

FINAL HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
NORTH DOWNER AVENUE COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

I. NAME

Historic: North Downer Avenue Commercial District

Common name: Same

II. LOCATION

2551 – 2651 N. Downer Ave.

3rd Aldermanic District, Ald. Michael D'Amato

Legal Description: See Attachment

III. CLASSIFICATION

District

IV. OWNERS *See Attachment*

V. DESIGNATION REQUESTED BY: Margery Mullett

VI. YEAR BUILT: 1909-1936

ARCHITECTS: Martin Tullgren
Augustin V. Wiscocil
Herman P. Schnetzky and Son
Kirchoff and Rose

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

Beginning at the intersection of the north curb line of East Webster Place and the west property line of 2551 North Downer Avenue; then east along the south lot line of 2551 North Downer Avenue to the east curb line of North Downer Avenue; then north along the east curb line of North Downer Avenue to the south lot line of 2590 North Downer Avenue; then southeasterly along the lot line of 2590 North Downer Ave. to the rear lot line of the same; then north along the rear lot lines of 2590 North Downer and 2604 North Hackett Avenue to the north lot line of the same; then northwesterly along the north lot line of the same to the west curb line of North Hackett Avenue; then south along the curb line to a point of intersection with the east property line of 2620 North Downer Avenue; then northwesterly along the rear property lines of 2620 North Downer Avenue to the north property line of the same; then west along the north property lines of 2620 North Downer and 2641 North Downer Avenue to the west property line of 2641 North Downer; then south along the rear lot lines of all properties with frontage of North Downer Avenue to the point of beginning in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Please refer to illustration #1 for a map of the boundaries.

BUILDING OWNERS AND LEGAL DESCRIPTIONS OF THEIR PROPERTIES:

Daniel J. Katz
John B. Crichton
Thomas A Hauck
316 E. Silver Spring Dr.
Milwaukee, WI 53217

2551-97 N. Downer Ave.

Milwaukee Savings and Inv. Ass'n Subd No. 3 in SW ¼ Sec 15-7-22 Block 4 Lots 10-11-12 and Lots 1-2 & 3 Blk 4 Adj.

2608-16 N. Downer Ave.

Legal Description:

Gilman's Subd Etc in Se ¼ Sec 15-7-22 Vol 4 Page 27 Block 6 Part Lots 6 & 7 com 4' S of most NLY Cor lot 7 TH E 64'-TH N 66.18' to Beg.

2615-25 N. Downer Ave.

Legal Description:

Milw. Savings & Inv. Ass'n Subd No. 3 in SW ¼ sec 15-7-22 block 1 Lot 5 & S ½ Lot 4.

2620-50 N. Downer Ave.

Legal Description:

Gilman's Subd etc in Se ¼ Sec 15-7-22 vol 4 page 27 Block 6 Lots (2-3) Exc. SE 80' & Exc. St. & W 62.5' (Lot 4 & N 47.1' Lot 5) SW 19.78' Lot 5 lots (6-7) Exc S 83.18' on W Line

Kasco Automotive Products
299 S. Main St.
Salt Lake City, UT 84111

2601-07 N. Downer Ave.

Legal Description:

Milw. Savings & Inv. Ass'n Subd No. 3 in SW ¼ Sec 15-7-22 Block 1 Lots 6 & 7.

Downer Hardware, Inc.
c/o Cathy Borneman
2629-31 N. Downer Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53211

2629-31 N. Downer Ave.

Legal Description:

Mil Savings & Inv. Ass'n Subd No 3 in SW ¼ Sec 15-7-22 Block 1 N ½ Lot 4.

City of Milwaukee
c/o Real Estate
809 N. Broadway
Milwaukee, WI 53202

2574-90 N. Downer Ave.

Gilman's Subd Etc in SE ¼ Sec 15-7-22 vol 4 Page 27 Block 5 Lots 30,31 and 32.

The **Popcorn Wagon** stands on the city's lot at 2574-90 N. Downer Ave.

Owners of the wagon: Lee and Eileen Collins
3225 N. Hackett Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Marie Sendik
AKA Marie Balistreri
2643 N. Downer Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53211

2633-51 N. Downer Ave.

Legal Description:

Mil. Savings & Inv. Assn. Subd. No. 3 in SW ¼ Sec 15-7-22 Block 1 Lots 1-2 & 3.

Rector, Wardens and Vestrymen
of St. Mark's Church of Milwaukee
2618 N. Hackett Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53211

2604 N. Hackett Ave.

Legal Description:

Gilman's Subd etc in SE ¼ Sec 15-7-22 Vol 4 Page 27 Block 5 Lots 24 Thru 29.

VII. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The North Downer Avenue commercial district is a two-block long cluster of eight early twentieth century, brick commercial buildings, an Episcopal Church complex, a little popcorn wagon that is permanently anchored to its site and two modern buildings. The study area is located on the city's upper northeast side about three miles north of downtown. It is surrounded by neighborhoods of fine, late nineteenth and early twentieth century houses and apartments.

The existing, contributing buildings within the district were built between 1909 and 1936 and they range in height from one to three stories. All of the structures are in a good state of repair. To the east of the district lies the North Point North Historic District, which is listed on both the local and national registers. To the west is a mix of late nineteenth and early twentieth century apartments, luxury duplexes and large single family houses.

The stores were built to meet the day-to-day consumer needs of homeowners and apartment dwellers living on the city's Upper East Side. Today the district still functions much the same way but it has also garnered a reputation as a unique hub of shopping, dining and

entertainment that attracts patrons from all parts of the city. Historically, the district had a secondary reputation as “Automobile Row” because two large, early twentieth century automobile service and storage garages were located there. The legacy of the automobile is preserved on one of the garages in the form a large, carved limestone plaque that bears the image of a fine, early motorcar.

The following inventory summarizes the study area’s architecture. A structure designated as contributing is pivotal to the architectural and historic significance of the district. A non-contributing structure is not known to possess historic or architectural significance at this point in time. There are eleven contributing structures, two non-contributing structures and one parking lot within the district boundaries.

Downer Garage

2551 N. Downer Ave.

Built 1916

Architect: Martin Tullgren

Contributing structure

The Downer Garage is a three story, brick, commercial style structure that was built during the early motorcar era to store, service and sell automobiles. The main elevation faces North Downer Avenue and it is symmetrically composed of three major bays. Centered in the parapet wall atop the central bay is a superb, carved limestone plaque depicting the front end of an early automobile and above it is a logo composed of a pair of bird wings that enframe a balloon-style tire. The plaque is an excellent reminder of the dawn of the automobile age and it is believed to be the only one of its kind in the city.

Today retail stores are located on the first story and until recently the second the third stories were used to store and service automobiles. The exterior of the building has remained nearly intact over the years. Alterations include the installation of new, extruded aluminum storefronts and the removal of the original cornice.

Read Investment Co.-owned building

2565-77 N. Downer Avenue

Engineer: Fred Rankl

Built: 1936

Contributing structure

Designed in a vaguely International Style of architecture, this was the last historic structure built within the district. The stark simplicity of the two-story brick block was a contrast to the period revival and Art Deco style commercial buildings that were built in the city during the 1930s. The street level storefronts have been remodeled, but the second story retains its original fenestration, a glazed brick string course and a limestone coping that tops off the parapet wall.

Downer Theatre

2579-97 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1915

Architect: Martin Tullgren

Contributing structure

The Downer Theatre is a fine example of the Chicago Commercial Style of architecture and it is the oldest known theater still operating in the City of Milwaukee. The two-story, symmetrically composed, flat roofed brick structure features a central bay that contains the theatre entrance and a massive, projecting, Art Deco Style marquee. Flanking the theatre entrance on either side are retail storefronts.

The building is trimmed with extensive terra cotta ornament that is reminiscent of the design work of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. The marquee is a replacement for the original one and the green enameled steel panels that surround the entry also apparently date from a 1930s remodeling. Because these alterations have acquired a historic character of their own over the years they are considered a contributing part of the structure and are worthwhile to preserve.

The Popcorn Wagon

2590 N. Downer Ave.

Built: Circa 1916

Architect/builder: unknown

Contributing structure

Milwaukee's oldest popcorn wagon has reputedly stood at this site since 1916 and it might be one of the oldest, working popcorn wagons in America. Made of wood and metal, it is reminiscent of a small, nineteenth century peddler's wagon. The interior still retains some of its original, steam-powered popcorn-making equipment although the apparatus is now powered by electricity. Research has not yet revealed just how old the wagon really is, but according to local folklore and the recollections of some East Side residents who have since passed away, the wagon has been standing there and in continuous use since about 1916.

Originally the wagon was portable and could roll about, but many years ago it became a permanent part of the district when it was embedded into a poured concrete foundation. The wagon reportedly is straddling two pieces of property. The front half stands on the city's right of way next to the sidewalk and the back half is located on the parking lot property that is now owned by the City of Milwaukee. Several popcorn wagons of similar design dotted the city's major thoroughfares before and after World War II but today all of the other historic wagons have vanished.

City of Milwaukee Parking Lot

2590 N. Downer Avenue

Acquired by the City of Milwaukee in 1963, this property has been vacant or used as a surface parking lot since at least 1915 according to current research.¹ It might be one of the oldest, continuously used parking lots in the city. Years ago, according to building permit records, the

¹ Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Milwaukee 1910, #83; Milwaukee City directories; City of Milwaukee real estate records for 2590 N. Downer Ave.

lot was used to sell Christmas trees during the holidays. The Popcorn Wagon, which is a contributing structure within the district, stands upon the lot's far northwest corner.

**Belleview Pharmacy
(Osco Drugs)**

2601 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1909

Architect: A.V. Wiscocil

Contributing structure

Designed in a Neo-Classical Revival style of architecture, this building is the oldest extant structure in the district. Although its original show windows on first story have been blocked-in to accommodate a large drug store, the second story retains its original brick walls, and large, projecting, bay windows. The building is trimmed with uniquely stylized versions of Neo-classical ornament such as brackets and cornices that have the general character of the Arts and Crafts style of architecture that was also popular when the structure was built. The first floor of the building is part of an Osco Drug store and connected to the contemporary style, one story building next door to it at 2609-13 N. Downer Ave.

Shortly after the building was completed in 1909 a matching, rear, one-story garage/gas station was added to the rear of the structure. The gasoline pumps were located at the curb but were removed around 1930. The station is another reminder of the district's early history as "Automobile Row."

**Sentry Foods
(Osco Drugs)**

2609-13 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1966

Engineer: Fred Poetnig

Remodeled: 1999

Non-contributing structure

A two-story house with a 1911 storefront addition stood at this site until it razed in 1966 to make way for a Sentry Food Store. Milwaukee architect John Menge, Jr, designed the storefront addition but the designer and builder of the house is unknown.

The Sentry store that replaced the old buildings was a one story, flat-roofed structure with large plate glass display windows. The storefront was completely rebuilt in 1999 for a new occupant, Osco Drugs. Today the Modern style brick storefront features a gabled parapet wall and it is complementary to the materials, scale and design of the historic buildings surrounding it.

Julius Straus Investment –Owned Property

2610 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1912

Architect: Martin Tullgren and Sons

Contributing structure

Built by a prominent, local real estate investor, the Straus building is a two-story flatiron structure designed in a vaguely Neo-Classical style of architecture. Trimmed with limestone belt courses and ornamental brickwork, the building is architecturally articulated on its two principal elevations that face North Downer and North Hackett Avenues.

The building was used for years as a laundromat but during the 1990s the first and second stories were renovated for a restaurant.

Mulkern Garage Co.

2620-50 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1912

Architect: Martin Tullgren and Sons

Contributing structure

This large, brick, two-story commercial style building was built as an automobile repair and storage garage. Like its larger companion down the block at 2551 N. Downer Avenue, this building was constructed specifically to cater to the needs of east siders who owned fine, early motorcars. Mulkern rented limousines and specialized in the repair and storage of gas and electric cars.

The building is L-shaped in plan and its principal elevation faces North Downer Avenue. A small storefront on the east elevation faces N. Hackett Avenue. The second story automobile garage, which is still in use today, is reached by means of a concrete ramp that connects the building's north elevation with East Park Place.

The N. Hackett Avenue side of the building remains virtually intact but the Downer Avenue elevation has been altered over the years. A large central entry pavilion and the pent roof that flanked it have all been removed.² The second story windows are modern replacements and the brick has been painted gray.

Coffee Trader

2625 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1975

Architect: Miller, Waltz and Diedrich

Non-contributing structure

The former Coffee Trader is a one-story, contemporary design structure that was built to replace two early twentieth century buildings that had been damaged by fire. Exposed wooden roof trusses and cream brick walls are pivotal design features both inside and outside the new building and these elements generally reflect the character of an early twentieth century industrial structure or garage.

² Once a Year--Milwaukee Press Club. Nov. 1, 1915 p. 42.

The main elevation facing North Downer Avenue is a simple rectangular block composed of salvaged Milwaukee cream brick walls that support exposed wooden roof trusses. Large, rectangular plate glass display windows flank a recessed entry that is composed of two sets of double leaf glass doors. For many years the Coffee Trader restaurant was the principal tenant, but since the business folded in the late 1990s the building has been vacant.

Downer Hardware

2629 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1912

Architect: Herman Paul Schnetzky and Son

Contributing structure

This two story, flat-roofed, brick building of eclectic design is a fine example of a smaller two story brick commercial block built prior to World War I. The principal architectural feature of the building is a large, Arts and Crafts style, bracketed cornice that supports a pent roof which, in turn, is topped with a terra cotta tile roof. The second story windows are trimmed with Neo-classical style keystones. The street level storefront has been recently remodeled in a sensitive manner that generally reflects the character of a pre-World War I commercial building in Milwaukee.

August Uihlein Investment-owned Property

a.k.a Sendik's Market

2637-51 N. Downer Ave.

Built: 1909

Architect: Kirchoff and Rose

Contributing structure

Known for years as Sendik's Market, this two-story, Mediterranean Revival structure features ebullient, scrolled gables at the corners and in the middle of the building. Set in between the gables is a pent roof trimmed with shaped rafter tails beneath the eaves.

The stucco finish on the second story was apparently applied over the original brick walls but the alteration is still within the context of Mediterranean Revival style architecture. The street level storefront has been altered with a travertine marble bulkhead and large plate glass display windows. A one-story greenhouse was added to the south side of the building and a large, two-story concrete block addition was added to the rear of the building but the new construction does not significantly detract from the character of the original building.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church

2604 N. Hackett Ave.

Built: 1911

Architect: Fitzhugh Scott, Sr.

Contributing structure

St. Mark's Parish Hall and Cloister

2618 N. Hackett Ave.

Built: 1949

Architect: Arthur L. Seidenschwartz

Contributing structures

Built to resemble a small English country or village church, St. Mark's is located in the center of the district at the five points intersection of N. Hackett and N. Downer Avenues and E.

Bellevue Place. The design of St. Mark's, which is one of the oldest extant structures in the district, was influenced by the English Perpendicular style of architecture.

The church is a front-gabled, one-story structure made of superbly crafted, rusticated limestone. A large English Gothic style art glass window is centered on the front elevation. The side elevations facing north and south feature buttressed, stone walls, regularly-placed rectangular art glass windows and shaped rafter tails beneath the deeply projecting eaves. A small, gabled entry pavilion is located at the rear of the south elevation.

The exterior of the church has remained nearly intact over the years with the exception that the original projecting central entry vestibule is now flanked on either side with a small, flat-roofed, addition. A large parish hall and cloister attached to the north side of the church was built in 1949 to replace an earlier wooden structure that was constructed in 1904.

A total of six historic structures in the district have been demolished over the years. **The Frank Kettler Drug Store**, which stood at the southeast corner of North Downer Avenue and East Park Place, was a fine, two story, brick Neo-classical structure that was razed in the early 1930s to make way for a corner gas station. According to a 1980 conversation with Humphrey E. Desmond a long-time resident of the east side, "Kettler's was the oldest drug store (on Downer) and they served the best 5 cent giant chocolate soda and later, they had a banana split that would kill an ordinary person for 15 cents."³

The gas station that took the place of Kettler's has also been demolished and the corner is now the site of a drive-thru banking facility. The Kettler store moved across the street to 2651 N. Downer Avenue and a pharmacy was in continuous operation there until the early 1990s when it moved out to make way for expansion to Sendik's Market.

Two, small brick commercial buildings were razed to make way for a parking lot and an addition to Sendik's market. One of them was the **Albert Heath Grocery Store** at 2633 N. Downer and the other was the **Christian Turck Butcher Shop** at 2637 N. Downer.⁴

Two brick buildings, located at 2615-25 North Downer Avenue, were razed in 1975 after a fire damaged them. A total of five shops were historically located in those two buildings. In their place today is the **Coffee Trader** building (1975).

A turn-of-the century, two-story frame house with a storefront addition at 2609 N. Downer Avenue was razed in 1966 to make way for a new building that is presently occupied by an Osco Drug store.

VIII. SIGNIFICANCE

The North Downer Avenue retail strip is architecturally significant as one of the city's best preserved early twentieth century neighborhood commercial districts. The district exemplifies the architectural styles, types of buildings and materials that are associated with an architect-designed, upscale neighborhood commercial district of the early twentieth century. The district

³ Shirley du Fresne McArthur. North Point Historic Districts-Milwaukee. Milwaukee: North Point Historical Society, 1981, p. 219.

⁴ Milwaukee City Directories; Milwaukee building permits; Milwaukee Fire Insurance Maps.

is also significant because of its overall plan which is similar to a small, European village with stores grouped around a central church complex.

IX. HISTORY

Architecture

The Downer Avenue commercial district is a bustling, well-preserved example of an early twentieth century, neighborhood commercial strip. The character of the district is reminiscent of a small European village because at its center lies a picturesque church complex and clustered around it are a variety of small commercial buildings. Most of the buildings in the district exemplify the early twentieth century commercial style of architecture that was very popular in the period before and after World War I.

The largest structure in the district, the **Downer Garage** (1916) located at 2551 N. Downer Avenue, is a rare and unusual reminder of the early automobile age in Milwaukee. This structure and its companion down the block at 2620 N. Downer Ave. (1912) were built to cater to well-to-do east siders who needed an indoor facility to store their expensive vehicles and the frequent services of skilled mechanics to keep the cars in good running order. Cars were also bought and sold at these garages, but historically the focus of both businesses was service and storage. During the early part of the 20th century, cars had to be repaired frequently because they were highly prone to damage and breakdowns from a combination of very poor road conditions and mechanical defects.

Today it is usually very easy to spot a modern parking garage because of its visible ramps, open walls and utilitarian appearance. Both of the Downer Garage buildings, however, have the finished appearance of small office or commercial buildings. There are only a few of these fascinating, early twentieth century automobile garages left in Milwaukee. The city's largest and best example of this type of structure was built for the First Wisconsin National Bank at the downtown corner of E. Mason and N. Water Streets. Architectural historians regard the Downer Garage building at 2551 N. Downer as Milwaukee's most outstanding example of this rare type of building outside of the central business district. The carved limestone plaque of an early car at the top of the building is the only one of its kind in the city and a fine reminder of the prestige and romance associated with America's early automobiles.

The **Downer Theatre** (1915) located at 2579-97 N. Downer Avenue, has the distinction of being the oldest known movie theatre still operating in the City of Milwaukee and it occupies a unique niche in the architectural history of Milwaukee's movie theatres. Built more than twelve years before the advent of "talking pictures," the theatre is one of the few in the metropolitan area that made the transition from silent pictures to sound pictures and still survives, basically intact, today.

The exterior is embellished with fine, ornamental terra cotta belt courses that are reminiscent of the design work of Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. It is also the only theatre surviving in Milwaukee that was designed in the Chicago Commercial style of architecture. Although the original marquee was replaced with an Art Deco style substitute in the 1930s, the exterior of the Downer has remained remarkably intact over the years.

In recent years the interior was sensitively divided into two theatres. During the conversion, every effort was made to retain and enhance the building's valuable, period character. Today the Downer is not only a rare survivor from the silent film era, but it is also an outstanding

example of how an older theatre can be successfully adapted to meet the needs of the modern marketplace.

Located across the street from the Downer Theatre, **The Popcorn Wagon** (ca. 1916) at the southeast corner of N. Downer and E. Bellevue Avenues is a one-of-a-kind structure that adds to the stand-apart character of the district. It might be one of America's oldest, working popcorn wagons and it retains some of its original steam-powered popcorn making apparatus. Today, however, the wagon's equipment is electrically-powered.

Several generations of Milwaukeeans have cherished the little red and white wagon and the popcorn that it has dispensed. Now permanently anchored to its site, it has become one of the best-known structures on the city's Upper East Side. It is also a unique, historic link to the new generation of rolling wagons which are now seen vending popcorn at the city's ethnic festivals, in area parks and on downtown Milwaukee streets.

The story of the venerable little wagon has become one of the city's urban legends because at present no one knows for sure just how old it is or how long it has been operating at its present site. Records confirm that the wagon was there in 1963 when the City of Milwaukee bought the parking lot that it partially stands upon. The wagon was there long before that and possibly as early as 1916 according to the present owners Eileen and Lee Collins who gathered the first-hand recollections of area residents who have since passed away.⁵ Research is continuing into the fascinating story of one of the city's smallest and best-known structures.

St. Mark's Episcopal Church (1911) located at 2604 N. Hackett Avenue, is pivotal to the character of the district and an excellent example of the design work of an important Milwaukee Architect, Fitzhugh Scott, Sr. St. Mark's is Milwaukee's only example of a small English-style parish church with an attached cloister. The church was meticulously constructed with hand-finished, rusticated limestone and further embellished with English Perpendicular style art glass windows. The church complex and the commercial buildings fanning out on either side of it are also reminiscent of the plan of a small English or European village. The cloister, added in 1949, is a rare architectural feature in this country and it reflects a continuation of distinctly European building traditions.

The **Straus Building** (1912) located at 2610 N. Downer Avenue, is one of the best-preserved small, flatiron commercial buildings remaining in Milwaukee. Made of sienna colored, iron spot brick and trimmed with ornamental brickwork and dressed limestone, it is a pivotal structure at the visually important five points intersection of N. Downer, N. Hackett and E. Bellevue. Architecturally, the building is a transitional structure because it incorporates the basic form and massing associated with small commercial buildings constructed during the late nineteenth century yet its details and trim are uniquely associated with early twentieth century design.

Mulkern's Garage (1912) at 2620-50 N. Downer is another rare surviving reminder of the early motor car era in America. In terms of its engineering, the building is a good example of early poured, reinforced concrete construction. Opposite the Mulkern Garage is the **Sendik Market** (1909) at 2637-51 N. Downer and the **Downer Hardware** Building (1912) at 2629 N. Downer Ave. The street level storefronts of both buildings have been altered over the years, but their upper stories remain relatively intact. The Sendik building, with its exuberant scrolled gables, is a very early example of the Mediterranean revival style and was constructed more

⁵ Phone conversation with Eileen Collins, 5/26/00.

than a decade before the style became popular during the early 1920s. The Downer Hardware building is one of the last surviving examples of the work of a noted Victorian architect, Herman Paul Schnetzky. It demonstrates that even very late in his career he was striving to keep pace with contemporary architectural styles.

Development and Retailing History

Today, Downer Avenue is an outstanding example of an older, traditional, neighborhood retailing strip that has adapted to and survived the sweeping changes in the modern American marketplace. The district's patrons travel to it from diverse parts of the metropolitan area to shop for foods at Sendik's market, 2643 N. Downer, to attend an art film at the Downer Theatre, 2577 N. Downer, or to sample one of its unique restaurants or specialty stores. Historically, the district developed in the years before and after World War I to serve the city's burgeoning, Upper East Side residential neighborhood. The Downer Avenue strip is also unique among the city's neighborhood commercial strips because it is the only one to retain structures that were built specifically to store and service fine, early twentieth century automobiles.

Prior to 1898, North Downer Avenue was an unpaved dirt road called Glen Avenue. The street was then renamed in memory of **Judge Jason Downer** (1813-1883) who was a native of Vermont and a Milwaukee pioneer.⁶ Judge Downer was a patron of higher education and over the years he made generous donations to schools and colleges. One of his gifts ultimately went to the college that would bear his name, Milwaukee Downer College, which was founded in 1898 at the corner of N. Downer and E. Hartford Avenues on the city's upper east side.⁷ Milwaukee Downer College moved out of the city when it merged in 1964 with Lawrence University in Appleton. The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee occupies the former Downer college buildings today and Downer Avenue is still associated with higher education.

Prior to 1909, construction in the Downer Avenue commercial district amounted to a few scattered wood frame houses.⁸ After that the district was developed solely for commercial use as vast tracts of vacant land surrounding it were subdivided and developed with fine homes and apartments. For the most part the original houses in the 2500 and 2600 blocks of N. Downer Ave. were either moved or razed to make way for commercial development. One of the houses, however, was altered in 1909 with a storefront addition and it stood until 1966 at 2613 N. Downer until it was razed to make way for the building that is currently occupied by an Osco Drug store.

The first businesses in the district responded to the day-to-day needs of the people living in the surrounding, residential neighborhoods. In 1921 there were thirty-four businesses on the two block strip including two grocers, two drug stores, an interior decorator, a barber shop, two butcher shops, a laundry, a sweet shop, a driving school and two dental offices. The district continued to offer shoppers that same basic mix of goods and services until after World War II when large retailers and supermarkets began to erode the business of smaller, "mom and pop" businesses. During the 1970s and 80s Downer Avenue merchants responded to changing

⁶City of Milwaukee Street Name File. North Downer Avenue. Legislative reference Bureau, Milwaukee City Hall.

⁷ John J. Gregory. History of Milwaukee Wisconsin. Vol. II Chicago, Milwaukee. The S.J. Clarke Publishing Co. 1931. P. 922.

⁸ Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Milwaukee Vol. 1. 1910, #83.

market conditions and the stores began to offer specialty products and services that larger retailers either could not or did not want to provide.

Downer Avenue is also significant because of its historic role as an “automobile row” where large garages stored and serviced the fine automobiles of East Side residents. Automobile service and storage garages began to appear across America after about 1905 as the car rapidly replaced horse-drawn transportation.

The Mulkern Garage at 2620 N. Downer (1912) stored and serviced both gas and electric cars. The original owner of the garage, Frank Mulkern, had an interesting link to the early history of the Yellow Cab Company which was founded in Chicago. Mr. Mulkern was a resourceful entrepreneur who originally operated a downtown Milwaukee shoeshine and newsstand at the corner of N. 3rd Street and W. Wisconsin Avenue. In 1908, when there were only a few thousand cars in the entire state of Wisconsin, Mulkern added a taxicab business to his downtown corner. His business prospered and in 1913 he opened the large garage on N. Downer Avenue to service his cabs and the cars of the affluent Upper East Side residents.

Mr. Mulkern earned a place in the history of the American taxicab trade because of his association with John D. Hertz, who had founded the Yellow Cab Company in Chicago. Mr. Hertz, whose name is now synonymous with the rental car business, was the first in America to paint his cabs bright yellow in order to make them more visible at a time when virtually every other car was black. In 1915 Mr. Hertz began building his own custom taxicabs and subsequently marketed his cabs and business concept to entrepreneurs in other cities. Among his first customers was Frank Mulkern who opened one of America’s first Yellow Cab Company franchises in Milwaukee with a fleet of 35 Hertz-built cabs.⁹ It is believed that his cabs were serviced and stored at the North Downer Avenue garage.

Mulkern’s garage also rented limousines and made a specialty of repairing and storing electric cars which were popular among the nation’s well-to-do between about 1910 and 1920. Compared with a gasoline engine car that required laborious cranking to get it started, an electric car started instantly and was easier to drive because gear shifting was not necessary. Electric cars were also the first to feature a totally enclosed passenger cab and this made them much more comfortable to drive during cold or inclement weather.

The Downer Garage at 2551 N. Downer, which retains its original limestone plaque of an early motor car at the top of the building, operated a driving school in addition to servicing and storing automobiles. Both of the Downer Avenue garages are amazing remnants of a by-gone era. The Mulkern Garage is still used for parking, but the Downer Garage ceased its long association with the automobile in the late 1990s to make way for interior remodeling. Both the Downer and Mulkern Garages stand as remarkable reminders of Milwaukee’s transportation history.

Today, Downer Avenue’s effervescent retailing activity makes it a stand-out among the city’s neighborhood commercial districts. Despite some changes in its businesses and architecture over the years, Downer Avenue remains a unique and vibrant hub of shopping and entertainment. It is an outstanding example of an older commercial district that has retained much of its historic character while continuing to meet the needs of modern businesses and consumers.

⁹ Brian O’Connell. *Entrepreneurs and Managers: A History of the Taxicab Business in Milwaukee 1895-1980*. Milwaukee: Center for Urban Transportation Studies, 1987, pp. 6-7.

St. Mark's Church History

Founded in 1893 to serve the city's Upper East Side, St. Mark's has been located at North Downer and East Bellevue Avenues since 1904. The present church building dates from 1911 and it is one of the oldest known structures in the district. St. Mark's is located at the very center of the district and its activities are an important part of the North Downer Avenue District. The central location of the church complex and the small commercial buildings grouped around it recalls the planning of a small European town or village.

St. Mark's began as a mission congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church which is located about 2-1/2 miles to the south at 904 E. Knapp St. on the city's Lower East Side. The mission got its start in 1893 during a meeting in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wade Richardson who lived on the Upper East Side at 2545 N. Frederick Avenue. The pastor of St. Paul's Church, Rev. Charles Lester, spoke to those in attendance about the urgent need to create a new Episcopal mission on the East Side, and the crowd enthusiastically obliged him by immediately contributing funds for a new parish called St. Mark's.

The mission congregation purchased a lot at the corner of Greenwich and Maryland Avenues where they built a small wooden chapel that opened with a special service on Sunday, January 21, 1894. The new chapel was known as "St. Mark's-on-the-Heights" because it was located in a neighborhood then known as Mitchell Heights. Nicknaming the church in that manner reflects a long-standing tradition of The Church of England which is where the American Episcopal Church has its roots.

Because the congregation grew rapidly, the Mitchell Heights chapel soon became much too small and in 1896, the mission parish moved its little church building to the corner of E. Bradford and N. Maryland Avenues and expanded it with a large addition. Continued growth in the mission brought about yet another move late in 1903 when the chapel was picked up off its site and rolled down the street to the current location of the parish at the corner of Hackett, and Downer Avenues.¹⁰ In 1904 a large social hall (now demolished) that measured 32' x 63' in plan was added to church. Called the "Guild Hall" according to Church of England tradition, it was designed by local architect Herman J. Esser.

In January of 1907 St. Mark's outgrew its mission status and was formally recognized as an independent parish. Four years later in 1911 the wooden chapel was demolished and the present church was built in its place. Milwaukee architect Fitzhugh Scott, Sr., who was known for his fine period revival designs, designed the structure to reflect the general character of a small English country or village church.

The church was constructed with walls of solid limestone and in 1912 the pastor reportedly commented that "the new church will stand as long as Milwaukee itself shall endure, and nothing short of an earthquake will blot it out."¹¹ The interior is adorned with an outstanding English hammer beam ceiling, and a magnificent Gothic style altar made of Italian Carrara marble.

¹⁰ St. Mark's Episcopal Church. Centennial Celebration 1893-1993. Anniversary booklet, p. 4.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 7.

The parish had more than 1000 members at its peak in the years around World War II. During that zenith, the turn-of-the-century wooden Guild Hall became much too small to serve the needs of such a large congregation. As a result, in 1949 the old wood frame hall was torn down and replaced with a new parish hall that stands two stories tall and is connected to the church by means of a cloister.

The new hall is decidedly modest compared with the original proposal for the structure. The design preferred by the congregation was a very large, Gothic style cloistered parish house that would have given the complex the character of an extensive medieval monastery. Because that plan proved to be too expensive for the parish, the present, smaller cloister and modern style parish hall was constructed instead.¹²

Architects/Engineers

Martin Tullgren and Sons Company

Martin Tullgren (1858-1922) was a talented, Chicago architect who was born and schooled in Sweden. He arrived in Chicago at age 23 but ultimately did much of his best work later in his career during his years in Milwaukee. Mr. Tullgren's firm designed four of the structures in the North Downer Avenue commercial District as well as some of Milwaukee's most outstanding, early twentieth century apartments and small commercial buildings. His career took an interesting turn in 1894 when he caught "gold rush fever" and left Chicago to become a prospector in the Black Hills. Later he worked as the superintendent of mines for the Storm Cloud Mining Company in Arizona. In 1900 he returned to architecture and set up his own practice in Chicago before coming to Milwaukee in 1902.¹³

His first Milwaukee firm was a partnership with another Chicagoan, Archibald "Archie" Hood. In 1909 that partnership dissolved and Mr. Tullgren began a new practice with his sons Herbert and S. Minard under the name Martin Tullgren and Sons Company. Both of his sons had worked for him earlier as draftsmen.

The work of the Tullgren firm, including Milwaukee's Downer Theatre (1915) often reflected the influence of Chicago's distinctive commercial style of architecture. When Martin Tullgren died in 1922 his sons continued the firm without any change in name. Minard's untimely death in 1928 failed to stop the firm and Herbert continued the practice alone until the middle of the Great Depression in 1935 when the business finally folded. Examples of the firm's work while Martin was the president include: the Marggraff Apartments (1915) at 1981 N. Prospect Ave. the first part of the Astor Hotel (1922) at 924 E. Juneau Ave.; and the Patrician Apartments (1915) at 2101 W. Wisconsin Ave.

Examples of firm's work under the brothers Herbert and Minard include the Bertelson Building (1927) at 2101-11 N. Prospect Avenue; the Watts Building (1925) at 761 N. Jefferson St.; and the Shorecrest Hotel (1924) at 1962 N. Prospect Avenue.

¹² Ibid, pp. 16-19.

¹³ John G. Gregory, History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin Vol IV. Milwaukee: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1931, 520-523.

Fitzhugh Scott, Sr.

The architect of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, Fitzhugh Scott, Sr., made a specialty of designing fine, period revival structures. The rambling English Tudor style mansion he built for Myron T. MacLaren (1920) at 3230 East Kenwood Boulevard reportedly impressed silent screen stars Mary Pickford and her husband Douglas Fairbanks so much that in the 1920s they had their Los Angeles house, known as Pickfair, designed with many similar features.

Mr. Scott was born in Milwaukee but went to Atlanta, Georgia at an early age with his parents where he received his early education. In 1897 he entered the Georgia Institute of Technology, studied there three years, and then took a position in an architect's office. After working for about a year and a half, he returned to school at Columbia University in New York City and graduated from there in 1905 with a degree in architecture. Mr. Scott subsequently returned to Milwaukee and took a position with the prominent architectural firm of Alexander C. Eschweiler and Company.¹⁴ In 1908 he established his own practice and received many prominent commissions including the Armin A. Schlessinger Mansion (1911) at 3270 N. Marietta Avenue and the Milwaukee Protestant Home Addition (1926) at 2449 N. Downer Avenue.

In 1914 Mr. Scott formed an architectural firm, Scott and Scott, with his brother Frederick M. Scott, Jr. By the middle of the 1920s the firm included a new partner and was known as Fitzhugh Scott and Mayer. Later Mr. Scott's son, Fitzhugh Scott, Jr., continued the firm. The firm eventually became Fitzhugh Scott Architects and Planners in 1974. One year later another restructuring added new partners to create the firm of Kahler, Slater, Fitzhugh Scott. After moving to Vail, Colorado in 1977 Mr. Scott, Jr. seemed to drop out of the firm. City directories continued to list him as active in the firm through 1983 but his name disappears from the listings after that.

Augustin V. Wiskocil

Augustin V. Wiskocil (1856-1933), who was a native of Austria, designed the Neo-classical style store building at 2601 N. Downer Avenue. Throughout his career he specialized in the design of private residences and schools.¹⁵ Two examples of his work on the city's upper east side include a fine Prairie style residence for Henry Hesse (1914) at 2625 N. Wahl Avenue; and a Queen Anne style frame residence (1892) at 1812 E. Park Place. A later example of his work is the St. Rose of Lima School (1924) located at 3003 W. Michigan St. in the Merrill Park Neighborhood on the city's near west side.¹⁶

Mr. Wiskocil worked with several partners over the years and his firm was known variously as Wiskocil and Leipold; Wiskocil and Schutz; and Wiskocil and Weber. At the time he designed the store on N. Downer in 1909 he was working alone.

¹⁴ John G. Gregory., Vol. IV, pp. 231-232.

¹⁵ Milwaukee of Today. The Cream City of the Lakes. Ca. 1892, p. 152.

¹⁶ City of Milwaukee Building Permit files.

H.P. Schnetzky and Son (Hugo W. Schnetzky)

Herman Paul Schnetzky was one of Milwaukee's most prominent Victorian-era architects. Near the end of his distinguished career he and his son, Hugo W., corroborated on the design of the building at 2629 N. Downer Ave. Mr. Schnetzky was born in 1850 in Wriezen, Germany and came to Milwaukee in 1868. The extent of his education in Germany is not known. The 1869 Milwaukee City Directory listed him as a draftsman for the architects George Mygatt and H.C. Koch. Mr. Mygatt was one of Milwaukee's first architects, but his direct influence on Mr. Schnetzky was probably minimal because the firm dissolved in 1870. H.C. Koch, who had been an apprentice to Mygatt before becoming a partner, entered into a partnership with Julius Hess in 1870 and probably hired Mr. Schnetzky as a draftsman.

Mr. Schnetzky's name disappeared from city directories for a three-year period between 1871 and 1873. He might have left the city for architectural training or work elsewhere, but in 1874 he again appeared in the city directories as an assistant architect for H.C. Koch. Julius Hess had dissolved his partnership with Mr. Koch during Mr. Schnetzky's absence. H.C. Koch subsequently became the proprietor of one of the city's most prestigious architectural offices which ranked as one of the three largest Milwaukee architectural firms in the late nineteenth century. The firm designed many of the city's public schools during the 1870s and early 1880s, and Schnetzky was undoubtedly involved in their design.

In 1884 Koch and Co. hired Eugene R. Liebert, an 18-year-old German immigrant draftsman who had arrived in Milwaukee a year earlier from Germany.¹⁷ Mr. Liebert worked and trained in the Koch and Co. office until 1887 when Mr. Schnetzky started his own architectural firm and hired Mr. Liebert as his draftsman and foreman. Examples of Mr. Schnetzky's work from this period includes St. Martini Lutheran Church (1887), 1520 S. 16th St., the McGeoch Building (1890) 322 E. Michigan Street, St. John's Lutheran Church (1889) 804 W. Vliet St. and the Blatz Brewing Company Office Building (1890) at 1120 N. Broadway.

Mr. Schnetzky and Mr. Liebert formed a partnership in 1892 and some of their collaborative design work includes St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church (1892) 1553 N. 24th St. and the Germania Building (1896) 135 W. Wells Street. The partnership dissolved in 1897 and subsequently the two men set up their own practices. Around 1900 Mr. Schnetzky became one of the pioneers in reinforced concrete construction techniques in Milwaukee. After 1909 Mr. Schnetzky went into partnership with his son, Hugo, and together they designed several commercial buildings in downtown Milwaukee including the large Manufacturer's Home Building (1909) at 104 E. Mason Street. Mr. Schnetzky died in 1916.

Hugo W. Schnetzky was born in Milwaukee on November 17, 1882. He graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1907 and later studied architecture at Columbia University in New York. After returning to Milwaukee he again practiced architecture with his father between 1913 and 1916. After his father died in 1916, Hugo continued the practice alone until May, 1920 when he was elected president and general manager of the Wisconsin Motor Manufacturing Co. which made automobile, truck, tractor and marine motors. He then reportedly "consolidated" his architectural firm with the Henry Horst Co. of Rock Island, Illinois. It is not yet known to what extent Hugo participated in the firm or if at some point in his career he returned to full-time architectural work.¹⁸

¹⁷ Gregory, Vol. IV., p.709.

¹⁸History of Milwaukee, City and County. Vol. III. Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co. 1922, pp. 241-242.

Kirchhoff and Rose

The firm of Kirchhoff and Rose was in business between 1897 and 1973 and it ranks as one of Milwaukee's most venerable and prominent architectural firms of the 20th century. Over the years the firm was credited with the designs of approximately 3,000 buildings. In the early days of the partnership they reportedly designed more than 200 taverns for the Schlitz Brewing Co.¹⁹ The architects' working relationship with the Brewery and its Secretary, August Uihlein, undoubtedly got them the commission in 1909 to design the investment property for Mr. Uihlein at 2643 N. Downer Avenue.

Charles Kirchhoff (1856-1915) and **Thomas L. Rose** (1868-?), reportedly established their firm with a mere handshake and continued to operate it for many years on that informal basis.²⁰ Mr. Kirchhoff was born in Milwaukee to German immigrant parents. His father was a carpenter and cabinetmaker so young Charles was familiar with the building trades from an early age.

After finishing school, Mr. Kirchhoff left Milwaukee to study architecture in Boston and New York before returning to Milwaukee to work with architect Henry Messmer. Mr. Kirchhoff formed his own independent architectural practice in 1885 and the oldest known existing example of his design work from that period is the former Schlitz Tavern (1890) located at 2449 N. Humboldt Avenue.²¹ The partnership he formed with Thomas L. Rose in 1897 blossomed into one of the city's architectural dynasties.

Mr. Rose was born and educated in New York City. In 1884 he moved to Chicago where he became an apprentice to a leading architect, James J. Egan. After working many years for Mr. Egan he left the firm in 1897 to work in Milwaukee with Charles Kirchhoff.²² Examples of the work of Kirchhoff and Rose include: Joseph Uihlein, Sr. Residence (1907), 3318 N. Lake Drive; and Second Ward Savings Bank (1911), 910 N. 3rd St.

¹⁹Milwaukee Journal. Home Section. "Architectural Firm Spans 75 Years." Nov. 9, 1969, p. 14.

²⁰ Ibid, p. 1.

²¹ Milwaukee of Today. The Cream City of the Lakes. Ca. 1892, p. 152.

²² John G. Gregory, Vol. IV., pp. 233-234.

X. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Downer Avenue commercial district be considered for designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic District as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-5, e-6, e-8 and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) 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.

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

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

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

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

References

Building Permits, City of Milwaukee. Filed by address at the City Development Center, 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI.

City of Milwaukee real estate records for 2590 N. Downer Ave. Dept. of City Development, Real Estate Department, 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee.

City of Milwaukee Street Name File. Downer Avenue files. Legislative Reference Bureau, Milwaukee City Hall, 200 E. Wells St.

City of Milwaukee tax assessment information. Tax Assessors Office, 200 E. Wells St. Milwaukee. *Web Site:* www.ci.mil.wi.us

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Telephone conversation with Eileen Collins, 5/26/00.

XI. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the original roof shape. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the buildings' heights, rooflines or pitches.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
- b. Repoint defective or deteriorated mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles, which were unavailable or were not used when the buildings were constructed.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting and other abrasive blasting to brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. These methods of cleaning erode the surface of the material and accelerate deterioration and the accumulation of dirt on the exterior of the buildings. 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.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new materials that duplicate the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is in appropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the character and appearance of the district. Retain all original cornices whenever possible and repair-replacement should match the original work as closely as possible.
- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were

unavailable when the building was constructed. The use of vinyl or aluminum trim or siding is prohibited

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash.
2. Respect the stylistic period during which the district was built. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or doors. Avoid using inappropriate sash and replacements. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as concrete block or glass block. Avoid using modern style sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the exiting trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design and appearance, but not necessarily in material.

E. Additions

Additions require the approval of the Commission. Publicly-visible elevations are pivotal to the architectural significance of the district. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations.

F. Signs

The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the building. No internally illuminated box sign will be approved.

G. Site features

New plant materials, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the district. The Popcorn Wagon at 2590 N. Downer Avenue is a unique feature of that site and should be retained in its existing location.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

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

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the district. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the cohesiveness of the district as a group of contiguous, stylistically compatible structures.

2. Scale

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

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the complex as a cohesive group of historic structures. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from any new construction in the complex should express the same design continuity established in the historic complex.

4. Materials

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

- I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair.

2. Importance

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

3. Location

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

4. Potential for Restoration

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

5. Additions

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

Margery Mullett
2844 N. Shepard Ave.
Milwaukee, WI 53211

Ald. Michael D'Amato
Milwaukee City Hall
200 E. Wells St.
Milwaukee, WI 53202

The Downer garages were initially operated much the same as nineteenth century livery stables where carriages and wagons were stored and maintained by expert mechanics and blacksmiths. Before 1915 many early twentieth century commercial garages were, in fact, called automobile liveries.

Judge Downer graduated from Dartmouth College in 1838 and then went to Law School in Louisville, Kentucky. After being admitted to the bar in 1842 he briefly practiced law in Kentucky before making his way that same year to Milwaukee. He arrived four years before the city was formally incorporated and during that time he practiced law and became the first editor of a daily newspaper in Wisconsin, the Milwaukee Sentinel. He continued his law practice and independent business ventures until November 1864 when Wisconsin's governor appointed him to the State Supreme Court. Mr. Downer resigned his post in September 1867 and resumed his private law practice and business interests.

We may never know for sure, however, if Downer Avenue's resemblance to a European village was part of a deliberate plan or merely coincidental.

Illustration #1