



## Brady & Farwell Historic District

PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT

CCF 251231

DECEMBER 2025

**BRADY & FARWELL**  
**HISTORIC DESIGNATION REPORT**  
**AND PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**  
**DECEMBER 2025**

**PROPERTY NAME**

Historic: Brady & Farwell  
Common Name: Justus and Margaret Vallat House(s); Justus Vallet House; Joseph B. Oliver House

**LOCATION**

Address: 1700-1792 N. Farwell Ave., 1708 N. Farwell Ave., 1714-1716 N. Farwell Ave., 1516 E. Brady St.  
Legal Description CAMBRIDGE SUBD PART LOT 6 SEC 21 & LOTS 15-16 BLK 198  
ROGERS' ADDN IN NE & SE 1/4 SEC 21-7-22 BLOCK 239 NW 95-1/3'  
(LOT 11 & SW 4' LOT 12), NW 95-1/3'(NE 36'LOT 12 & SW 1'LOT 13),  
LOT 14, NW 95-1/3'(NE 36'LOT 12 & SW 1'LOT 13) BID #11

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. As the buildings are expected to be demolished by the current owner and there are no disclosed development plans, failure to designate would reduce the availability of housing in the city.

**NOMINATION DETAILS**

Owner: F STREET BTC\$ LLC  
1134 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 200  
Milwaukee, WI 53233

Nominator: Michael W. Hatch

Alderperson: Alderman Alex Brower, 3<sup>rd</sup> District

**BUILDING DATA**

YEAR BUILT 1870-1897

ARCHITECTS James Douglas, Henry C. Koch, Carl F. Ringer

STYLE Italianate, High Victorian Gothic, Queen Anne

## GENERAL CHARACTER

The Brady & Farwell Historic District consists of four properties that were all originally constructed for residential uses. Three of the buildings front onto North Farwell Avenue, while the Oliver House is located just east of Farwell Avenue on East Brady Street. The buildings are located in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Milwaukee, approximately one mile north of the Central Business District. The Farwell Avenue and Brady Street area was historically developed with a mix of both housing and businesses. The housing types ranged from modest frame structures to grand masonry structures. Business in the immediate area included paint shops, warehouses, pharmacies, and social clubs. Occupants consisted of middle-class individuals, professionals, or heads of businesses. The area now consists of a mix of apartments, businesses, offices, and restaurants.

## HISTORY

The Lower East Side is located north of the Central Business District, tucked between Lake Michigan on the east and the Milwaukee River on the west. The land was originally covered with a dense forest and large bluffs along the lake. The area developed slowly, with a few farms, few streets platted and much of the land north of Brady Street held in speculation until following the Civil War. The first major road, Whitefish Bay Toll Road, and first East Side railroad, the Milwaukee, Lake Shore and Western Line, were both constructed in 1872.

From the 1850s through 1880s, residential development consisted of frame cottage, cream brick residents, and row houses constructed by the Yankee, Irish, and German residents who moved to the Lower East Side.<sup>1</sup> Working-class residents and immigrants tended to reside closer to the Milwaukee River, while the middle-and-upper class residents resided closer to the bluffs above Lake Michigan. A mix of grand mansions and high other high-quality, architect designed residential dwellings were constructed along Farwell and Prospect Avenues. Prospect Avenue, located one block west of the Brady & Farwell Historic District, arose as the “Gold Coast” of Milwaukee, attracting wealthy Milwaukeeans to construct some of the city’s finest mansions between 1875 and 1910. Noted society architects such as Edward Townsend Mix, James Douglas, and Henry C. Koch designed the mansions of the wealthy lumber barons, tanners, brewers, and merchants who resided in the area, including the Brady & Farwell Historic District. While not as grand as Prospect Avenue, Farwell Avenue similarly developed in the 1870s through 1900s with fine mix of housing for the middle-class professionals who developed the area.

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<sup>1</sup> Landscape Research, *Built In Milwaukee: An Architectural View of the City* (Milwaukee: City of Milwaukee, 1980). 182.

Joseph B. Oliver constructed his grand Italianate-style residence at what is now 1671 North Prospect Avenue (later moved to present location at 1516 East Brady Street in 1892) in 1874. Oliver, born January 19, 1840 in Oswego, New York, was a respected Civil War veteran who became a well-known Milwaukee businessman. Oliver learned the provisioning business from his father, a butcher and produce merchant, and went west to seek his fortune, establishing himself in Milwaukee in 1860. Oliver began his business career as an employee of commission merchant J. D. Culver and subsequently went to work for the large wheat trading firm of Hooker & Nichols.<sup>2</sup>

Oliver paused his career by enlisting in the United States Army when the Civil War began. He left for Virginia on July 22, 1861, and rapidly rose from private to lieutenant to the captain of Company B (Milwaukee Zouaves), Fifth Wisconsin Regiment. Oliver participated in numerous battles including Lewensville, Lee's Mills, Yorktown, Big Bethel, Williamsburg, Malvern Hill, Seven Pines, Golden's Farm, Savage Station, Fredericksburg, White Oak Swamp, the Second Battle of Bull Run, South Mountain, Harper's Ferry, Antietam, and Sugar Loaf Mountain. Although Oliver resigned from the military in 1862, he continued to be active in veterans' programs for the rest of his life and even served as president of the First Light Battery, a militia unit that initially met at the corner of Farwell Avenue and Curtis Place from 1886 to 1890.

Oliver briefly spent time in Chicago before returning to Milwaukee and taking up a partnership with George D. Hart by 1867 as Oliver & Hart, meat packing and provision commission merchants. The firm was successful, opening a branch in Leavenworth, Kansas, that same year. Oliver partnered with his brother, Thomas B. Oliver, around 1870 as J.B. Oliver & Co. While Oliver experienced the volatility that comes along with commodity trading, he diversified his business interests, becoming one of the incorporators of the Milwaukee Elastic Nut Company, serving as one of the directors of the Milwaukee Industrial Exposition Association, and becoming a corporate officer and stockholder in the Milwaukee Edison Light Company.

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<sup>2</sup> The narrative for the Oliver House has been condensed from the National Register nomination for the building. The nomination was prepared by Carlen Hatala in her capacity as a city employee.



*Joseph B. Oliver*

In addition to his other business dealings, Oliver also invested in real estate as one of the directors of the Lake Avenue Co., which constructed and operated the Whitefish Bay Toll Road. He purchased and sold property in Whitefish Bay, along Prospect Avenue, and elsewhere in Milwaukee and by the mid-1890s real estate speculation appears to have been his primary occupation.

Oliver married Mary Maynard Crocker in 1871, and the couple rented at 1437 Prospect Avenue until they constructed a home of their own in 1874. Starting in 1873, Oliver began

assembling parcels for his homestead on Prospect Avenue just south of Brady Street. He had acquired four sizeable parcels on Prospect Avenue by 1874 and hired prominent local architect Henry C. Koch to design the \$8,700 Italianate residence for him. Oliver acquired additional adjacent parcels in 1882, though prior to that he was already starting to sell portions of his originally purchased Prospect Avenue holdings. One parcel was sold for construction of brick-veneered Italianate residence for George D. and Annie Shepard at what is now 1653 North Prospect Avenue (razed).

Oliver turned his Brady and Prospect properties, including the homestead, to Charles F. Ilsley on May 20, 1884. It is unclear if he ran into financial difficulties or needed the capital to fund other business ventures. Ilsley began selling off portions of the holdings as demand for new residential lots increased in the 1890s. All of the property, including the Oliver house, was eventually sold. Fred Kraus purchased the parcel containing the Oliver house on October 24, 1891, for construction of a large brick residence. Oliver, who was either attached to his house or could not afford construction of a new residence, decided to move the house to a vacant parcel on Brady Street the Olivers purchased on January 16, 1892. The 1892 city directory confirms the house was relocated to what is now 1516 East Brady Street and the Oliver family living there that year.

The Olivers appear to have had financial difficulties, as they missed a mortgage payment on the parcel in 1893 and failed to pay their taxes in 1892 and 1893. The property was eventually foreclosed upon and sold at auction on August 15, 1896. Mary Oliver's mother eventually acquired the property and turned it back to the Olivers on July 5, 1898. The Olivers remained at the property until 1914, when they sold it to Ticonic Investment Company, who in turn sold it one month later to Lumberman's Investment Company for \$7,069.22. The Olivers moved to an apartment, The Everett, at 815 East Knapp Street before moving in with their son, Fergus, west of the city. Joseph Oliver died at age 82 on February 17, 1922, followed by his wife, Mary on January 12, 1931. The Oliver house was subsequently occupied by a series of renters until purchased by M.L. Goldman and converted into a four-unit income property in 1942. The property was purchased by Joseph J. Ziino in the 1950s and was owned by Ziino and his family until 2018.

The remaining three properties, 1700-1702, 1708, and 1714-1716 North Farwell Avenue were all built by Justus Vallat between 1878 and 1897. Justus Vallat was born in France on July 14, 1829, and had relocated to the United States by at least 1855, when he married Margaret Bailey in Cuyahoga County, Ohio. By the early-1860s, the couple was living in Buffalo, New York, where they had daughters Julia in 1861 and Katherine in 1864. By 1870, the Vallats were living in Milwaukee, where Justus was working as an engineer at the

Eagle Flour Mill.<sup>3</sup> At that time, the family was living in the 6<sup>th</sup> ward, on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street north of Galena, close to the flour mill. The family later moved to 8<sup>th</sup> and Walnut by 1877.

In 1878, Vallat commissioned architect James Douglas to design two residences for him on two adjacent parcels near Brady and Farwell. Douglas designed two identical brick structures in the High Victorian Gothic style. The houses each had a cost of \$3,000. The house at 244 Farwell (now 1708 N. Farwell Avenue) was intended to be the family home, while 246 Farwell (now 1714-1716 N. Farwell Avenue) was constructed as an investment property. For unknown reasons, the Vallat family did not occupy their new home for the first few years after construction. City directories show Isaac Schiff, who owned Plaut & Schiff wholesale clothiers, living at the residence from 1879 to 1881.<sup>4</sup> The Vallat family occupied their residence starting in 1882. Margaret Vallat passed away in 1887 and Justus continued living at the residence until his death on June 24, 1897.

The Vallat daughters resided at the house for the next few years but a new resident was listed by 1900. By 1904, Samuel Kemper was occupying the house. City directories identify him as working as a cashier. Kemper remained until approximately 1920, when Nicholas and Theresa Thrill lived at the house. Thill operated a plumbing and gas fitting business. The house was listed as a two-flat on a 1937 permit. Two of Thill's children, Anton Thill and Mrs. Lenore Reichardt, continued living at the house into the late-1950s. Various occupants resided at the property through the 1980s. The property was purchased by attorney Joseph J. Ziino in the 1950s and held by him or his family until it was sold in December 2018.

As an investment property, the Vallat House at 1714-1716 North Farwell Avenue had a series of early occupants. The first occupant of the house was Gottlieb Engel, an attorney with the firm McKenney & Engel. Through most of the 1880s, the house was occupied for William H. Blazier, a bookkeeper at the Eagle Mill. The Louis Hallbach family resided at the house from at least 1913 through at least 1930. Hallbach worked as a furrier for the Gerretson Company before starting his own firm. A 1939 permit indicates the building was used as a rooming house, with two apartments and a sleeping room on the first floor, three apartments and a sleeping room on the second floor, and two sleeping rooms on the third floor.<sup>5</sup> It was converted to a four-unit building in 1954 by owner Joseph J. Ziino. Ziino owned the property until it was sold the same day as 1708 N. Farwell Ave.

The property at 1700 North Farwell Avenue, located on the prominent eastern corner of Brady and Farwell, was constructed last in 1897. Justus Vallat, widowed for over a decade,

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<sup>3</sup> 1870 United States Census Record.

<sup>4</sup> Michael McQuillen. "Justus & Margaret Vallat Houses," National Register of Historic Places Determination of Eligibility Form, November 2010.

<sup>5</sup> City of Milwaukee Building Permit #18948, September 13, 1939.

he pulled a permit for a new \$6,000 dwelling on April 10, 1897. Vallat would pass away just two months later. The house was first occupied by the family of popular physician, Dr. Ralph Chandler. Chandler was born in Milwaukee on July 16, 1861. He was a graduate of Carroll College in Waukesha and studied medicine in the office of Dr. Solon Marks, graduating at Rush Medical College in 1886.<sup>6</sup> He opened his own practice in Milwaukee in 1888 and built a large practice. For eighteen years, Chandler acted as surgeon of the First Light Battery, later known as Battery A, of the Wisconsin National Guard. The commander of the Battery was Chandler's neighbor, Captain Joseph B. Oliver. Chandler was also on staff of the Johnson Emergency Hospital Chandler and was a supporter of the Children's Free Hospital. He was also active in civic affairs, as a member of the Sons of the Revolution, the Military Order of the Loyal Legion, the Milwaukee Club and University Club, and a number of professional and medical societies. Chandler married Alice Louise Eldred in 1893. Chandler died unexpectedly following surgery for abdominal trouble at age 42 on August 12, 1904. Less than one month later, his widow offered the property for sale.

**The Schenuit  
Conservatory  
of Music** Farwell Ave.  
and Brady St.

**HARRY F. SCHENUIT.** Organist and Choirmaster  
of St. John's Cathedral, Director

**Reopens September 3rd**

**Piano, Violin and Theory. Voice Culture.  
Church and Concert Singing.  
Certificates and Diplomas Given.**

*Advertisement for the Schenuit Conservatory of Music, Milwaukee Journal, September 7, 1907*

<sup>6</sup> "Death of Leading Physician," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 13, 1894.

The house was subsequently occupied by Harry and Louise Schenuit. Schenuit was born in Pennsylvania in 1873 and later lived in Baltimore. He and Louise relocated to Milwaukee in 1904 and he founded and was director of the Schenuit Conservatory of Music, where his wife served as associate director. The Schenuits appear to have operated their business out of their residence for a number of years before relocating to the Alhambra Theater on Grand Avenue. Schenuit was also the organist and choirmaster of St. John's Cathedral. The Schenuit's daughter, Irma, was a child prodigy on piano who gave her first grand concert performance at age 5, was touring nationally at age 7, joined the Keith and Orpheum vaudeville circuit in 1918, and later performed for the King and Queen of England. Irma Schenuit's first forays with performance and fame occurred while the family resided in the house.



**LITTLE IRMA SCHENUIT.**

The child is able to play classical music with a touch and ease that is considered remarkable. She first appeared in public when 5 years old at the Alhambra theater, when she played selections from Grieg and Moszkowski.

### **TEN YEAR OLD PRODIGY IS GIVEN SIGNAL HONOR**



**Irma Schenuit.**

Newspaper articles about Irma Schenuit. Milwaukee Journal, November 27, 1907 & Milwaukee Sentinel, June 23, 1912.

By 1913, Dr. Nellie Wentworth Cargill was living at the house. Dr. Cargill was born in Syracuse, New York, in 1863, and moved to Chicago with her parents in 1888. She studied medicine at Northwestern University and worked on the staff of Wesley Hospital in Chicago before moving to Milwaukee and establishing her own practice. She was a member of the Milwaukee County Medical Society, Wisconsin State Medical Society, American Medical Association, and was recognized as an authority on gynecological and gastro-intestinal diseases.<sup>7</sup> She lived at the Farwell residence until 1925.

The house had a series of occupants for the remainder of the 1920s and 1930s. In 1934, under the ownership of Mrs. F. Straus, a permit was pulled to modify the ground floor of the house for use as a bookstore. An antique store called The Grotto occupied the retail space starting in 1942. Additional retail shops, such as greeting card sales, and a dressmaker, occupied the space in the 1940s. In 1949, the property was marketed as producing “income for life” as a rooming house with twenty-two rooms and a basement store.

The property was purchased by attorney Joseph J. Ziino, who pulled a permit for the present first floor brick addition in October 1950. Ziino was born to Sicilian immigrant parents in the Third Ward in 1911 and raised in Sicily after the family returned when he was a baby. He returned to Milwaukee at age 16 and worked a series of manual jobs to support himself through the Great Depression. He graduated from Lincoln High School in two years and attended State Teachers College (later merged into UW-Milwaukee). He and his wife, Lucy, opened a successful Italian grocery store at 1725 N. Astor Street in the 1940s. Ziino attended Marquette Law School, graduating with honors in 1945. He established his own firm and operated his business out of the newly constructed addition from 1950 for over fifty years until his retirement. Subsequent permits for the property identified the house as a rooming house. City directories and permits show as many as eleven units listed in addition to the law office space. Subsequent permits show the rooms were modified and units consolidated to create nine apartments. Recent real estate listings identify ten apartments and two storefronts. This property, along with the other four properties in the historic district, was sold by the Ziino family in 2018. All four properties are now owned by F Street BTC\$ LLC.

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<sup>7</sup> “Noted Woman Physician Dies,” *Milwaukee Journal*, March 15, 1931.

## DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY OF INDIVIDUAL BUILDINGS

**Joseph B. Oliver House (1870, additions 1874, moved to present site 1892)**

**1516 East Brady Street (404 Brady Street, old)**

**Henry C. Koch, architect**

The Joseph B. Oliver House is located on a short block of Brady Street between Prospect and Farwell Avenues on the city's lower east side. The house occupies a 45-foot-wide by 120-foot-deep lot. The main elevation faces southwest toward Brady Street. The house is sited close to the sidewalk atop a small grassy berm planted with shrubs and trees. A public alley runs along the east side of the building. The small rear yard is used for tenant parking, and there is a small side yard to the west. A mid-rise modern condominium apartment building stands to the east, while three nineteenth century residences, fronting on Farwell Avenue, border the house on the west. The Oliver residence was built in 1874 at what is now 1671 North Prospect Avenue, but was moved to its present site in 1892.

The Oliver House is an exceptional and, for Milwaukee, rare example of a frame, upper middle-class Italianate style residence that retains most of its decorative features. The two-story, frame building is T-plan in configuration with the projecting central block balanced on the east and west by shallow wings set well back from the front. The house rests on a cut stone foundation. The main portion of the building has a low deck-on-hip roof while the wings are gabled. The roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles, and a chimney projects from the west side of the roof.

The facade of the projecting central block is divided into three equal bays consisting of two windows and a side entrance on the first story and three windows on the second story. The windows are simple, one-over-one double-hung sash. Each opening is enframed by a wide ogee-arched moulded wooden surround. Those surrounds extend to the floor of the porch on the first story. The entrance, located in the east bay of the first story, consists of a pair of tall, paneled, wood and glass double doors. A modern porch supported by four square posts extends across the facade, with a parapet railing encircling the roof. The corners of the facade are articulated with corner boards that terminate in decorative brackets at the eaves. A bracketed pediment is centered on the facade at the attic story ornamented with a small decorative window in its center. Four elaborately turned brackets are evenly spaced across the facade at the eaves. Scroll sawn wood fretwork is applied to the pediment frieze as a further ornamental touch.



*Joseph B. Oliver House, 1516 E. Brady Street*

The east elevation is relatively simple in design with most of the windows featuring ogee-arched surrounds. The windows are paired on the east wall of the east wing. The small attic story window in the gable is identical to the one on the facade.

The west elevation is similar to the east elevation, but features a two-story, polygonal bay instead of paired windows. The bay consists of three, double-hung sash windows on each story, divided by slender colonnettes that terminate in decorative brackets. A small, pointed attic story window above the bay is identical to the ones on the south and east elevations.

The rear of the house is simple and utilitarian in character with rectangular windows. Fire insurance maps from 1888, 1894 and 1910 show that a one-story frame wing projected from the rear. Building permits indicate that a new one-story addition with a brick foundation was constructed to the rear in 1916 that was 7 by 18 feet in size, either enlarging or replacing the earlier structure. Today, a two-story wing exists, one part of

which has a gabled roof and one part of which has a flat roof- Building permit records do not show when the wing was raised to two stories.



*Joseph B. Oliver House, 1516 E. Brady Street*

Some alterations to the Oliver House have occurred over time. The porch has been modified. Fire insurance maps show that it originally wrapped around the main facade and down the sides to join the wings, but was reduced to extend only across the front at some point in the twentieth century. A major reconstruction of the porch took place in 1980 when it assumed its present form. A small rectangular addition was added to the west side of the house sometime after 1950.

The Italianate style was popular in Milwaukee from the mid-1850s until the late 1870s. It was a versatile style that introduced picturesque new building shapes to the local architectural scene as well as a vocabulary of ornament that could be applied to the long familiar boxy house type. Unlike some architectural styles, the Italianate could be rendered equally well in masonry or frame construction, and a large number of houses

illustrating a full range of sizes and degrees of architectural pretension and costliness were built throughout the city in both mediums. In the central business district, of course, the Italianate style was the dominant mode since that part of the city was developed primarily during the heyday of the Italianate style from 1855 to 1875. The vicissitudes of time have greatly eroded Milwaukee's stock of Italianate buildings with the result that today only a small fraction of the city's original inventory still exists. Not surprisingly, practically all of the surviving examples are brick, since the less substantially constructed and more expensive to maintain wooden houses have fallen victim to the wrecker's ball or fire. The J. B. Oliver House is virtually the last remaining intact frame Italianate house in Milwaukee of architectural interest. It exemplifies the final flowering of the Italianate style when applied decorative features, in this case of Victorian Gothic inspiration, were used to ornament the increasingly complexly massed, low-roofed, Italianate house type. The eclecticism and exotic ornamentation illustrated in the Oliver House reflected the change in public taste that was then popularizing the picturesque Victorian Gothic style and would soon lead to the emergence of the Queen Anne style. The Oliver House is the finest frame late Italianate style house remaining in Milwaukee.

Other than being one of Milwaukee's finest remaining examples of a frame Italianate house, the Oliver House is a significant example of the early residential work of one of the city's leading nineteenth century architects, Henry C. Koch.

#### **Justus and Margaret Vallat Houses (1878)**

**1708 North Farwell Avenue (244 Farwell Avenue, old); 1714-1716 North Farwell Avenue (246 Farwell Avenue, old)**

**James Douglas, architect**

The Justus and Margaret Vallat Houses at 1708 and 1714-1716 North Farwell Avenue are two nearly identical High Victorian Gothic style houses on adjacent lots designed by James Douglas and constructed in 1878. The houses are located on slightly raised yards and are sited approximately twenty-two feet back from North Farwell Avenue. Because the houses are nearly identical, the following architectural description applies to both, with differences noted at the end.



*Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1708 N. Farwell Avenue*

The houses are two-and-one-half stories tall with steeply pitched hipped roofs with a hipped flat roof top. The houses are clad with brick, 1708 in red brick and 1714-1716 in tan brick, and sit on a raised limestone foundation. The houses face northwest on North Farwell Avenue and have asymmetrical front facades with raised entries on the left of the front façade and a canted bay with three one-over-one windows to the right. The entries have paired doors within a segmentally arched opening. The entries have small wooden porches with gabled hoods supported by ornate carved wooden brackets. Carved wood brackets with drop finials are in the porch gables. The second floor has a one-over-one windows above the entry and paired one-over-one windows with brick surrounds and

segmental arches above the bay window. Paired four-light windows are located in the steeply pitched front gable. These windows are separated by carved wooden brackets with drop finials. Decorative wooden scroll cut panels are in the gable peak. A steeply pitched dormer with pointed-arch one-over-one window is located adjacent to the gable.



*Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1714-1716 N. Farwell Avenue*

The northeast elevations are more restrained in design. A canted three-bay projection with large gable with overhanging eaves is located towards the center-rear of the façade. The bay has three one-over-one windows on the first floor and a single one-over-one window centered on the second floor. Two one-over-one windows flank the bay on the second floor. All windows have limestone sills and brick surrounds with brick segmental

arches. One of the windows on the bay window of 1714-1716 has been infilled with glass block. The attic level has a pointed-arch window in the gable and decorative brackets in the eaves.

The rear (southeast) facades are also minimally decorated. The ground floor has an entry door and one-over-one window and the upper level has a door and transom window with brick segmental arch that leads to a second floor balcony. The balconies have wood slat balusters. One-over-one windows are located in the center of the rear gables.

The southwest façade has a canted projection similar to the northeast elevation. Modern porches are located in the ell off the rear block and the projection. The entry door with transom is located within the main block of the ell. All windows are one-over-one with brick segmental window hoods and limestone sills. The gable has similar bracketing to the gable on the projecting bay of the northeast façade.

### **Justus Vallat House (1897)**

**1700-1702 North Farwell Avenue (240 Farwell Avenue, old)**

**Carl F. (C.F.) Ringer, architect**

The house at 1700-1702 North Farwell Avenue was also constructed by Justus Vallat, though nearly twenty years after 1708 and 1714-1718 North Farwell Avenue. Architect Carl F. Ringer designed the house in the then-fashionable Queen Anne architectural style, rather than the High Victorian Gothic style of the neighboring houses. The house is a two-and-one-half story Queen Anne clad with Cream City brick. The house is front gabled, with prominent cross gables on the side facades. The house is located on the east corner of the East Brady Street and North Farwell Avenue intersection. The house was originally set back from North Farwell Avenue approximately 20 feet, though a 1950 one-story brick addition in front of the building is now located up to the property line. The building is also only slightly set back from the East Brady Street property line, with just a small planting strip separating the sidewalk from the building.

The front façade contains the one-story, flat-roof, rectangular 1950 brick addition on the corner of Brady and Farwell. The addition is clad with five-course common bond brick veneer. There are two entries with semi-circular canvas awnings covering doors. The southernmost entry is clad with ashlar stone veneer under the awning. There are three metal frame window openings with stone sills on the ground level. The addition has a stone parapet cap and a metal railing surrounding the second level roof. Behind the addition is the main block of the original building. On the south is a semi-circular projection at the corner with three rounded windows with semi-circular arches. Next to the projection is an infilled opening containing a modern sliding door leading to the deck above the 1950 addition. The opening has a segmental arch in slightly protruding brick above. The building recesses slightly to a window opening and modern concrete block addition that extends from the 1950 commercial addition. The third story has one-over-one windows and a limestone band that separates the second and third floors. The attic level has later

dormer additions on either side of the center gable. The gable projects slightly with brackets supporting the gable. A tripartite window is centered in the gable.



*Justus Vallat House, 1700 N. Farwell Avenue*

The southwest façade extends east down Brady Street towards Prospect Avenue. A portion of the limestone foundation has been replaced with red brick matching the commercial addition. This portion of the ground level contains modern commercial windows and a door underneath the rounded projection. Windows on the second level are one-over-one windows with brick segmental arches and limestone sills. Windows on the third levels do not have segmental arches but do contain limestone sills. The large cross-gamble extends slightly from the mass of the building, similar to the front gable.

The northwest façade is largely obscured by the Vallat House adjacent to the north. The concrete block addition is visible. With patio accessed from the second floor of the house. A large cross

gable, similar to the southwest façade, is centered on the façade. Unlike the front and southwest gables, this one does not project from the mass of the building.

The rear (southeast) façade has a concrete stairway that leads to a landing on the first floor level. A recessed entry is located under a second floor balcony. A later infilled addition of cream brick extends towards Brady Street from the original block of the building. The second story has a balcony with modern replacement doors and a polygonal bay with pyramidal roof. The attic level has a small shed roof dormer addition leading to a small balcony. The rear gable contains paired one-over-one windows.



*Justus Vallat House, 1700 N. Farwell Avenue. Brady Street façade.*

## ARCHITECTS

### HENRY C. KOCH (from Oliver House NR)

Henry C. Koch (March 30, 1841 - May 19, 1910) was born in the city of Celle, Hanover, Germany, and came to Milwaukee with his family in 1842. After receiving instruction at the German-English Academy he apprenticed with architect G. W. Mygatt beginning in 1856. He interrupted his architectural career to enlist in the Twenty-fourth Wisconsin Infantry during the Civil War. Koch's drafting skills led to a position as typographical engineer on General Phillip Sheridan's staff, a position he held for nearly a year after the end of the war. In 1866 Koch returned to Milwaukee and established a partnership with G. W. Mygatt. The partnership dissolved in 1870 when Koch established his own practice. Among his partners over the years were Julius Hese, Herman Paul Schnetzky, Herman J. Esser, and his son, Armand D. Koch.

It was during the 1870s that Koch came into his own as a professional architect. The Milwaukee Sentinel documents dozens of commissions for residences, churches, institutional, governmental, and commercial buildings. Virtually all of Koch's known residences from the 1870s, however, have been razed with the exception of three small brick houses: the Louis Fuldner residence (1874) at 914 South Fourth Street (Walker's Point Historic District, NRHP, December 9, 1978); the much altered Herman Berger-Katzenstein Residence (1874) at 1247 North Cass Street (Cass/Juneau Avenue Historic District, NRHP, November 3, 1988), and the modest Fred Pritzkow Residence (1875) at 1324 North Marshall Street. The Oliver House survives as a unique example of a well-preserved frame Italianate residence designed by Koch during this period.

As Koch's fame grew he concentrated less on residential work and instead designed numerous public school buildings in Milwaukee as well as such landmark structures as the Milwaukee City Hall (NRHP, March 14, 1973); the Pfister Hotel; and Gesu Church (NRHP, January 16, 1986). The Oliver House is as an important example of Koch's early work before the architect moved into the Victorian Gothic, Romanesque Revival, and Flemish Renaissance Revival styles for which he is best known.<sup>8</sup>

### JAMES DOUGLAS

James Douglas was born in Scotland in 1823 and first arrived in Canada in 1840 before moving to Milwaukee in 1843. He was involved with the construction of numerous early Milwaukee landmarks, including St. John Cathedral (1847, 812 N. Jackson Street), Holy Trinity church (1849, 605 S. 4th St.), and the first Milwaukee City Hall (razed). In 1847 he began working as an architect and building with his younger brother, Alexander, as J & A

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<sup>8</sup> The narrative for the Henry Koch has been lightly adapted from the National Register nomination for the Oliver House.

Douglas, architects and builders. Following a brief tenure in a management position with Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance in the 1960s, he returned to architecture full-time in 1872. While much of his work has been lost to demolition, his remaining designs in Milwaukee include Sanford Kane House (1883, 1841 N. Prospect Ave.), Willard Merrill House (1890, 1425 N. Prospect Ave.), and the Elias Calkins Double House (1875, 1612-14 W. Kane Place). A number of his designs are listed on the National Register of Historic Places and/or locally designated. Douglas also influenced the next generation of architects, with prominent apprentices in his office including Alfred C. Clas, Cornelius Leenhouts, Fred Graf and Otto C. Uehling. Douglas put his sons in charge of his firm due to failing health and before dying in 1894.<sup>9</sup>

### CARL F. (C.F.) RINGER

Carl F. Ringer was born in Germany in 1851 and came to Milwaukee in 1870. He began working as an apprentice in the office of George W. Mygatt who was one of the city's early architects. Ringer then moved on to work for Edward Townsend Mix, one of the most prestigious architects of the city in the nineteenth century. He then finished his apprenticeship years working as construction foreman for Milwaukee architect James Douglas.

Ringer opened his own architectural office in 1881. Ringer was adept at working in period revival styles and the commercial architectural styles of the day. He had clients not only in the German-American community but throughout various ethnic groups. He is believed to have maintained strong family and social ties with his German homeland where, incidentally, his sister Bertha lived with her husband Carl Benz, who was one of designers of the Mercedes-Benz automobiles.

The 1880s and 1890s were particularly busy for him. The papers chronicled dozens of projects including residences, double houses, churches such as Zion Lutheran at 21th and North Avenue, stores, schools, tannery buildings, manufacturing buildings. In 1884 alone Ringer was designing dwelling houses and double houses throughout the greater Concordia and Avenues West area: a double house for H. R. Green (27th and Cedar), a frame house for H. R. Green (27th between Wells and Cedar), a frame house for H. Mueller (Cedar between 25th and 26th), a frame house for H. Schroeder (24th Street between Wells and Cedar). He also designed the David W. Howie House, today's Manderley Bed and Breakfast. He was also responsible for numerous prominent East Side houses, particularly along Newberry Boulevard.

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<sup>9</sup> City of Milwaukee, Historic Preservation Commission. "Permanent Historic Designation Study Report, William J. Turner House." 2005.

That his commissions were city-wide says a lot about the quality of his work and expertise in many building types. Many Milwaukee architects tended to have very local practices and their commissions can be found only in certain parts of the city.

Ringer later reorganized his firm as a partnership with his son, Carl Jr., who in 1904 had joined the firm and renamed it as C. F. Ringer & Son. The firm became known for its industrial/ manufacturing buildings and warehouses. The partnership lasted until 1934 when the elder Ringer retired. Ringer Sr. was a member and vice chair of the city's harbor commission, an honorary member of the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, a member of the Milwaukee Turnverein, and the Freie Gemeinde.<sup>10</sup>

## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Brady & Farwell Historic District, and its attached land be given historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria f-3, f-5, f-6, and f-9 of Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

f-3. Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city.

The house at 1700 N. Farwell Avenue known for the second occupants, the Schenuit family. The home of Harry, Louise, and Irma Schenuit was first location of the Schenuit Conservatory of Music upon family's arrival in Milwaukee in 1904. While still operating out of the home in 1909, an article states that the Conservatory was "one of the best-known institutions of its kind in this section of the state. It has been in existence for many years and graduates have attained success in their chosen fields."<sup>11</sup> They successfully operated the school out of their residence for the first number of years before outgrowing their home and relocating to the 4<sup>th</sup> floor of the Alhambra Theater on Grand Avenue. The home was also where Irma Schenuit, later Irma Schenuit Hall, learned piano and began her musical career. Schenuit Hall was a well-known and famous child prodigy concert pianist and vaudeville performer who would later perform for the King and Queen of England. When she retired from touring, she and her husband settled back in Milwaukee, where Schenuit Hall continued to teach piano. The Schenuit Hall's School operated for many years out of the Fine Arts Building at 125 East Wells Street. At the school's height she had a staff of five teaching over two hundred students, many of whom went on to prestigious musical careers.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The text on Ringer is lightly adapted from the 2020 Milwaukee historic designation study report for the Patrick J. Geraghty Double House.

<sup>11</sup> "The Milwaukee Journal's Educational Number," *Milwaukee Journal*, August 21, 1909.

<sup>12</sup> "Deaths," *Milwaukee Journal*, March 12, 1989.

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

All four of the properties within the Brady & Farwell Historic District are outstanding examples of their respective late-19<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles. The Oliver House is architecturally significant as an excellent example of a frame, Italianate residence of the 1870s representing the early work of a locally significant architect. Although a number of brick Italianate residences from this era survive in Milwaukee, practically all the ornate, frame Italianate dwellings, except for the Oliver House, have been razed or altered beyond recognition of their original appearance. The two Justus and Margaret Vallat Houses represent excellent examples of the High Victorian Gothic style. The style is represented in these nearly identical paired buildings in their heavy bracketing, pierced bargeboards, ornate window hoods, and vertical emphasis.<sup>13</sup> While other High Victorian Gothic examples exist in the city, paired buildings such as these, are highly uncommon. The 1897 Justus Vallat House is likewise a great example of the Queen Anne style represented in brick. Ornate and elaborate Queen Anne residences are not infrequently found in older sections of the city, though they are most often frame structures, rather than brick. The building has a rounded corner projection that implies a tower, asymmetrical façade, rounded windows in decorative openings and limestone accents. The 1950 addition does not detract from the scale and quality of the historic building and could be removed in the future and the historic façade restored, if so desired.

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.

All four of the properties were designed by top late-19<sup>th</sup> century Milwaukee architects. The Oliver House is an excellent example of an Italianate residence designed by Henry C. Koch. Of the fourteen identified commissions Koch designed in the Italianate style, all except the Oliver House were executed in brick rather than as frame structures. Koch has numerous designs on the National Register and four of his Milwaukee designs, Milwaukee City Hall, Fourth Street School, Ward Memorial Hall (contributing the Northwestern Branch, National Home for Disabled Volunteer Soldiers Historic District), and Turner Hall, are National Historic Landmarks. James Douglas, architect of the two Justus and Margaret Vallat Houses, was one of the most influential architects in the city in the late-19<sup>th</sup> century. The Vallat Houses are among only a few residential structures Douglas executed in the High Victorian Gothic style. C.F. Ringer was a disciple of Edward

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<sup>13</sup> Michael McQuillen. "Justus & Margaret Vallat Houses," National Register of Historic Places Determination of Eligibility Form, November 2010.

Townsend Mix and was a prolific architect in the 1880s and 1890s, working in a variety of revival architectural styles. Numerous Ringer designs are on the National Register of Historic Places or locally designated, including properties in the Newberry Boulevard Historic District, Concordia Historic District, and Northpoint North Historic District.

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.

The four properties within the historic district represent residential vestiges of the rise of the Lower East Side and particularly Prospect and Farwell Avenues. While these properties are not as grand as some of the Gold Coast mansions, they represent superbly designed upper-middle class commissions. All four have anchored the eastern corner of Brady and Farwell for well over one hundred and twenty five years.

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## PRESERVATION GUIDELINES FOR THE BRADY AND FARWELL 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

## 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, oriel, 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 Brady and Farwell 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

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 Brady and Farwell 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 Brady and Farwell 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

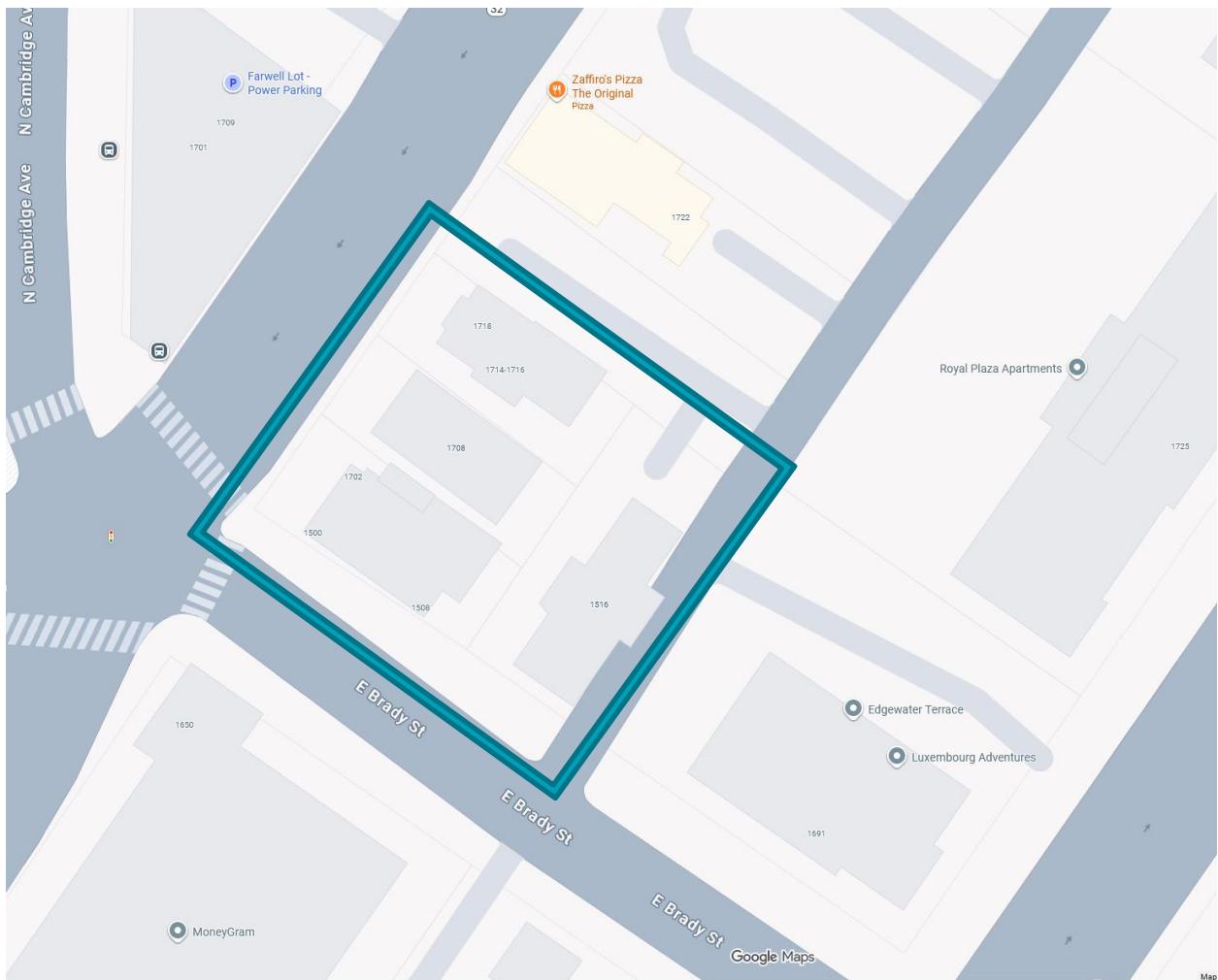
Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable, if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The Commission shall take the following guidelines, with those found in subsection 11(h) of the ordinance, into consideration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

## MAPS



**Map 1.** 2025 Google Map showing neighborhood context and approximate boundary.

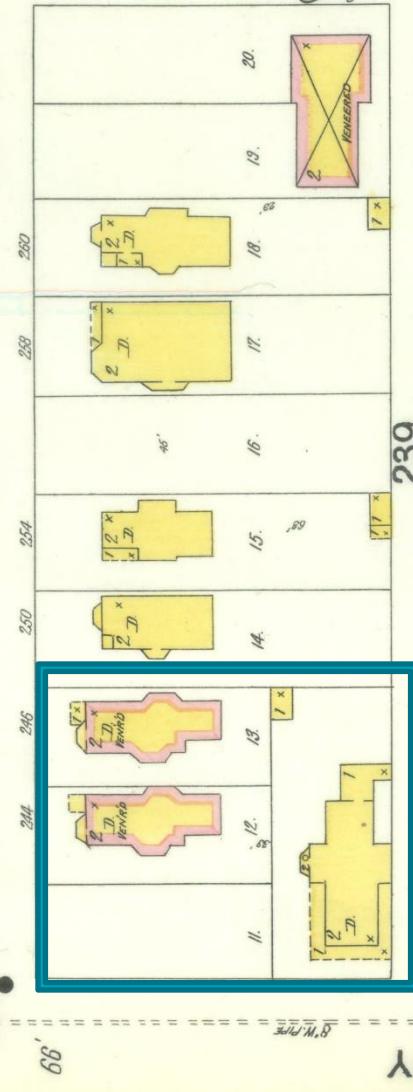


Map 2. 2024 Aerial view of district

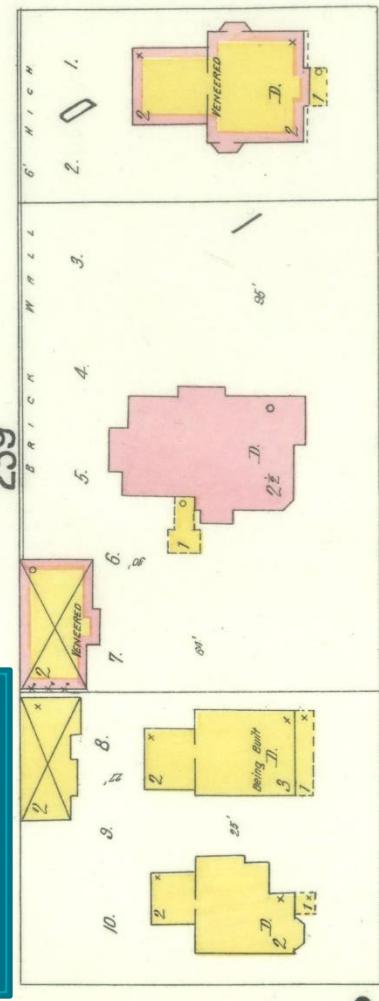
45 Grandbridge Av.  
MILWAUKEE

43

FARWELL



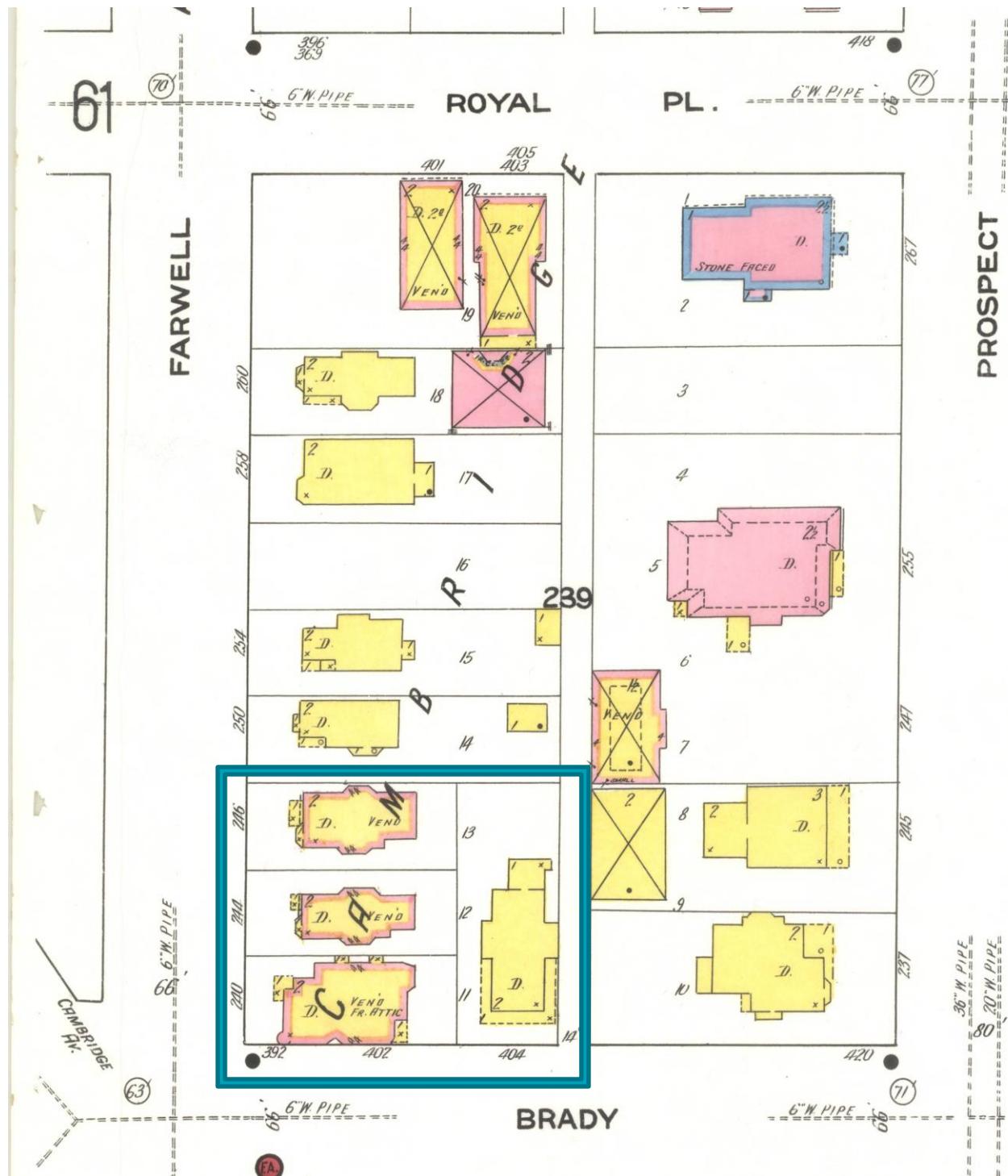
ROYAL



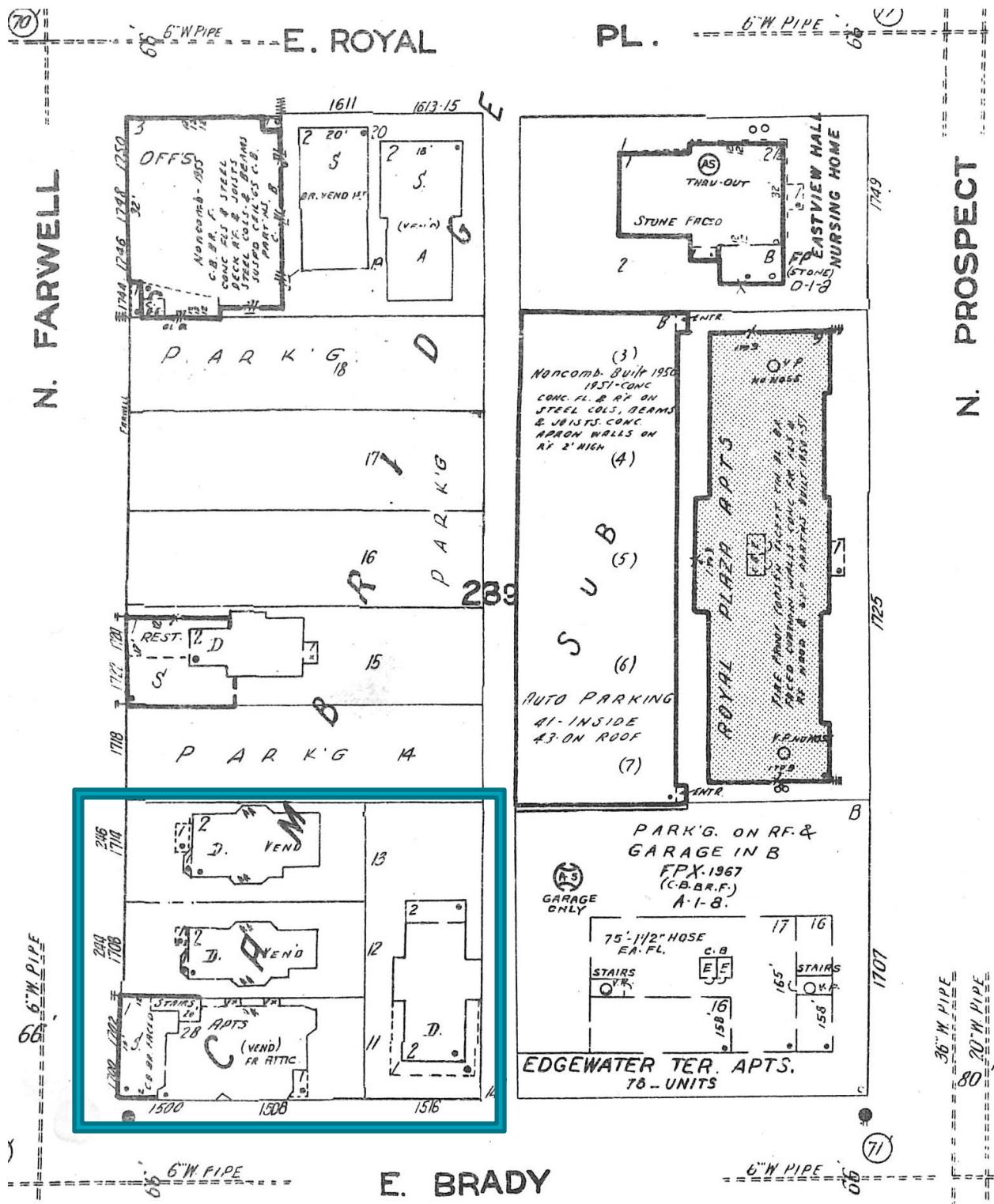
PROSPECT



Map 3. 1894 Sanborn



Map 4. 1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance map of district with approximate proposed boundary.

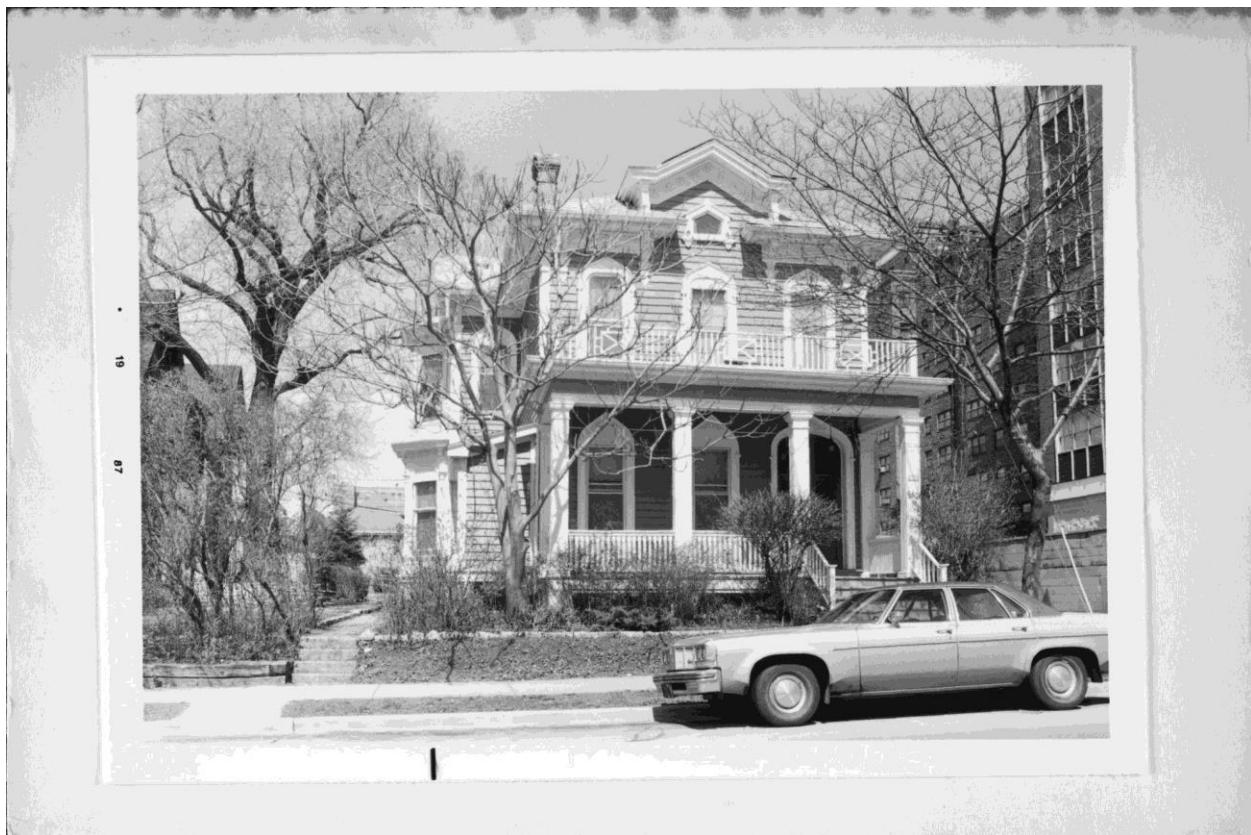


Map 5. 1969 Fire Insurance map of district with approximate proposed boundary.

## IMAGES



**Figure 1.** Joseph B. Oliver House. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 98982. Photo taken 1979.



**Figure 2.** Joseph B. Oliver House. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 98982. Photo taken 1987.



**Figure 3.** Joseph B. Oliver House. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 98982. Photo taken 2002.



**Figure 4.** Joseph B. Oliver House, photo taken 2025.



**Figure 5.** Justus Vallat House. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106612. Photo taken 1987.



**Figure 6.** Justus Vallat House. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106612. Photo taken 2010.



**Figure 7.** Justus Vallat House, photo taken 2025.

Milwaukee Co. 0106613 Milwaukee 1708 N. Farwell Ave.



**Figure 8.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1708 N. Farwell Avenue. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106613. Photo taken 1979.



**Figure 9.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1708 N. Farwell Avenue. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106613. Photo taken 1987.



**Figure 10.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1708 N. Farwell Avenue. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106613. Photo taken 2010.



**Figure 11.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1708 N. Farwell Avenue, photo taken 2025.



Milwaukee Co. 0106615 Milwaukee

1714 N. Farwell Ave.

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**Figure 12.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1714-1716 N. Farwell Avenue. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106615. Photo taken 1979.



**Figure 13.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1714-1716 N. Farwell Avenue. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106615. Photo taken 1987.



**Figure 14.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1714-1716 N. Farwell Avenue. Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Record # 106615. Photo taken 2010.



**Figure 15.** Justus & Margaret Vallat House, 1714-1716 N. Farwell Avenue, photo taken 2025.



**Figure 16.** Brady & Farwell Historic District, photo taken 2025.