revival

## GENERAL CHARACTER

The Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District consists of four apartment buildings consisting of three purpose-built apartment buildings and one single-family residential property that has been subsequently altered for use as a rooming house/apartments. The buildings range in date of construction from 1903 to 1923 and cover a period of transition along West Wisconsin Avenue away from the grand single-family “country estates” constructed in the 1870s-1910s towards the development of apartment buildings in the 1910s-1920s. Three of the properties in this historic district were constructed on undeveloped property, while the Glen Gables Apartments, 3226 W. Wisconsin Ave., was redeveloped from one of the many grand estates along the avenue. The buildings all have a substantial setback from W. Wisconsin Ave. of between fifty and fifty-five feet and contain large front lawns with a mix of landscaping material. All of the buildings are on large lots that extend at least one hundred and eighty-five feet north from W. Wisconsin Avenue. The large buildings range in height from two-and-one-half story to four stories tall. To the east of the historic district is an apartment building dating to the mid-1980s, which does not fit with the character of the other properties. To the west is a vacant lot that previously contained an apartment building that was demolished in the mid-1960s. Marquette University High School is south of the historic district and single-family and duplexes in the Concordia neighborhood are to the north. The historic district represents an intact cluster of grand early-20<sup>th</sup> century apartment buildings along W. Wisconsin Avenue.

## HISTORY

The following detailed history of Grand Avenue/W. Wisconsin Avenue was written by HPC staff for the Historic Designation Study Report for the Pettibone/White House, located at 2051 W. Wisconsin Avenue, just east of the subject properties:

West Wisconsin Avenue today is a busy traffic arterial characterized by commercial buildings, churches, schools, apartment buildings and residences. During the early settlement period it was a thoroughfare that connected with the

Blue Mound Road at its west end and provided access out of the city. Originally, Wisconsin Avenue was not a continuous thoroughfare. The portion west of 8th Street did not connect with the Wisconsin Avenue east of 8th Street. An insurmountable 60-foot high bluff west of 5th Street required west bound travelers to jog over from Wisconsin Avenue to Michigan Street and then climb the hill at 8th Street in order to proceed westward. This separation created a unique and somewhat secluded neighborhood atop the hill. Early on, this hilltop was the location of large land holdings, held by investors who waiting for the city to expand westward. West Wisconsin Avenue became one of the prestige thoroughfares, attracting the very well to do such as Alexander Mitchell, Harrison Ludington and John Plankinton. Over time, the estates were subdivided as more and more upper income residents wanted to live along the thoroughfare. Intense construction of expensive housing occurred in the 1880s and 1890s. Eventually, the name changed from its original Spring Street designation to Grand Avenue, reflecting the elite quality of the area. Grand Avenue was eventually renamed West Wisconsin Avenue.

Discussions were held as early as 1848 about developing a monumental boulevard on Wisconsin Avenue. It was at this time that Wisconsin Avenue was cut through from 5th to 8th Streets. When that monumental road project was completed it was discovered that Wisconsin Avenue did not meet up with the earlier road atop the hill but ran parallel to it to 11th Street where the two streets joined into one. Rather than eliminate one of the roads, it was envisioned that a monumental boulevard, 150 feet wide, would extend from 8th to 34th Streets and enhance the luxury estates being established there. The ambitious scheme was never realized, most likely due to its cost.

By 1877, the now Grand Avenue, was described as a park-like thoroughfare: “lined with heavy shade trees...and fronted on either hand by elegant residences and carefully kept grounds...at the west end of the thoroughfare [the grounds] are observed to be much more extensive, giving opportunity for the display of skill in landscape gardening...the absence of division fences,...making the avenue to seemingly pass through one immense and elegant park.”<sup>1</sup>

Although the entire roadway was never officially laid out as a divided roadway under the overview of the Milwaukee Parks Board as was Newberry Boulevard or McKinley Boulevard, it did get classified as a “boulevard” under city ordinances. That allowed for traffic controls and other restrictions in order to maintain the street’s character and bar heavy trucking for example. That character began to erode with the introduction of non-residential development.

By the dawn of the 20th century, commercialization was spreading westward from the heart of the Central Business District. Likewise, educational institutions like Marquette University began to make their appearance. The opening of the Wisconsin Avenue viaduct in 1911 provided a more convenient way to cross the

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<sup>1</sup> *Milwaukee Illustrated* 1877, pp. 21-24

Menomonee Valley and access portions of the West Side as well as Wauwatosa. Traffic along the thoroughfare increased. Zoning laws instituted in 1920 allowed and encouraged multi-family housing and commercial development that was already occurring. As they saw their neighborhood change, wealthy individuals began to leave their mansions in favor of more “secure” neighborhoods in the Upper East Side. Health care facilities started buying up the large mansions and eventually replace them with larger buildings. Apartment buildings replaced old mansions as health care workers and educational workers and students needed places to live. Large houses became fraternity and sorority houses; many were converted into rooming houses. Large clubhouses for fraternal organizations also found a home on the avenue in the 1920s.

Despite the changes, there was still a strongly rooted perception of Wisconsin Avenue as being more elite and having a certain cachet that other streets lacked. The apartment buildings constructed here tended to be larger and more highly embellished and there developed the largest concentration of courtyard style apartments and high rise apartments in the city. This perception greatly diminished during the Great Depression and after World War II. Filling stations which started showing up at commercial nodes like 27th Street and 35th Street began to appear. In recent decades, fast food restaurants and convenience stores and even a car wash have replaced many of the remaining large houses. In some instances, commercial fronts were added to the facades of former mansions. Facilities for the treatment of drug and alcohol abuse and emotional disorders have come to occupy some of the more modest remaining residential structures. Others became offices for attorneys.<sup>2</sup>

As referenced in the above history of Grand Avenue/W. Wisconsin Avenue, the apartment buildings constructed on the avenue tended to be larger and more highly embellished due to the prestige of the avenue. The Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District contains three purpose-built properties and one grand single-family building that has been used as an apartment since the early-1940s.

Of the four properties in the historic district, the Sherburn Sanborn house, 3212 W. Wisconsin Ave. (3210 Grand Avenue, old), is the only property not originally constructed as an apartment. Sherburn Sanborn was born in Bath, New Hampshire, on September 15, 1834. After being educated in his home state, he relocated to Milwaukee in 1854 to accept a position as a clerk. In 1862, Sanborn began employment with the Chicago and Milwaukee railroad, where he would spend the remainder of his career. The railroad incorporated as part of the Chicago & Northwestern system in 1866.<sup>3</sup> He married Eliza Vilas Cary in 1870 and the couple had two daughters that survived childhood, Mabel (1875-1961) and Jessie (1877-1962). The Sanborn family lived in Winona, Minnesota, and Chicago, Illinois, before

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<sup>2</sup> City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report, Pettibone/White House." 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Watrous, Jerome A. *Memoirs of Milwaukee County: From the Earliest Historical Times Down to the Present, Including a Genealogical and Biographical Record of Representative Families in Milwaukee County, Volume 2*, 659.

returning to Milwaukee prior to 1900. He rose through the ranks of the railroad through his 31-year employment, holding successive roles of clerk, ticket agent, general agent, division supervisor, assistant general supervisor, and general supervisor before retiring as the assistant general manager of the railroad in 1902.<sup>4</sup> Following his retirement, he hired the elite Milwaukee architectural firm of Ferry & Clas to design a residence for his family in 1903. The permit for the house from May of that year indicated a cost of \$12,000 for the house. The Sanborn family resided in the house until relocating to Shepherd Avenue in 1911. The family moved west to Pasadena, California, prior to 1915.<sup>5</sup>

The family of August C. and Elizabeth Cudahy Beck moved into 3210 Grand Avenue in 1911. Beck was the president of the August C. Beck Company, a lumber firm that produced manufactured packing boxes and hardwood flooring. By 1919, the Beck family had moved to Terrace Avenue and home was briefly occupied by the John W. and Clara (née Stark) Kieckhefer family. Kieckhefer was the president of the Kieckhefer Box Company and following a merger with Weyerhaeuser Timber Company in 1957, one of the wealthiest men in America. The house had a series of occupants from 1923 until 1927 when it was purchased by Charles M. and Mary Klien Tiernan. Tiernan was a superintendent in the reclamation business. The family lived in the house until 1939. In October 1939, Mrs. Emma Fichtner obtained a permit to occupy the residence as a 12-unit rooming house. Since 1940, the property has served as an apartment building much like the three other purpose-built apartments in the historic district.

The Hudson Flats Apartment Building is located at 3200 W. Wisconsin Avenue (3200/3202 Grand Ave., old), just to the east of the Sanborn House. This 12-unit apartment building was designed by Leiser & Holst, a Milwaukee firm that designed numerous apartment buildings, churches, commercial buildings, and residences throughout the city and who worked in the popular architectural styles of the day. The building had a cost of \$44,000 when the permit was issued in October 1907. Though the earliest purpose-built apartment in this historic district, it was already one of thirty found along W. Wisconsin Avenue when it was constructed.<sup>6</sup> Charles Kort oversaw carpentry on the building and Henry Schmidt oversaw the masonry. The building was developed by Abraham H. Esbenshade (May 28, 1849 – December 26, 1914).

Esbenshade was born in Paradise, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania to Samuel and Elizabeth Esbenshade. Abraham first appears in Milwaukee directories in 1878, where is listed as living on Fourth Street just south of Grand Ave. and working as a salesman. The majority of his career was spent at F. Westphal & Company, a file manufacturer, where he worked his way up to treasurer of the company. He married Alice Platto in 1884 and the couple had two children. The Esbenshades later resided in a grand Queen Anne house at 3119 W. Wells Street, located four lots north of the Hudson Flats Apartments. By 1909,

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<sup>4</sup> Ancestry.com. *U.S., Chicago and North Western Railroad Employment Records, 1935-1970*. [https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6944/images/43910\\_520307001\\_0224-01765?pId=519955](https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/6944/images/43910_520307001_0224-01765?pId=519955). Accessed July 12, 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Conlynn Goetsch, "S. Sanborn Residence." Wisconsin Historical Society Determination of Eligibility Form. Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, 5.

<sup>6</sup> Shannon Dolan. "Hudson Flats Apartment Building" Wisconsin Historical Society Determination of Eligibility Form. Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, 14.

Alice Esbenshade had died and Abraham was listed as living in the Hudson Flats building. He would reside there until his death in 1914.

Building permit applications to construct the Franklin Arms Apartment Building, 3120-3128 W. Wisconsin (3120/3128 Grand Avenue, old) and Glen Gables Apartments, 3226 West Wisconsin Avenue (3226 Grand Avenue, old), were pulled within a month of each other in June and July of 1923, respectively. The Franklin Arms Apartment Building is the largest building in the historic district, consisting of a U-shaped, four-story, 58-unit courtyard apartment constructed on vacant triple-sized corner lot. The building cost an estimated \$170,000 when permits were issued in June 1923. The courtyard apartment was an apartment form popular in Milwaukee following World War I and offered the benefits of allowing air, light and pleasant views to apartments.<sup>7</sup> The property owner listed on the permit was Charles B. Danielson (1885-1947). Danielson was a Milwaukee native, born to Norwegian parents Bernhard J. and Caroline Danielson. Though he is listed as living and working as a book keeper in Milwaukee in the 1905 census, Charles briefly lived in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where he worked as a clerk and where he married Elizabeth Storr in 1906. He appears back in Milwaukee directories as of 1907, where he is listed as being a carpenter, contractor, or builder in subsequent directories. By the 1920s he was working independently as a general contractor, which he continued into the 1940s.

The Glen Gables Apartments are a twelve-unit, three-story apartment building located at 3226 West Wisconsin Avenue (3226 Grand Avenue, old). The building had a cost of \$51,000 when the permit was issued in July 1923. The building is clad with red brick and designed in the Arts and Crafts style. No architect is listed on the building permit, though it may have been designed by the property owner, Simon Newman Loftus (1888-1963). Loftus was born in Milwaukee to Patrick H. and Elizabeth A. Loftus. His father worked as a superintendent of construction for Chicago & North Western Railway. Simon Loftus was listed in city directories as working variously as a clerk, in sales, or primarily as a tailor prior to 1920. He married Martha Sybil Zimmer in 1913 and the couple had one daughter. By the 1920s, Loftus was listed in directories as a general contractor. Census records show the family had relocated to Brookfield by 1930, where Loftus was listed as a civil engineer. In addition to the Glen Gables Apartments, Loftus is known to have constructed the Simon Loftus Apartments, 2557 N. Terrace Ave., in the North Point North Historic District in 1927. It is unknown at this time how many apartments or other buildings he may have constructed in Milwaukee.

## DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS

### **Franklin Arms Apartment Building (1923)**

**3120-3128 W. Wisconsin Ave (3120/3128 Grand Avenue, old)**

#### **Rosman and Wierdsma**

Franklin Arms Apartment, 3120 W Wisconsin, is a four-story, U-shaped luxury courtyard apartment building designed by Rosman & Wierdsman. The building is lightly decorated but shows modest elements of the Tudor Revival style, an English architectural style that

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<sup>7</sup> Emily Pettis. "Franklin Arms Apartment Building." Wisconsin Historical Society Determination of Eligibility Form. Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, 14.



was highly popular in the United States in the 1900s through 1920s. The courtyard-style apartment was popular in Milwaukee, particularly after World War I, and found in large numbers, along W. Wisconsin Avenue.

The building is set back from W. Wisconsin on a large, grassy lawn with mature trees and diagonal sidewalks that connect the sidewalk to the building. The building is clad in tan brick with limestone accents. The building has a castellated parapet with decorative limestone banding and floral panels above the fourth story. There are two entrances in the courtyard with pointed arch limestone surrounds. The primary (south) façade is symmetrical and contains the two arms of the apartment and recessed courtyard. Each of the arms contains a slightly projecting center bay or two paired six-over-one windows flanked by paired windows. Each bay of the courtyard portion of the façade steps out slightly and contains both single and paired windows.

The secondary façade facing west on N. 32<sup>nd</sup> Street continues the decorative elements found on the primary façade with limestone bands and panels, decorative brickwork, and slightly projecting bays. The eastern façade is clad with the tan brick for the first third of the façade, before a lesser quality cream brick for the back two-thirds. The decorative elements are also eliminated on the back two-thirds. The north (rear) façade is clad with common cream brick and is void of the decorative elements found on the primary facades. The penthouse level is visible from this façade, as is a large brick chimney. The rear yard is paved and used for parking.

#### ARCHITECTS

**Rosman and Wierdsma** designed the Franklin Arms Apartment Building in 1923. Miner R. Rosman (1884-1940) and Oliver W. Wierdsma (1893-1978) operated in partnership from 1919 through 1930. Miner Rosman was born in Whitewater and graduated from Beloit College before relocating to Milwaukee in 1904. He worked as a draftsman for the local firm of Leenhouts and Guthrie early in his career. Oliver Wierdsma was a Milwaukee native who also worked as a draftsman for Leenhouts and Guthrie in his early architectural career. The pair left their employer and established their own firm in 1919. The firm “played a significant role in the development of large, period revival style apartment buildings, a building type that reached its apogee in Milwaukee during the 1920's.”<sup>8</sup> Among their other notable works are Roosevelt Arms Apartments (1924, 2324 W. Wisconsin Ave.), Commerce Building (1923, 828 N. Broadway), the Knickerbocker Hotel (1929, 1028 E. Juneau Ave.), Biltmore Apartment Hotel (demolished), and Marquette Apartments (1926, 1628 W. Wisconsin Ave.). The loss of commissions during the Great Depression led to the dissolution of the firm in 1930. Rosman subsequently worked out of small offices and briefly formed a new partnership with Robert H. Smith in 1939 as Rosman and Smith, before his death in 1940. Wierdsma relocated to Oconomowoc and founded Oliver Construction Company, a firm responsible for the construction of the

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<sup>8</sup> City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report, Biltmore Apartment Hotel," 6.



Waukesha County Courthouse and Waukesha County Technical Institute. Wierdsma died at age 84 in 1978.

### **Hudson Flats Apartment Building (1907)**

**3200 West Wisconsin Avenue (3200/3202 Grand Avenue, old)**

**Leiser and Holst, architects**

The Hudson Flats Apartment Building is a 12-unit, three-story symmetrical building with rectangular plan. The building was designed by the Leiser & Holst and had an estimated cost of \$44,000 when the building permit was issued in 1907. The building is an example of a flat apartment building designed in the Neo-Classical Revival style, an architectural style popular in the United States following the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893.

The building is clad with a red brick and sits on a raised basement. A large two-story entrance is supported by fluted columns. The capitals on both columns are missing, leaving a notable gap before the frieze. The entrance consists of a partially infilled doorway with modern door. Above the entrance is embossed "Hudson" set in a decorative door surround. The entry has a flat roof with decorative frieze and dentil cornice. The second story porch has a decorative rail that resembles a Chippendale design. Brick quoins are found on the second and third levels of the building. The roof has a large brick parapet, overhanging cornice with modillions, and brick cap. The windows are one-over-one double-hung sash.

The secondary street façade along N. 32<sup>nd</sup> Street is also ornately decorated and continues the detailing found on the primary façade. The first floor has brick belt courses, a stone belt course separates the first and upper floors. A secondary entrance is located about two-thirds of the way back and is set within a slightly recessed bay with a metal barrel tile shed roof over a cornice with three modillions. The entry has a brick round arch opening on the second floor and one-over-one window with a brick jack arch on the third story. The entry contains a large door hood embossed with "Hudson." A brick round arch opening is located above the entrance. The western façade and north façade are more utilitarian, are lacking the architectural detailing found on the street facades, and are clad with a common brick.

#### ARCHITECTS

**Leiser and Holst** designed the Hudson Flats Apartment Building in 1907. The firm was operated by Milwaukee natives Julius Leiser (1875-1930) and Charles J.F. Holst (1876-1924). Leiser's architectural career began at the age of 15, apprenticing for Gustave Leipold. He briefly worked for Josslyn & Taylor in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, before returning to Milwaukee to work as a draftsman for Fred Graf. He briefly partnered with Frank H. Mueller in 1898. Holst worked for Uehling & Linde before partnering with Leiser in 1903. The firm operated their office out of the Germania/Brumder Building from 1903 through 1924, the duration of their partnership. The firm designed numerous apartment buildings, churches, commercial buildings, and residences, with commissions almost exclusively found in the City of Milwaukee. The firm worked in popular architectural styles, including Tudor

Revival, Colonial Revival, Craftsman, and Prairie.<sup>9</sup> Among the designs from the firm are the St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Kirche (1913, 2205 N. Palmer), Faith Lutheran Church (1922, 1000 S. Layton Blvd.), Frank and Ella Hochmuth House (1928, 5231 W. Washington Blvd.), and Dr. Frank C. Studley House (1908, 3528 N. Summit Ave.). Charles Holst died at a tuberculosis sanitarium in Colorado in 1924. Julius Leiser continued to practice architecture until his death in 1930.

### **Sherburn Sanborn Residence (1903)**

**3212 West Wisconsin Avenue (3212 Grand Avenue, old)**

**Ferry & Clas, architects**

The Sherburn Sanborn House, 3212 W. Wisconsin Ave., is a two-and-one-half story residence designed in the Arts and Crafts-style. The front-gabled house has a rectangular plan and is clad with red brick on the first two levels with faux half-timber infilled with stucco on the upper story. The primary (south) façade has a projecting bay on the western half, terminating with a brick gable featuring a diamond brick pattern. The bay is flanked by brick buttresses topped with curved limestone caps. A five-bay oriel window with six-over-one double-hung sash windows is found on the first floor of the bay, with a smaller opening with three six-over-one windows set in a segmental arch with brick keystone on the second story. To the east of the projecting bay, on the primary plain of the house, are bays with paired six-over-one double-hung windows on the first and second floors. The third story contains three four-over-one windows centered in a large gable with faux half-timbering and stucco infill. The entrance is located on the far eastern portion of the façade. The entry is located under a sweeping roof that extends down the height of the building. The entry has a small gable with paired square columns and entry stairs flanked by brick cheek walls with concrete caps.

#### ARCHITECTS

The house was designed by the noted architectural firm of **Ferry & Clas** and constructed in 1903. The partnership of George B. Ferry (February 7, 1851 – January 29, 1918) and Alfred Charles Clas (December 26, 1858 – July 8, 1942) began in 1890 and lasted until 1912. George Ferry was born and educated in Springfield, Massachusetts. He studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and began his architectural career in his hometown in 1872. He relocated to Milwaukee and established his practice there in 1881. Alfred Clas was born in Sauk City, Wisconsin. He was educated in his home city and subsequently apprenticed with an architect and undertook two years of instruction in building construction. Following a two year stint working in an architect's office in Stockton, California, Clas returned to Milwaukee in 1880. He worked as a draftsman and architect in the offices of James Douglas in the 1880s before partnering with George Ferry in 1890. During their twenty-two year partnership, the firm designed many major architectural projects in the city including Milwaukee Public Library and Museum (1895, 814 W. Wisconsin Ave.), the Northwestern National Insurance Company Headquarters (1906, 526

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<sup>9</sup> Shannon Dolan. "Hudson Flats Apartment Building" Wisconsin Historical Society Determination of Eligibility Form. Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, 15.

E. Wisconsin Ave.), the Frederick Pabst Mansion (1890-92, 2000 W. Wisconsin Ave.), and the Milwaukee Auditorium building (1907-09, 518 W. Kilbourn Ave.). Following the dissolution of their partnership in 1912, Alfred Clas continued in partnership with his sons Angelo and Rubens as Clas and Clas and later Clas, Shepard, and Clas. George Ferry remained in the Ferry & Clas offices on Broadway following the dissolution of the firm and continued his practice until 1916.

### **Glen Gables Apartments (1923)**

**3226 West Wisconsin Avenue (3226 Grand Avenue, old)**

#### **Architect unknown**

The Glen Gables Apartments were built in 1923 in the Arts and Crafts style. The architect is was not listed on the July 1923 building permit but the property was owned by S. N. Loftus. This is likely Simon Newman Loftus, who was listed as a general engineer and contractor in city directories. The building has a rectangular plan, is three stories in height and clad with red brick. The primary (south) façade is eight bays side, with six of the bays set in a protruding bay. This façade has a center gable that protrudes from the third story roofline and is clad with stucco. The windows are six-over-one, except for one-over-one replacement windows in the gable on the third story. Metal railing balconies are located on the outer window bays on the upper two floors. The front half of the side facades is clad with red brick, while the back half is painted brick. Protruding entry bays clad with stucco are located halfway back on the side facades. The building has a flat roof with a brick chimney centered in the roof two-thirds of the way back. Two triangular metal-framed skylights extend from the roofline on either side of the chimney.

### **MAJOR SOURCES**

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## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Grand Avenue Historic District be given permanent historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria f-5, f-6 and f-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

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

RATIONALE: The Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District contains excellent examples of architectural styles popular for apartment construction from the early-1900s through the 1920s. The Hudson Flats Apartment Building is an example of a Neo-Classical Revival flat apartment building. The Neo-Classical Revival style was popular in the United States from 1895-1930. The style was influenced by the World's Columbian Exposition, held in Chicago in 1893, which sparked a renewed interest in Classical form. Major characteristics of the style include a grand, imposing size and scale, symmetrical façade, flat or low pitched roof, highly decorated wall surfaces with floral patterns, window surrounds, decorative panels, and cartouches, columns or pilasters, and quoins. The Sherburn Sanborn Residence and Glen Gables Apartments are fine examples of Arts and Crafts architecture. This English style was immensely popular in Milwaukee, with many examples found in areas developed between 1900 and 1915. The Sanborn Residence represents the English version of the Arts and Crafts style and feature asymmetrical forms with a variety of materials – brick in light and dark tones, stone, stucco, and faux half-timbering. The Glen Gables Apartments is a simplified version of the Arts and Crafts style, forgoing ornamentation while still containing elements of the style such as a mix of exterior materials and six-over-one windows. The Franklin Arms Apartment Building is a simplified Tudor Revival-style courtyard apartment building. The style was hugely popular in the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and is based on English building styles from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Tudor Revival detailing found on the Franklin Arms consists of horizontal banding, castellated parapet, arched entries, and decorative stone panels.

- f-6 Its identification as the work of an artist, architect, craftsman or master builder whose individual works have influenced the development of the city.

RATIONALE: Of the four properties in the Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District, three of the properties were designed by some of the top architectural firms in the city. Ferry & Clas were arguably “one of the most prominent [architectural firms] in Milwaukee,” known for their numerous fashionable residential commissions and elegant public buildings.<sup>10</sup> Among the firms other numerous commissions are State Historical Society Building (1900, 816 State St., Madison), the Milwaukee Public Library and Museum (1895, 800 W. Wisconsin Ave.), Frederick Pabst House (1890, 2000 W. Wisconsin Ave.), Steinmeyer Building (1898, 205 W. Highland Ave.), and First Unitarian Church (1892, 1009 E. Ogden Ave.). Leiser and Holst’s partnership lasted over twenty years, producing other notable commissions in Milwaukee such as St. Marcus Evangelical Lutheran Kirche (1913, 2205 N. Palmer), Faith Lutheran Church (1922, 1000 S. Layton Blvd.), Frank and Ella Hochmuck House (1928, 5231 W. Washington Blvd.), and Dr. Frank C. Studley House (1908, 3528 N. Summit Ave.). While a smaller firm, Rosman and

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<sup>10</sup> M. Caren Connolly, "Saint James Court Apartments, Milwaukee, Wisconsin." National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 9.

Wierdsma also produced notable work in Milwaukee in addition to the Franklin Arms Apartment Building. During their partnership, the firm's other notable commissions include the Roosevelt Arms Apartments (1924, 2324 W. Wisconsin Ave.), Commerce Building (1923, 828 N. Broadway), the Knickerbocker Hotel (1929, 1028 E. Juneau Ave.), Biltmore Apartment Hotel (demolished), and Marquette Apartments (1926, 1628 W. Wisconsin Ave.).

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

RATIONALE: Grand Avenue was the most fashionable and desirable residential location on the west side of the Milwaukee River in the last decades of the nineteenth and first decades of the twentieth century. The street was second only to Prospect Avenue in terms of grandiosity. This prestige extended to the numerous luxury apartment buildings constructed along the avenue, including the four properties included in this historic district.

## PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR THE GRAND AVENUE APARTMENTS HISTORIC DISTRICT

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon design submissions. Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. The intent of the guidelines are to preserve the buildings as closely as possible to their original form and details. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

Any exterior alteration, exclusive of painting of non-masonry surfaces, will require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Any existing exterior features can remain for their lifespan. The historic designation does not mean that owners are required to restore their buildings to original condition, but that changes are subject to review so that they are compatible with the historic character of the building.

These guidelines are based upon those contained in MCO 320-21-11 & 12 of the historic preservation ordinance. These guidelines serve as a guide for making changes that will be sensitive to the architectural integrity of the structure and appropriate to the overall character of the building.

### I. Roofs

- A. Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they do not visually intrude upon those elevations visible from the public right-of-way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline, pitch, or gable orientation.
- B. Retain the original roofing materials wherever possible. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building and neighborhood.
- C. Replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials that match the old in size, shape, color and texture. Avoid replacing deteriorated roof covering with new materials that differ to such an extent from the old in size, shape, color and texture so that the appearance of the building is altered.



## II. Exterior Finishes

### A. Masonry

- (i) Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Painting unpainted masonry also introduces a new maintenance issue.
- (ii) Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.
- (iii) Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
- (iv) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

### B. Stucco

Repair stucco with stucco mixture duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture. Refer to NPS Preservation Brief #22: The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco.

### C. Wood

- (i) Retain original material whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features such as clapboards, shingles, cornices, brackets, half-timbering, window architraves and doorway pediments. These are in most cases an essential part of a building's character and appearance that should be retained.
- (ii) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. When feasible, avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when

the building was constructed such as artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.

### III. Windows and Doors

- A. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the original configurations of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and hardware. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door panes or sash. Avoid discarding original doors and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused. Secondary elevations that are not visible from the public right-of-way may offer greater flexibility.
- B. Respect the stylistic period or periods a building represents. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should complement the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with materials like glass-block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not in proportion to the openings or that are historically out of the character with the building. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

### IV. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

- A. Retain porches and steps visible from the public right-of-way that are historically and architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features, such as handrails, balusters, columns or brackets.
- B. Retain trim and decorative ornamentation including copper downspouts and guttering, copings, cornices, cresting, finials, railings, balconies, oriels, pilasters, columns, chimneys, bargeboards or decorative panels. Avoid the removal of trim and decorative ornamentation that is

essential to the maintenance of the building's historic character and appearance.

- C. Repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original material.

## V. Additions

Make additions that harmonize with the existing building architecturally and are located so as not visible from the public right-of-way, if at all possible. Avoid making additions that are unsympathetic to the original structure and visually intrude upon the principal elevations.

## VI. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscapes on W. Wisconsin Avenue are visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of landscaping features. There are few prominent inappropriate additions to historic structures. The traditional landscape treatment of the building lots and the period streetlights contribute to the maintenance of the district's traditional residential character.

- A. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
- B. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage and street lighting that is compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, street lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.
- C. Note that what is compatible and appropriate throughout the district generally may vary somewhat based on the character of the particular subject building.

## VII. Signs/Exterior Lighting

Should there be an application for signage, plastic internally illuminated box signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted. Approval will be based on the sign's compatibility with the architectural character of the historic building.

## VIII. Guidelines for New Construction

There has been no new construction in the Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District since 1923. It is important that additional new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district.

- A. Siting. New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the Grand Avenue Historic District. This includes setback, spacing between buildings, the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures, and the relationship between the main building and accessory buildings.
- B. Scale. Overall building height and bulk; the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof; and, individual building components such as porches, overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.
- C. Form. The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structures.
- D. Materials. The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials traditionally used in the Grand Avenue Apartments Historic District. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

## IX. Guidelines for Demolition

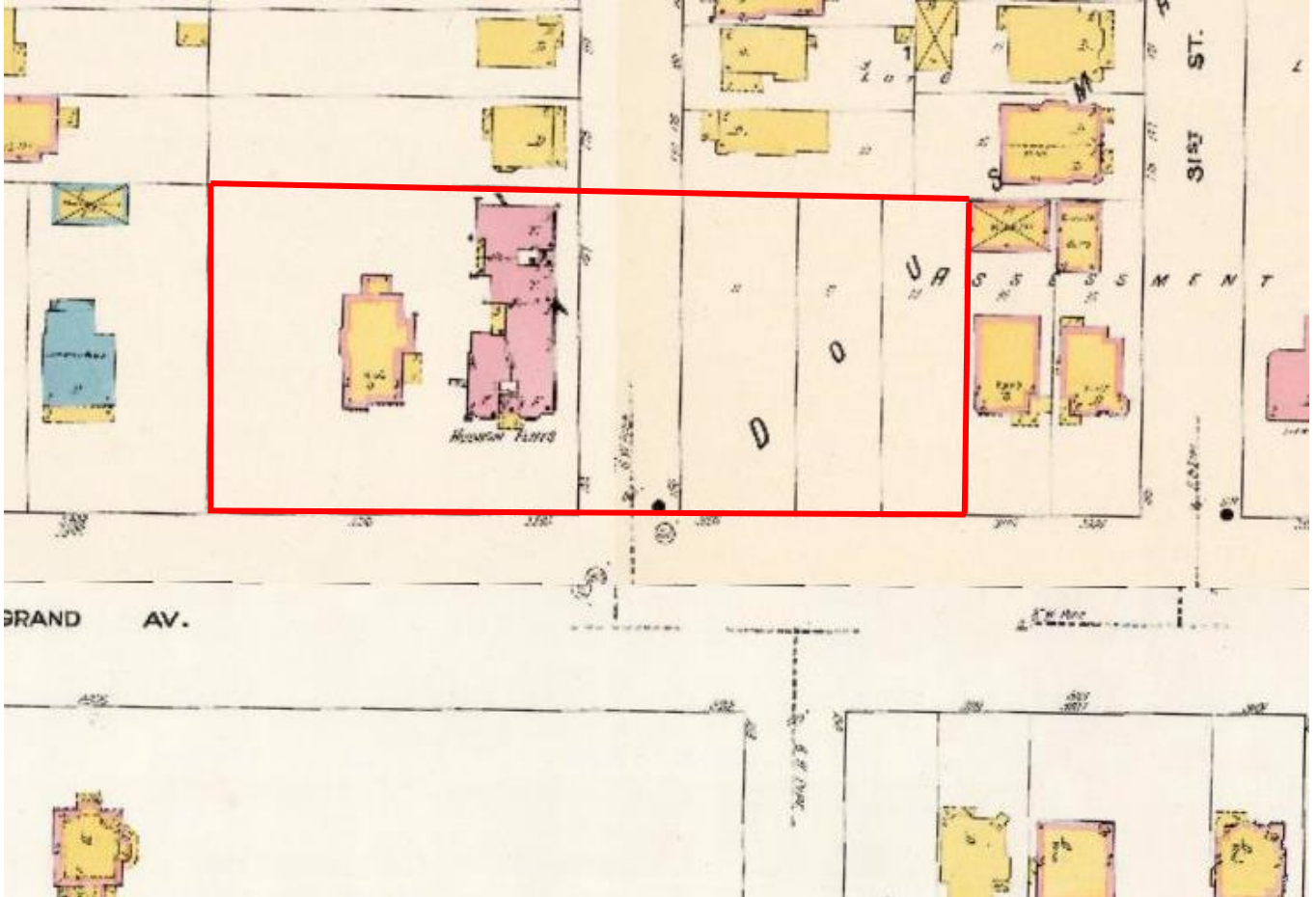
Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable, if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission shall take the following guidelines, with those found in subsection 11(h) of the ordinance, into consideration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

- A. 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.
- B. Importance. Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance. The relative modesty or grandeur of a building is not the only factor that influences its significance. Indeed, the architecture of the less grand buildings in the

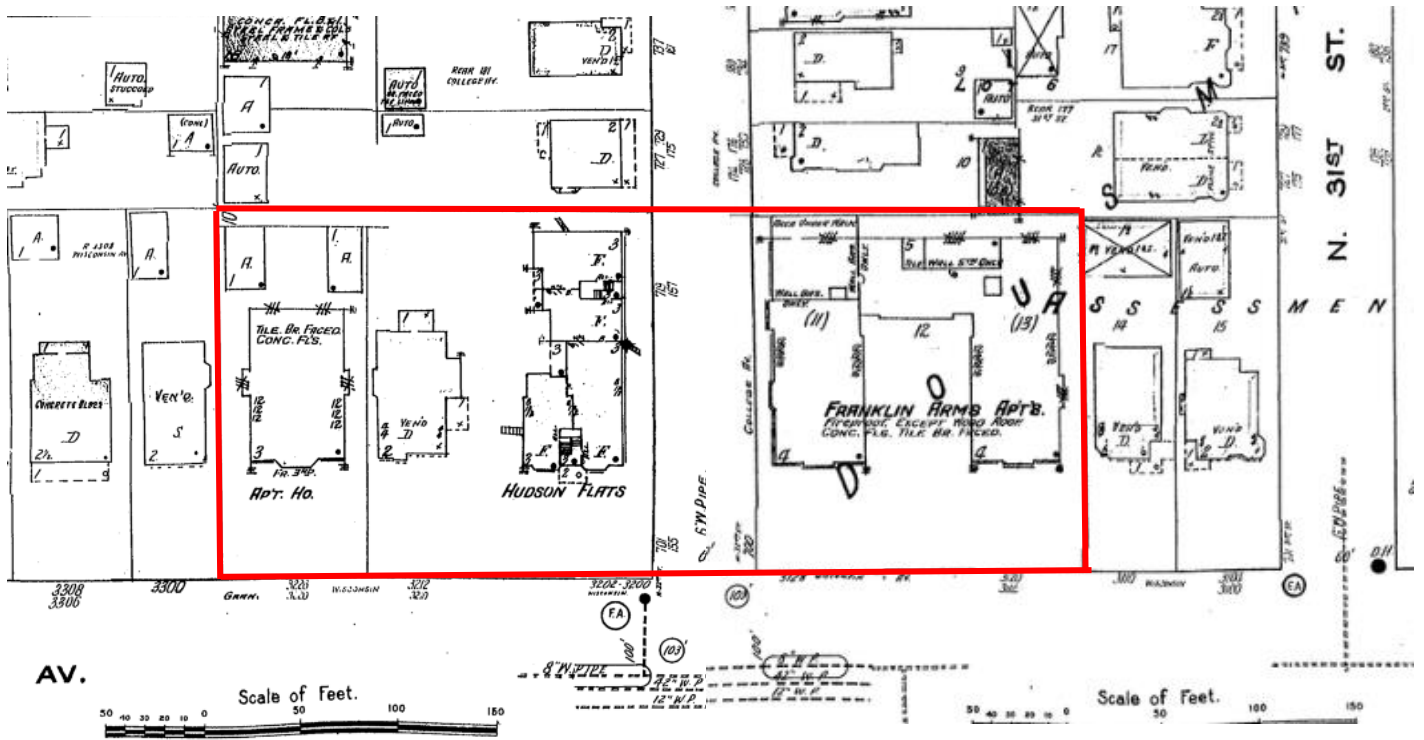
district may be significant examples of how and where people of different socioeconomic classes lived.

- C. Potential for Restoration. Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair. This will be weighed against the reason for the present disrepair, in order to avoid demolition by neglect.
- D. 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 or historical pattern of development.
- E. Replacement. Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style and scale (see New Construction Guidelines).

## Historic Maps



1910 Sanborn map of Grand Avenue. Hudson Flats and Sanborn Residence located on the 3200 block of Grand Ave. Overall district outlined in red. From Digital Sanborn Maps of Milwaukee, 1894 and 1910. New York : Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Limited, 1894. American Geographical Society Library, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries. <https://uwm.edu/lib-collections/sanborn/>



1927 Sanborn map of Wisconsin Avenue. Subject properties located along Wisconsin Ave., outlined in red. From ProQuest Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867-1970. New York : Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Limited, 1894. American Geographical Society Library. [https://0-digitalsanbornmaps-proquest-com.classic.countycat.mcfls.org/browse\\_maps/49/9504/46429/48605/653866?accountid=12466](https://0-digitalsanbornmaps-proquest-com.classic.countycat.mcfls.org/browse_maps/49/9504/46429/48605/653866?accountid=12466)



# Franklin Arms Apartment Building (1923) 3120-3128 W. Wisconsin Ave (3120/3128 Grand Avenue, old)

March, 1925

THE PAINTER AND DECORATOR

19



FRANKLIN ARMS APARTMENT  
3120-3128 GRAND AVE., MILWAUKEE  
DESIGNED BY  
SCHMIDT & SEITZ  
1616 WRIGHT STREET

**JOHNSON PRODUCTS USED**  
169 Gallons Johnson's Floor Varnish  
36 Gallons Johnson's Flat Varnish  
105 Gallons Johnson's Perfectone Undercoat  
93 Gallons Johnson's Perfectone Enamel  
392 Gallons Johnson's Permacote Flat Wall Finish

## JOHNSON BRANCHES

- CLEVELAND**  
7106 Superior Ave.  
Phone: Randolph 1826
- DENVER**  
1846 Arapahoe St.  
Phone: South 6269-W
- DES MOINES**  
1435 W. 29th St.  
Phone: Drake 8233
- DETROIT**  
3155 Grand River Ave.  
Phone: Glendale 4780
- KANSAS CITY**  
611 Delaware St.  
Phone: Victor 2159
- LOS ANGELES**  
1151 Santee St.  
Phone: Vandike 4196
- LOUISVILLE**  
623 W. Market St.  
Phone: City 6943, Main 1306
- MILWAUKEE**  
864 Third St.  
Phone: Lincoln 912
- NEW ORLEANS**  
508 Magazine St.  
Phone: Galvez 389
- NEW YORK CITY**  
46-48 Lispenard St.  
Phone: Canal 7593
- OMAHA**  
1818 St. Mary's Ave.  
Phone: Atlantic 1634
- PHILADELPHIA**  
401-403 Commerce St.  
Phone: Market 1674
- SAN FRANCISCO**  
1250 Folsom St.  
Phone: Hemlock 1150
- ST. LOUIS**  
19 So. 3rd St.  
Phone: Olive 9416
- ST. PAUL**  
1600 University Ave.  
Phone: Midway 2822

## The Proof of the Pudding

The old saying: "The Proof of the Pudding Is in the Eating" is probably more applicable to wood finishes than anything else. Formulas, claims and promises mean nothing until a real painter tries the product out on his own paint brush, under average conditions, on a regular job.

Here is a typical, fine modern building, the 36-apartment—Franklin Arms of Milwaukee. Schmidt and Seitz, painting contractors, used on this job 795 gallons of Johnson's Varnishes, Enamels and Flat Wall Finish.

The hard-headed, practical, business man painter knows results, working qualities and profits. Can anything speak more for Johnson products?

**FREE** —Manual on Wood Finishing. A complete and concise booklet for the practical man. Contains concrete information on the best methods for all sorts of jobs on floors, walls and trim, covering capacities you ought to get, costs, etc.

Used as a text book in many American schools. A real hand book for architects, builders and painters. Send for your copy.

S. C. JOHNSON & SON, Dept. O.J. 3, RACINE, WIS.  
"The Wood Finishing Authorities"

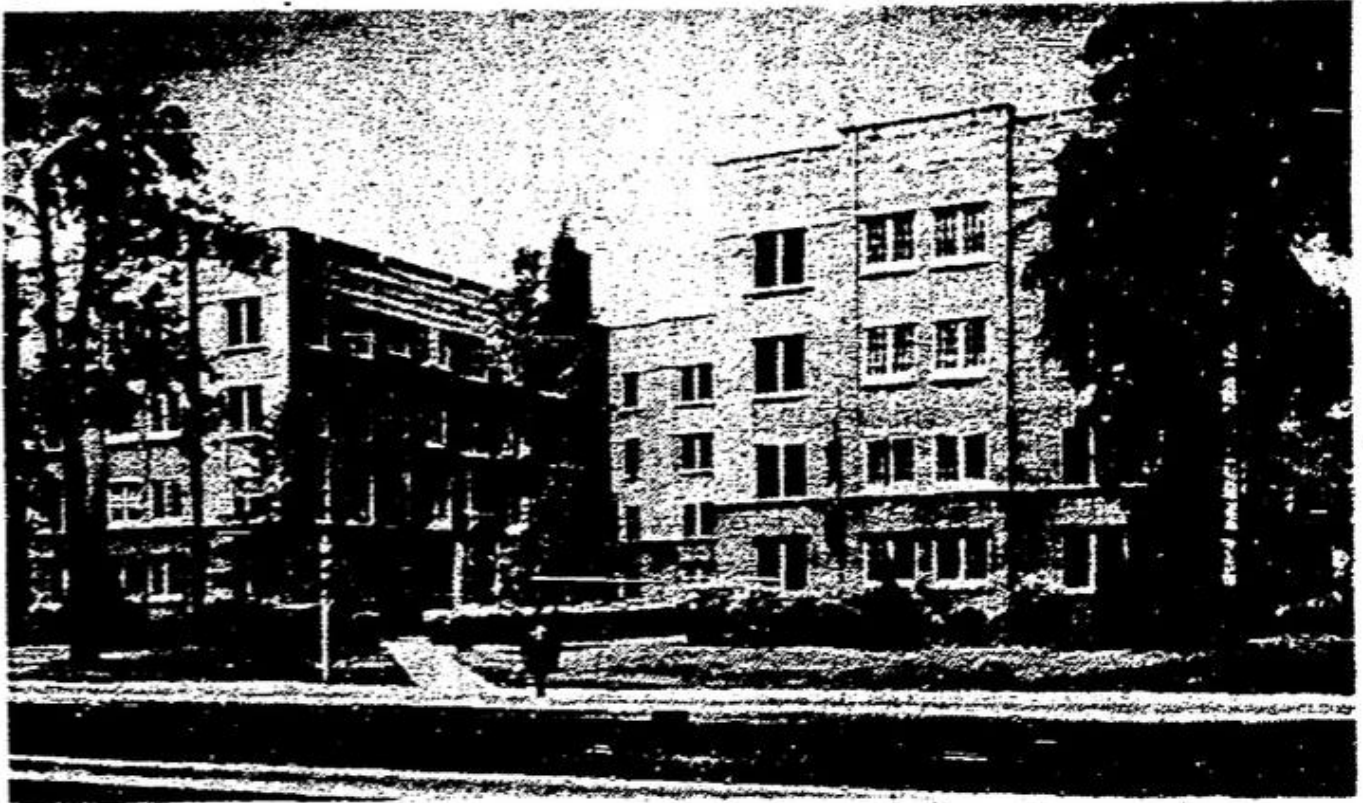
Please send me copy of your Book on Wood Finishing.

Name .....

Address .....

City & State .....

My Dealer is .....



FRANKLIN ARMS, 3128 W. Wisconsin Ave.—One building with 60 kitchen units, recently equipped with 1950 General Electric refrigerators, replacing competitive brand.

1950 General Electric advertisement featuring Franklin Arms



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 111510. Photo taken 1980.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 111510. Photo taken 1980.





Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 111510. Photo taken 1984.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 111510. Photo taken 2015.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 111510. Photo taken 2015.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 111510. Photo taken 2015





Franklin Arms Apartments. Photo taken August 2023.



Franklin Arms Apartments. Photo taken August 2023.

Hudson Flats Apartment Building (1907)  
3200 West Wisconsin Avenue (3200/3202 Grand Avenue, old)



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #30295. Photo taken 1980.





Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #30295. Photo taken 1984.



Hudson Flats Apartment Building. Photo taken 2015.



Hudson Flats Apartment Building. Photo taken 2015.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #30295. Photo taken 2015.



Sherburn Sanborn Residence (1903)  
3212 West Wisconsin Avenue (3212 Grand Avenue, old)



*John Kieckhefer's Residence  
3210 Grand Ave*

Photo taken during Kieckhefer family ownership, circa early-1920s. Photo accessed from Milwaukee County Historical Society.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #113792. Photo taken 1980.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #113792. Photo taken 1984.





Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #113792. Photo taken 2015.



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #113792. Photo taken 2015.



Sherburn Sanborn Residence. Photo taken August 2023.



Glen Gables Apartments (1923)  
3226 West Wisconsin Avenue (3226 Grand Avenue, old)



Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record #113790. Photo taken 1984.



Glen Gables Apartments. Photo taken August 2023.



Glen Gables Apartments. Photo taken August 2023.





Gables Apartments. Photo taken August 2023.