

**HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
May 2016**

I. NAME

Historic: Wisconsin Consistory (originally Plymouth Congregational Church)

Common Name: Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center / Scottish Rite Temple

II. LOCATION

790 North Van Buren Street

Legal Description -

Tax Key No. 3930461000
Certified Survey Map No. 4864 in NW ¼ SEC 28-7-22
PARCEL 1
Formerly: PLAT OF MILWAUKEE in SECTIONS (28-29-33)-7-22, BLOCK 89, LOTS 9-10-11-12 & N. 30' of LOT 8

III. CLASSIFICATION

SITE

IV. OWNER

Trustees, Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite,
Valley of Milwaukee
790 North Van Buren Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

ALDERMAN

Ald. Robert Bauman 4th Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR

Peter Zanghi, Milwaukee Preservation Alliance

V. YEAR BUILT

1889 and 1936/1937

ARCHITECT:

Edward Townsend Mix (1889)
Herbert W. Tullgren (1936-1937 remodeling)

NOTE:

The Wisconsin Consistory Building has been listed in the National Register of Historic Places September 26, 1994

The Common Council denied the first attempt at local historic designation on September 23, 1986

The Historic Preservation Commission placed a second nomination on file on May 18, 1992 after a written agreement was signed that the exterior would not be altered for a period of two years.

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

THE AREA

The Wisconsin Consistory Building is located at the southeast corner of North Van Buren Street and East Wells Street. The area today consists of office buildings, parking lots, parking ramps, club houses (University Club), St. Johns' Cathedral Complex, and a number of 19th and early 20th century residential buildings, some of which have been converted to commercial use and some of which are part of a National Register historic district as well as a locally designated historic district (Cass-Wells Historic District).

Historically, this was part of the Yankee Hill neighborhood, so called for the preponderance of residents who settled in Milwaukee from the eastern U.S. in this particular area. Originally populated with large scale houses on substantial sized lots, by the late 1880's, when the subject of this nomination was built, larger parcels had become subdivided and numerous single family as well as row houses and duplexes were being constructed. Also in evidence was the new form of dwelling, at least in Milwaukee, the apartment house. Not at all considered slum dwellings, these apartments were targeted to young marrieds, singles without families, and empty nesters as well as young men seeking their fortune. It was still the social norm for children to stay at home and contribute to the family household or even remain after marriage to assist elderly parents.

Although the neighborhood still held onto its exclusivity, the younger generation of well-to-do and newly rich self-made men was moving to Prospect Avenue and areas north. The congregation, and especially its pastor, felt this was fertile ground for their social mission.

Description

Unique to this building is the fact that a Congregational church lies beneath the structure we see today. The original 2 ½ story building was Richardsonian Romanesque in style, constructed of brick, with a rusticated stone foundation and rusticated stone used for sills, window trim and at spandrel areas. Prominent Milwaukee architect and church member Edward Townsend Mix was the designer. The rounded corner tower was the primary feature, with steep conical roof flanked by two tall chimneys that emerged from the walls to either side. A large stone-trimmed arched portal was centered on the Van Buren Side of the building and a second was located toward the east end of the building on Wells Street. Five dormers were located at the upper half story with pairs of rectangular windows set within. Arched windows characterized the second story while rectangular windows were located on the first. A massive dormer with a stepped gable was located above the entry on Van Buren and a second was located above the entry on East Wells Street. The building lacked all the overt and usual attributes of a Christian church. There was no cross, no religious figures or religious-themed stained glass. The design reflected the wishes of the congregation and its pastor Rev. Titsworth to reflect the congregation's social justice mission. The building could easily have been mistaken for a school, an institutional building or some public building.

Today, what we see of the building dates to the remodeling done in 1936-1937. The Wisconsin Consistory is a 2 ½ story, mansard roof with parapet (flat roof at the top), limestone clad rectangular building that occupies its entire lot. Slight grassy planting areas are located along the Van Buren and Wells Streets elevations. The Art Deco style structure measures about 120 by 160 feet. It has finished elevations along Van Buren Street and East Wells Street and the east and south elevations have common brick walls. The east wall in particular shows evidence from the former church with round arched windows that have been bricked in. The striking feature of

the building that survives from its original form is the conical tower that occupies the corner at the intersection of Wells and Van Buren.

The mansard roof and conical roof of the tower are clad in polychrome slate. Dormers are located along the roof, much in the same locations from the period of the original church.

The foundation features rusticated ashlar blocks, a remnant of the original building that lies beneath the current façade.

Windows have remained in their original locations from the time it served as a church and grouped in twos and threes but are now rectangular in shape with steel/metal sashes that feature twelve-light or six light sash, many fitted with art glass. Bedford Limestone now clads the exterior of the Van Buren and Wells Street facades and features vertical fluting. These limestone pilasters divide the façade into regular bays and alternate with windows. Below the windows are carved limestone spandrels.

The entrance on Van Buren was shifted to the south and is located in a three story bay that projects above the mansard parapet. The entry features oak framed leaded glass doors, sidelights and transom set deep within a compound-molded angular arch. The entrance has been made handicap accessible and the flight of steps at this location have been removed in recent years. There is also a wide canopy that has been installed at this entrance. A new entrance was added to the Wells Street side of the building immediately adjacent to the tower but its bay is smaller than the one on Van Buren. A third entrance is located where the original east entrance of the Plymouth Church was located and matches the one adjacent to the tower.

The principal feature of the building remains the large, round, three-story conically roofed engaged corner tower that unifies the Van Buren and Wells Street sides of the building.

Prominent on the building are the series of carved limestone panels that feature Masonic symbols. Most eye-catching however are the 29 life-size standing figures. Each is positioned at the parapet above the vertical bays of windows. The stylized elongated forms represent medieval monk-like figures, warriors in headdress with swords and armor, and bishops with headdresses.

Alterations to the building include the 1912 addition to the south after the Scottish Rite Masons acquired the building. It also includes the second addition in 1936-1937 at the south end where the main entrance is located. Since that time no major change has occurred outside of making accessible entrances. The Scottish Rite Masons have been excellent stewards of their building both on the interior and exterior.

HISTORY of the Plymouth Congregational Church

Plymouth Congregational Church traces its history back to May, 1841. Early services were held in the J. P. Rogers Block at the northeast corner of today's Plankinton Avenue and West Wisconsin Avenue. A brick church was later built at the northeast corner of North 2nd and West Wisconsin Avenue and dedicated on January 3, 1844. Always something of an activist congregation, the church was very much involved in the temperance and abolitionist movements. The congregation moved once again, selling its Wisconsin Avenue church to the Methodists, and built another brick church, in the Greek Revival style, at the southeast corner of East Wells Street and Milwaukee Street. The congregation adopted the name Plymouth Congregational and dedicated their new church in May, 1851. So, by the time the congregation moved to the location under discussion today, it had had three homes.

Plymouth grew to become the largest congregational church in the state and by 1866 was considered the wealthiest. Prominent church members included Judge Arthur MacArthur,

Judge Jason Downer, attorney Asahel Finch, merchant T. A. Chapmen, and architect Edward Townsend Mix.

Under the pastorate of Judson Titsworth (1883-1909), community outreach became the congregation's focus. Special efforts were directed to those in society who were often neglected including the elderly, "latchkey" children, immigrants in need of special classes and the homeless. As a result Plymouth was often referred to as an institutional church.

Needing a larger facility in which to carry out their numerous and ambitious programs, the congregation purchased property at the southeast corner of East Wells and North Van Buren Streets. After examining structures in Chicago, Indianapolis, Philadelphia, Elmira, and New York City, Rev. Titsworth formulated his idea of what a new church structure should be like. In June 1888, Edward Townsend Mix, a member of the congregation, was asked to prepare plans. Delayed by Mix's poor health, the plans were finally completed and construction began in 1889.

The new building, which ultimately cost \$101,000 was dedicated in December 1889 . It was as unique as Titsworth's vision of the church's mission. In addition to a 1200 seat auditorium and gallery, there were reading rooms, a lecture hall, parlor, classrooms, and a pastor's office amusement hall with stage, kitchen and dining facilities as well as a gymnasium with athletic equipment.

The institutional look of the exterior was the talk of the town. No spires, no rose windows or ecclesiastical elements identified the building and it was often likened to a post office, railroad depot or public building. The Associated Press criticized its unconventionality and criticism of its design was heard from as far away as New York, Missouri and Texas. (Flucke pp 39-40)

This unconventional "institutional church" building with its host of practical rooms made it suitable for adaptive use; the reason it is still here with us today.

Outreach work continued at this location through 1912. Some of its most successful efforts with youth recreation, reading rooms, summer camps and caring for the homeless (Milwaukee Rescue Mission) spun off into larger facilities and other institutions like the Milwaukee Public Library and the Milwaukee Public Schools stepped in to run municipally sponsored programs. Many of the congregation's well-to-do were moving up the north shore.

While initially considering establishing a mission on the Upper East Side, the congregation decided to relocate entirely. It constructed a new church building at 2717 East Hampshire Street near today's UW-Milwaukee. Society architect Alexander C. Eschweiler designed the building. In stark contrast to its unusual building at Van Buren and Wells Streets, the new building was a very traditional English Gothic Revival and sat a mere 350 persons in contrast to the 1,200 at the old location.

The last service was held at the old church on September 15, 1912 and the building was sold to the Scottish Rite Masons for \$44,000. As was typical then, buildings did not necessarily appreciate over time. Plymouth Congregation had paid \$101,000 for its construction. (Flucke pp. 40-42)

THE SCOTTISH RITE MASONS

The Scottish Rite Masonic Order is a branch of Freemasonry. The Freemasons are the oldest fraternal organization in both the United States and Wisconsin. Although the Order traces its origins to the guilds of the medieval era, the modern organization dates from the early eighteenth century. Masonic lodges appeared in America as early as 1730, apparently carried across the Atlantic by Englishmen who had been familiar with the order in Britain. By 1776, the

Order was firmly established in the east, and according to the Masons, several heroes of the Revolution, including Washington, Franklin, Revere, and the Adams' were active members.

As the population grew and expanded beyond the eastern seaboard, settlers carried the order to the west. A secret society with regalia, passwords, mystic rites, seals, ceremonies, degrees, signs, and signals, the Masons had a powerful attraction; membership in the exclusive organization conferred status, privilege, and a certain degree of prestige to its members. Most importantly, the Masons provided an archetype after which hundreds of other fraternal groups modeled themselves.

The Scottish Rite is one of two branches available to a Master Mason after he has completed the three stages of the Symbolic or Blue Lodge. The other branch is the York Rite that includes Royal Arch Masons, Royal and Secret Masters and Knights Templar.

The term Scottish Rite evolved when Scots fleeing turmoil in today's U.K. settled in France and began practicing their Masonic rites in the late 17th century. The first "Ecosais" or Scottish Lodge was established in 1732. Authorization was granted to establish a lodge in the West Indies in 1762. In 1767, the first Scottish Rite Body in the United State was established in Albany, New York and known as a Lodge of Perfection. The first Scottish Rite Supreme Council was established in Charleston, South Carolina in 1801. The early decades can be characterized by various lodges being established but with rites and organizational practices being diverse. Part of the Scottish Rite is its organization into valleys. There are currently valleys in 110 cities in 15 states that fall under the Northern Masonic Jurisdiction. The Southern Masonic Jurisdiction covers 35 states.

Although there are stages that ascend to 33^o, these do not indicate a "higher" level of membership. The highest degree is that of Master Mason which is granted or achieved at the Blue Lodges. (32ND ° Masons Valley of Detroit www.32nddegreemasons.org; accessed May 7, 2016)

Scottish Rite Masonry in Wisconsin dates to August of 1863 when a representative of the Supreme Council, Edmund B. Hayes, journeyed from New York at the request of several prominent Grand Lodge officers to organize a Grand Consistory. First, Hays conferred Scottish Rite degrees on 29 Wisconsin members who subscribed to the oath of fealty and allegiance. He then proceeded to elevate to the grade of Thirty-Third Degree to Henry L. Palmer who had served as Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of Wisconsin in 1852-1853. At the same time, Hays appointed him Deputy for the State of Wisconsin. In 1879 Henry L. Palmer was elected Sovereign Grand Commander of the Supreme Council, a position he held for 30 years.

In Wisconsin, the five divisions of the Scottish Rite are referred to as "Valleys". The five valleys are located in Milwaukee, Madison, Green Bay, Eau Claire and LaCrosse. The Valley of Milwaukee consists of four coordinated Bodies: the Wisconsin Lodge of Perfection, Wisconsin Council of Princes of Jerusalem, Wisconsin Chapter of Rose Croix and the Wisconsin Consistory. Each body is a separate and distinct entity insofar as the fraternal operation of the Rite is concerned and each has its separate staff of officers. The Executive Committee of the Valley consists of the heads of the four coordinated Bodies.

MASONRY IN WISCONSIN

Fraternal activity in Wisconsin began shortly after the establishment of the first permanent white settlements in the territory. The first Masonic Lodge was formed in Green Bay in 1823 by a group of military officers stationed at Fort Howard. Although this Menomonee Lodge lasted only seven years, the Masonic Order grew steadily over the next two decades and in December

of 1843 the Wisconsin Masons held their first statewide convention in Madison. By this time there were active lodges in operation at Platteville, Mineral Point and Milwaukee.

Milwaukee's first lodge had been formed in early 1843 when 40 to 50 Masons united to petition for lodge status from the nearest Masonic authority in Springfield, Illinois. Authorization came from the Grand Master in June, but the charter was not officially signed until January of 1844. Originally called Milwaukee Lodge No. 3, the name was subsequently changed to Kilbourn Lodge in honor of early member Byron Kilbourn. Numerous other Freemason lodges followed: Tracy Lodge (later Wisconsin Lodge #13) in 1847, Aurora Lodge #30 in 1850, Independence Lodge #80 in 1856, Excelsior Lodge in 1869 and Harmony Lodge #142 in 1863, the city's first exclusively Jewish Lodge.

Other branches of Masonry were soon established: the Royal Arch Masons in 1844; the Commanderies in 1850; and the Scottish Rite with its Wisconsin Grand Consistory in 1863.

Generally, the various Masonic bodies would share a common meeting hall, although ritual and pageantry might vary from group to group. Early meetings were held in several locations including the corner of today's Plankinton and West Wisconsin Avenue and at Ludington's Block at the northwest corner of North Water and East Wisconsin Avenue. Eventually two main meeting places emerged, the Masonic Temple in the 700 block of Plankinton Avenue (razed) and the Masonic Hall in the Iron Block at 205 East Wisconsin. The latter was first occupied in January of 1862. Described as "one of the most unique and chastely elegant in the city", the Masonic Hall was decorated by the firm of Faxon and Vaux with Siennese marbled wallpaper, grained cornices, moldings and a paneled ceiling. The main hall was flanked with anterooms and a smaller hall was located at the west end of the building. (Milwaukee City Directories; Milwaukee Sentinel 1862 February 1 page 1 column 4.)

By the late 1870s the Freemasons who occupied the Iron Block began to seek other quarters and a Masonic Union was formed to share the burden of site selection, rental fees and overall maintenance of a headquarters. In 1878 consideration was given to the rental of the two upper floors in Plankinton's Library Block at the northwest corner of North Fourth and Wisconsin (razed), but this was superseded by a scheme to build a \$100,000 temple east of the river. This did not come to fruition. Ultimately, the Masonic Union (consisting of three lodges, two commanderies and the Scottish Rite Masons) contracted with the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company for use of the third floor and part of the second floor in the insurance company's building at the northwest corner of Broadway and Wisconsin Avenue (razed). The sumptuous High Victorian Gothic building had been designed by Edward Townsend Mix and the new Masonic Hall was especially elaborate. Dubbed Egyptian Hall, the new quarters were decorated with frescoes by Chicago artist P. M. Almini at a cost of over \$3,000 and even boasted an organ. Dedication took place on April 7, 1880. (Milwaukee Sentinel 1880 January 1 page 8 column 4; 1880 January 25 page 5 column 1; 1880 January 26 page 8 column 1; 1880 February 21 page 1 column 6; 1880 April 1 page 2 column 1; 1878 February 16 page 8 column 2; 1878 February 28 page 8 column 1; 1878 March 5 page 8 column 2)

The dream of building a new Masonic temple did not die, however, and throughout the 1880s plans were periodically discussed for a jointly-owned lodge building. At one point a site was selected on East Wisconsin Avenue and Jefferson Street, but the building was eventually constructed at the southeast corner of Jefferson and Wells Streets. Instead of an intimate, homelike clubhouse, the Masons erected a large commercial block. The gabled, six-story Masonic Building was the work of local architects Ferry and Clas and was completed in 1896. (Milwaukee Journal 1905 February 17) Retail and office space was rented to help finance the cost of the running the lodge. The Masons, including the Shriners and other lodges, used this structure until 1923 when the building was sold for use as the county courthouse annex. This building too has been razed and the Shops-on Jefferson and a medical building were constructed on the site. (Milwaukee Sentinel 1884 July 9 page 3 column 4; 1884 August 30

THE CONSISTORY BUILDING AT 790 NORTH VAN BUREN STREET

After sharing quarters in the Masonic Building with the other Masonic bodies, the Scottish Rite Masons decided to strike out on their own.

They soon purchased the Plymouth Congregational Church, located just two blocks over from where they had been, in September, 1912. The purchase price was \$44,000. The building's exterior was conveniently un-churchlike and the interior provided the kind of spaces that were needed. The masons took out a permit for expansion that same year, on December 5th, and the \$40,000 expansion included a large stage and another meeting room. This expansion to the south was located on property owned by the church and had included a house. Local architects Leenhouts & Guthrie were responsible for the addition.

By the 1920s the Consistory began seeking a new home. A large and desirable nearby site, the former Charles T. Bradley estate, was on the market in 1926 and included a 254 foot frontage along State Street between Astor and Marshall Streets. The Consistory purchased the site from Water Schroeder for \$145,000. The goal was to construct a million dollar clubhouse but the persistence of the great depression led to a downsizing of their plans. In meeting minutes from January 31, 1934 the decision was made to abandon the large scheme. Setting the cost at \$350,00, a competition was announced and the architect was required to be a member of the Consistory. The drawings of Clas and Clas, and Herbert Grassold and Elmer Johnson Associated Architects were selected. The lowest bids came in at over \$800,000 and it was decided to drop the project and sell the Bradley Estate property. What was known as the Park East Hotel was later built on the site at 816 East State Street in 1954-1955.

This would have been a blow to the Consistory in many ways. Other fraternal organizations, even other Masons had built some of the most striking buildings in Milwaukee at that time when the economy was riding high in the 1920s. Examples include the Tripoli Temple the Palmer Masonic Lodge, the Excelsior Masonic lodge, the Eagles Club, the Knights of Pythias Hall, and the University Club. They were all of diverse styles, designed by a variety of architects yet definitely made a statement about the prestige of their organizations.

Remodeling the old building became the choice of the members. Consistory member Herbert Tullgren, who had been an advisor to the competition, was chosen to design the building. The permit for the work was taken out March 23, 1936 and included a second 40-foot addition to the south. Permit records showed the cost of the project was \$200,000.

Work on the building created a dramatically new look for the Consistory. The old roof was replaced with a mansard-like slope, pierced by 10 dormers much as in the former church. The load bearing brick walls were clad in Indiana limestone and the old window openings were retained, saving expenses. The remodeling gave the old building a vertical emphasis and a sleek modern look.

To quote from H. Russell Zimmermann's article "Untraditional church is now a cathedral"

What today seems to be the building's dominant theme was not as recognizable then. But sleek parallel lines ("streamlining") and highly stylized, low relief carving give the limestone walls a powerful moderne character. On both street fronts, numerous cast-aluminum light fixtures, which reflect the art deco era, are still visible.

The parapet walls are interrupted by life-sized, almost cubistic sculptures representing monks, wardens of the Rose Croix and bishops. Images of the Knights of St. Andrew,

St. John and Templar and the Teutonic Knights decorate the top of the corner tower. Masonic symbols, including many two-headed eagles, can be seen everywhere in stained glass and stone. (Milwaukee Journal, Sunday, 1985 August 18, Home Section pages 1 and 5.

Particular attention was paid by the press at the time of construction to the striking life-sized stylized figures on the exterior. The Milwaukee Journal in its article "Tiles, Stones and Posters Turn to Art", April 18, 1937, mentions how the Wisconsin Consistory had been completely changed and that the 28 carved figures were "strong and impressive. They stand above the street as they might in some European structure in the days of the Templars." The design of the figures was attributed to architect Herbert Tullgren and the execution was handled by craftsmen at Vollbrecht Stone Company, a Milwaukee firm. It is interesting to speculate that noted local sculptor, Adolph Roegner (October 20, 1892-March 8, 1980) may have worked on the pieces. The sculptor came to Milwaukee from Germany in 1923 and arranged to do contract carving with Vollbrecht starting in 1927. Roegner did the frieze on the Milwaukee Journal Company Building in the 1920's (now removed) and executed sculpture for many churches as well as Alverno College. More research will need to be done to establish if he had a connection with the Wisconsin Consistory. (Jaunts with Jamie, "Definition of a Sculptor", undated clipping about Adolph Roegner c. 1963/1964)

Nineteen windows show leaded art glass depicting everything from masonic symbols to individuals important to masonry such as George Washington. The main entry door with its sidelights and transoms has leaded glass. The other entrances have leaded glass doors.

The interior included a main auditorium, lodge rooms, make-up rooms, wardrobe and dressing rooms, classroom, library, lounges, offices as well as kitchens and dining rooms.

The building has remained in use by the Scottish Rite Masons. Over time all four bodies of the Scottish Rite began using the building and it became known commonly as the Scottish Rite Cathedral.

In 1992, the architectural firm of Engberg Anderson was commissioned to study the building and make a plan for its renovation. Their report recommended upgrading the physical plant, addressing the matter of handicap accessibility, and updating the interior decor and services such as seating, audio systems, electrical and plumbing systems. In the 1992 National Register nomination application, it was pointed out that the trustees of the Scottish Rite Masonic Bodies were proposing to turn over the building to a charitable and educational foundation, the Wisconsin Scottish Rite Foundation, Inc. that would have the ability to raise funds and open the building to public, non-Masonic activities. At that time the building was renamed the Scottish Rite Masonic Center. The completion of these activities was marked with a cornerstone laying ceremony on June 5, 1994 and the building has since been known as the Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center in honor of Glenn L. Humphrey and Gertrude Humphrey Foundation. (Carol Cartwright, National Register Nomination, Wisconsin Consistory Building, November 1, 1992, Section 8 pp. 3-4; Program for the cornerstone laying event and reception, Sunday evening June 5, 1994)

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Wisconsin Consistory/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center is significant for its architecture and architect and what it tells us about the development of fraternal organizations in Milwaukee.

The is a superb example of the Art Deco style and one of a handful of examples of this style in Milwaukee. While some cities like Buffalo, New York and Tulsa, Oklahoma have numerous examples of the style as represented in their commercial and office buildings, Milwaukee has fewer examples, perhaps because of the enduring, well-built monuments from the late 19th century such as City Hall, Milwaukee Central Library and the Pabst Building (razed) that survived into the 1920s and 1930s. The Milwaukee Gas Company building is perhaps the city's largest example. Other examples that come to mind include the Milwaukee Western Fuel Company Building, 1260 North Prospect (Exton Apartments) and the Viking Apartments. All three were the work of Herbert Tullgren.

Herbert Tullgren was one of the most forward looking architects of his day in Milwaukee. While with his father and brother, the firm introduced a form of apartment house style that became the norm on the city's east side and elsewhere in the city. After his father's death he continued to design apartments but introduced the two-story type to the city in the Viking and the 1260 N. Prospect. Although this type of apartment had no imitators, Tullgren patented his design and was featured in architectural periodicals. Numerous commissions across the city and state cemented his importance as a designer. With regards to the Wisconsin Consistory, it was a great achievement that he could transform a squat Romanesque Revival Building into a sleek example of the modern age.

VIII. THE ARCHITECT

Herbert Wallace Tullgren (July, 1889 – February 22, 1944) was the city's leading practitioner of the Art Deco and Art Moderne Styles in the late 1920s and 1930s. He was born in Chicago and educated in the local public schools there before attending Staunton Military Academy in Virginia , from which he graduated in 1908. Having served as a draftsman for his father's firm, from 1905 through 1908, Herbert joined his father Martin as a partner in 1909.

The founder of the architectural firm, Herbert's father, Martin Tullgren (May 7, 1858 – February 23, 1922), was a Swedish immigrant who established an architectural practice in Chicago in 1881. He interrupted his career to prospect for gold and to superintend mines out west then returned to Chicago to resume his architectural career at the turn of the 20th century. Archibald Hood became his partner. The firm designed mostly banks and apartment buildings . By 1902 the firm had established a branch office in Milwaukee and Tullgren settled here permanently in 1905. The firm was located at the northeast corner of North Water Street and East Michigan Street, the State Bank of Wisconsin-Bank of Milwaukee Building.

In addition to designing buildings, the two architects (Martin Tullgren and Archie Hood), along with Sherman C. Goetz, established the Milwaukee Building and Construction Company on December 29, 1905, through which the partners were able to finance the construction of rental properties. This corporation was ultimately dissolved on November 18, 1912. Throughout the rest of his life, Martin Tullgren lived at a variety of apartment buildings that were designed and built by the firm. The apartments designed by Hood and Tullgren can be seen all over the lower east side and in other parts of the city and introduced features that often included sun rooms or sheltered porches, servants' quarters and the like.

In 1909 Martin Tullgren severed his ties with Archie Hood and took his sons Herbert Wallace (then age 20) and S. Minard into partnership with him under the name Martin Tullgren & Sons Company. The location of their architectural offices changed frequently but eventually settled at what was then the First National Bank Building still at 735 North Water Street from 1916 through 1925. The firm

continued to produce numerous apartment buildings on the lower east side and along West Wisconsin Avenue where the large mansions were giving way to rentals. The first portion of the Hotel Astor (924 East Juneau Avenue, 1922) and the Carpenter Building (536 West Wisconsin Avenue, 1922, razed) were among their other large projects.

As he had done with Archie Hood, Martin Tullgren formed a corporation with his sons and other investors in order to construct income producing properties. This corporation, named like its predecessor, the Milwaukee Building and Construction Company, was active from May 1, 1915 until its dissolution on February 13, 1918. Martin S. Tullgren died on February 23, 1922 at nearly 64 years of age. (Gregory Vol. 1v, pp. 520-523; Milwaukee City Directories 1900-1944; Permit records on various properties checked in conjunction with major intensive surveys of Milwaukee; Milwaukee Building and Construction Company Incorporation Records, Articles of Incorporation, Vol. W pp. 44-45, dissolution, Vol. 34, p. 50 at the Milwaukee County Historical Society; Milwaukee Building and Construction Company Incorporation Records, Articles of Incorporation, Vol. 36, p. 521, dissolution Vol. 39, p. 624 and Vol. 64, p. 547, Milwaukee County Historical Society)

Despite Martin's death, and later Minard's death in 1928, the architectural practice retained the name Martin Tullgren & Sons Company through 1935. The brothers Herbert Wallace and S. Minard alternated positions as president and vice-president/treasurer until Minard's death.

The office changed locations until settling in at 1234 North Prospect Avenue from 1928 through 1944. Many commissions came through Oscar Brachman and Walter Schroeder and the firm designed the Shorecrest Hotel (1924), the Herbert Tullgren Building at 5919-5927 West North Avenue (1924), the Watts Building at 761 North Jefferson Street (1925), the Bertelson Building at 2101-2111 North Prospect Avenue (1927), the Drott Tractor Company Building at 3841 West Wisconsin Avenue (1928), the First Wisconsin Garage at 746 North Water Street (1928).

Various hotels were designed for the Schroeder Hotel chain including the Astor and East-Way Hotels in Milwaukee, the Loraine in Madison, the Northland in Green Bay, and the Retlaw in Fond du Lac. They also designed the Manitowoc Hotel in Manitowoc. Not long before Minard's death, the brothers formed the Herbert W. and S. Minard Tullgren Inc. to handle their real estate activities. It was maintained through 1937 by Herbert and Minard's widow, Pansy.

After Minard's death, Herbert W. Tullgren maintained the firm name Martin Tullgren & Sons through 1935 after which he practiced under his own name.

Herbert was known to have set up one later corporation, the Fylgia Corporation in 1931 to assist in the construction of the Viking Apartments at 1705-1717 East Kane Place (1931). Affiliated with this corporation were Tullgren's draftsman Elmer A. Johnson, as well as C. E. Look, Emil W. Grossman, Marian Papenthien, Pansy E. Tullgren, and Walter G. Meyer. Tullgren's patented floor plan for this building was featured in the Architectural Record in March of 1934. Tullgren and secretary Walter G. Meyer dissolve Fylgia Corporation on December 17, 1941. (Fylgia Corporation Incorporation Records, Articles of Incorporation, Vol. 75, p. 466, dissolution Vol. 112, p. 198, Milwaukee County Historical Society; Milwaukee City Directories 1931-1944)

Following his brother's death, Tullgren's work shows a decided shift away from the Mediterranean revival style and period revival style that characterized his work in the 1920s. Very prominent was the use of Art deco and Moderne features in his work. The list includes:

- The First Wisconsin Garage at 746 North Water Street (1928)
- The Armory Courts Building at 4005-4015 North Oakland Avenue (1930)
- The Hathaway Tower Apartments at 1830 East Kane Place (1931)
- The Viking Apartments at 1705-1717 East Kane Place (1931)
- The Milwaukee Western Fuel Company Building at 2160 North Prospect Avenue (1934)
- The remodeling for the Scottish Rite Consistory at 790 North Van Buren (1936)
- The Badger Mutual Fire Insurance Company at 1635 West National Avenue (1937)
- The 1260 (Exton) Apartments at 1260 North Prospect Avenue (1938)

Characteristics of this style include cubic forms, metal framed rectangular windows, low relief around doors, use of structural glass, use of metal such as aluminum or steel, introduction of colorful terra cotta, octagonal fixtures such as lamps, figural sculpture either in low relief or as elongated stylized forms along the façade, geometric ornamentation, a vertical emphasis in Art Deco and long horizontal emphasis in Art Moderne, sunrise and floral motifs, setbacks.

It is said Tullgren designed over 50 apartment buildings across the state. Tullgren also designed the grade and high schools in Whitefish Bay and West Milwaukee as well as Plymouth's junior and senior high schools. Tullgren was also an associate architect on the Parklawn Housing Project, constructed in 1937 as a Federal Public Works Administration project and later turned over to Milwaukee's Housing Authority. Tullgren's successful career was cut short at the age of 54 when he died of heart disease on Tuesday February 23, 1944. (Obituary Herbert W. Tullgren, Milwaukee Journal, February 23, 1944, Local News Section, p.1.)

SOURCES

Cartwright, Carol Lohry. National Register Nomination, Wisconsin Consistory Building. November 1, 1992.

Flucke, Paul. Plymouth: A Church and its World. A History of Plymouth Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Milwaukee: Plymouth Church, 1984

Fylgia Corporation Incorporation Records, Articles of Incorporation, Vol. 75, p. 466, dissolution Vol. 112, p. 198, Milwaukee County Historical Society.;

Gregory, John B. History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 4 volumes. Milwaukee: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1931.

Milwaukee Building and Construction Company Incorporation Records, Articles of Incorporation, Vol. W pp. 44-45, dissolution, Vol. 34, p. 50 at the Milwaukee County Historical Society

Milwaukee Building and Construction Company Incorporation Records, Articles of Incorporation, Vol. 36, p. 521, dissolution Vol. 39, p. 624 and Vol. 64, p. 547, Milwaukee County Historical Society)

Milwaukee City Building Permits. 790 North Van Buren Street..

Milwaukee City Directories.

Milwaukee Journal

Milwaukee Sentinel.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1894, 1910. Digital version Wisconsin Historical Society. www.wisconsinhistory.org .

Scottish Rite Masons. Program for the cornerstone laying event and reception, Sunday evening, June 5, 1994.

32nd ° Masons Valley of Detroit; www.32nddegremasons.org; accessed May 7, 2016.

Tullgren, Herbert. Obituary. Milwaukee Journal. February 23, 1944 Local News Section, page 1.

Wisconsin Scottish Rite Bodies 1863-1983. (Commemorative Booklet) Milwaukee: WI Scottish Rite Bodies, 1983.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Wisconsin Consistory/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center be given historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-3, e-5, and e-6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

- e-1 Its exemplification and development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the city, State of Wisconsin or the United States.

The Wisconsin Consistory/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center is an important cultural artifact from the heyday of the fraternal period in this country. It captures that moment in time when membership in these institutions soared in the 1920's and 1930s and many groups found it necessary to leave behind rented quarters and build a prominent, architecturally distinctive clubhouse that would serve as a center for offices, social occasions, dining, ritual, reading, charitable activities and the collective fraternalism that gave meaning and a structured recreation to their lives. Unlike the lavish movie houses, these clubhouses offered a sense of exclusivity and status. In Milwaukee such buildings included the Tripoli Temple, the Eagles Club, the University Club, the Pythian Castle Lodge, Excelsior Masonic Lodge, the Henry L. Palmer Lodge and all were built or enlarged in the 1920s.

The Wisconsin Consistory/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center likewise planned for a grand million dollar temple during the 1920s and even purchased a site for it. The project had to be scaled back due to financial constraints but the resulting remodel of their existing temple led to a one-of-a-kind building that is still eye-catching today.

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

The Scottish Rite Masons were an important part of the Masonic community in Milwaukee as well as in Wisconsin. Membership included many of the important leaders in Milwaukee's financial, business and commercial quarters.

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

Characteristics of this style include futuristic cubic forms, metal framed rectangular windows, low relief around doors, use of structural glass, use of metal such as aluminum or steel, introduction of colorful terra cotta, octagonal fixtures such as lamps, figural sculpture either in low relief or as elongated stylized forms along the façade, geometric ornamentation, a vertical emphasis in Art Deco and long horizontal emphasis in Art Moderne, sunrise and floral motifs, setbacks.

The Wisconsin Consistory/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center is an outstanding example of this style, made all the more impressive by the challenge of

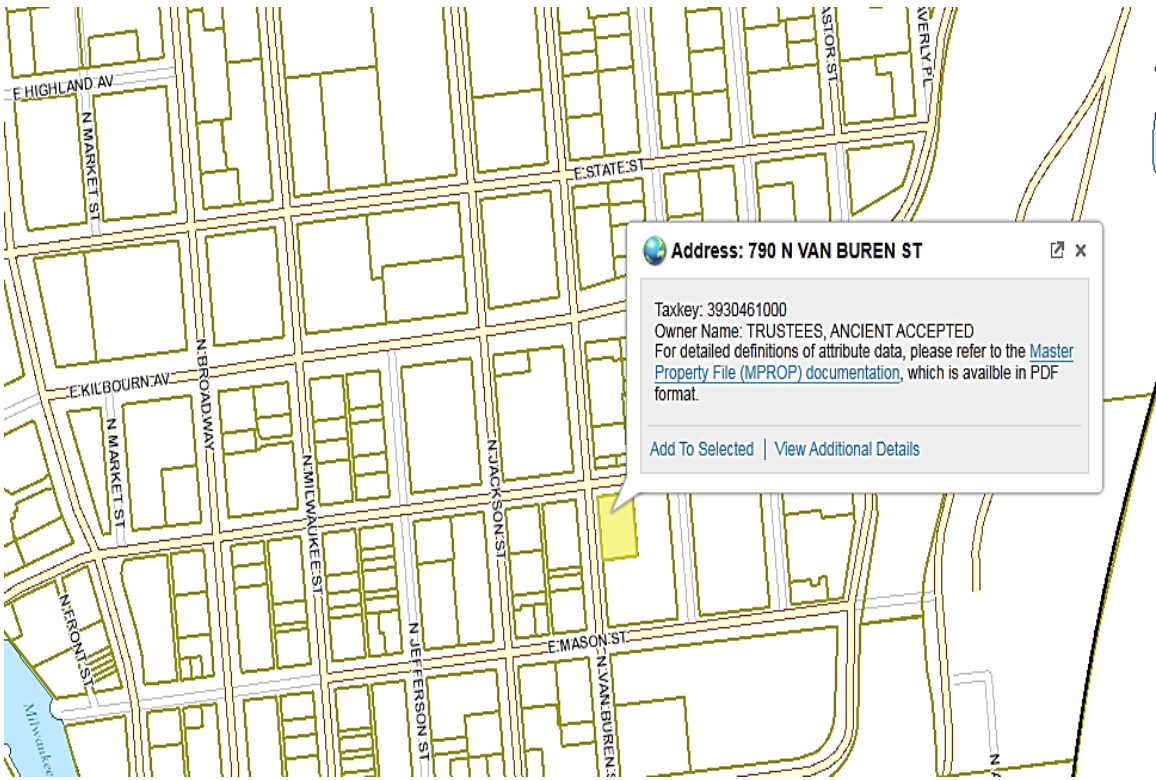
remaking an older existing building. It features many of the stylistic points listed above and still looks fresh today. Art Deco was not as popular here as it was in some other cities. Although it was used to update older commercial storefronts, many of those have been removed either through remodeling or the demolition of the building. Larger projects are represented in building headquarters (Milwaukee Gas Company Building, Milwaukee Western Fuel Company Building and the Badger Mutual Fire Insurance Company Building) as well as apartments. The Wisconsin Consistory/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center is the most striking of all. A quick Google search shows many images of the building and it also shows that while not as large as some of the Masonic halls, it was the most distinct of those in the Deco Style. The parade of stylized figures was both in the mainstream of deco design, as shown on bridges and buildings, yet distinctly different.



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

Herbert Tullgren launched into the use of the Art Deco style after his many projects in the period revival styles, particularly the Mediterranean style. It was new, it spreading across the country and provided optimism for the future in a time of economic hardship. Technology could move us forward and this could be expressed in architecture as well as other products from the machine age.

One of his earliest forays into this style, the First Wisconsin Garage at Water and Mason Streets, built in 1928, shows how a new building type, a parking garage could look elegant and modern with the application of stylized ornament to a multi-level utilitarian structure.

Tullgren's career gave Milwaukee new apartment building floorplans, stylish hotels and jewel box-like commercial buildings and he was one of the foremost architects of his time. He also influenced future architects. One of his draftsmen, Elmer A. Johnson went on to partner with Grassold and become the most prolific and influential proponent of mid-century modern after World War II.



 **Address: 790 N VAN BUREN ST** 

Taxkey: 3930461000
Owner Name: TRUSTEES, ANCIENT ACCEPTED
For detailed definitions of attribute data, please refer to the [Master Property File \(MPROP\) documentation](#), which is available in PDF format.

[Add To Selected](#) | [View Additional Details](#)

**Preservation Guidelines
For the
Wisconsin Consistory / Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center**

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the historic designation of the Wisconsin Consistory Building/Humphrey Scottish Rite Masonic Center. The intent of the commission is to preserve the historic, existing exterior features of the building and guide any changes and restorations that might be done on the exterior.

Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. Any exterior changes including repair of ornamental trim but exclusive of routine painting will require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Most certificates are issued on a staff-approved basis and only major new construction or alteration requests typically will go before the Historic Preservation commission. The Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Given the thoughtful stewardship of the building by the Scottish Rite Masons, the exterior is in very good condition.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. The installation of skylights where they would be visible from the street are not permitted as they would have a negative impact on the building. Skylights however may be added to roof slopes if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. No changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, the roofline or its pitch. Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible at all from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. Preservation of the polychrome slate is essential to maintain the character of the building. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building and neighborhood. Do not replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials which differ to such an extent from the old in size, shape, color and texture that the appearance of the building is altered.

Mechanicals currently located on the flat portion of the roof are set back from the mansard portion of the roof and are not visible from the street. The location of future mechanicals or apparatus (solar collectors, satellite dishes, etc.) should follow the same pattern.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick or stone must not be painted or covered. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, etc.) is not allowed.
- b. Re-point defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width. 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. Using much harder, contemporary Portland cement mortar will not make a lasting repair and can damage the historic brick and stone. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Do not use mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any re-pointing.

- c. In the future should masonry cleaning be necessary it should be done only with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (baking soda, nut shells, dry ice, etc.) on limestone, pressed brick or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. The use of accepted chemical products to clean masonry is allowed and a test panel is required before general commencement of the work. Work should be done by experienced individuals as the chemical cleaning process can have a negative impact on the masonry. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before any cleaning would begin.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated masonry with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. The use of EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems) which is synthetic stucco is not permitted. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Do not remove architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.
- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated elements is encouraged rather than complete removal and replication. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and material of the originals.

C. Windows and Doors

- 1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore them to the 1937 condition. Do not make additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Do not change the size or configuration of the original window panes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations

similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible.

2. Respect the building's stylistic period. Current windows feature art/leaded glass set within metal frames. At the entries there is leaded glass in sidelights and transom and in the doors.

In the event any windows need to be replaced, consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to determine appropriate glazing patterns. New glass must match the size and design of the historic glass. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

Any original windows on the building must be retained and repaired. Vinyl, vinyl-clad, wood or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted. Combination/storm screen units or fixed storm windows that fit the shape of the original opening are permitted. Plastic awnings or shutters at the windows would be inappropriate. Any replacement doors must be appropriate to the historic period of the building and match the originals. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed where they are visible from the street. If permitted, the doors or grates must be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for this type of installation.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing historic trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its 1937 condition. A replacement feature must match the original member in terms of scale, design, color, and appearance. Spot repair is preferable to wholesale replacement of details. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

Due to building's location and the parking ramps at the east and south elevations as well as the importance of the Van Buren and Wells Streets facades, no additions will likely be proposed for the building. Approval by the Commission would be needed for any proposed addition.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture on the front of the building shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to assist in the selection of exterior fixtures. Plastic internally-illuminated cabinet

signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the architectural character of the building.

H. 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 following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. 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. This would generally be in case of a major fire or a natural catastrophe.

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. The building is one of only a handful of prominent buildings in Milwaukee in the Art Deco style.

3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building or portions of it 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 the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.







Postcard View after 1912 and before 1937. The 1912 addition shows at the far right.