

August 11, 2021

To the honorable Chair and Commissioners:

1100 S. 5th Street, Ste. 319
Milwaukee, WI 53204
P: 414.220.0530

The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance supports temporary historic designation of the William Spence Houses Numbers 1 and 2 at 2275 and 2279 N. Summit Ave. as comparable examples of the unique residential character of the neighboring North Point South Historic District. Such a designation would provide an opportunity to more fully explore whether the Historic District should include these and other modest homes along N. Summit Ave. that were originally excluded.

There is evidence to suggest that these homes may deserve to be included within the District. As the nominator notes, they were constructed in the same time period (1889) and as part of the same development (the Glidden and Lockwood's Addition) as many homes within the district and are of a similar style and character. Their inclusion would help paint a fuller picture of this important development and its significance to Milwaukee's growth in the late 19th century by showing the variety of home types (not just larger homes and mansions) that were being constructed at the time.

The question of why these buildings were not included within the original district boundaries can only be speculated upon. However, it is not uncommon for historic district boundaries to be revisited and expanded, both at the National Register and local levels. Such expansions reflect the development of our understanding of what kinds of places are worthy of preservation in America. Buildings may have been excluded originally because they were not yet old enough for consideration, or as may be the case in this situation, because of a previous bias within preservation toward the architecturally grand. Today, we understand that such views, in excluding certain types of places, also exclude certain people. We now appreciate more fully that a preservation that only preserves the places and stories of the wealthy and elite is an incomplete story. The places that represent the breadth of the human experience are worthy of preservation and add value to the narrative of our history as a city.

As was established in conversations surrounding the Puddlers' Cottages, these "ordinary buildings" (www.vernaculararchitectureforum.org) can hold just as much cultural and architectural significance as their more high style kin and are an important component to ensuring the stories of the "ordinary people" who inhabited them are not lost.

For these reasons, we believe 2275 and 2279 N. Summit Ave. deserve the further exploration that temporary historic designation would provide and urge the Commission to grant the designation.

Thank you as always for your hard work on behalf of the people and places of Milwaukee.

Respectfully,

Jeremy Ebersole
Executive Director
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance