

MILWAUKEE HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
TEMPORARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION PETITION

1. Name of Property: Kneisler's White House  
Address of Property: 2900 S. Kinnickinnic 53207  
Zip Code

2. Name and Address of Owner

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Area Code)  
Applicant (if different from owner) T. Anthony Zielinski  
Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Attachments

The following information is enclosed:

- ☐ Exterior photographs or digital images (required)
- ☐ Copy of newspaper notice of demolition permit application
- ☐ Copy of Orders from the Department of Neighborhood Services
- ☒ Other (explain) recent sale

4. Legal Property Description

see attached

5. **Description of Structure**

Number of stories: 2 1/2

**Wall cladding** (check each that apply)

Clapboard ☐ Brick ☐ Stucco ☐ Stone ☒ Wood Shingle ☐

Terra Cotta ☐ Asphalt Siding ☐ Asbestos Tile ☐ Aluminum/Vinyl Siding ☐ Artificial Stone ☐

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Outstanding Features:

Turrets

6. **Significance**

Areas of Significance:

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                       |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> science                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> community planning      | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> economics               | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> other:                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> education               | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  |   |

Date Built: 1890

Date(s) Altered (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Builder/Architect: \_\_\_\_\_

Written Statement of Significance, including history of structure:  
(continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

Former Schlitz Tavern

7. Major Bibliographical References

On Milwaukee Tanzib article attached

8. Form Prepared By:

Name: T. Anthony Zielinski Date: 02-27-18

Address: 200 East Wells St

City: Milwaukee State: WI Zip Code: 53207

Telephone: 414 405 1483

Email: tzielinski@milwaukee.gov

Signature must be acknowledged by a notary

Signature of preparer/applicant: [Signature]

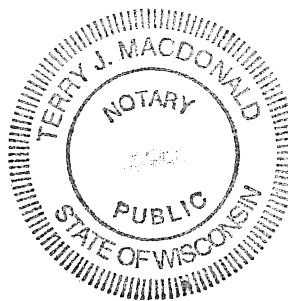
State of Wisconsin

County of Milwaukee

This document was acknowledged before me on 2/27/18 by \_\_\_\_\_

Terry J. MacDonald  
Seal & Signature of notarial officer

My commission expires: 11-15-2019



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission  
Office of the City Clerk  
200 E. Wells Street Room B-4  
Milwaukee, WI 53202  
[HPC@Milwaukee.gov](mailto:HPC@Milwaukee.gov)

414-286-5722



Milwaukee.gov

RE ▼ (Help) Enter Taxkey or  
Address

2900 S Kinnickinnic

## Assessment Detail and Listing Characteristics

Taxkey	Premise Address	Nbhd	Plat	Assessment County	Class
5030647000	2900-2902 S KINNICKINNIC AV	6282	50314	Milwaukee	Local Mercantile

Ownership Information	Conveyance	Assessment Information
BUGSME A WISCONSIN LLC 2900 S KINNICKINNIC AVE MILWAUKEE WI 53207	Deed Type Date Fee <i>Name or Address Change:</i> 2010-08-17	WD 2007-11-19 0.00 Land - N/A - Imprv - N/A - Total - N/A -
		Year Current Previous 100800 340200 441000

Org Year	Drop Year	Zoning	Ald. District	Census
		LB2	14	018200-

## Legal Description

HANSON &amp; MILBRATH'S SUBD NO 1 IN SW 1/4 SEC 10-6-22 BLOCK 3



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HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY

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## PROPERTY RECORD

2900 S KINNICKINNIC AVE

## Architecture and History Inventory

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## NAMES ▸

Historic Name: **KNEISLER'S TAVERN**Other Name: **KNEISLER'S WHITE HOUSE TAVERN**

Contributing:

Reference Number: **27763**

## PROPERTY LOCATION ▸

Location (Address): **2900 S KINNICKINNIC AVE**County: **Milwaukee**City: **Milwaukee**

Township/Village:

Unincorporated Community:

Town:

Range:

Direction:

Section:

Quarter Section:

Quarter/Quarter Section:

## PROPERTY FEATURES ▸

Year Built: **1893**

Additions:

Survey Date: **1990**Historic Use: **tavern/bar**Architectural Style: **Queen Anne**

Structural System:

Wall Material: **Clapboard**

Architect:

Other Buildings On Site: **0**Demolished?: **No**

Demolished Date:

## DESIGNATIONS ▸

National/State Register Listing Name:

National Register Listing Date:

RESOURCE  
DESCRIPTIONSAbout the National  
Register and State  
Register of Historic  
Places

All Wisconsin National Register of Historic Places listings are searchable on our website.

About Our Wisconsin  
Architecture and History  
Inventory (AHI)

Search digital records on more than 140,000 historic buildings, structures and objects throughout Wisconsin.

## RELATED ARTICLES

Is Your Property Eligible  
for the National Register  
or State Register of  
Historic Places?

Eligible properties must retain the essential physical appearance of the period in which they were important, and meet one of four criteria.

Related products from our  
Online Store:

Unsalted, Shark Free T-shirt



Price: \$13.95

Old World Wisconsin Zip Hoodie



National Register Listing Date:

State Register Listing Date:

National Register Multiple Property Name:

**NOTES ▶**

**Additional Information:** A 'site file' exists for this property. It contains additional information such as correspondence, newspaper clippings, or historical information. It is a public record and may be viewed in person at the State Historical Society, Division of Historic Preservation.

SCHLITZ BREWERY PAID TO HAVE THE BUILDING CONSTRUCTED. WILLIAM C. KNIESLER WAS THE ORIGINAL OWNER AND HAS REMAINED IN THE FAMILY EVER SINCE. NICKNAMED THE "WHITEHOUSE" BECAUSE LOCAL POLITICIANS HAVE FREQUENTED THE TAVERN.

Also nicknamed "The Capitol".

Wm. Kneisler owner 1890-1919.

Herbert Kneisler 1919-74.

Well conserved frame saloon with a pentagonal plan and Queen Anne elements.

Milwaukee Landmarks Commission did research on this building.

No original building permit on file.

**Bibliographic References:** TAX ROLLS. CUDAHY REMINDER ENTERPRISE 5/23/1991. MILWAUKEE HISTORIC BUILDINGS DRIVING TOUR OF BAY VIEW. BUILT IN MILWAUKEE, LANDSCAPE RESEARCH, P. 81. Ervin Zillman, So You Will Know 1966 (History of Bayview)

**RECORD LOCATION ▶**

Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, Wisconsin

**Have Questions?**

If you didn't find the record you were looking for, or have other questions about historic preservation, please email us and we can help:

[joe.derose@wisconsinhistory.org](mailto:joe.derose@wisconsinhistory.org)

If you have an update, correction, or addition to a record, please include this in your message:

- AHI number
- Information to be added or changed
- Source information

Note: When providing a historical fact, such as the story of a historic event or the name of an architect, be sure to list your sources. We will only create or update a property record if we can verify a submission is factual and accurate.

**How to Cite**

For the purposes of a bibliography entry or footnote, follow this model:

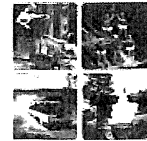
**Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory Citation**

Wisconsin Historical Society, Wisconsin Architecture and History Inventory, "Historic Name", "Town", "County", "State", "Reference Number".



Price: \$41.95

Vintage Dells Coaster Sets



Price: \$19.95

White Seipp Mug



Price: \$9.00

Farm to Table Floursack Towel Set



Price: \$14.95

Wisconsin Love Tote



Price: \$16.00

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(https://adserver.onmilwaukee.com/onmilw/adclick/FCID=-4/site=OMC/area=BARS/size=550X480/random=384553221.709535/custid=WpXOoLitFi4AACu@hXg/TLD=/SPONSOR=UR20SPELUNKING.KNEISLER'S%20WHITE%20HOUSE.BAY%20VIEW.SCHLITZ%20TIED-HOUSE.SEAN%20RAFFAELLI.MATTHEW%20LANGOEHR.WILLIAM%20KNEISLER.HERBERT%20KNEISLER.URBAN%20SPELUNKING/AUTHOR=BOBBY%20TANZIL0)



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For more than 125 years, this corner tap has been quenching Bay View's thirst.

## Urban spelunking: Kneisler's 126-year-old White House tavern



By **Bobby Tanzilo**  
Senior Editor/Writer

Published March 23, 2017 at 9:04 a.m.

***"Bar Month" at OnMilwaukee is brought to you by Miller Brewing Company, calling Milwaukee home since 1855. For the entire month of March, we're serving up fun articles on bars, clubs and beverages – including guides, the latest trends, bar reviews, the results of our Best of Bars poll and more. Grab a designated driver and dive in!***

A lot has changed in Milwaukee over the years, and especially lately a lot has changed in Bay View. But one thing that's remained constant for nearly 126 years is the white clapboard tavern on the corner of Ellen Street, where Kinnickinnic Avenue bends off to the right.

One of the oldest watering holes in the city, the White House, 2900 S. Kinnickinnic Ave., celebrated its 125th birthday last October, and it appears to show no signs of slowing down.





On the contrary, current owner Sean Raffaelli, who bought the White House in 2006 from members of the extended Kneisler family, pays tribute to the corner pub's history more outwardly than had its previous owners.

Raffaelli and his bar manager for the past six years, Matthew Langoehr, have brought the old tavern and family photos down from the attic and hung them on the wall, replacing more anonymous bar decor like beer signs and posters announcing weekly specials.

"It had kind of lost its identity," says Langoehr. "We really focused on the age of the building. We focused on the original woodwork. We have so much custom stuff here that's original and that was just kind of covered up. We went back to that and made a big push to say, 'hey, we're a Bay View historic building.'"



"I've always had a thing for old, historic buildings. When you walk into a place like this, you get this tingle. There's 126 years of history here."



"I hear so many great stories. We have a lot of young customers, 24, 25 years old that say, 'my mom played volleyball here,' or 'this is where my parents met, this is where my grandparents met' or 'this is where my grandma had her first drink.' We've got three and four generations of customers here."



Kneisler's on opening day, 1891, above, and in 2017, below.



But, Langoehr reminds, "we're not just an old bar. We have really active volleyball leagues that start in April, too."

William Kneisler built the tavern with a loan from the Schlitz Brewing Company, making the tavern a Schlitz tied-house, meaning it sold only that brewery's products when it opened in 1891.

This, however, wasn't Kneisler's entrance to the world of taverns. His first place was on Maple Street and he ran another on Kinnickinnic Avenue, a little farther north.

Interestingly, while most of the surviving Schlitz tied-houses (<https://onmilwaukee.com/bars/articles/urban-spelunking-schlitz-tiedhouses.html>) were constructed with cream city brick, the White House is a wood frame, clapboard building on a cream city brick foundation. However, like some of its brick cousins, this place was designed in the Queen Anne style and adorned with a couple turrets, the largest being above the main entrance.

Inside, the corner tap is extremely well-preserved. The hardwood floors remain and so does the solid wood bar. The impressive carved wooden built-ins are the same ones you see in photos dating back to the bar's opening day, and the cooler doors are original, too, even if the inner workings of the appliance have been modernized.

The metal hinges and handles on these built-ins are original, too, and many are stamped with the names of their manufacturers.

I especially like the shape of the tavern, which seems unique in Milwaukee. The copious windows mean that the bar is flooded with sunlight during the day, and when you walk in the front door you immediately have a panoramic view of nearly the entire place.

In the basement you can see where old windows and access doors have been bricked up. A back hallway – whose staircase has its original wooden newel posts and railings – leads to the second floor tavernkeeper's apartment, now inhabited by Langoehr and his canine pal – and up to the attic.

Up there, you can duck down low and go into the turrets, though they're pretty tight spaces. The back one is open clear up to the peak, but the front one, which looks out over the Kinnickinnic Avenue, has a ceiling just above the windows.

Among the many items stored up here are more old Kneisler photos and awards, as well as a trove of old schoolbooks, dated with the first years of the 20th century, and containing the penmanship of young 17th Ward School student Herbert Kneisler – who later took over the bar from his uncle – as well as some dusty old tomes with brittle and yellowed old pages full of German gothic print.

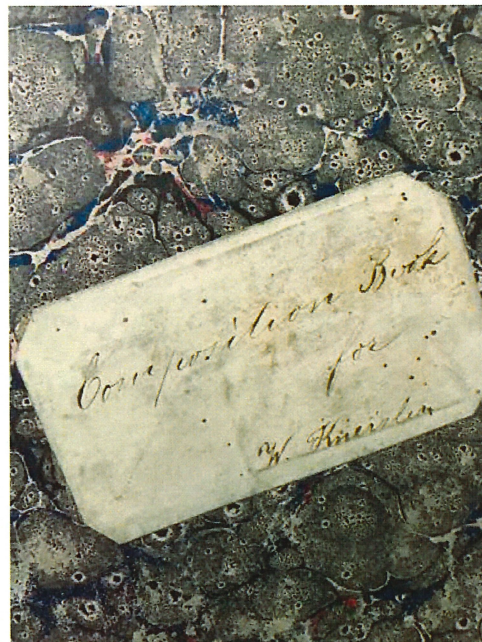
One thing I didn't see (or hear) during my visit – or any of the other times I've visited the White House over the years – are ghosts, which are among the first things folks utter when you mention Kneisler's.

Some say they've heard children playing upstairs, but the most talked-about ghost is the spirit of a woman who apparently walks through the bar late at night and can often be found hanging around outside the bathroom, according to Langoehr.

"There are a few different legends about the hauntings of the White House," he says. "I haven't had many things happen with me. I don't know if you need to be in tune with that type of thing."

He recalls one night, when he was sleeping in the apartment upstairs, there were a really loud knock on the door. Loud enough to cause Langoehr's dog to bark.

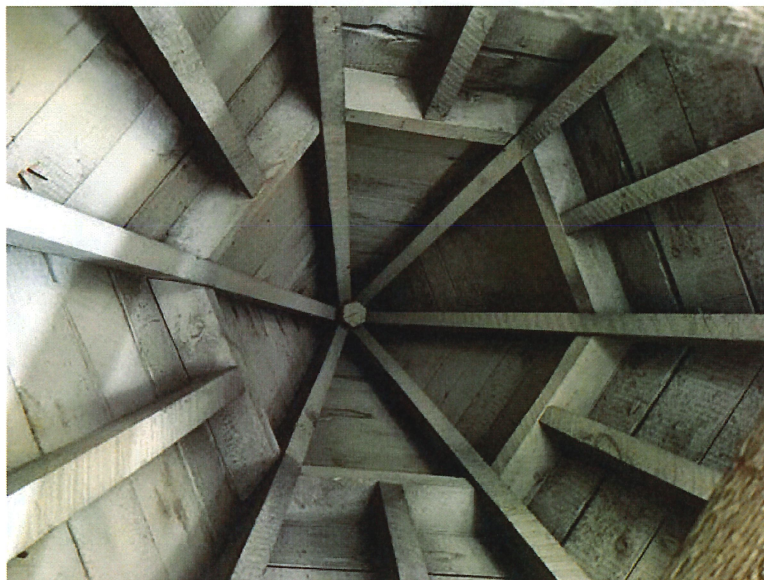
"I got up and no one was there," he says. "I hear a lot of noises in the building because the building shifts, and the way it's shaped causes the wind to skim around it really fast and sometimes it'll blow open the doors."







Turret on the outside, above, and on the inside, two photos below.



"I don't put too much into it; I'm not a believer as much in ghost stories. But a really loud knock on your door at 2 in the morning and nobody there, makes you think about it."

When William Kneisler died in 1919, Langoehr says old Bill's 39-year-old nephew Herb – a hulking fellow to judge by the photos – took over and ran the place until he passed away in 1973.

Like many taverns, the White House quickly became a neighborhood gathering place, one where election results were waited out, one where mail was stored for neighbors, one that had some of the earliest telephones in Bay View, one that rented attic rooms out to residents and one that, of course, sold beer by the bucket to hard-working Milwaukeeans.

"Kneisler paid this loan off pretty quick, and was no longer beholden to selling only Schlitz beer, after only a few years," says Langoehr. "In some of the old photos however, you can see the classic Schlitz palm tree and Schlitz logo."



The White House remains a neighborhood magnet, even now with so much competition in the neighborhood. It's a place for volleyball, a place to plug the jukebox, a place to play some board games with friends, a place to buy your mug and store it up on the shelf for your next visit. It's a beloved, neighborhood place, and has been for many generations.

"One of the things that sets the Historic White House apart from some of these other classic taverns is, it has always been a tavern," says Langoehr. "Some have started as boarding houses, union halls, etc., but William Kneisler built the tavern in 1890, as what it still stands as today.

"Even during prohibition, we never stopped selling beer. I mean, who is going to tell a bunch of old German guys they could not drink or sell beer? Kids would often take pails full of 'small,' meaning low-alcohol, beer down to the mill workers a few blocks away."

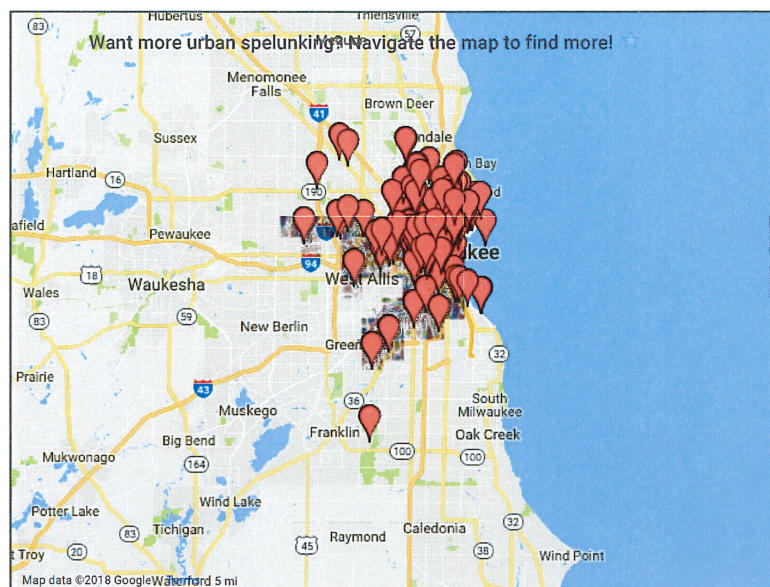
When you stop in at the White House, be sure to look at those cool historical photos on the walls that help give you a sense of just how important the place has been to Bay View for more than a century. Don't forget to shift your gaze upward, too, to see the great little model of the place, which is silver, not white.

"It was a major stop on the stagecoach line, through the late 1800s, early 1900s," says Langoehr. "In one of the photos, you can see local politicians gathering for election night results, and celebrating their victory. This was – like most large taverns at the time – also a sort of town hall. One might come here for their mail or telegraph, to get a haircut or shave, (downstairs), eat, vote, get news, etc.



"Now, we have four nights of volleyball during the week (leagues start in April), bean bag leagues, some of the best parties in the neighborhood, especially Halloween, a VIP members club with your own engraved mug, and a customer base that spans all age groups."

That mix of modern vitality and historical character is what makes the White House so great. It looks and feels like the place you see in those old photos, but, perhaps fortunately, without the spittoons.

**More Information...**

**Kneisler's White House** (</bars/business/kneislars.html>)  
2900 S. Kinnickinnic Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
(414) 483-2900



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(<https://adserver.onmilwaukee.com/onmilw/adclick/FCID=-4/site=OMC/area=BARS/size=550X480/random=1444866990.31994/custid=WpXQIK3BfDgAAAZPJFk/TLD=/SPONSOR=SC20WHITE%20HOUSE,HISTORIC%20BAR,SEAN%20RAFFAELLI,CLOSINGS/AUTHOR=MOLLY%20SNYDER>)



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It's the end of the White House as we know it. (PHOTO: [Bobby Tanzilo](#) ([/author/showauthor.html?id=3](#)))

## Historic Kneisler's White House to close at year's end



Published Dec. 18, 2017 at 12:01 p.m.

*Take a sip of this story, brought to you by [SoulBoxer](#) (<http://soulboxer.com/>) – quality, ready-to-drink cocktails that promise less time making, more time drinking. Put a little soul in your life, Milwaukee.*

By [Molly Snyder](#)  
Senior Writer  
Photography: [Bobby Tanzilo](#)

Owner Sean Raffaelli, who bought Kneisler's White House, 2900 S. Kinnickinnic Ave., in 2006 from members of the extended Kneisler family, confirmed that he has sold the building.

Although he would not disclose the new owners, he says the bar "is in good hands" and will remain open until Jan. 1. The bar will then close for an undetermined amount of time for remodeling.

The White House will host "End of the World" parties on both Dec. 30 and Dec. 31 to celebrate the 126-year old tavern that is one of the oldest in the city

(<https://onmilwaukee.com/bars/articles/urban-splunking-kneislars-white-house.html>).

"I want to thank everyone who's been a customer or helped us along the way," says Raffaelli.

Raffaelli says he plans to focus on his other real estate properties. Stay tuned to OnMilwaukee for more information about the new ownership when it becomes available.

[More Information...](#)

Kneisler's White House (/bars/business/kneislers.html)  
2900 S. Kinnickinnic Ave.  
Milwaukee, WI 53207  
(414) 483-2900