



## **Historic Designation Study Report**

### **Van Ells Drug Store**

2652-54 W. Fond du Lac Avenue

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City of Milwaukee  
Department of City Development  
Summer, 2001

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## HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

### Van Ells Drug Store

#### I. NAME

Historic: Van Ells Drug Store

Common name: Family Dental Center

#### LOCATION

2652-54 W. Fond du Lac Avenue

7th Aldermanic District, **Ald. Fredrick Gordon**

Legal Description: Subd of Lots 9 & 10 of Williams Subd in SW ¼ sec 18-7-22 block 4 lot 29

#### III. CLASSIFICATION Structure

OWNER: Robert W. Wellenstein  
4535 W. North Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53210

#### V. DESIGNATION REQUESTED BY: Ms. Christine Lorenz and Mr. Ed Ferris

#### VI. YEAR BUILT: 1903<sup>1</sup>

**ARCHITECTS:** Leiser and Holst<sup>2</sup>

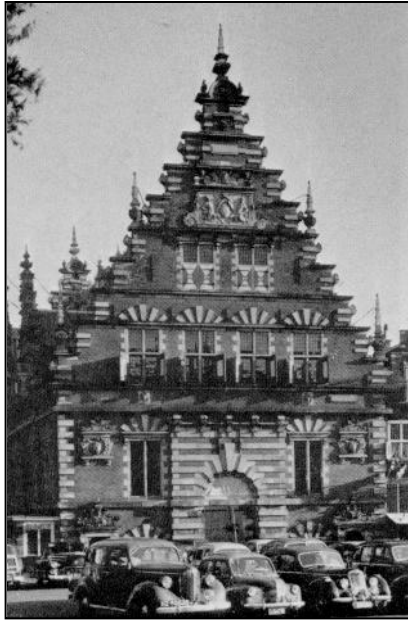
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<sup>1</sup> City of Milwaukee building permit No. 384, July 20, 1903.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., Line 7.

## VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

### Introduction



The Meat Hall from 1603 (left), in Haarlem, the Netherlands (Holland), is one of the country's most distinguished buildings of its time and it may have influenced the design of Milwaukee's Van Ells Building (right) which was built exactly 300 years later in 1903.

The Van Ells Building is Milwaukee's finest remaining example of a small commercial building designed in the Flemish Renaissance Revival style. It is a brilliant example of local craftsmanship and there is nothing else quite like it in the city. The store's spectacular scrolled front gable recalls the indigenous architecture of central Europe where many of the city's immigrant settlers had come from in the late nineteenth century. It is believed that the famous Meat Market (1603) in Holland, where the Van Ells family originated, may have inspired the design of the building.<sup>3</sup> Historians use the label "ethnic architecture" to describe a structure like the

Van Ells because its design keenly reflects the ethnic heritage of its original owner. Ethnic architecture is rare in America and it is important to preserve Milwaukee's remaining examples because these eye-catching structures are vital to the city's physical identity and its cultural diversity.

The Van Ells building is located at the center of a small commercial district that is clustered around the busy, three-street junction of West Center Street, North 27<sup>th</sup> Street and West Fond du Lac Avenue. Between 1900 and 1950 this intersection was a thriving hub of neighborhood commerce and a major transfer point on the city's streetcar network. During the past 25 years, however, the architectural character of the district has dramatically changed.

Across the street from the Van Ells an entire block of small commercial buildings was replaced in the early 1990s with a new, contemporary style library. Immediately south of the Van Ells several commercial buildings were demolished to make way for a parking lot. To the north of the subject building stands a 2-story, brick, store and office building designed in the early twentieth century commercial style. Another notable survivor in the vicinity is the former Kilbourn State Bank at the northwest corner of the triangular-shaped intersection. The impressive Neo-Classical style, flatiron structure was remodeled into its present form in 1928 when the district was at its peak in terms of architecture and commerce.

<sup>3</sup> Holland is formally known today as "the Netherlands" although the two terms are used interchangeably.

### **The building**

The Van Ells building is a 2-1/2 story, red brick, front-gabled commercial building designed in the Flemish Renaissance Revival style of architecture.<sup>4</sup> The most outstanding feature of the building is an extraordinary scrolled front gable that faces West Fond Du Lac Avenue. It is trimmed with extensive ornamental sheet metal work and dressed limestone. The front elevation is finished with red pressed brick laid with very narrow mortar joints that are only about 1/4" in thickness. Known as a "knife joint" this ornamental and structural feature contributes to the very fine finished appearance of the main elevation.

The first story of the front elevation is composed of a modern metal and vinyl-sided storefront. A central aluminum entry door is flanked on either side by small, rectangular plate glass windows. Another entry door on the south half of the elevation has been covered over with vinyl siding. Originally it opened to a staircase that leads to offices and an apartment on the second story.



Sheet metal balustrade atop the bay

The second story appears to be nearly intact and its principal feature is a large, projecting, flat-roofed bay that is trimmed with extensive ornamental sheet metal. The bay is fenestrated with a large, central landscape sash that is flanked on either side by a double hung window. The sheet metal bulkhead beneath the windows is embellished with small, raised fleur-de-lis ornaments and the corners of the bay are trimmed with paneled, sheet metal pilasters. Topping off the bay is a fine bracketed metal cornice that is surmounted by an ornamental metal balustrade. Flanking the bay is a large landscape sash window that is embellished with a striking, polychrome lintel made of red brick and dressed white limestone blocks. This feature is one of the hallmarks of Renaissance era, Dutch-inspired design. The

second story is separated from the attic story above it by a projecting sheet metal cornice that is trimmed with scrolled acanthus leaf sheet metal brackets.

The scrolled gable that tops the building is one of the most remarkable architectural features of its kind to be found in Milwaukee. Each of the four major steps on either side of the gable is trimmed with a projecting sheet metal cornice and a large, scrolled sheet metal bracket called a knee block. Each step is further embellished with two white limestone quoins. Centered in the gable is a bay of two double-hung windows topped with polychrome lintels made of red brick and contrasting white limestone blocks. A very fine detail near the top of the gable is a small round-arched niche that is trimmed at the bottom with a projecting, half round sheet metal sill supported by a large bracket. The gable peak is topped with a half-round pediment that, in turn, is surmounted by a large finial.

The side and rear elevations are utilitarian in character and finished with common red brick and standard mortar joints that are about 1/2" thick. A neighboring 2-story commercial building hides most of the side elevation that faces northwest. The side elevation that faces southeast is composed of a red brick wall fenestrated with double hung windows that are randomly placed to respond to the needs of the interior. A large bay window on the second story projects from the rear half of the building. The bay is finished with wooden clapboard siding and trimmed with wood cornice moldings.

<sup>4</sup> The term **Flemish** refers to an area of northern Europe historically called **Flanders**. Today this region includes parts of Holland, Belgium and France.

The rear, gabled elevation is finished with red, common brick on the first and second stories and the attic story is clad with square butt wooden shingles that appear to be original to the building. The gable and its returns at the eaves are trimmed with wood cornice moldings. Windows and doors are randomly placed to respond to the needs of the interior. A 2-1/2-story iron fire escape, which appears to be a mid-twentieth century addition, projects from the center of the rear elevation. Building permit records also indicate that a small detached metal garage was erected at the rear of the building in 1913, but it is no longer standing today.<sup>5</sup>

The exterior of the building has remained relatively intact over the years, perhaps because it has had relatively few owners in nearly one hundred years. Although the original street-level storefront has been replaced with a new one, this change is reversible and it does not significantly detract from the overall architectural significance of the building. Historic photos of the building also reveal the loss of a brick chimney with ornamental terra cotta tops that soared above the north wall. Over the years most of the changes have occurred to the interior although that part of the building is not evaluated for its architectural merit in the local designation process.

The interior alterations are worthwhile to point out in order to understand the overall history of the building. The first floor was used originally for retail sales and the second story was a large shopkeeper's flat where the first owner made his home. In 1926 the shopkeeper's flat was remodeled into four offices according to plans drawn by local architect George Klenzendorf.<sup>6</sup> In 1941 one of the second floor offices at the rear of the building was converted back to a small apartment.<sup>7</sup> Remodeling on the first floor was done in the late 1970s to accommodate the needs of the Family Dental Clinic that is still there today.

## **VII. SIGNIFICANCE**

The Van Ells building is architecturally significant as Milwaukee's finest remaining example of a small commercial building designed in the Flemish Renaissance Revival style of architecture. This striking building is also historically significant as a virtually irreplaceable example of ethnic architecture, which is defined as a building that reflects the ethnic heritage of its original owner. The preservation of Milwaukee's historic ethnic commercial buildings, constructed between about 1855 and 1920, is a top priority because genuine examples of ethnic architecture are rare and these structures are some of the city's most outstanding physical assets.

The Van Ells building is also significant to the state's social and architectural histories. The State Historical Society's Cultural Resource Management Plan has identified a need to preserve ethnic architecture, such as the Van Ells, because these structures are unique visual reminders of the people who settled the state and the building traditions that they brought with them from the Old World.

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<sup>5</sup> Milwaukee Building Permit No. 1477 dated April 26, 1913. Microfilm record at 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee.

<sup>6</sup> Milwaukee Building Permit No. 13756 dated June 7, 1926. Microfilm record at 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee.

<sup>7</sup> Milwaukee Building Permit No. 13461 dated May 29, 1941. Microfilm record at 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee.

## VIII. HISTORY

### Architecture



The scrolled gables of Milwaukee's Van Ells (left) and Holland's Meat Hall

The Van Ells Drug Store is an icon of Dutch-influenced architecture in Milwaukee and the State of Wisconsin. The building reflects a robust period in Milwaukee's history when local architects and their patrons found inspiration in the architectural fashions and history of Europe.

The Van Ells is also an important example of ethnic architecture that helps to recall Milwaukee's history as a focal point of 19<sup>th</sup>

century European immigration. Many Dutch immigrants departed for the New World from the city of Haarlem, which is also the location of one of Holland's most spectacular 17<sup>th</sup> century scrolled gable structures, the Meat Hall, built in 1603. The building has been a veritable celebrity since it was completed, and published photos and drawings of it are likely to have influenced the architects who designed the Van Ells Drug Store in Milwaukee exactly three centuries later.

The Van Ells Building and the Haarlem Meat Hall share a pivotal characteristic in that ornamentation increases in richness and detail from the bottom of the structure to the top. This attribute was one of the significant contributions that the historic Meat Hall, designed by master architect Lieven de Key (c.1560-1627), made to Dutch architecture. Other Dutch architects had designed scrolled gables, but none up to that point had dealt with the feature so successfully as Mr. de Key did with his plans for the Meat Hall.<sup>8</sup> His extensive design work generated a veritable school of architecture and although it is often referred to as Dutch or Flemish Renaissance in style, today it is more correctly identified as *Mannerist*, which refers to the stylistic period that immediately followed the Renaissance in Holland.

More similarities between the Van Ells and the Meat Hall include the white limestone quoins that accent each step of their gables and their striking polychrome lintels made of red brick and white limestone that trim the tops of the windows. The Van Ells building is the only known structure in Milwaukee that features a polychrome lintel designed precisely in this fashion. Topping off the gable on both buildings is a distinctive arched pediment that is surmounted by a tall square, tapered finial. It is important to understand, however, that the architects of the Van Ells did not want the building to be a copy of the Meat Hall. Instead the designers adroitly combined significant design features of the original trend-setting 17<sup>th</sup> century structure with the architectural fashions and building materials that were popular during the early twentieth century.

Another short history lesson can be found among the small, but fascinating fleur-de-lis ornaments that embellish the panels of the second floor bay window. The fleur-de-lis is the

<sup>8</sup> Jakob Rosenberg, Seymour Slive and E. H. ter Kuile. *Dutch Art and Architecture 1600-1800*. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1986, pp. 383-384.

symbol for French royalty and at first might seem out of place on a Dutch-inspired building. The ornament, however, is an apt reminder that southern Holland was a French province during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and some historic Flemish land is now part of modern-day France.

### **Scrolled gables and their importance to local ethnic architecture**

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many of the Milwaukee's houses, factories and commercial buildings were adorned with elaborate scrolled gables that are associated with the homelands of central European immigrants from Germany, Poland and Holland. The term *ethnic architecture* is used to describe a building that uniquely reflects the heritage of its original owner through its design or construction methods. Milwaukee's ethnic buildings are some of its most outstanding architectural assets partly because very few cities in America possess these types of structures.

In broad terms, the ethnic character of a building is a regional style or prominent architectural detail that is strongly associated with the homeland of an ethnic group. Examples include storefronts and churches that were embellished with distinctly Old World architectural details in order to personalize them for the immigrant communities they served. Milwaukee's outstanding collection of ethnic architecture reflects the city's nineteenth century status as an unusually vibrant center of European immigration and culture. These structures are a unique architectural record of the city's social and development histories and they exemplify the craftsmanship and community pride that is strongly associated with the city.



Compared with the Meat Hall, The Orphanage (1616, left) and the Spice House (1559) in Enkhuisen, Holland are less ornate and have a lighter character. These two structures are more typical of shaped gable architecture in Holland.

Curvilinear, scrolled gables are one of the most engaging forms of ethnic architecture in Milwaukee and their origin can be traced back to the Renaissance in Italy. The motif was then spread northward by master masons to Germany, Belgium, Holland and Poland with each region developing its own substyle.

Germany might have actually been the first northern European region to build shaped gables. Several of the earliest extant German scrolled gables, referred to as *Welsche Geibel* (Italian gables, in English), date to at least the 1520s. One of the greatest concentrations of these gables is in the central German region of Westphalia which borders Holland.<sup>9</sup> Other German areas where the shaped gable is common are Anhalt-Saxony and Thuringia.

<sup>9</sup> Henry-Russell Hitchcock. *German Renaissance Architecture*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981, p. 15.

Shaped gables reached a particularly high degree of development in *Flanders* which is a region spread out over modern day Belgium and parts of Holland and France. This area was the cradle of the Flemish Renaissance, and it had a profound influence on the design and construction of scrolled gables throughout northern Europe. Pre-dating the curvilinear forms of gables, step-like gables were constructed in Flanders as early as the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Later, during the Renaissance, step-gables were embellished with curvilinear forms imported from southern Europe.

Milwaukee's grandest scrolled gables can be found on City Hall, a Flemish Renaissance Revival masterpiece completed in 1897 at 200 East Wells Street. The construction of shaped gable buildings for the city's Polish-American and German-American communities continued until about 1920 and after that the genre was virtually abandoned as a means to reflect the ethnic heritage of an owner. Scrolled gables in the Mediterranean Revival style were constructed as late as the mid-1930s, but they were stylish architectural details of the period and not statements about ethnicity. During the last half of the twentieth century, a large number of the city's ethnic buildings and their fascinating scrolled gables were lost to demolition and unsympathetic remodeling. Today many of the remaining structures are concentrated on the near south and near north sides of the city with some of the best examples located on West Lincoln Avenue between South 5<sup>th</sup> and South 20<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Despite the relatively large numbers of Netherlanders who settled in Wisconsin, high style examples of Dutch-influenced architecture such as the Van Ells building are exceedingly rare in the state. The Van Ells is not only Wisconsin's finest remaining structure to reflect the indigenous architecture of Holland but it is also one of the most remarkable examples of the *scrolled gable* architectural styles that are native to northern European countries. Another fine example of Dutch-influenced design is the two-story Weldon Building at 2479 South Howell Avenue built in 1885. Outside of the examples in Milwaukee the state's only other remaining Netherlands-style buildings are a small commercial building and a Dutch ethnic museum in Cedar Grove. Located about 50 miles north of Milwaukee, the small farming community was settled by Dutch immigrants in the late nineteenth century.

### **Dutch Immigrants in Wisconsin and Milwaukee**

The Van Ells building is a remarkable reminder of the fact that Wisconsin was a popular area for Dutch settlement between the mid-1840s and 1890. During those years only Michigan and New York could claim larger numbers of Dutch newcomers. There are accounts of Dutch settlers living in Milwaukee in the late 1830s, but the majority of Wisconsin's Netherlanders tended to make the city a temporary stop on their way to the rich agricultural lands of the interior. Today many of the descendants of Wisconsin's early Dutch immigrants live in Brown, Sheboygan and Outagamie counties.<sup>10</sup>

Despite the allure of the countryside, by 1900 Milwaukee had a sizable Dutch-American ethnic community that was represented in nearly every branch of city and county governments as well as in the professions, businesses and trades. As early as 1851, Gijsbert Van Steenwijck, a Dutch insurance agent in Milwaukee, estimated that out of the city's total population of 6,000 nearly 600 were of Dutch heritage.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> James Paul Allen and Eugene James Turner. *We the People*. New York, Macmillan Publishing Co., 1988, p. 61.

<sup>11</sup> *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*, Vol. 1. Madison, Wisconsin: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986, Settlement section, p. 4-1 to 4-2.

According to another account, by 1857 the city's Sixth Ward on the near north side was inhabited entirely by Dutch immigrants and their descendants. Their neighborhood, called *Hollandsche Berg* which means *Dutch Hill* in English, was bounded on the east by North 10<sup>th</sup> Street, on the west by North 18<sup>th</sup> Street and by West Reservoir Avenue and West Galena Street on the north and south respectively.<sup>12</sup> Today there are no structures in that neighborhood with a distinctively Dutch architectural character.

The first significant waves of Dutch immigrants began pouring into Wisconsin around 1844 and Milwaukee has a well-documented case of a Dutch family arriving in the summer of 1843.<sup>13</sup> Most of these Hollanders came here seeking religious and political freedoms that had eluded them in their homeland. Many of the earliest immigrants were Protestants known as "Seceders," who got their nickname after breaking away from the state controlled Reformed Church of the Netherlands. Problems within the Reformed Church began in 1816 when King William I reorganized the church to give him more control over it. In protest several congregations broke away from the King's authority in 1834. This led to serious conflicts between church and state that caused many Seceders and their sympathizers to leave their homeland and seek religious freedom in America.

In 1848 the King relaxed government controls over religion, but by that time many Seceders had already left the country or made up their minds to do so. Not all the Dutch immigrants were Protestant and many were Roman Catholics who came to America primarily for economic and social reasons. They also did not stress their ethnicity, which contrasted with the ideals of their Protestant countrymen.<sup>14</sup> In Milwaukee, the Dutch Catholics never established their own ethnic parish and it is believed that these newcomers tended to join German ethnic parishes or one of the city's English speaking Catholic congregations.

By the 1890s Dutch immigration to Wisconsin significantly declined while it remained steady or increased in Michigan, New York, Illinois, Iowa and New Jersey. Ironically, in 1920 following the end of World War I, the largest number of Dutch immigrants ever entered Wisconsin, which was indicative, perhaps, of the lingering ethnic ties between Wisconsin and Old World.

### **Historic owners: Henry M. Van Ells, Edmund C. Neumann**

The Van Ells Building is a remarkable structure that is very important to Milwaukee's architectural history, but relatively little is known about Henry Van Ells for whom it was built and named. Mr. Van Ells was born in Wisconsin in 1867 and his father was a native of Holland according to census records.<sup>15</sup> It was not unusual for Milwaukee merchants to have their small commercial buildings designed to reflect the European homelands of their parents.

Research has revealed Mr. Van Ells had a long career that began in 1883 when he went to work at the age of 16 as a prescription clerk in a downtown Milwaukee drug store.<sup>16</sup> After working for several years at various pharmacies in the area, Mr. Van Ells went into business

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<sup>12</sup> Kathleen Neils Conzen. *Immigrant Milwaukee, 1836-1860*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 146-147.

<sup>13</sup> *Immigrant Milwaukee*, p. 44.

<sup>14</sup> *We the People*, p. 60.

<sup>15</sup> 1910 Census, Ward 20, Enumeration District No. 289, Sheet 17, lines 79-82.

<sup>16</sup> Milwaukee City Directory, 1883, p. 654.

with a partner and opened the Hassinger and Van Ells Drug Store in 1893 at 1457 West Forest Home Avenue (razed).<sup>17</sup>

The next big step in his career was the establishment of his own business in 1903 and the subsequent construction of the grand Flemish Renaissance Revival building at 2652-54 W. Fond du Lac Avenue. Mr. Van Ells, his wife Otilie and their children Lester and Myron lived in the same building with their business just as shopkeepers had done in Europe. After selling the building and their business in 1921, the Van Ells family left their spacious second floor flat and moved to a single-family house on the West Side at 2415 North 48<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Van Ells subsequently went to work as a pharmacist for Schmidt's Service Drug Store on West Walnut Street. He retired in the early 1940s, according to city directories, and his wife died in 1949.<sup>18</sup> Mr. Van Ells' name disappears from the city directory after 1950.

Dr. Edmund C. Neumann, who bought the Van Ells pharmacy in 1921, renamed it after himself and moved into the upper shopkeeper's flat with his wife Christina. He also established a medical office on the second floor for his patients. In 1926 Dr. Neumann converted part of the grand structure into a professional building by having the second floor completely remodeled into four offices. He and his wife subsequently moved to a single-family house at 3073 N. 38<sup>th</sup> Street.<sup>19</sup> Dr. Neumann kept one office for his own medical practice and in 1927 he rented out the others to John R. Woelffer, a dentist, Fred J. Korthals, a physician and Charles S. Fleming, a lawyer.<sup>20</sup> The remodeling was an important turning point in the history of the building because it established the Van Ells as a desirable location for professional offices and today the building is still used for the same purpose.

In 1941 one of the small offices was remodeled back into an apartment. Dr. Neumann's pharmacy remained in business at least through 1945 according to spot checks of city directories. By 1955 Hugo M. Bohn operated the pharmacy under his own name and he lived in the small upper flat. The directory that year also records that two of the 1920's-era tenants, Charles S. Fleming, the lawyer and John R. Woelffer, the dentist, were still using offices on the second floor. The Bohn Pharmacy was in business through the late 1970s until the first floor was remodeled in 1979 for the Family Dental Center that is still there today. The street level storefront was remodeled at that time to accommodate the needs of the new business. City directories indicated that the second floor offices were vacant during the late 1970s.

### **The Architects**

#### *Julius Leiser and Charles Holst*

The design work of Julius Leiser (1875-1930) and Charles Holst (d. 1924) has had a significant influence on Milwaukee's architectural character. The most outstanding example of their skills is the Van Ells store that was finished in 1903 during their first year in business together. Their partnership lasted until Mr. Holst's death in 1924 and for more than 20 years they designed many fine houses, small commercial buildings, and apartments in the period revival styles of architecture that were popular during the early twentieth century.

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<sup>17</sup> Milwaukee Journal, Friday March 9, 1990 page 4G "Remember when...Van Ells Drug store was in business?"

<sup>18</sup> Vital Statistics records at Milwaukee's Zeidler Municipal Building 841 N. Broadway. Death Certificate #59 dated January 4, 1949.

<sup>19</sup> Milwaukee City Directly, 1928.

<sup>20</sup> Milwaukee City Directory, 1927.

Mr. Leiser, who was born and educated in Milwaukee to German immigrant parents, became an architect through the apprentice system, learning his profession from established architects and master crafts workers. At the age of 15, Mr. Leiser began his career as a draftsman with local architect Gustav H. Leipold. Four years later Mr. Leiser left that job and acquired a practical knowledge of building construction by working successively as an apprentice carpenter, plumber and steam fitter.<sup>21</sup>

Following that phase of his career he worked briefly in Iowa for the architectural firm of Josslyn and Taylor and then returned to Milwaukee where he worked as a draftsman for architect Fred Graf.<sup>22</sup> In 1898 Mr. Leiser and Frank H. Mueller opened their own architectural firm, but it dissolved in 1903 when the partnership of Leiser and Holst was formed. Examples of their design work are concentrated on the city's Upper East Side which is an area that is well known for its fine, architect-designed houses and small commercial buildings.

The popularity of building ethnic-styled structures in Milwaukee was on the decline when Leiser and Holst began their firm, so their known body of design work incorporates only a few of these fascinating structures. One of those structures is the large German Renaissance Revival style tavern (1906) at 1020 East Locust Street that features an elaborate scrolled gable. A residential example of their ethnic design work is the brick flat at 3270-80 N. Hackett Avenue (1904) which is trimmed with a distinctive Teutonic half-timber and stucco gable called "fachwerk" in German.

Mr. Leiser and his partner were also known for their church design work which includes St. Marcus Lutheran at the northwest corner of Palmer and Garfield Streets, Saron Lutheran at N. 29<sup>th</sup> and West Hadley Streets and Gethsemane Lutheran at South 24<sup>th</sup> and W. Harrison Streets.<sup>23</sup> Mr. Leiser was living on the city's Upper East Side at 2443 North Oakland Avenue when he died on December 5, 1930.

Relatively little is known at present about Charles Holst who worked as a draftsman for Milwaukee architects Uehling and Linde before teaming up with Julius Leiser. Uehling and Linde had offices in the Germania building and they were well known in the city for their designs of apartments, churches and fine residences.

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<sup>21</sup> John G. Gregory, *History of Milwaukee*, Wisconsin, Vol. IV. Milwaukee: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1921, p. 712.

<sup>22</sup> *Men of Milwaukee*. Vol 1. Milwaukee: Associated compilers, 1929-30

<sup>23</sup> *Men of Milwaukee*.

## IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Van Ells Drug Store be considered for designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-4, e-5, e-6 and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

**e-4 Its portrayal of the environment of a group of people in an era of history characterized by a distinctive architectural style.**

*Rationale:* Criterion **e-4** is applied because the design of the building recalls some of the outstanding architectural traditions of Holland that, in turn, reflect the ethnicity of the building's original owner.

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

*Rationale:* Criterion **e-5** is applied because the building is an outstanding example of Dutch-influenced, Flemish Renaissance Revival style design.

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

*Rationale:* Criterion **e-6** is applied because the designers of the building, Leiser and Holst, were among the city's top architectural firms during the early twentieth century. Their work has contributed significantly to the architectural character of the city as it stands today.

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

*Rationale:* Criterion **e-9** is applied because the building is one of the most outstanding small commercial buildings remaining in Milwaukee and it is a splendid reminder of the city's late nineteenth century commercial vitality and its ethnic heritage.

## REFERENCES

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1910 Census, Ward 20, Enumeration District No. 289, Sheet 17, lines 79-82.



## **X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES**

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 particular design submissions. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

### **A. Roofs**

Retain the original roof shape. Avoid making changes to the roof shape or the front gable that would alter the building's height, roofline or pitch.

### **B. Materials**

#### **1. Masonry**

Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.

Repoint defective or deteriorated mortar by duplicating the original in terms of color, style, texture and strength. See the masonry chapters in the books, *As Good As New or Good for Business* for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original joints.

c. Clean masonry only when necessary and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting and other abrasive blasting to brick or stone surfaces is not allowed because these methods of cleaning erode the surface of the material and accelerate deterioration and the accumulation of dirt on the exterior of the building. Chemical cleaners should always be used with care because they could have an adverse reaction with some masonry materials. Certain acids, for example, may erode limestone and terra cotta.

d. Repair or replace deteriorated masonry with new materials that duplicate the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed.

#### **2. Wood/Metal**

a. Retain original materials whenever possible and avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance. Important sheet metal elements on the building's main elevation include the extensive cornice work on the first and second stories, the projecting bay window on the second story and the extensive ornamental work that trims the shaped gable.

b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural

features with modern materials that are incompatible with the historic character of the building. The installation of vinyl trim or siding is not allowed.

#### C. Windows and Doors

Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of original window panes or sash.

Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or doors. Avoid filling-in or covering up openings with incompatible materials such as concrete or glass block. Avoid the installation of modern window units with glazing configurations that are incompatible with the style of the building (i.e., installing multi-pane colonial style windows in place of original double hung windows).

#### D. Trim and Ornamentation

Existing trim or ornamentation should not be changed except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design and appearance, but not necessarily in material.

#### E. Additions

Additions are permitted with the approval of the Historic Preservation Commission. Ideally an addition should either compliment or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. The commission will review the compatibility of the addition with the historic building and may consider the following details: Window size and placement, scale, design, materials, roof configuration, height and the degree to which the addition impacts the principal elevation of the building.

#### F. Signs

The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the architectural character of the building. Translucent plastic signboards that are illuminated from behind and mounted in a metal box will generally not be approved.

#### G. Site features

New plant materials, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures should respect and enhance the historic architectural character of the building.

#### H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the building.

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a free-standing structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components such as overhangs and fenestration that are in proximity to a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the building.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the building as a distinct, freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main historic building should express the same continuity established by the historic building if they are in proximity to it.

4. Materials

The materials used in the new construction which are visible from the public right-of-way should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there are 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 9(h) of the ordinance, into consideration when reviewing demolition requests.

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 and is beyond hope of repair.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.