



TEMPORARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION

STUDY REPORT

PAUL WEISE COMPANY BUILDING

1534-1542 NORTH FARWELL AVENUE

AUGUST, 2017

**TEMPORARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
PAUL WEISE BUILDING
AUGUST, 2017**

I. NAME

Historic: Paul Weise Building

Common Name: Paul Weise Building

II. LOCATION 1534-1542 North Farwell Avenue

Legal Description Tax Key No. 3590008110
RONALD'S SUBD OF LOT 7 BLK 198 & LOT 11 BLK 199 IN
ROGER'S ADDITION IN SE ¼ SEC 21-7-22 SELY 51' LOT 4 &
LOT 8 IN (LOT 7 BLOCK 198)

III. CLASSIFICATION Site

IV. OWNER Steven Stein
1534 North Farwell Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202

ALDERMAN Ald. Nik Kovac 3rd Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR Milwaukee Preservation Alliance

V. YEAR BUILT 1903, 1910, 1922
(Milwaukee Permit Records 1534 North Farwell Avenue)

ARCHITECT: Alexander Eschweiler (1903, 1910); Leenhouts and Guthrie
supervising architects (1922)
(Permit Records 1534 North Farwell Avenue)

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

THE AREA

The Paul Weise Building is located at the northeast corner of North Farwell Avenue and East Albion Street in the Lower East Side neighborhood of Milwaukee approximately a mile and a quarter from the Central Business District.

Historically, Farwell Avenue was a residential street built up with a mix of housing types from modest frame dwellings to substantial masonry houses and double houses. There was even one prominent masonry row house, Peck Row, near the intersection of Farwell Avenue and Brady Street (locally designated June 16, 1998 and National Register listed June 14, 2016). Occupants were prosperous middle class individuals, professionals or heads of businesses. Farwell Avenue was also home to a number of businesses or organizations that catered to the carriage trade, servicing the rich and famous that lived nearby on Prospect Avenue. Among these businesses

were auto dealerships and warehouses, a dance academy, and west of Farwell, a riding academy where children and adults could learn the art of horsemanship. The exclusive Town Club, right at Farwell and Brady, offered tennis and ice skating to members. Residents along Prospect Avenue, and some on Farwell, as well as those moving into the North Point area, relied on the services provided for their automobiles, their household goods, and the education for their children that included dancing and appropriate riding.

Prospect Avenue is now home to numerous apartment buildings and condos, which though expensive, do not have the cache that the thoroughfare had in the past. Today, aside from the warehouses and some auto-related buildings converted to other uses, virtually all traces of the carriage trade businesses have left Farwell Avenue. Farwell today has become a street lined with apartment buildings, small office buildings, some residences, and mixed use structures with retail on the ground floors. The Paul Weise Company is the last survivor of businesses that catered to the carriage trade. It has remained in business over 100 years.

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Paul Weise Company Building is located at the northeast corner of North Farwell Avenue and East Albion Street on the city's Lower East Side. The lot measures 100-foot by 102-foot in dimension. The building occupies its entire frontage on Farwell Avenue and Albion Street with no setbacks from the sidewalks. To the rear or east is an asphalt paved parking lot bordered by a chain link fence. The building was constructed in three portions, all according to the design of Alexander C. Eschweiler as documented in drawings at the Wisconsin Architectural Archives, housed at Milwaukee Central Library. (Store for Mr. Paul Weise. A. C. Eschweiler architect. Drawings. Wisconsin Architectural Archive. Milwaukee Central Library. 001-0879) The first portion, built in 1903, replaced a frame house that stood to the east of the two Weise shops and measured 21-foot by 50-foot. The second portion was constructed in 1910, measured 30-foot by 60-foot and extended from Albion Street along Farwell Avenue. The third and final portion was constructed in 1922 and measured 40-foot by 30-foot and filled out the building along Farwell Avenue to the north lot line. The sections are a seamless match and show that Weise was following Eschweiler's master plan. In fact, the 1910 Farwell elevation drawing indicates which portion was part of the "present contract" and what was to come later.

The three story, solid masonry building has a flat roof and is designed in the 20th century Commercial Style. The base consists of storefront windows and entrances while the upper two stories have a consistent fenestration pattern. Above the third story is a parapet area defined by a simplified chevron pattern and corbeled cornice. The foundation is stone. There are three bays along Albion Street and five along Farwell Avenue. Bays are defined by pilasters capped with abstract stone capitols between which are groups of windows. A simple stone beltcourse demarcates the first story from those above and stone blocks accent pilasters above and below this beltcourse.

On the Farwell Avenue elevation the first story features three large storefront windows, a main entrance and two small entrances to the upper floors. The large entrance with double doors and sidelights is centered between two of the large storefront windows in the southern three bays of this façade. The entrance is recessed and approached by a flight of cement steps with simple railings. There is a large metal canopy that extends out over the sidewalk at this entrance. The next bay to the north is narrower and features an entrance with transom that leads to the upper floors. The next bay to the north features a large storefront window about equal in size to those flanking the main entrance. The end bay features two six-over-one sash and another entrance with transom.

On the first story of the Albion Street elevation the two east most bays are filled by six-over-one sash separated by brick mullions, in groups of three. The westernmost bay, narrower than the other two, features a large storefront window with multipaned leaded glass transom. The easternmost bay was the first portion of the building, constructed in 1903. Drawings at the

Wisconsin Architectural Archive show the entrance to have been at the easternmost bay. Scars in the masonry show where that entrance had been located.

Upper story windows are grouped in threes between the pilasters in most of the bays on both the Farwell Avenue and Albion Street facades. Today the windows consist of one-over-one sash. The exception to this pattern is the narrow bay on the Farwell elevation, filled with a single window on each of the upper two stories. They are located above one of the minor entrances on the first floor and mark where the 1910 addition had ended. On the Albion Street façade, the westernmost bay is narrower and features just two windows on each of the two stories.

The north elevation is utilitarian in design and features a few window openings on the second and third stories but is otherwise unadorned. A penthouse structure rises above the roof on this elevation. A ghost sign reading Paul Weise Furniture is painted on this penthouse wall.

The east elevation is likewise unadorned. In the 1903 portion of the building on the third story are located four one-over-one sash. On the 1922 portion of the building are six windows stacked above each other on each story, all with one-over-one sash. A ghost sign reading Paul Weise Furniture in an oval medallion is located at the second story.

There are a few differences between the Eschweiler drawings and the building that stands today. On the Farwell elevation, there was to have been a sixth bay with what would have featured the fourth large display window on this façade. It appears that this was never constructed. The northernmost bay on the Farwell elevation today has two windows and a narrow entry door. When it was the fifth bay, it was drawn to have two side-by-side doors with full light leaded glass windows and leaded glass transoms above. Also, in this fifth bay, instead of three windows on the upper floors there were only two with a brick panel set between them.

Changes to the building have been minimal since 1922. An elaborate, copper, front canopy was constructed over the main entrance in 1927. It was replaced by the current, simpler design after the Lower East Side Survey was conducted in 1988. Likewise, the six-over-one cottage style sash at all of the upper story window openings were replaced after 1988. The front entry doors, shown with leaded glass in the drawings are today single light doors. The adjacent sidelights still have their leaded glass. The doors to the upper floors, shown with full light leaded glass are today covered by wood. It is not known if the leaded glass remains underneath.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Paul Weise Building is significant both for its history and its architecture.

Paul Weise is the only known furniture maker/dealer/decorator to have lived and had a shop directly adjacent to his upscale clientele. Paul Weise operated his business in the craft tradition, having his employees as stockholders in contrast to the large manufacturers who relied on outside investors. The client base was select and Weise was known to have given his customers very personalized service. By the 1920s the business continued to make furniture as well as sell furniture made by others. High grade rugs and household furnishings appealed to the "most artistic taste". The business found a niche clientele which it served for over 100 years.

The Paul Weise Building is significant for being an early commercial work by the significant local architect Alexander C. Eschweiler. It was modest and unlike the other commissions Eschweiler was designing at the time for such big corporate clients as the Wisconsin Telephone Company and the Milwaukee Gas Light Company. In this time period as well, Eschweiler gained the reputation as Milwaukee's society architect, designing dozens of houses for well-to-do clients along Prospect Avenue and North Point. How Paul Weise was able to hire the prestigious Eschweiler might never be known. The Weise's and the Eschweiler's did live near each other along Farwell Avenue, moving to the street in the same year. The Eschweiler family might have commissioned furnishings from Weise. An Eschweiler client may have put in a good word for

Weise on the basis of an interior design project. Weise was a member of the Scottish Rite Masons and also was a member of the Elks and this may have led him to an association with Eschweiler. Nevertheless, the building stands as a small scale project unique in the body of Eschweiler's work.

Neighborhood Context

A cluster of five frame buildings was located at the northeast corner of North Farwell Avenue and East Albion Street by the time that Paul Weise began renting one of them in 1886. All fronted Albion Street. This location had ties to the development of Prospect Avenue, just a block to the east/northeast. Although we know about Prospect's signature place as mansion row, that character did not begin to develop until the 1870s. Scattered houses were built along the thoroughfare by the 1850s and there were a couple of attempts to plat residential lots in the vicinity of Prospect and Curtis Place as well as Prospect and Albion. At the southwest corner of Albion and Prospect was located a small coffee house, later saloon run by William Huttman (aka Hutman) between 1856 through at least 1865. At the northwest corner was the grocery store of Joseph Degaris from 1866 through at least 1874/1875. Albion Street was likewise the terminus of a streetcar line that originally extended up Prospect Avenue to North Avenue (Lake Shore Branch of the River and Lake Shore City Railway) then shortened by the Milwaukee City Railway Company and known as the Hill Branch. In 1874 the streetcar, now under the ownership of the Cream City Railway, relocated the route to Farwell Avenue. (Prospect Avenue Mansions Historic District, National Register Nomination, prepared by Carlen Hatala, 1989, Section 8 page 2; Prospect Avenue Apartment Buildings Historic District, National Register Nomination, prepared by Carlen Hatala, Section 8 page 2)

This portion of Milwaukee did not appear in the 1876 Rascher Fire Insurance Map of Milwaukee. By the time the Rascher Fire Insurance Map appeared in 1888, alterations were evident along Albion Street between Prospect Avenue and Farwell Avenue. The northwest corner of Prospect and Albion was pasted over and shadow lines indicate there had been structures at that location, something confirmed by city directories. It may be speculated that the buildings were moved aside and down Albion Street to make the Prospect Avenue site available for new development. Prospect Avenue was beginning to fill up with costly mansions and such small scale frame buildings were not considered appropriate. It was into two of these buildings that Paul Weise moved in 1886.

Farwell Avenue did not have the elevated status of Prospect Avenue but was a mix of residential and business properties that included fine masonry houses, rowhouses and even small frame cottages. But it did have a unique position in being right on the doorstep of the mansion district. Paul Weise' business was one of a number of carriage trade businesses and institutions in the area that catered to the well-to-do who lived on exclusive Prospect Avenue. Other businesses included auto dealerships and warehouses, a dance academy, and west of Farwell, a riding academy where children and adults could learn the art of horsemanship. There was even a skating rink. The Town Club, right at Farwell and Brady, offered tennis and ice skating to members.

Auto dealerships and storage/service garages and warehouses may seem odd in this upscale area. But the residents along Prospect Avenue, and some on Farwell as well as those moving into the North Point area, could well afford the new mode of transportation provided by the automobile and took advantage of the storage and servicing that the auto dealerships and garages provided. Likewise, prosperous families had need of safe, secure storage facilities for their many possessions and two large warehouses were located at the upper end of Prospect Avenue, near North Avenue.

The Prospect Avenue mansion district underwent slow decline, first as a result of zoning that allowed conversion of mansions into rooming houses and other uses and the construction of apartment buildings, then as a result of redevelopment that toppled most of the remaining

mansions in the 1960s. The avenue is now home to numerous apartment buildings and condos, which though expensive, do not have the cache that the thoroughfare had in the past. Today, aside from the warehouses, virtually all the carriage trade businesses have left Farwell Avenue and its vicinity. Paul Weise is the last survivor.

PAUL WEISE HISTORY (1863-1934)

Paul Weise was born on July 3, 1863 in Wreschen, Posen, Saale-Kreis, Thuringia, Germany. This area was originally part of Prussia but in 1918 became part of Poland. His father was John Weise (1829-1905) and his mother was Maria Stelter. Upon the death of his mother, Paul's father remarried in 1876. His second wife was Wilhelmine (Millie) E. Zitlau. There would be seven more children born to the senior Weise's. Half-brother Carl Waldemar Weise was born on March 29, 1880 and he would become part of the story of Paul Weise Furniture. (Ancestry.com Weise family genealogy)

Paul Weise attended public school after which he apprenticed three and a half years in a furniture and decorating establishment. (William George Bruce, Vol 3, page 711) Paul Weise was described in one of his passport applications as being 5-foot 4-inches in height, with gray eyes, Roman nose, medium forehead, large mouth, round chin, sandy hair, fair complexion and oval face. (U.S. Passport Application November 28, 1890 in Ancestry.com)

Paul Weise left home to come to the United States in 1882, departing from Hamburg on the steamship Hansa. On the passenger list he is identified as a "sattler", someone who makes saddles from leather. Arriving in the US in May of 1882, Weise found employment as an upholsterer in Birmingham, Connecticut then moved to Milwaukee in 1883 and worked for Matthews Brothers Furniture co. That business became nationally known for their high end interior woodwork and would eventually furnish the home of Henry Ford in Michigan. (Bruce Vol. 3 page 711; Ancestry.com)

Weise moved about in his first three years in Milwaukee and lived at 501-15th Street (today's 1529 N. Fifteenth Street no longer extant) in 1883, then at 950 Winnebago in 1884 (no longer extant), and then 551 12th Street in 1885 (today's 1643 N. Twelfth Street no longer extant). He moved to the corner of Albion and Farwell in 1886, the year he married Ida Caroline Barbara Kaestner at St. John's Lutheran Church. The frame building was addressed at 164 Albion and fronted Albion Street. This move coincided with the start of his own business. Why did Weise leave the prestigious Matthews Brothers? Weise was said to have embarked on his own after work decreased at Matthews Brothers, in other words, a layoff. He is said to have "solicited work on the upper east side among private families and, receiving much encouragement from prosperous customers" decided to set up business on the Lower East side. (Bruce Vol. 3 page 712; Milwaukee City Directories)

Paul and Ida were to live here, at their shop, for two years then moved a short distance away to 137 Farwell. This address is the site of a masonry duplex, built in 1889, and catty corner from the Weise shop at the southwest corner of Farwell and Albion. They later moved to 163 Farwell (old number, 1567 North Farwell today, no longer extant) a small one story cottage, which would remain their residence until they moved to Miami, Florida in 1933. There were two structures on the lot on Albion, a residence and a one story store that was right at the corner parallel to Farwell Avenue. The Weise's rented the premises in the early years. (Historic Photograph Milwaukee Public Library <http://content.mpl.org/cdm/singleitem/collection/RememberWhe/id/174/rec/17> ; Milwaukee City Directories)

On June 28, 1887 Weise bought his first horse, harness and delivery wagon, paying \$143.80. (Bruce Vol 3 page 712). On August 7, 1891 Paul Weise took out a permit to construct a wood frame barn, 24-foot by 28-foot by 16-foot high in dimension. This shows up in the 1894 Sanborn map located to the rear of the one-story shop and ran parallel to Farwell Avenue. (Sanborn 1894 Vol. 1 sheet 44). The barn cost \$200 to construct and was built by Henry Riley. As business

improved, on January 21, 1895, Paul Weise took out a permit to construct a frame addition to “present carpenter shop” that consisted of raising the roof by seven feet and building a store under it. This project cost \$200. This could very well have been one of the two additions seen at the rear or north of 164 Albion, the second building in from the corner. On March 29, 1900 permit records show that a second addition, also frame and much larger, took the building to the north lot line. It cost \$800 and was designed by A. C. Eschweiler. The dimensions were listed as 20-foot 4 inches by 46-foot by 35-foot high. It was a three story addition and later identified on the 1910 Sanborn fire insurance map as a “ware rm” or wareroom. This is the first documented contact between Paul Weise and Alexander Eschweiler, a relationship that would later result in the masonry building we see today. By this time, the building at the corner was addressed as 394-396 Albion while the second building in, originally a residence, was renumbered 398 Albion. (Milwaukee Permit Records; Sanborn 1910, Vol. 1 Sheet 56)

The year 1903 was a major one for the Weise’s. On July 27, 1903 Paul and Ida purchased their property from H. L. Kellogg and his wife Grace H. Kellogg. That same date Paul incorporated the business as Paul Weise Company, with capital of \$30,000. The incorporators were Paul, Ida and Carl W. Weise, Paul’s half-brother. Paul Weise served as president, Ida Weise served as vice-president, and Carl W. served as secretary-treasurer. A bit earlier that year, on March 10, 1903, the permit was taken out to construct the first portion of the building we know today. The solid masonry building, 21-foot by 50-foot deep, faced Albion, was three stories tall and cost \$4,500 to build. It was built next door east to the two frame buildings they occupied and replaced a frame residence that had stood at that spot. Once again, A. C. Eschweiler was the architect. Albert Kroenig was the mason. (Deeds, July 27, 1903; Milwaukee Permit Records)

The maturing of Prospect Avenue and the North Point neighborhood, possibly construction of the Elizabeth Black House (1901) just to the east, as well as Weise’s expanded business probably all played into the decision to expand at this location and in a way that would provide an elegant setting for the furniture, draperies and other goods available at the business. Paul Weise’s connection with Eschweiler had been established a few years earlier with the frame addition he built in 1900. Weise himself was not part of the social elite as far as we know, but did business with them. Could a commission, like the one for Elizabeth Black, just to the east have brought the two men together? Could the men, both living on Farwell Avenue, have crossed paths at some point, perhaps if the Eschweiler family need furnishings? We do not think that the two families socialized. We may never know the answer. But a small commission like this one was unusual for Eschweiler. It seems like the type of commission one would do for a well-regarded associate, or one done upon recommendation by a client on behalf of Weise.

The store was expanded once again, to the west in 1910 at a cost of \$6,900, also designed by Eschweiler. (Milwaukee Permit dated November 12, 1910) The following year, the “front” of the building was remodeled at a cost of \$100 per permit dated July 31, 1911. This coincides with the change of the main entrance from Albion to Farwell at the entry location we know today. The entrance on Albion was blocked up and evidence of this is still visible on the building.

The final portion of the building was constructed in 1922 when a 40-foot by 30-foot addition was constructed that filled out the property to the north lot line. We know from architectural drawings by Eschweiler, extant at the Wisconsin Architectural Archives, that he designed the entire building, even though it was constructed in stages. The final portion of the building was built according to the design of A. C. Eschweiler but under the supervision of the firm of Leenhouts and Guthrie. Why Leenhouts and Guthrie took over the supervision is not clear at this time; perhaps the Eschweiler firm, now engaged in very large projects, just did not have the time for such a small project. The year 1922 also coincided with a re-capitalization of the company to \$100,000. (Bruce Vol. 3 page 712) A lot of Weise’s success can be attributed to his personal touch with customers. His advertising is said to have been through personal letters to patrons.

Carl Waldemar Weise History (1880-1973)

Partner and half-brother Carl Weise would go on to play an important part in the business. Carl Waldemar Weise was born on March 29, 1880 in Wreschen, Germany and was seventeen years younger than his half-brother Paul. He came to the United States with the rest of the family in either 1891 or 1892; the 1900 U. S. Census and Naturalization Application differ. (Ancestry.com) Carl first appears in the Milwaukee city directories in 1895 and is listed as an upholsterer. Although his work place is not indicated he most likely was employed by his half-brother Paul. In 1897 and 1898 Carl is listed as a bookkeeper with his half-brother's business and then again as an upholsterer in the 1905 Census. The 1895 city directory shows him living at 864 Bartlett (old number, today's 3220 North Bartlett Avenue) and by 1897 the family was residing at 888 Bartlett (old number, today's 3252 North Bartlett Avenue). Living at this address were his parents and six siblings. His brother Oscar worked at least for a time as an upholsterer and his brother Edward A. worked as a painter, later to open his own painting and decorating business on Oakland Avenue. His father John Weise died on June 1, 1905.

In 1903 Carl became secretary-treasurer of the business. Ironically, Carl W. also married an Ida, Ida C. Doerfler, in 1909, and they had the following children: unknown son (1910), Gertrude Caroline Weise Kuesel (1912-1989), Mildred Bernice Weise Netz (1917), and Paul Carl Weise (1919). The 1917 World War I Draft Registration shows Carl W. to be a sales manager for Paul Weise Co. He also maintained his position as company treasurer from 1903 through 1928. Over the course of his time in Milwaukee Carl Waldemar Weise and his wife Ida lived at a variety of addresses including 98 ½ Reservoir (old number) in 1909, 1463 Maryland (old number) in 1925, 454 Kenmore Place (old number) late 1920s, 7476 North Lombardy Road in Fox Point in 1961. (Milwaukee city directory; Ancestry.com)

Paul Weise apparently retired in 1929. Previous to that year, Paul and Ida Weise transferred their business premises to the Paul Weise Company in 1922. Passenger lists show that Paul and Ida were in Cuba and Key West both in 1924 and 1926 so it appears that they were easing out of the business. In 1929 the directory shows him without an occupation and the business is reorganized. Half-brother Carl Waldemar Weise became company president with Herman J. Lemke as vice-president and Elynore F. Grand as secretary. Records show that the building and business were deeded from the business back to Paul Weise in 1929. The property would remain in the Weise estate in later years. (Deeds Vol. 1178 page 352)

The senior Paul Weise moved to Florida in 1933 and died the following year on September 28, 1934. Ida moved back to Milwaukee and died in 1956. Both are buried at Valhalla Memorial Gardens. Paul and Ida Weise had no children so the business would fall under the stewardship of Carl Waldemar and his family.

Carl Waldemar Weise remained president of the business through much of the 20th century. His son Paul Carl Weise (1919 - 1981) served as treasurer by 1952 and became president-treasurer by 1961. Elynore Grade served as secretary through 1974/1975 and was succeeded by Elizabeth Weise, Paul Carl Weise's wife.

Carl Waldemar's wife Ida died in 1965 and he died in 1973 at the age of 93.

The business was sold to Steven Stein in 1978.

Paul Weise Company Business

How are we to classify the Paul Weise Company? Was it a furniture retailer, a furniture manufacturer, a furniture repair service, a decorating service? The lines between upholstery, decorator, furniture dealer, furniture maker were somewhat blurry in the late 19th and early 20th century. It appears that Paul Weise Company provided all these services and that the emphasis shifted over the decades.

The home furnishings and interior design business in Milwaukee is not one that has received a lot of scholarly attention. Surviving drawings of Milwaukeean George Mann Niedecken who considered himself an interior architect, provide one exception. Professionally trained in Chicago, Niedecken found himself working with Frank Lloyd Wright and other Prairie architects and later transitioned into the period revival designs his clients favored. He designed furniture, textiles, rugs and other features and coordinated the colors and textures of rooms for his customers. Other businesses likely provided similar services but there are no surviving records or client lists. With the large numbers of extremely costly houses going up in the late nineteenth century there must have been attention paid to the interior fittings of these mansions. There are scattered references in the Milwaukee newspapers about various mansions being decorated with high style murals, mainly executed by artists from outside the city. And there are references to the colors and furnishings of just-completed houses but no mention is made of specific decorators or firms that coordinated the interiors. We also know that paperhangers, who installed wallpaper and grainers, who upgraded lower quality woods with faux graining to resemble finer oak, mahogany, etc. were consulted about color choices, patterns. Scattered references in surviving correspondence for projects around the country do show that the owners and their architects often consulted about the overall look of their interiors, sometimes having the architects design to match pre-selected furnishings and collections, sometimes selecting furnishings to coordinate with the strong architectural features of the interior. The term "interior decoration" was first documented in 1904 with the first courses offered in this field at the New York School of Applied and Fine Arts (now Parsons). Elsie de Wolfe is considered the first interior decorator and received her first commission in 1905. (*A Brief History of Interior Design*, Interior Designers for Legislation in New York website accessed July 26, 2017. www.idlmy.org/history-of-interior-design)

So was the Paul Weise Company a decorating firm or a upholstery business or a furniture manufacturer? Many of the businesses listed in the directories as furniture manufacturers most likely sold to local dealers or were exported to other localities. Some of these businesses were known more for their interior fittings that included specialized millwork for churches, saloons, hotels and houses rather than just individual lines of chairs, tables, parlor sets. Some of the manufacturers also had their own retail outlets. The Weise company did not fit into the category of furniture manufacturer as it relates to the larger furniture industry.

By 1880, the Milwaukee City Directory listed some 42 furniture manufacturers/dealers in the city. Included were names that would soon become footnotes to history while others were to grow into prosperous businesses such as Matthews Brothers Furniture Company and A. D. Seaman & Co.

When the city directory separates the manufacturers from the retailers in 1881, we find that the number of manufacturers drops to about ten while some thirty-four retailers were present throughout the city. By 1897 there were seventeen manufacturers, thirty-nine furniture dealers and thirty upholsterers. Many of the dealers probably were like J. V. Beyer, on Mason Street, whose ad showed they carried parlor furniture, mattresses, lambrequins, sofa pillows, carpets, "and all description of Fancy Articles made up at shortest notice.". The same ad indicated that furniture was re-covered and polished and chairs repaired and "mattresses overhauled". Carpets were cleaned, cut and repaired. (Milwaukee City Directory 1882)

So how do we categorize Paul Weise's business? Paul Weise's listing in the city directories show him as "upholsterer" from 1888 through the early 20th century. The one historic photo of the shop, pre-1895, shows the sign "Paul Weise Upholsterer" with various individuals standing at the corner of Farwell and Albion. One gentleman holds a bolt of cloth. One leans upon a upholstered chair, with what looks like additional cloth draped across the chair. The wooden chair had upholstered back, seat and arms. In the 19th century came the evolution of upholstered furniture as we think of it today. Historically, everyday chairs were made of wood, including the seats. By the eighteenth century fine dining room and parlor chair seats had fabric on them as well as sofas and "wing" chairs. The very plush, cushioned seat, arms and backs were an evolution of the 19th century drive toward comfort when appropriate fabric became more readily available through

mass production and more affordable to the general population. Paul Weise was definitely in the mainstream with his work.

Also in the photo is the delivery wagon purchased in 1887 and painted with the words “upholsterer” as well as “carpet cleaner”. Weise’s carpet cleaning service evidently started in the late 19th century before being listed for the first time in the directories in 1900. This part of the business was located at 248 Highland Place (old number, later Land Place). This site had been the location of the Hunscher Carpet Cleaner business in 1894 and the building was significantly altered by 1910 when it was identified on the Sanborn fire insurance map as “rug & carpet cleaning” (no longer extant). The carpet cleaning service was eventually discontinued but it showed that the Weise company was willing to expand the services it provided to its clients. (Sanborn 1894, Vol. 1 sheet 40, and 1910 Vol. 1 sheet 58)

In the 1905 Federal Census Weise is shown with the occupation of “furniture” but in the 1910 Federal Census he is listed as “upholstery proprietor”. In the 1920 Federal Census he is listed as “Ret Dealer”; the abbreviation probably referring to “retail”. Fire insurance maps identify the buildings as upholstery, cabinet shop and upholstery, furniture show room. In the trade publication The Upholsterer and Interior Decorator from 1922, the Paul Weise Company is briefly mentioned as having completed a \$25,000 addition to “give greater floor space for their display of furniture and draperies.” (Milwaukee City Directories; Ancestry.com; The Upholsterer and Interior Decorator, Page 101, Google Books, accessed on line July, 2017)

From various sources indicated above , including fire insurance maps, family history and published information, it appears that Paul Weise was an upholsterer, produced custom furnishings for his select clientele, had a cabinet shop, provided draperies, carpets and even a cleaning service. In the twentieth century the firm moved away from manufacturing and concentrated on retailing fine furnishings produced by others, with traditional lines being the most popular, mostly in cherry and mahogany. They also advertised interior decorating services as well as the restoration of family heirlooms and antiques. A “furniture fashion journal” was even produced by the Weise firm in 1921 when the business was described as “upholsterers and makers of fine furniture”. (Ad. “Within The Home”, The Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle, March 6, 1921, page 7) So the Weise firm stood in a unique place in Milwaukee’s furniture/decorating history. It was more of a craft shop with a small number of employees, not a large manufacturer. The client base remained those interested in traditional, expensive, well-made home furnishings, even after the clientele moved further up the north shore. And customer service has remained a hallmark of the business. (Paul Weise Furniture Website, Accessed on line July 30, 2017, <http://paulweise.com/service.php>).

VIII. THE ARCHITECT

The architect for the Paul Weise Building was Alexander Chadbourne Eschweiler. Drawings for the building are housed at the Wisconsin Architectural Archive housed at Milwaukee Central Library.

Alexander Chadbourne Eschweiler (August 10, 1865 – June 12, 1940) was born in Boston, Massachusetts, the son of German mining engineer Carl Ferdinand Eschweiler and Hannah Lincoln Chadbourne who was from an old New England family and born in Maine. Alexander’s boyhood was spent in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula copper country.

In 1882, when Alexander was 17, the family relocated to Milwaukee. His father continued his work as a mining engineer and apparently worked out of his home. Young Alexander attended Marquette University for a year, then worked as clerk and later as a draftsman in 1886. It is said that he worked for James Douglas, and spent his summers in the offices of Howland Russel and George B. Ferry. Alexander went on to study architecture at Cornell University in New York. His brother Franz C. had various occupations including clerk and postal clerk before embarking on a law career starting in 1889. Over the years he had a variety of partners but established McElroy & Eschweiler in 1895, a partnership that would last into the 20th century. Franz was later a Justice of

the Wisconsin Supreme Court. (Shirley du Fresne McArthur, North Point Historic Districts-Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin: North Point Historical Society, 1981. page 169; Milwaukee City Directory)

The Eschweiler family moved about in the city living at 534 Broadway (old number) in 1883, at 643 Jackson (old number) in 1884, at 601 Jackson (old number) in 1885 before settling in at 72 Farwell in 1886. This by the way is the same year that Paul Weise moved to the corner of Farwell and Albion, just a short distance away. It is interesting to speculate about the possibility of Weise meeting members of the Eschweiler family through proximity in the neighborhood or perhaps the family needing the services that Weise provided.

The Eschweiler family then moved to 101 Farwell (old number, no longer extant) in 1890, staying there through 1892 and moving to 100 Farwell (old number, today's 1462 North Farwell Avenue) for 1893 and 1894. Carl Ferdinand Eschweiler died on August 29, 1893 while in Chicago and was later buried in Milwaukee's Calvary cemetery. Brother Franz C. moved away from the family to a house on 5th Street in 1895, the year he married.

Alexander C. Eschweiler graduated from Cornell University in 1890 and upon his return to Milwaukee worked for H. C. Koch & Co. and is said to have done some of the drafting on the City Hall tower. He married Marie Mueller in 1891 and moved away from the family to 330 Bartlett (old number, today's 1930 North Bartlett Avenue) Street for the years 1891 and 1892. When he won the design competition for the Milwaukee Downer College buildings in 1893, Eschweiler established his own practice in the Metropolitan Block at Third and State Streets (no longer extant). For one brief year, he was in partnership with Gustav Vogelsberger in 1894 then moved his practice to the University Building, then the Goldsmith Building on West Wisconsin Avenue. It was in 1894 he moved back to 100 Farwell (old number) probably to assist his widowed mother.

City directories show Alexander at 677 Prospect (old number) in 1895. This portion of Prospect was renamed Hackett Street by 1896 and still stands as 2825 North Hackett, a house he built for his mother and which his mother would occupy until her death on August 8, 1904. He briefly lived at 357 Kane Place (today's 1505 East Kane Place) in 1901 before moving to a house he designed for himself at 2810 East Bradford in 1902. By 1908 Alexander had put the Bradford Street house up for sale and was living primarily at North Lake in Waukesha County.

During the early years Eschweiler designed a whole host of buildings although he seemed to have captured the interest of the East Side society elite. He designed over 30 residences in the North Point area, more than any other single architect. His work could also be seen on Prospect Avenue and included houses for Elizabeth Black, Charles Allis, Charles D. Mann, and Andrew Story Goodrich. Mostly executed in English revival styles, houses were fashionably decked out with Elizabethan, Tudor and Jacobean details. Some featured the combination of brick and stucco popular in the Arts and Crafts movement. A handful were designed in the Colonial/Georgian Revival style. As the Architectural Record reported in 1905, his sympathies lay with the early English styles. (Samuel Ilsley, "The Work of Alexander Eschweiler". Architectural Record, Vol. 17, March, 1905)

Why did a society architect design a commercial building for a furniture/upholstery business? The specific links may never be known. Eschweiler lived in close proximity with the Weise's, at least for periods of time, and the two may have shared a client base; Eschweiler designing houses that Paul Weise helped to furnish. But residential commissions were not the only work Eschweiler took on. His connections led to such projects including the Milwaukee Gas Light Company Plant in the Menomonee Valley in 1902-1903, the Wisconsin Telephone Company Building in 1905 (formerly located at 735 North Fifth Street, razed), St. Rose Church in Racine in 1903, and Plymouth Congregational Church in 1913. As best as can be determined through remaining records, Eschweiler never embarked on the design of small scale commercial buildings like the Weise building. The typical commercial commissions were ones from big corporations and placed Eschweiler in the forefront of Milwaukee's architects. The Weise building stands as a unique

commission, almost as if done as a special favor. A building designed by Eschweiler would have been a feather in Weise's cap as it were and would have resonated well his upscale clientele.

Alexander and his wife Marie would have a number of children. Three sons, Alexander, Jr., Carl F. and Theodore L., followed in their father's footsteps and studied at Marquette University and Cornell University before being taken into the business in 1923. With the inclusion of the younger Eschweiler's, the firm was renamed Eschweiler and Eschweiler. Offices were set up at 720 East Mason Street. The practice continued to design a variety of buildings including schools, churches, office buildings, residences, and even industrial complexes. Among their better known projects are the Bankers Building (completely refaced in the 1970s), the Wisconsin Telephone Company Building on Broadway, the Wisconsin Gas Company Building, WTMJ's Radio City, the Mariner Building, Rex Chainbelt, Cutler-Hammer Corporate Headquarters, the Milwaukee Arena, and the Milwaukee Public museum (altered). In honor of the firm's fiftieth anniversary, a commemorative publication written by Richard S. Davis, was published in 1943 with an updated version produced in 1951.

Alexander Eschweiler died on June 12, 1940 at his home at North Lake in Waukesha County where the family had established summer and permanent homes at a farm on the south end of the lake. The three sons continued the architectural practice after their father's death. Alexander C. Jr. died in 1951 at the age of 58 in a plane crash. Carl F. Eschweiler retired from the firm in 1960 and died at the age of 76 on January 1, 1977. Theodore L. Eschweiler died on November 16, 1966 at the age of 71. Alexander C., Jr.'s son, Thomas L. Eschweiler, worked for the firm between 1954 and 1960 and left to work with Herbst, Jacoby & Herbst and in 1966 became director of construction for the Milwaukee Public Schools. By 1962 the firm was known as Eschweiler, Eschweiler & Sielaff. Between 1966 and 1974 it was known as Eschweiler, Schneider & Associates, Inc. It was last known as Eschweiler & Schneider in 1975 when it finally closed.

The Eschweiler legacy continues with the Wisconsin Architectural Archives, begun in 1975 by Thomas Eschweiler with 1,250 drawings of the firm's work and an endowment to the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee which has brought internationally prominent architects to the school as visiting professors.

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IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Paul Weise Building be given temporary historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1 and e--6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

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

The Paul Weise Building is a testament to the long-standing business started by Paul Weise in 1886 and continued by his family through the 1970s. It allows us a glimpse into the ephemeral world of furniture making and interior design in Milwaukee. While buildings can survive for centuries, interiors are fleeting, changing with each new occupant or owner. Milwaukee had a robust furniture making industry in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Some of those businesses also worked on interior design. Assorted buildings are all that are left of these companies. There were also numerous small businesses that sold furniture made by others and businesses that sold decorative items and textiles for the home. Paul Weise combined the services of upholsterer, cabinet/furniture maker, dealer in draperies and rugs and also provided interior design services. The firm is the oldest of its type, having survived by catering to a carefully curated customer base and providing timeless furnishings that have long lasting appeal.

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

Alexander C. Eschweiler is considered one of Milwaukee's outstanding architects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century who set design trends among the well-to-do of the city's east side and who went on to establish a firm that was active until 1975. His design for the Paul Weise Building was unique among his commissions. It suggests a personal relationship or business relationship, with a connection perhaps through a shared clientele. The Commercial Style building would have been considered modern in 1903, free of historic references yet scaled to fit in with the nearby mansion district of Prospect Avenue. It was constructed of lasting quality materials that complemented the traditional furnishings that were a specialty of the Weise company.

Preservation Guidelines For the Paul Weise Building

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the temporary historic designation of the Paul Weise Building. 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 masonry and stone details 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.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. No changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, the roofline or its pitch. The appearance of the flat roof and straight parapet are key features of the early 20th century Commercial Style. Skylights may be added to the roof if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. 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. Re-roofing requires consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness to ensure appropriate materials and installation. Terra cotta coping remains in some areas but has been replaced with membrane material in others. Returning terra cotta coping would be appropriate. Should a satellite dish be installed it should be placed where it is not visible from the street, preferably at the rear northeast corner of the roof. No large rooftop construction or addition is allowed, as this would have a negative impact on the historic character and proportions of the building. The construction of other rooftop features requires review by Historic Preservation staff and/ or the Historic Preservation Commission and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

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. No painting of the limestone foundation is permitted. The rear or east wall has been painted and also parged in some places to address deteriorating brick. It is recommended that the cause for the deterioration be investigated and corrective action taken. The stone trim at the top of the building, on the beltcourses, as decorative accents at the windows and pilasters and at the base of the building is to be retained and not replaced with synthetic material.
- 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 or 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. Wood is present at the entry doors (see below) and metal can be found at the ornamental grilles protecting the basement windows.
- 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. Structural wood epoxies are suggested for the lasting repair of damaged or decayed areas of wood and wood trim. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and material of the originals, including the species of wood. The current canopy above the main entrance dates to after 1988. A new canopy that would be comparable to the 1927 design would be acceptable.

C. Windows and Doors

- 1. Retain existing window and door openings and original doors and windows within those openings. The storefront windows are to be retained along with their leaded glass transoms. Retain the existing configuration of

panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore them to the original 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. The use of structural wood epoxies is strongly encouraged to repair any minor damage or decay to wood windows.

2. 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 of the historic glass. New windows must be made of wood. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. The upper story six-over-one cottage style sash have been replaced with what appear to be vinyl windows. They may remain but at such time replacement is requested or needed, replacement windows will match the originals and be made of wood. Basement windows have been covered with wood panels in the northernmost bay of the Farwell Avenue elevation. If the wood covering were to be removed, the glass windows can be restored to their original appearance. Other basement windows feature ornamental iron grilles that must be retained. 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 changes or replacements or restoration will require a Certificate of Appropriateness and appropriate wood windows.

Any original windows on the building must be retained and repaired if at all possible. Vinyl, vinyl clad, metal, and metal-clad or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted. The original storefront windows, with their leaded glass transoms must be retained. It appears that original doors are located in their original openings. Two on the Farwell Avenue elevation have wood covering where the full light glass panels had been. Plans show that these had been full light leaded glass panels. If the leaded glass remains behind the wood, it must be retained and restored should the wood panels be removed. The main double entry doors today appear original although the full light glass panels are no longer leaded glass. Should the doors be restored or replicated, it is encouraged that the leaded glass lights be installed. The leaded glass sidelights are still extant and are to be retained. Any replacement doors must be appropriate to the historic period of the building. 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 not allowed in the storefront windows. On other doors and windows they 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 original condition. A replacement feature

must match the original member in terms of scale, design, color, appearance and material. Existing historic trim must not be removed unless it is for the purpose of repair. Spot repair is preferable to wholesale replacement of details. Wood epoxy repair is often highly desirable for permanently repairing smaller areas of decay or damage to wood elements. Repair can also be done to metal surfaces and stone. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

As the building occupies all of its property to the public sidewalk along Farwell Avenue and Albion Street, no additions are permitted at these locations. The roof may not be removed or reconfigured to allow for an addition. Should a small addition be contemplated, approval shall be based upon its compatibility with the primary building in terms of window proportion and placement, building height, roof configuration, scale, design, color, and materials. Additions must be smaller than the original building and not obscure the historic building. The Historic Preservation Commission may consider an addition to the rear or east elevation if the design, scale, materials, proportions and other features are compatible with the historic building and do not dwarf or minimize the historic building.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture on the Farwell Avenue and Albion Street elevations of the building will 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 box signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted. Currently, two ghost signs are extant on the building. One is located on the north wall at the penthouse location. The other is located on the east elevation. They may remain. It is not recommended that they be repainted or painted over or painted out, rather that they be allowed to fade over time.

G. Site Features

While there is no physical space for planting along the Farwell Avenue or Albion Street elevations, the addition of planters and other sidewalk features will require the approval of the Commission. Future enhancement to the parking lot, or its conversion to outdoor space for the building will likewise require Commission approval. New plant materials, paving, or fencing shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building. Should a fence be considered in the future (to replace the current chain link fence) examples of appropriate fencing can be found in As Good As New and Living With History. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before starting any work that would involve the landscape features, parking, walkways, or driveway

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. However, since this property is almost landlocked on its site, with the exception of the east surface parking lot, it is doubtful that any new construction will take place. These guidelines are included, however, to be consistent with the guidelines for all locally designated historic properties. Small-scale accessory structures, like a gazebo, garage/parking pad or fountain, may be permitted depending on their size, scale and form and the

property's ability to accommodate such a structure. Any request to construct a new garage/parking pad would be subject to review for code compliance and appropriate design and would require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

1. Site work

New construction must respect the historic site and location of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to the historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the building. New construction is to be smaller in size and shorter in height than the historic building. New construction will not extend over the top of the current historic building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the historic building as a freestanding structure.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic building should be compatible with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained and materials not available when the building was constructed should be avoided.

- I. 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 11(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.

3. Location

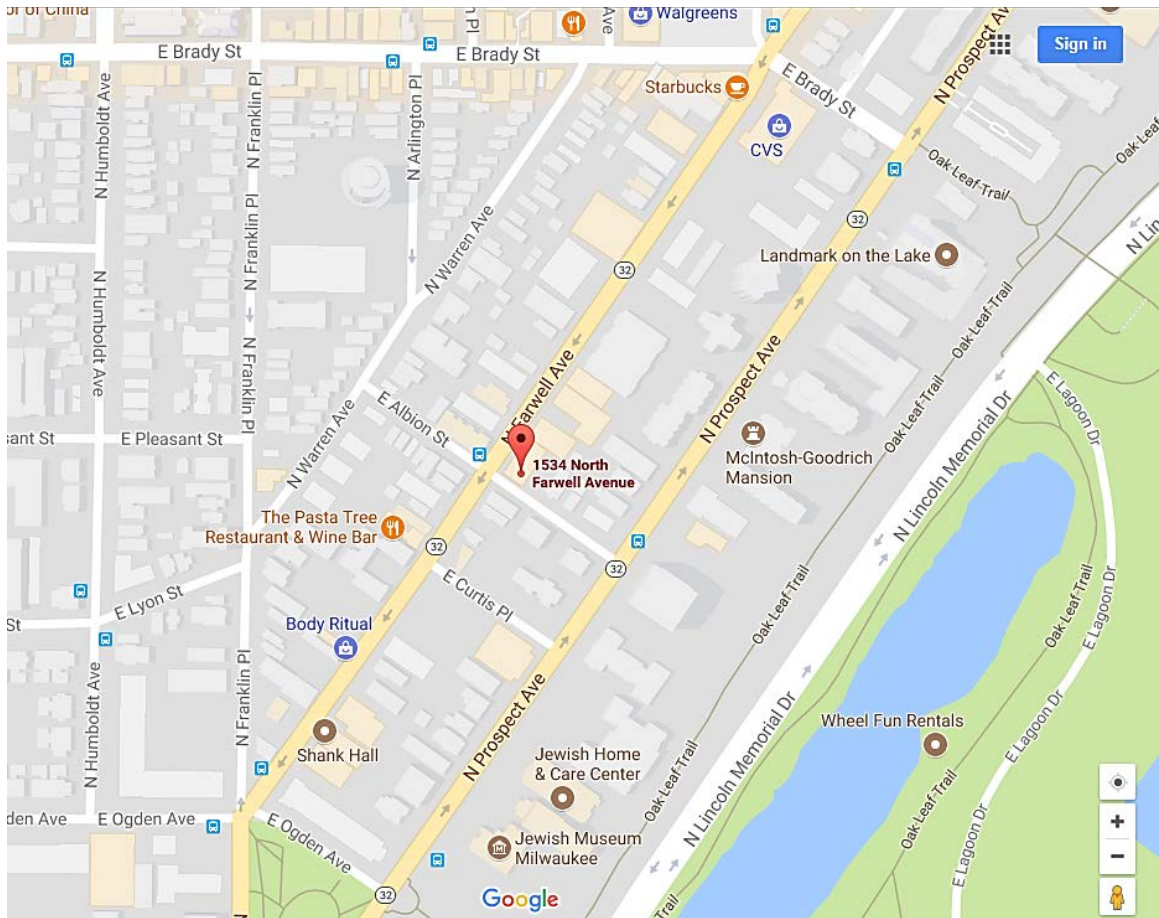
Consideration will be given to whether or not the building or portion of it contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

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. No portion of this building is considered an addition



Google Map showing 1534-1542 North Farwell Avenue .



Quarter Section Map
Showing the location of
1534-1542 North
Farwell Avenue

