

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT ALBERT P. KUNZELMANN HOUSE

(Written November, 1997)

I. NAME

Historic Name: Albert P. Kunzelmann House

Common Name: South Community Organization Headquarters

II. LOCATION

1635 South 8th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53204

12th Aldermanic District

Tax Key Number: 461-1418-000-9

Legal Property Description: LW WEEKS SUBD IN NW 1/4 SEC 5-6-22, BLOCK 143,
LOTS 4 & 5

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNERS

South Community Organization
1635 South 8th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208

V. YEAR BUILT:

1914

Architects: Herbst & Hufschmidt
Builder: Steven Czaplewski

VII. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Architectural Character

The Kunzelmann House is located on Milwaukee's south side, just north of Historic Mitchell Street, and occupies two lots that have a total dimension of 60.1 feet by 149.5 feet. The building is set back 35 feet from the sidewalk with a bermed landscaped front lawn approached by a flight of steps that are flanked with brick and stone knee walls. The rear yard is planted with grass and there is an asphalted parking area off the alley. Across the street and to the north, South 8th

Street consists of a mixture of late 19th and early twentieth century houses as well as some bungalows. To the south, parking lots that serve the Mitchell St. businesses have replaced residences that were once located on the site.

The Kunzelmann House is a two-and-one-half story, stucco clad, L-plan house of Mediterranean style that was designed by the firm of Herbst and Hufschmidt. The larger wing of the house is situated perpendicular to the street while the smaller wing is set back and parallel to the street. The cross-gabled tile clad hip roof crowns the building and features hip roof dormers on the south and west slopes and a wall dormer on the north.

The entry is located at the junction of the wings within a quarter-circle one-story porch. As the focal point of the main facade the entry is articulated with engaged stone Tuscan columns and a stone entablature with triglyph and metope design. An ornamental wrought iron balustrade crowns the structure and there is an ornamental wrought iron grille at the door. The door itself is flanked by sidelights. Other features of the facade include stone quoins at the corners, a stone beltcourse at the sill level of the second story windows, wrought iron balconets at the second story windows. Low stonewalls define the semi-circular terrace in front of the entry. A prominent chimney rises along the east wall of the larger wing and is stone clad above the roofline. Windows on the lower story are set within shallow arches and originally consisted of multi-paned, operable French doors. This arcade continued along the south front of the smaller wing and defined the sun porch area there. The openings are now filled in with vinyl clad replacement windows with a multi-light configuration.

The rear elevation is simpler in articulation and features a hooded entry with small stoop and groupings of six-over-one-sash. A shallow wing extends at the northwest corner and originally housed a service wing off the kitchen and a sleeping porch on the second story. A second rear entry is located at grade in this wing.

The north elevation has a variety of windows in the six-over-one configuration as well as a large window that illuminates the stair hall within.

Last used as a private residence in the spring of 1924, the Kunzelmann House was subsequently converted into a hospital (South Side Hospital) and then a rooming house before its acquisition by the present owners, South Community Organization, in 1992. The building now houses offices. Despite its varied use over the decades, no major alterations have taken place on the exterior except for the replacement of the original French doors with smaller sash. The corner quoins had been removed some decades past but the present owners restored them using historic photos. Some modifications have been made to the interior as well but the general configuration of the rooms and features such as the parlor fireplace, main staircase, paneled dining room, mosaic tile and oak flooring have been retained.

VIII. SIGNIFICANCE

In terms of its architectural significance the Albert P. Kunzelmann house is a fine example of a Mediterranean style house. It is a style that evolved from Hispanic and Italian heritage and encompasses ideas from Spanish, Italian and American origins. Mission, Spanish Revival, Monterey and Santa Barbara are styles related to the Mediterranean. While these styles enjoyed the greatest popularity in the warm areas of the southwest and Florida, they spread across the whole country between 1900 and World War II. Milwaukee has a number of large, fine examples of this style, especially on the city's upper east side, and there are more modest examples, even

bungalows, on the north and west sides which display elements of this style. This style, however, is not common on the south side, where the population was predominantly working class and the housing was modest in scale and materials.

The Kunzelmann house is also historically significant as the residence of its original owner, Albert P. Kunzelmann, who was the founder and major partner in Kunzelmann & Esser Furniture Company, a director of the Mitchell Street State Bank, president of the Mitchell Street Land Company, president of the John M. Schneider Land Company, and a director of the Peoples Land Company. Kunzelmann significantly contributed to the development of Mitchell Street as it evolved into the south side's "Grand Avenue" and the business he established remains an anchor to the district even today. The Kunzelmann House likewise embodies that era in Milwaukee's history when prosperous business owners built grand houses in the "old neighborhood" close to their businesses and remained part of the community that supported them. This tradition lingered past World War I on the south side unlike other parts of the city where fashion dictated an upper east side or north shore address already by the turn of the century. Although Kunzelmann eventually bowed to social pressure and moved to Lake Drive, his first, mansion quality house survives as a beautiful artifact that has no rival in its modest south side neighborhood and serves as a visual landmark in its neighborhood.

IX. HISTORY OF THE KUNZELMANN HOUSE

Albert Kunzelmann was born in Louisville, Kentucky on January 25, 1875, the son of German immigrants Philip and Emma (Zoeller) Kunzelmann. In 1882 the family settled on Milwaukee's south side in a house on Lapham St. (Lapham Boulevard) just one block north of Mitchell St. Albert attended St. Anthony's parochial school; St. Anthony's serving the German residents of that neighborhood. While very young he was apprenticed as a tinner with Ferdinand Stamm and kept at this trade until 1891. He then worked as a clerk for the Hansen Fur Company until about 1894 or 1895 then took a job with R. R. Fleck's furniture store at Kinnickinnic and Becher St. In 1900 Kunzelmann opened his own home furnishings business in the 700 block of Mitchell St. Mitchell St. was evolving into a major commercial thoroughfare at this time in large part due to the street railway lines that traversed the thoroughfare and the tremendous population growth on the south side as thousands of immigrants poured into the city and settled close to the industrial complexes that concentrated there.

Kunzelmann's business flourished and in 1903 he took his half-brother, Joseph T. Esser as partner and the firm has been known as Kunzelmann-Esser ever since. By 1910 the firm had expanded to occupy all of the Zaleski block and there were various additions on South 7th St. as well. Final additions and remodeling in the 1920's resulted in the store we see today.

With his newfound prosperity Kunzelmann contracted with the firm of Herbst & Hufschmidt to design a grand house that would be located on South 8th St. (originally known as Third Ave.), a block from and within sight of the Mitchell St. store. Kunzelmann purchased two lots for his new house; the first on May 14, 1912 from John and Martha Schneider; the second from Rudolph and Anna Talsky on June 24, 1913. The permit to begin construction on the \$25,000 house was taken out on February 27, 1914. Kunzelmann moved his family from their South 7th St. house to this grand new dwelling in the fall of that year. The house featured a spacious living room/parlor, sunroom, kitchen and pantry and possibly a bath or half bath on the first floor and three or four bedrooms on the second along with a bath and sleeping porch. Maid's quarters were on the third or attic level.

The South 8th St. house served Albert, his wife Elizabeth (Bambrick), and children LeRoy, Lester, Norma and Fabian less than 10 years and Kunzelmann sold the property to Fred and Eleonore Westermann on October 31, 1921. The Kunzelmanns subsequently lived a short time on Mitchell St. while planning their new home. In 1922 a permit was taken out to construct their new home at 3021 N. Lake Dr. and the Kunzelmanns were able to move in 1923. The Kunzelmanns chose the same architectural firm, now known as Herbst and Kuenzli, to design the 3,532 square foot dwelling. The same architects later designed an addition to the store on Mitchell St.

Kunzelmann went on to serve as a director of the Mitchell St. State Bank, the president of the John M. Schneider Land Company, the president of the Mitchell Street Land Company, a director of the Peoples Land Company, president of the Mitchell Street Advancement Association, an officer in the South Side Civic Association, president of the Milwaukee Retail Furniture Dealer's association and a stockholder in many other businesses. He was also active in the Knights of Columbus and the Milwaukee Athletic Club.

Kunzelmann and his wife and various members of his family lived on at the Lake Dr. house until 1939 when they moved to an apartment on E. Wyoming Pl. The house on Lake Dr. was subsequently rented out and eventually sold in the late 1940's. Kunzelmann remained active in his Mitchell Street business activities at least through the late 1930's and served as chairman of the board of Kunzelmann-Esser until his death on November 24, 1950 at the age of 75 from complications of gout. Funeral services were held at Holy Rosary Catholic Church on Oakland Ave. and he was buried at Mt. Olivet Cemetery.

After the Kunzelmanns moved to Lake Dr., their former home was occupied by Fred Westerman and his family until November 13, 1923 when they sold the premises to W. A. and Rose B. Titus of Fond Du Lac, Wisconsin. They in turn sold the building to Edith Beil on May 14, 1924 and Ms. Beil opened the South Side Hospital on the premises. Many such grand houses were undergoing conversions into medical facilities at that time along Prospect Ave. and Grand Ave. as they were affordable and sizeable enough to meet the needs of small clinics and medical specialists. Edith Beil formally transferred title to South Side Hospital on June 2, 1924. South Side Hospital offered the care of many reputable doctors as well as being a government "station" during the Depression. Longtime area residents recall exchanging script for food items there.

South Side Hospital remained in operation through about 1943 and subsequently closed. The vacant building was acquired by Maynard Electric Steel Casting Co. on May 5, 1944. This was probably through the intervention of Maynard Steel's owner, Sylvester Wabiszewski, who was likewise prominent in banking circles and investments on Mitchell St. The former Kunzelmann house was soon sold to Alma Mary Florian (May 10, 1944) and then to a partnership consisting of Joseph Joswick and J. Chaignot (October 15, 1949). Later owners were Walter and Delores Majcher and Ervin and Louise Bartczak (1968-1984) and Rafael Fernandez (1984-1992). Under these later owners the building was converted into a rooming house and various partition walls were erected to create apartments and additional bathrooms and kitchens. On the first floor the front and dining rooms were converted into two living and sleeping rooms, and there was a bedroom, living room and a shared bathroom and kitchen; the second floor had two bedrooms with kitchen and living rooms, two additional bedrooms that shared a kitchen and living room, and one bathroom shared by the entire floor; and the third floor or attic had one bedroom with a kitchen and bathroom.

In 1992, South Community Organization (SCO) bought the Kunzelmann house to use as its office

building. They began rehabilitation, since the house had fallen into disrepair through neglect and abuse. Although several tenants remained throughout the rehabilitation, the last tenant vacated in late 1994. Currently the building is used entirely as office space for SCO employees. SCO has tried to renovate the Kunzelmann house with true historical integrity by restoring the corner quoins, using the original doors found in the attic, rebuilding the masonry on the front porch and returning the building to its original color of brick red. Many people have memories of visiting this building either as a hospital or a government station or as a former tenant. The building served the community in its early years and now once again serves the community through the offices of the South Community Organization. In addition, the house receives exposure to the community as it is used for health screening, informational presentations, training programs, and other similar activities as well as hosting community group meetings.

The Architects

William G. Herbst (1885-1959/1960) and William F. Hufschmidt (died 1918) were partners from 1912 until Hufschmidt's death in 1918 and had their offices in the Caswell Block downtown. Herbst had roots on the south side, growing up at 910 W. Lapham Blvd., and attended parochial schools and South Division High School before training at the Armour Institute of Technology in Chicago until 1903. He subsequently worked for American Appraisal Company and traveled in 14 states appraising manufacturing plants. He returned to Milwaukee in 1905 and worked for the firm of Kirchhoff and Rose before opening his own architectural practice in 1911 at the Juneau Building at South 6th and W. Mitchell Sts. The following year he took William Hufschmidt as partner and moved to larger quarters at the Caswell Block in 1914. The partners designed a number of South Side and West Side buildings including: 2977-79 S. Superior St.(1913); 914 S. 5th St.(1912); 961-67, 1003-05, 1009-11, and 1013-15 N. 33rd St. (all in 1912); a building for Walter Mathiesen at 1230 S. 16th St. (1916); Swendson Auto Dealership at 1554 W. National (1916); 1039-41 W. Mitchell St. for the Mitchell Street State Bank. The partners also designed the Barney Czerwinski building at 575 W. Lincoln Ave. in 1912. The stylistically versatile firm also designed houses on Grant Blvd, in the Prairie style (2436), the Mediterranean style (2424) and Colonial Revival style (2431).

It is interesting to speculate that Kunzelmann and Herbst may have been acquainted through their early residency on Lapham Blvd. or through school ties although Herbst was ten years younger than his client. It is likely that the architectural firm's early location on Mitchell St. was another point of contact between the two men.

Herbst went on to form a new partnership after Hufschmidt's death in 1918, this time with Edwin C. Kuenzli. Marquette University High School, of Collegiate Gothic style, was designed by the partners in 1924. This partnership lasted until Kuenzli's retirement in 1942. Herbst subsequently took his son Roger M. Herbst into the firm as William G. Herbst & Associates and Roger continued the practice with various associates (John P. Jacoby, Mark Pfaller) until 1992 making it one of the longest-lived design firms in the city.

The work that Herbst and Hufschmidt produced for Albert Kunzelmann was in keeping with the high style period revival buildings that the partners were designing in the pre-to-post World War I era yet it remains a unique example of their work that was not duplicated in their other commissions.

X. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Kunzelmann House be studied for possible designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its possible fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-3, and e-5 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-3. Is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Milwaukee.

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

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 building height, roofline or pitch. Retain the historic roofing materials on the building if at all possible but if replacement of the tile roofing is necessary, duplicate the appearance of the original roofing as closely as possible.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, 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 mortar by duplicating the originals in color, style, texture and strength. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and use the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone or marble.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as aluminum or vinyl siding or artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.
- e. Repair stucco with a stucco mixture duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture.

2. Wood

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid the removal of architectural features that are in most cases an essential part of the building's character and appearance.
- b. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering

architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed such as artificial stone, vinyl or aluminum siding or composition panels.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain original window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the present configuration of panes, sash, lintels, sills, architraves, hoods, doors, and hardware, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in the principal elevations by enlarging or reducing window or door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash. Avoid discarding original windows, doors, and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused.
2. Respect the stylistic period a building represents. If the replacement of window sash or doors is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted galvanized aluminum storm and screen window combinations. Avoid the filling in or covering of openings with materials like glass block or the installation of shutters. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of casement sash or the substitution of units with glazing configuration not appropriate to the style of the building. Vinyl or metal clad prime window units are not permitted. Glass block basement windows are not permitted, except on the rear elevation, where they may be allowed in locations where they will not be readily visible from the street.
3. Exterior mounted steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. If permitted, the doors or grates shall be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There shall be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original condition and shall match the original member in scale, design, color and material.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted in the east, north or south elevations because they are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Any other addition will require the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design, color, and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations or is visible from the public right-of-way.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture shall require the approval of

the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light fixture with the historic and architectural character of the building.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structure, such as a garage, shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building if visible from the public right-of-way.

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 structure.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure in a landscaped setting.

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 a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the house.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the house as a distinct freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic house if they are in close proximity to it.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the house should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the house. 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 the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.