

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
WEST MITCHELL STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
AS REVISED SEPTEMBER 2012
TO REFLECT AMENDED BOUNDARIES

I. NAME

Historic: Mitchell Street

Common: West Mitchell Street Historic District

II. LOCATION

A. General Location

The district includes the buildings on both sides of West Mitchell Street between South 5th and South 14th Street, including the former Sears Store at 1337 West Forest Home Avenue. *The amended boundary picks up the properties addressed as 738 West Maple Street (White Eagle Hotel) and 716 West Windlake Avenue (city-owned parking lot).*

B. Legal Description

The boundaries of the Mitchell Street Historic District are described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of South 5th Street and West Historic Mitchell Street; then south along the east property line of 501-505 West Historic Mitchell Street to the south property line of said property; then west along the south property lines of all the properties that front onto Mitchell Street to the intersection with the east property line of 716 West Windlake Avenue; then south along the west curb line of West Windlake Avenue to the south property line of 716 West Windlake Avenue; then west along the south property line of 716 West Windlake to the east property line of 738 West Maple Street; then south along the east property line of said property; then west along the south property line of 738 West Maple Street to the west property line of said property; then north to the north property line of 716 West Windlake Avenue; then west to the rear/south property line of 803 West Historic Mitchell Street; then west along the south property lines of properties fronting West Historic Mitchell Street to the northeast corner of the property addressed as 1718 South 9th Street; then south along the east property lines of properties fronting South 9th Street; then west along the south property line of 1730 South 9th Street to the east property line of 1747 South 9th Street; then south along the east property line of 1747 South 9th Street to the south property line of said property; then west to the west property line of 1747 South 9th Street; then north along the west property line of 1747 South 9th Street to the south property line of 939 West Historic Mitchell Street; then west along the south property lines of properties fronting Historic Mitchell Street to the south property line of 1201-1211 West Historic Mitchell Street; then south along the

east property lines of 1715-1717 and 1725 S. 12th Street; then west along the south property line of 1725 South 12th Street to the rear/east property line of 1738 South 13th Street; then west to the east property line of 1301 West Historic Mitchell Street, then south along the east curb line of South 13th Street to the intersection with West Burnham Street; then west along the north curb line of West Burnham Street to the intersection of South 14th Street; then north along the east curb line of South 14th Street to the north property line of 1676 South 14th Street; then east along the north/rear property lines of buildings fronting on West Historic Mitchell Street to the west property line of 1670-1672 South 6th Street; then north to the rear property line of said property; then east along the rear property line of 1670-1672 South 6th Street and 524 West Historic Mitchell Street to the rear/west property line of 1689 South 5th Street; then north along the rear property line of said property to the north property line of said parcel; then east to the west curb line of South 5th Street; then south along the west curb line of South 5th Street to the place of beginning in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County.

III. CLASSIFICATION

District

IV. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Multiple

This nomination adds the following two properties:

716 West Windlake Avenue
City of Milwaukee
C/O City Real Estate
809 North Broadway
Milwaukee, WI 53202
Tax Key 4610534100

(Note: this property is included because it links the existing Mitchell Street Historic District boundaries with those of 738 W. Maple Street)

738 West Maple Street
Palermos Properties LLC
3301 West Canal Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208
Tax Key 4610540000

Nominator of expanded historic district: Nancy Bush
Historic Mitchell Street Preservation Corp.
1635 South 8th Street

This nomination was submitted as part of the efforts by the Historic Mitchell Street Preservation Corp. to acquire and rehabilitate the White Eagle Hotel.

V. DESCRIPTION

A. General Character

The Mitchell Street Historic District is a nine-block commercial strip of late nineteenth and early twentieth century, brick or frame commercial structures. Although most of the structures are two stories tall, there are several one-story buildings and a number of buildings ranging from two to four stories in height. The Kunzelmann-Esser Building, at eight stories, is the tallest building on the street and one of the tallest on the South Side. There are approximately ninety buildings within the district. In addition to commercial structures, there are two large church complexes within the district.

The buildings were built between 1870 and 1940 with most dating from the period between 1890 and 1920. Many of the present structures were built to replace earlier buildings. They illustrate a wide range of architectural styles popular for commercial buildings in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. False-fronted wooden buildings, brick Queen Anne structures, early Twentieth Century Chicago Style commercial blocks, Classical Revival banks and Moderne storefronts can be found within the district. Good examples of each type are present ranging from 511, a one-story wooden false-front structure (**since razed**), or 801, a two-story example; to 501 and 546, two brick Queen Anne commercial blocks; or 600, an imposing and over scaled Colonial Revival influenced brick structure. The district is rich in early Twentieth Century commercial architecture ranging from historical revival style buildings such as 527-29, 624-28 and 601, through Chicago style-influenced blocks such as 710, 828, 906, 1020, 1135 and 1225, to the small gem-like bank buildings and terra-cotta storefronts such as 806-10, 929, 935, 959 and 1039-41. In addition there are several excellent examples of the relatively rare Art Moderne Style including 723 and 1000-1006 West Mitchell Street and 1337 Forest Home Avenue. The two churches within the district are both fine examples of Victorian ecclesiastical design. St. Stanislaus Roman Catholic Church, begun in 1872, is a notable example of Eastern European Romanesque influenced design executed in cream brick while St. Anthony's Roman Catholic Church, began in 1877, is an unusual example of Victorian Gothic architecture built of rusticated limestone. St. Anthony's has a large complex of handsome accessory buildings adjacent to it including a Chateausque rectory, a Victorian brick convent, a paneled brick church hall and a parochial school, while St. Stanislaus has a notable Art Deco parochial school and a small, Victorian cream brick rectory.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

Date Built: 1870-1940

Mitchell Street is architecturally significant for its fine assemblage of commercial structures and churches representing a wide range of architectural styles and periods. It is historically significant as the commercial heart of the South Side, as an important center of Polish Commercial, religious and cultural life, and as one of the most important retail areas in Milwaukee between 1880 and 1970.

The expansion of the boundaries of the Mitchell Street Historic District will not alter the character of the district. It brings into the district the former White Eagle Hotel and a surface parking lot that links the Mitchell Street commercial buildings with the former hotel. The former hotel is a commercial style building, consistent with the appearance of other buildings in the district and features a first floor storefront and two upper floors with a simple corbelled cornice. Like many of the buildings in the historic district, it is a solid masonry structure and is more in keeping with Mitchell Street than the other frame corner storefronts on adjacent blocks south of Mitchell Street.

The property addressed as 738 West Maple Street is the former White Eagle Hotel, a boarding house/hotel that was operated by Polish Americans throughout most of its history. It was the only such business of its kind near Mitchell Street and surprisingly there were virtually no hotels on or near Mitchell Street during its heyday. An ad in the 1940s cites this as Milwaukee's only Polish Hotel. It is an important reminder that a majority of the businesses on and Mitchell Street were started and run by members of Milwaukee's Polish community, most of whom were relatively new immigrants to the city.

The property addressed as 716 West Windlake Avenue is being added to the current historic district to provide the link between the existing historic district boundary and the White Eagle Hotel.

VI. HISTORY

Although Mitchell Street was laid out in 1857, little settlement occurred until the later 1870's when this farm studded portion of the South Side began to attract Polish settlers. As late as the mid-1880's, however, agricultural enterprises such as the Enos and Company Nursery and the Comstock Celery Farm could still be found in the neighborhood. Gradually commercial buildings began to appear in the vicinity of St. Stanislaus Church, which had stood in lonely grandeur at Mitchell and South 5th streets for years before it got its first neighbors. As Polish settlement increased, Mitchell Street developed into the commercial, cultural and religious center of the Polish community. Eventually, Mitchell Street became known as the 'Polish Grand Avenue' and ranked second in commercial importance only to downtown, a position it maintained until well after World War II. The substantial commercial structures erected there, including the enormous Kunzelmann-Esser, Schuster's, Sears Roebuck and Company and National Hardware Buildings, were a testament to the thriving retail trade. Only Milwaukee's central business district had as many large stores at Mitchell Street. Another indication of the street's importance were the many banks established there, as well as the two movie theaters, the Granada (razed) and the Modjeska.

After 1970 Mitchell Street slid into a precipitous decline that witnessed the closing of most of the large stores. Attempts were made to revive the street by building a landscaped pedestrian mall and a farmer's market in 1975, but the results were disappointing. The street has since been returned to a traffic thoroughfare and the farmer's market has been replaced with commercial buildings. Over the years, only two important structures on Mitchell Street have been razed, the Granada Theater, formerly at 1127 West Mitchell (razed 1973), and St. Jacobi Church, (razed 1975) formerly on the site where Mitchell Street intersects with West Forest Home Avenue.

See addendum at the end of the report for the history of 716 West Windlake Avenue and 738 West Maple Street.

VII. **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that Mitchell Street be designated a historic district in accordance with the provisions of (currently) Section 320-21 of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

Staff recommends that the boundary changes be adopted as fulfilling criteria e-1 and e-8. The boundary changes proposed in September, 2012 pick up a significant building with over a century of history linked to Mitchell Street and also a surface parking lot that links the existing historic district with 738 West Maple Street.

The original nomination for Mitchell Street did not call out specific criteria of the Historic Preservation ordinance but the following appear to apply:

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

RATIONALE: The Mitchell Street Historic District represents the heart of the Milwaukee's Polish community. It was the largest commercial district outside of the downtown and in today's terminology was a regional shopping center for the city's south side. It had businesses not found in other parts of the city and was the place where Polish investment, commerce, religion and entertainment thrived from the 1880s to the mid-twentieth century. It was in many respects a microcosm of the city as a whole but with the unique culture brought by the Polish immigrants.

e-8 Its relationship to other distinctive areas which are eligible for preservation according to a plan based on a historic, cultural or architectural motif.

RATIONALE: Mitchell Street is architecturally significant for its fine assemblage of commercial structures and churches representing a wide range of architectural styles and periods. Styles range from boomtown gable-fronted storefronts to Queen Anne, Classical Revival, Mediterranean and Moderne. Researching permit records and looking at the rear of the buildings shows that Mitchell's Street's vitality led to successive periods of remodeling at many of the locations where new fronts and additional stories were added to accommodate growing businesses. The commercial district was relatively well confined to the frontage along Mitchell Street itself. The White Eagle Hotel, at 738 West Maple Street, was just off Mitchell Street and built to match the quality of construction of other businesses there. It is a standout in its intersection and is an appropriate addition to the Mitchell Street Historic District. The property at 716 West Windlake, although currently a vacant lot, does provide the link between the White Eagle Hotel and the existing historic district.

VIII. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principle 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. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the Mitchell Street Historic District. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Guidelines for Rehabilitation

The Mitchell Street Historic District is important because of its concentration of period commercial buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries. Throughout the district's history a sense of integrity has been maintained by the consistency in scale, setback, siting and materials. This has resulted in visually distinct blockfaces. These guidelines are based upon those contained in Section 301-81(10) (now 320-21-11 and 12) of the historic preservation ordinance. These guidelines are not intended to restrict an owner's use of his/her property, but to serve as a guide for making changes that will be sensitive to the architectural integrity of the structure and appropriate to the overall character of the district.

1. Roofs

Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. This includes parapets, pediments and cornices.

2. Exterior Finishes

a. Masonry

- (i) Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- (ii) Retain painted masonry surfaces. Removal of paint could cause irreversible damage to the masonry. If it is decided to remove the paint from masonry surfaces, use the gentlest method possible.
- (iii) Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or not used when the building was constructed.
- (iv) Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surface is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical

products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.

- (v) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.

b. Wood

- (i) Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid the indiscriminate removal of architectural features that are in most cases an essential part of the building's character and appearance.
- (ii) Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed such as artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.

c. Terra Cotta

- (i) Unpainted terra cotta should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering naturally glazed or finished terra cotta. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- (ii) Clean terra cotta only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method available. Sandblasting terra cotta is prohibited. This method of cleaning destroys the material.
- (iii) Repair or replace deteriorated terra cotta with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Pre-cast tinted concrete or cast fiber glass are recommended replacement materials as long as it is finished with a masonry coating to resemble the original appearance. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or does not resemble the original.

3. Windows and Doors

- a. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the present configuration of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, hoods, doors, shutters and hardware except for the restoration to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principle elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes

or sash. Avoid discarding original doors and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused.

- b. Respect the stylistic period or periods the building represents. If replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with materials like glass-block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or fake shutters that are not in proportion to the openings or that are historically out of the character with the building. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

4. Trim and Ornamentation

There shall be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. The historic architectural fabric includes all terra cotta ornament; all pressed metal elements including cornices, pediments and oriels; and all carved and cast stonework. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and material.

5. Additions

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

B. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The visual character of the streetscapes in the Mitchell Street Historic District is maintained by the consistency of the block faces in terms of height, scale, siting and density. This has resulted in compact, cohesive building stock with no intrusions that detract from the district's historic character.

1. Maintain the height, scale, mass and materials established by the buildings in the district and the traditional setback and density of the block faces. Avoid introducing elements that are incompatible in terms of siting, materials, height or scale.
2. Use traditional landscaping, fencing, signage and street lighting that is compatible with the character and period of the district. Avoid introducing landscape features, fencing, street lighting or signage that are inappropriate to the character of the district.

C. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that additional new construction be designed so as to harmonize with the character of the district.

1. Siting

New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the Mitchell Street Historic District. This includes setbacks, spacing between buildings, the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring structures, and the relationship between the main building and accessory buildings.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk; the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof; and individual building components such as porches, overhangs and fenestration must be compatible with the surrounding structures.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the surrounding buildings. The profiles of roofs and building elements that protect and recede from the main block must express the same continuity established by the historic structure.

4. Materials

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

D. 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.

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 affect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential or Restoration

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.

5. Replacement

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible building of similar age, architectural style and scale or by a new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure (See New Construction Guidelines).

E. Fire Escapes

Additional required fire escapes shall be designed and located so as to minimize their visual impact from the public right-of-way.

F. Signs

The installation of any permanent exterior sign other than those now in existence shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the building.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION POLICY ON SECURITY GATES AND BARS FOR COMMERCIAL BUILDINGS

All Security bars and grates, whether mounted inside the windows or on the exterior, require Historic Preservation Commission review and, in most cases, a permit from the Department of Building Inspection.

The Historic Preservation Commission disapproves of the use of security grates, bars or solid roll-down doors because they are out-of-character with the traditional appearance of Milwaukee's commercial areas. They create an unsafe appearance and harm the economic vitality of the neighborhoods where they are installed by discouraging pedestrians from frequenting commercial establishments. The Commission believes that there are less intrusive ways to secure storefronts from glass breakage and vandalism including break resistant glazing and alarm systems.

- A. The Historic Preservation Commission will not under any circumstances approve:
 - 1. Permanently fixed-in-place exterior bars or grills
 - 2. Exterior mounted retractable scissor gates
 - 3. Interior mounted bars or retractable scissor gates
 - 4. Roll down exterior or interior mounted solid security doors.
- B. The Historic Preservation Commission may, under certain circumstances approve:
 - 1. Roll down type open work grills mounted inside the display windows that are not readily visible from the street
- C. The Historic Preservation Commission believes these treatments are more appropriate:
 - 1. Break-resistant glazing
 - 2. Alarm systems
 - 3. Neighborhood security patrols

HISTORIES OF THE PROPERTIES BEING ADDED TO THE
MITCHELL STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
SEPTEMBER 2012

HISTORY OF 738 W. MAPLE STREET THE WHITE EAGLE HOTEL

The property at 738 West Maple Street had a long history before the construction of the present building on the site. Charles Steinkraus was an early owner associated with the property beginning in 1880. He was sometimes listed in the city directories as a laborer or as a blacksmith. He most likely lived in the small frame dwelling that is shown at the rear of the lot adjacent to the alley in the 1888 Rascher Fire Insurance Map. (Rascher 1888 vol. 2 page 133) Steinkraus apparently abandoned his blacksmith work and began running a saloon on the premises in 1887. The city directories and the Rascher Fire Insurance map indicate that Steinkraus had apparently built his two-story frame tavern building right about this time. Separating the front tavern from the rear dwelling was a one story frame shed. Steinkraus would operate this tavern through 1897.

Later saloon operators at the site included John Stahl (1898), Anton Czaropata (sometimes spelled Czarapota) (1900-1901), Michael Skibinski (1902-1904) and Frank Budnik (1905-1906). All lived on the premises during their tenure.

Leopold/Leo Chroscicki (spelled several ways in the city directories) became owner by 1907. Chroscicki was born in Poland in 1868 and came to the United States in 1902 while in his 30s. Milwaukee city directories show him for the first time in 1903. He worked as a laborer living on S. 18th Street and then ran a saloon at today's 1939 S. 4th Street. Chroscicki acquired the property at today's 738 West Maple Street by 1907. (City Directories; Ancestry.com)

On October 9, 1907 Chroscicki took out a permit to construct a new building on the property. The three story, \$8,000 structure was solid masonry with a flat roof. It was designed by local architect Albert Michalak and built by mason contractor John Gajewski whose business was further east on Maple Street. Permit records indicate that the building was to house a store and boarding house. The "store" seemed always to be occupied by a saloon. The upper rooms appear to be rented out on a temporary basis. It is only speculation, but the tenants were likely Polish working men. Fire insurance maps show that the large frame saloon building erected by Charles Steinkraus c. 1887 was moved to the back of the lot and Steinkraus' small frame dwelling was gone. Whether the dwelling was razed or moved is not indicated in the permit records.

The new masonry building was definitely a prominent structure in its intersection. The storefront faced Maple Street and there were three windows on each of the upper two stories. The corners were emphasized with simple capitals and corbelled brick that suggested quoins. A simple corbelled cornice topped the building above which was a parapet wall. Stone was used for the lintels and sills. The storefront cornice was wood.

The west elevation fronted South 8th Street or Third Avenue as it was known at the time. A side door that serviced the upper rooms, a small window and large storefront-sized window completed the first story and on the upper floors were single and paired windows that corresponded to the interior floor plan. The east elevation was simple in design and

featured a recessed window well that allowed for some separation from the dwelling house that once stood next door to the east.

This new brick building served Leopold Chroscicki well for five years and he lived on the premises with his wife Mary and five children: Felicia (born c. 1905); Josephine (born c. 1909/1910); Stanislaus (born c.1912); Sylvester (born c.1914); and Alice (born c. 1915). (Ancestry.com)

At this time, the city directory listed some 129 boarding houses in Milwaukee, mostly north of the Menomonee Valley. The listing was probably incomplete. The great majority of the rooming houses were run by women and probably reflected houses that had been converted to this use. These were often reputable establishments. The boarding houses run by men often had saloons on the premises and were frequently housed in commercial type structures. The establishment run by Chroscicki was not listed under the boarding house category and neither was it listed under hotels in these early years. Chroscicki was merely listed as operating a saloon at this address.

On August 8, 1912, Chroscicki took out a permit to construct a brick addition at a cost of \$5,500. It was completed in March, 1913. This addition extended the building out to the alley. It continued the corbelled cornice and the simple framing of the window openings. The addition began about where the parapet plaque on which Chroscicki's name appears along the South 8th Street elevation. The addition pretty much doubled the size of the building. The permit records do not indicate what happened to the old frame tavern building that Chroscicki moved back on the lot in 1907. The name plaque at the parapet has been altered. It was larger and embellished with pilasters and an ornamental top. Much of this has been removed since the late 1940s. But it still bears the name of the first owner "L. Chroscicki."

The purpose of the addition is not spelled out in the permit records. However, the 1910 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (vol. 5 part 1 page 466) shows that a store has been added as well as a garage. The remains of the storefront is visible along South 8th Street but has been boarded up. At the rear or north end of this facade, a large opening flanked by two smaller ones shows the site of the original garage door. A pedestrian door is located at the alley corner. All openings have been boarded up.

The two upper floors had living space. On the second story, set almost at the middle of the addition was a covered balcony that featured a door flanked by two windows. The balcony itself has been removed but the door opening, windows and roof remain. The other windows in this elevation have been boarded up from either the interior or exterior.

The rear elevation is utilitarian in appearance. A large opening with stone sill is located at the east end of the elevation. On the second story is a window and a door that exits to a platform of the fire escape. On the third floor are three rectangular windows served by the fire escape. All openings have been boarded up.

Coinciding with this expansion of his building, the city directories began listing the business as the White Eagle Hotel in 1912. Chroscicki is shown in the directories as running the hotel and a saloon on the premises. It is probably at this time he had the sign painted on his building "White Eagle Hotel L. Chroscicki 484" [the old address was 484 Maple Street], on the South 8th Street elevation and the sign "White Eagle Hotel" on the Maple Street facade. Both can be categorized as ghost signs today. Other signage

was painted on the building; there was a large Miller High Life sign on the South 8th Street elevation and a “Jack’s Garage Auto Supplies Bartels Maguire oil and greases” near the alley. The first story brick has been painted over, covering the Miller sign. The garage sign is still visible at the third story.

The White Eagle Name

Why did Leopold Chroscicki name his hotel the White Eagle? The white eagle has long been a symbol of the Polish people and is said to be the oldest national symbol of Poland. It originated as the emblem for the Polish royalty. Legend has it that three Slavic brothers, Lech, Czech and Rus, were seeking a place for permanent settlement in central Europe. Czech founded the nation and state of the Czechs. Rus went east and established the nation and state of the Ruthenians. Lech went north and when he and his tribe stopped at the edge of a great forest, Lech saw a large white bird circling overhead. When the eagle settled in its nest in a large oak tree, Lech determined that this was a good omen and decided that they would settle at this spot and call it Gniezno (old Polish word for nest) and the white eagle would be their symbol. The town of Gniezno still exists, and is located some 30 miles east of Poznan. It is generally considered to have been Poland’s first capitol. (“The White Eagle”; Jan Rekawek. Poland in the Classroom. Info Poland University at Buffalo, State University of New York <http://info-poland.buffalo.edu/classroom/eagle.html>)

The earliest artifact on which the eagle is displayed is the silver denarius of Boleslaw Chrobry of the Piast dynasty, the first crowned king of Poland whose coronation occurred in 1025 AD. The country was later divided into various provinces which were ruled by dukes of the Piast line most of whom used the white eagle as their personal coat of arms. When the country was reunified under Przemysl II, duke of Wielkopolska, in 1295, the seal used featured a crowned eagle. “The coronation of King Przemysl II in 1295 not only returned the dignity of the Polish monarchy, but also raised the White Eagle, the King’s personal emblem, to the rank of the Official Coat of Arms of the Kingdom of Poland and dignified it with a golden crown, golden beak, and golden claws. Though this is not evident on the wax seal, we have reason to believe that the Eagle appeared on a field of red. It has retained these characteristics to this day.” (Jan Rekawek)

Later rulers used the white eagle on their coats of arms across the generations. When Poland lost its independence through partitioning to Russia, Prussia and Austria in the 18th century, the use of the White Eagle was forbidden. When Poland became independent once again after World War I the Sejm or parliament reinstituted the White Eagle as the official state symbol in 1919. The current version of the design dates to 1927. The White Eagle became the symbol for independence during World War II by the Polish Underground Army and the Polish Government and Armed Forces in exile when its use was once again forbidden by both the Germans and Russians occupying Poland. (Jan Rekawek)

After World War II, Russian-occupied Poland was allowed the use of the White Eagle but without its crown. Following the collapse of the Communist regime in the late 1980s, the elected Sejm restored the White Eagle’s crown.

“The White Eagle, once an emblem of the absolute power of Kings, over the centuries, changed into a powerful patriotic symbol uniting the citizens of all social classes. Today, the White Eagle appears on the seals of all government agencies, be it national or local, on the buildings that house their offices, in classrooms, on Poland’s currency and coins, on military and official banners, on soldiers’ caps and uniform buttons.” (Jan Rekawek)

The name White Eagle has been used across the United States wherever there has been a Polish settlement. Today’s White Eagle Café and Rock ‘n’ Roll Hotel was originally built in 1905 and is situated in North Portland (Oregon) under the Fremont Bridge. It was the hub for Portland’s immigrants with a tavern on the first floor and 11 guestrooms upstairs. (<http://www.mcmenamins.com/452-white-eagle-home>) There are White Eagle soccer clubs and fraternal organizations and a White Eagle Bakery in Buffalo, New York established in 1904. (www.buffalo.com/grub/blog/for-the-love-of-all-things-paczki; White Eagle Sports Club in Troy, Michigan <http://whiteeaglesc.com/modules.php?name=Content&pa=showpage&pid=2>) In Milwaukee the name was not used extensively but city directories show a White Eagle Pharmacal (pharmacy) at 267 Mitchell Street (no longer extant, close to South First Street); a White Eagle Dance Hall, White Eagle Building & Loan Association, and a White Eagle Liquor store.

Chroscicki’s use of the white eagle name demonstrates that Poles retained their sense of a national identity even when living in other countries and even though independence for Poland would come again only after World War I.

Chroscicki operated the White Eagle through 1919 and he is no longer listed in the directories after that year. Whether Prohibition, which began on midnight January 16, 1920, had anything to do with Leopold’s departure is not known. The political climate in the newly reconstituted Poland might also have played a part. At any rate, Chroscicki applied for a passport and returned to the country of his birth where he later died in 1941. His widow Mary died in Poland in 1971. (Ancestry.com)

The White Eagle Hotel After 1919

A new proprietor shows up in 1920, Michael Wasilewski (name spelled various ways in the directories). He was a native of Poland, born on January 29, 1883, and was brought to America by his parents John and Rose Wasilewski in 1899. The family settled first in Suffield, Massachusetts then relocated to Milwaukee in 1905. (Borun, Thaddeus, compiler. “We, The Milwaukee Poles” – 1846-1946. No Publisher, 1946. page 270)

Michael Wasilewski married Frances A. Winooski at St. Vincent’s Church in 1909. They had five children and lived at the White Eagle. City directories show Michael as a blacksmith in the year before coming to the White Eagle. He would be the longest term proprietor of the White Eagle. In Borun’s book on the history of Milwaukee’s Polish community, Wasilewski’s ad for the White Eagle proclaims “The Only Polish Hotel In The City Of Milwaukee!” and “At “White Eagle Hotel” it is always the proverbial “GOSC W DOM – BOG W DOM” which means: When the Guest Arrives – God Arrives.” (Borun, page 270)

Wasilewski is shown in the directories as the proprietor of the White Eagle Hotel but no mention was made of there being a “soft drink parlor” on the premises. Many such establishments were known to have sold alcohol surreptitiously during prohibition, with

the police force turning a blind eye to the situation as long as things were kept orderly. Perhaps the White Eagle was one of these establishments.

In 1934, a C.W.A. project surveyed buildings in fire districts and the White Eagle was included. The floor plan shows a large room at the Maple Street end as a tavern. Two interconnected spaces behind, one 27' by 14' and one 27' by 20' are shown as a hall. At the rear of the building was the garage. The building was considered in good condition. Wasilewski subsequently received occupancy for a dance hall and hotel with three male employees and one female employee.

The rear garage on the first story has a variety of tenants over time and was addressed as 1738 South 8th Street. Sometimes it was listed as a private garage. At other times it was leased to individuals such as Joseph Biezyski (1921), Bernard F. Rock (1925-1927), Harry Stachowiak Garage (1928-1929), Sylvan Santo (auto repair garage 1935-1936), Merten Nield (repair of electrical starters and generators, auto lighting in 1938-1940), Novak Food & Tavern Supplies (1942-1945).

Not much was done to the building under Wasilewski's ownership. Defective Christmas tree lights caused a small fire in 1948 that totaled \$350 in damages but was quickly repaired.

By 1950 Mrs. Paula Deanovich had acquired the White Eagle Hotel and neither Michael nor Frances Wasilewski are subsequently listed in the directories.

Mrs. Deanovich made the greatest changes to the building. By 1953 the rear garage which had been used for auto storage, was being considered for living space. The Building Inspection department originally indicated that this space could be converted into a store or restaurant by providing sanitary facilities, light and ventilation. It could not be converted into living space. Two months later in August 1953, Mrs. Deanovich was converting the space into a sitting room for use by the tenants who boarded upstairs. It would be entirely separated from the tavern. A standard exit door would replace the overhead garage door. The \$1,500 project was completed in October, 1953. (Milwaukee permit records June 1, 1953)

In 1955 the owner decided to change out the tavern storefront windows and apply perma stone to the front and side elevation. On the interior a suspended ceiling was installed in the tavern. (Milwaukee permit records May 6, 1955)

By 1957 the rear of the second floor had been occupied by one dwelling unit with 37 rooms for tenants in the rest of the building. The former dwelling unit was converted into 2 sleeping rooms with 6 renters allowed. (Milwaukee permit records August 17, 1957)

Mrs. Deanovich died on August 7, 1957 and her estate was handling the property. Later individuals associated with the building were Jubiski Cirie/Ciric (spelling varies), Vasilije Vulovic, Frank Geboy and John Carini. A sign permit in 1975 showed that Serbian Food was being served on the premises.

Frank Geboy as White Eagle Inn, Inc. sold the building to Jeffrey and Peggy Takala on December 6, 1996. Their occupancy permit in 2000 indicated that their rooming house was licensed for 38 occupants and had 38 rooms and three bathrooms. At that time they had 20 roomers. (Milwaukee permit records September 29, 2000) The Takala's

sold to Palermos Properties LLC on March 19, 2001. Palermos had their pizza making business across the street until moving to a new facility in the Menomonee Valley. Palermos had been buying up property in the vicinity of Mitchell Street for future expansion. The White Eagle Hotel has been vacant for a number of years. Negotiations are currently underway for the building to transfer to new ownership.

The preservation guidelines adopted earlier for this historic district shall apply to this building and property. The alterations made to the building can be reversed: perma stone at the front can be removed; window and door openings can be reopened; the name plaque can be restored/rehabilitated; the balcony can be rebuilt; the ghost signs should remain as they date to the early years of the building.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY ADDRESSED TODAY AS 716 WEST WINDLAKE AVENUE

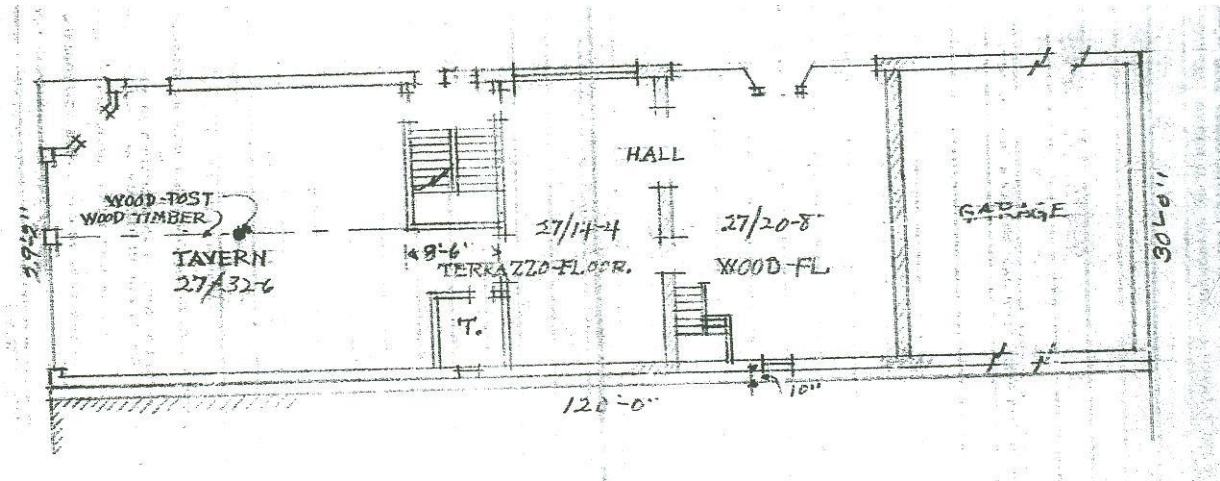
The property addressed today as 716 West Windlake Avenue is an irregular parcel, south of Mitchell Street that currently serves as a surface parking lot. This parcel once contained Lots 5 through 8 and Lots 14 through 18 of Mitchell's Subdivision. Most of Lot 14 held barns and sheds belonging to the Mitchell street businesses. Part of Lot 18 was the same. The remaining 8 lots were all residential with front and rear houses for a total of 12 dwellings all together. All were frame and either one or two stories in height. In the 1960s they were demolished in an effort to create surface parking lots for the Mitchell Street businesses in an attempt to stem the shift of customers to suburban stores. The same practice was carried out on the buildings to the north of Mitchell Street where dozens of dwellings were taken down for parking. This property is being added to the district to provide a link between the White Eagle Hotel at 738 West Maple Street and the Mitchell Street Historic District. Should new construction be considered for this site, it would be reviewed as have other new construction sites on Mitchell Street.

The preservation guidelines adopted earlier for the district shall apply.

ARCHITECT ALBERT MICHALAK (APRIL 13, 1861 – NOVEMBER 5, 1932)

Albert Michalak was a Polish-born immigrant who settled on Milwaukee's South Side at 2010 South 8th Street around 1882. City directories show that he worked as a carpenter then carpenter-contractor. In 1893 he moved to 1322-1324 West Becher Street where he operated a saloon in addition to his contracting business. Michalak became a city assessor in 1897, a position he held through 1912, but kept up his contracting business in which his son, Leo (Leon), also worked. Other family members living at the Becher Street address included his wife, Victoria, and their children Thaddeus, Amanda, Wanda, Josephine, and Helen. Like many men in his business, Michalak provided design service in addition to his construction services. In 1913 he began listing himself as an architect. When the state began mandatory licensing of architects in 1917, a regulation taken to ensure the professionalism of the field, many builder-designers like Michalak, who had worked themselves up through the building trades, did not qualify or chose not to get a license. Many resumed listing themselves as carpenters. Michalak retired in the early 1920s and died on November 5, 1932 at the age of 71. Current research has turned up only a handful of projects done by Michalak, two of which reflect the ethnic character of his Polish clientele. One project is the Stanley Kajewski building at 1131-

1133 West Lincoln Avenue for which he made alterations in 1916. The other is the Kordys Funeral Home at 1501 West Lincoln Avenue (1908). Both display the undulating shaped gables so popular in Milwaukee's Polish community right around World War I. A third project is located in the Bay View neighborhood at 2477-2479 S. Graham Street; it is a spacious front gabled duplex which has had alterations. The White Eagle Hotel, designed earlier in 1907, reflects a more sober and utilitarian appearance perhaps a result of slimmer finances or the design wishes of client Leopold Chroscicki. Michalak, however, gave the building some flourishes with the simple corbelling at the top of the building, the suggestion of quoining at the front façade corners and simple capitals. (Milwaukee City Directories; Milwaukee Death Certificate 1932 November page 4561)

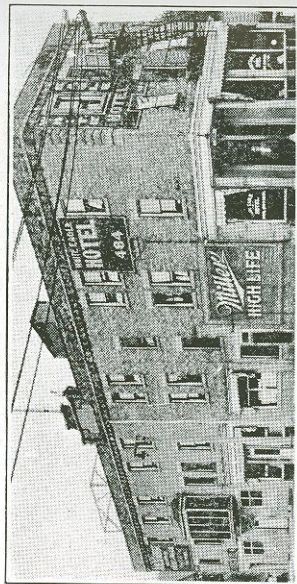


WHITE EAGLE FLOOR PLAN 1934

The Only Polish Hotel In the City of Milwaukee!

WHITE EAGLE HOTEL

738 W. Maple, corner S. 8th St.

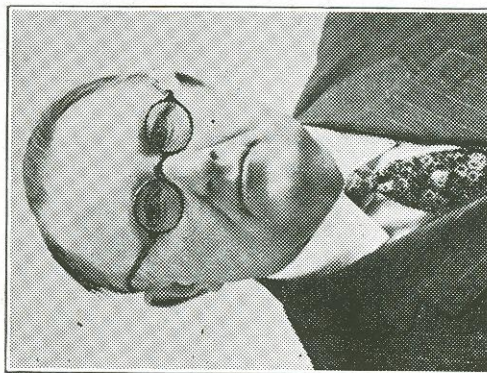


Since 1920 the burden of extending traditional Polish hospitality to the weary travelers and guests in Milwaukee rest on the shoulders of genial Michael Wasilewski and his charming wife Frances.

Mr. Wasilewski was born January 29, 1883 in Poland, son of John and Rose Wasilewski, coming to America in 1899 to Suffield, Mass., and in 1905 to Milwaukee, Wis.

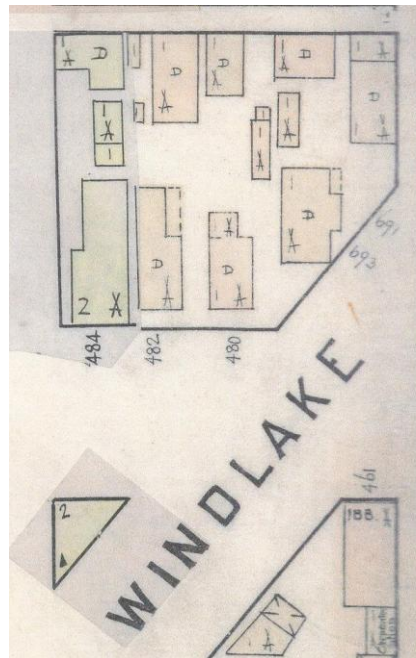
January 9, 1909 married Frances A. Iwanowski at St. Vincent's Church. This union was blessed with 4 daughters, Genevieve Kowalski, Emily Posch, Valentine, Florence and 1 son, Lt. Edwin Wasilewski, now in service, stationed with the Occupational Forces in Japan.

At "White Eagle Hotel" it is always the proverbial "GOŚĆ W DOM — BÓG W DOM" which means: When the Guest Arrives — God Arrives.

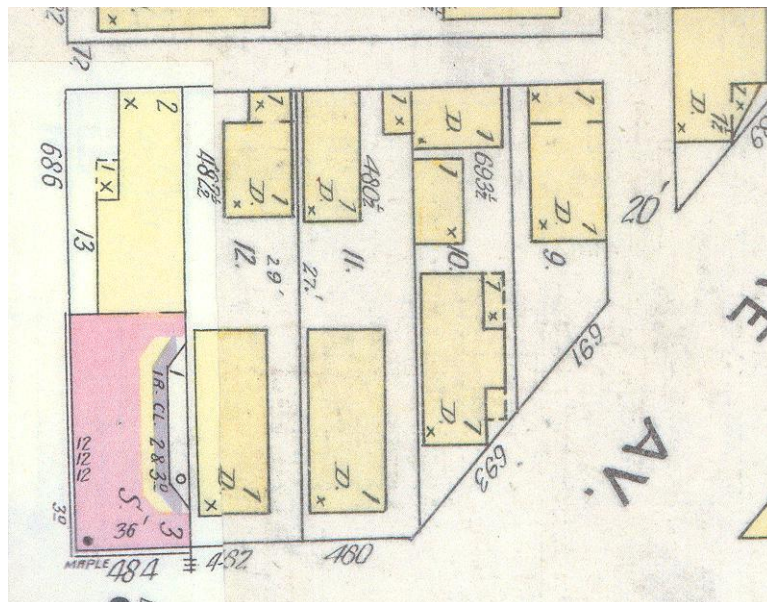


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"WE, THE MILWAUKEE POLES" — 1846 - 1946

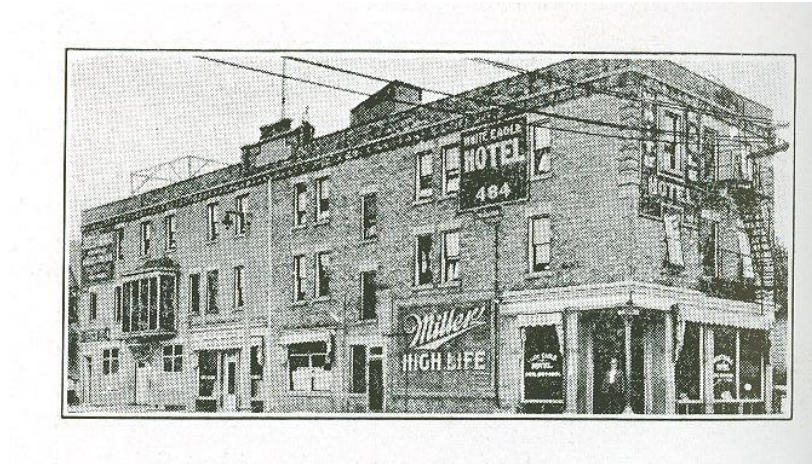


RASCHER FIRE INSURANCE MAP 1888 VOL. 2 P. 133



SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP 1894 VOL. 3 P. 3





WHITE EAGLE HOTEL 1946



WHITE EAGLE HOTEL 2012