

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
COLD SPRING PARK HISTORIC DISTRICT

I. Name

Historic: Cold Spring Park Historic District
Common: McKinley Boulevard

II. Location

The Cold Spring Park Historic District includes the lots fronting West McKinley Boulevard on both sides of the street between North 27th and North 34th Streets. This includes all of the structures and lots numbered 2700 through 3340 West McKinley Boulevard.

III. Classification

District

IV. Owner

Multiple

V. Year Built

1900-1915

Architect: Multiple

VI. Description

A. General Character

The Cold Spring Park Historic District is a seven block residential street that includes the buildings on both sides of McKinley Boulevard between North 27th and North 34th Streets. The district is situated on the West Side of the city on level terrain. The alignment and spacing of the blocks is consistent with the overall city street grid. A landscaped esplanade distinguishes the street forty feet wide down the middle of the roadway.

The district is exclusively residential in character and is comprised of 93 buildings. There are 86 residences, six carriage barns and one nursing home. There are no intrusions of non-contributing buildings and only one vacant lot. The buildings are either 2 or 2-1/2 stories in height and are constructed of either wood or brick with some terra cotta, stucco, cut and cast stone used as trim. The residences were all originally built as either single-family or duplex houses, but beginning in the 1930s many of the larger ones were converted to multi-unit dwellings. This phenomenon, along with the conversion of 3014 West McKinley into a nursing home, has not detracted from its historic visual character, however.

Because the district has remained virtually unaltered since its completion, it presents an accurate image of a prosperous upper middle class early 20th century neighborhood that developed within a short period of time. The district was built to 95% capacity between 1901 and 1910 with over half of the residences built between 1906 and 1909. Because of its rapid development, the streetscape has consistent setbacks, and there is little deviation in the architectural styles and house forms. The variations that do occur are a result of lot size. The blocks between North 29th and North 32nd Streets were subdivided into slightly wider lots, which enable larger houses to be built, often with a carriage barn. This part of the district is the most diverse in terms of architectural style and form. At the west end of the district between North 32nd and North 34th Streets, most of the housing was originally built as duplexes. Here the fabric is the densest as well as the most repetitious in form and design.

Generally, the houses are sited on the front half of the lot with modest front yards and extensive backyards. Formal landscaping is sparse, but that which does occur is limited primarily to foundation plantings and an occasional mature deciduous or coniferous tree. Most often the garage or carriage barn is located at the rear of the lot and is reached from the alley, but in some cases it is reached by a side drive from the street. Between the sidewalk and the curb is a small parkway that was once planted with a row of elm trees. Dutch elm disease killed these trees and the easement is not planted with young maple and locust trees. The esplanade today is a grassy area that is planted with trees and formal shrubbery and flower beds to produce a park-like setting. 'The esplanade is maintained by the city.

B. Architectural Character

The mix of early-twentieth century single-family and duplex houses determines the architectural character of the district. The missing of the typical Queen Anne house form of the 1890s was used to a large extent, but the overall designs looked forward to the Arts & Crafts, Prairie, Georgian Revival and Neoclassical styles of the period. A distinctive characteristic of the district was the tendency to incorporate Teutonic inspired features into the designs. This reflected not only the ethnic heritage of the majority of the property owners within the district, but also the German backgrounds of the architects who prepared the plans.

The building fabric in the district is very consistent. There are common setbacks, sameness in height and bulk, and similar materials were often used. This was partly because of the street's very short development period and the fact that the architectural styles that were used relied heavily on similar design features. Even though a broad range of architectural styles is absent, there are enough variations of the represented styles that McKinley Boulevard is one of the city's best streets of early 20th century residential architecture.

The oldest structure in the district is the Edwin F. Rohn House at 2908 West McKinley Boulevard. Built in 1901, it established the trend in house design that would dominate future construction. It is a basic 2-1/2 story, block with a massive cross-gabled roof. The facade is highly ornamented with Neoclassical and Arts & Crafts elements. The stuccoed gable end is designed with half timbering indicative of the emerging Elizabethan Revival style. At the attic level is a band of three windows divided by Corinthian order pilasters. Across the front of the house is a full porch with a modillion cornice supported by paneled and battered porch posts. The house was designed by

the architectural firm of Messmer and Son, which also provided plans for a significant number of other residences in the district.

In subsequent years the half-timbered/stuccoed gable end would appear in a large number of the district's residences. Identified with the Elizabethan Revival movement of the 1890s, there was boldness in their design that appealed to the German homeowner. Other examples of this mode include the Henry Hase House (1902) at 2920 West McKinley, the Fred Lichfeldt House (1907) at 2923 West McKinley, and the Richard Bucholz House (1905) at 3120 West McKinley. In these residences the gabled ends were the dominant design feature. The bodies of these structures exhibited a wide range in their treatments. There was a significant use of masonry materials including brick, stone and terra cotta. The George Zimmermann House (1905) at 3102 West McKinley was a departure from the front gable form. This residence is a side-gable block with two massive gabled dormers facing the street. Built entirely of brick, except for the wood trim, it is one of the few all-brick houses in the district.

The other most common stylistic influences in the district were the Colonial Revival and the Neoclassical. Though not as numerous as the residences that used Medieval motifs, their presence in the district reflected the major architectural trends of the period. Because the basic rectangular block type house popular at the period could be adorned in almost any style, the Colonial Revival was a popular decorative choice. The still dominant front gable was often sheathed with either clapboards or shingles, with modillions at the eaves and a Palladian style window in the attic. Full porches extended across the front of the house supported by Classical order columns. The Edward Wild House (1903) at 2932 West McKinley exemplifies the Colonial Revival design trend found in the district. A more formal adaptation using the same details is the Neoclassical style Willits/Sternemann House (1903) at 3112 West McKinley Boulevard. Distinguished by an Ionic order pedimented portico, it is one of the few temple front residences in the city.

VII. Significance

The Cold Spring Park Historic District is significant for both its architectural and its historical associations. It is architecturally significant for its early twentieth century domestic architecture. It is historically significant as part of an early city planning phenomenon that created a system of landscaped boulevards to serve as links between the major parks and to restrict undesirable traffic. This resulted in residential streets that were distinguished from the established street grid by their width, landscaped treatment and unusually high quality residential architecture. In its day, McKinley Boulevard was one of the most distinguished residential addresses in the city.

VIII. History

Prior to the development of McKinley Boulevard as a residential street, it had been part of a larger tract of land known as Cold Spring Park. As one of the largest and longest-lived private parks on the West Side, it covered the equivalent of 16 city blocks between North 27th and North 35th Streets, and west Juneau Avenue and West Vliet Street. Although the 60-acre tract was two miles from the central city, it was accessible from two plank roads. A grove of trees stood on the grounds and the whole area was originally surrounded by a forest.

Throughout its early history, Cold Spring Park was primarily associated with the sport of horse racing. Published references to racing at the site go back to at least 1884 when trotters were

said of have run there. The Wisconsin Regional Agricultural and Mechanical Association used the park for a race track in 1866. For a few years, the Milwaukee Driving Park Association, which had been organized on March 4, 1877, also met there, but people failed to patronize the club to the extent expected and it eventually dissolved. Driving clubs were popular in the 1860s and 1870s among the well to do. Members would hold invitational meets throughout the year at which trotting races took place.

A hotel, the Cold Spring House, located adjacent to the park accommodated visitors and drivers before and during races. It was notorious for its gambling, cockfights, courtesans, and dances.

The size and location of Cold Spring Park made it ideal for other uses in addition to horse racing. It was the location of the second annual fair and exhibition of the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society held in Milwaukee, October 6th through 9th in 1852. The first State Fair had been held in Janesville in 1851 and, thereafter, became an annual event, except for a three-year lapse during the Civil War between 1861 and 1863. For the Fair, Cold Spring Park was graded and the entire area enclosed with a board fence. The fence followed the perimeter of the racetrack while the interior was devoted to exhibition tents and cattle pens. The spring and three newly dug wells supplied water for animals and visitors. Benches were placed among the trees to accommodate fairgoers. An estimated 10,000 to 20,000 people were said to have attended. Besides agricultural items, displays were set up by manufacturers to promote new products. Subsequent fairs were held at Watertown, Janesville, Madison and Fond du Lac, as well as Milwaukee. When in Milwaukee, the fair alternated between sites on today's Wisconsin Avenue and Cold Spring Park, which was used in 1870, 1871, 1872, 1876, and from 1886 to 1890.

During the Civil War, Cold Spring Park became the site of Camp Washburn, housing the 2nd Cavalry, 30th Infantry, and 39th Regiment. This was one of three sites in Milwaukee chosen for military encampments during the war. Requirements of camp life resulted in the construction of barracks, a sutler's shop, a guardhouse, and auxiliary structures. Muddy ground forced the 30th infantry to move to Camp Reno near the lakefront in 1864. The camp structures were destroyed by fire in November of 1865. By April 1866, the Wisconsin Agricultural and Mechanical Association was again operating the park as a racetrack.

Cold Spring Park disappeared after 1891 when it was subdivided into house lots. The land had descended from Wisconsin pioneer settler Michael Dousman to his married daughter, Mrs. E.B. Wollcott, in 1854. The Wollcott's transferred the parcel to their daughter, Marion, wife of Col. Theodore Yates, who in turn sold half of the park to her husband in 1887. Although the Wisconsin Agricultural Society had been considered a likely purchaser of the tract to provide a permanent home for the State Fair, this did not materialize because Yates' asking price of \$4,000 per acre was more than the Society could afford. Yates had indicated a reluctance to sell to the Society anyway due to pressures for housing development in the area. Yates eventually sold the acreage and it was subdivided and built over after the turn of the century. McKinley Boulevard was laid out through the center of the Cold Spring Park as the focal point for the new subdivision. It was the second boulevard to be established in the city.

The establishment of the boulevard system in Milwaukee served several civic purposes. As needed landscaped public open areas, they provided breathing space in densely built residential areas and served as linkages between the municipal parks. By prohibiting undesirable traffic, they encouraged a better class of residential construction along their lengths. Designed by Common Council ordinance, the boulevards usually had landscaped esplanades down the middle of the roadway and vehicles carrying heavy loads, such as

building materials, dirt, manure and farm produce were banned from using them. The esplanades were constructed at the expense of the abutting property owners, but the City Department of Public Works undertook subsequent improvements and maintenance.

The boulevard plan was one of the more ambitious early efforts at city beautification by the municipal government. Seen as an adjunct to the establishment of the municipal park system that had begun with construction of Washington Park (1892) on the west side and Lake Park (1895) on the upper east side, the Common Council declared Highland Avenue between North 27th and North 35th streets as the city's first boulevard in 1896.

The next boulevards created after Highland were McKinley Boulevard between 27th Street and North 34th Streets, and Newberry Boulevard between Lake and Riverside Parks, both in 1906. Both figured prominently in achieving the city's goal of creating much needed open space in the tightly developed street grid that had resulted from the city's pre-Civil War subdivision codes.

These first boulevards set the precedent for the countywide park, parkway and boulevard system proposed and executed under the guidance of Charles B. Whitnall after 1923. As a result of his efforts, Milwaukee has one of the largest systems of parks, parkways and boulevards of any major city in the country.

A characteristic common to all of the boulevards with landscaped esplanades was their development into exclusive residential streets lined with costly residences. This created unique pockets within the established street grid that could be distinguished from the adjacent residential areas. McKinley Boulevard was no exception to this phenomenon.

Costly houses in the district represent a sampling of the major styles used in residential designs in the first decade of the twentieth century. Represented in the district are examples of the Arts and Crafts, Colonial Revival and Neoclassical styles. It also illustrates how Milwaukee's German-born and trained architects interpreted the prevailing American architectural trends to satisfy their own and their clients' aesthetic needs for substantial, solid-looking, well-constructed buildings. Though not as overly "Teutonic" in character as some other Milwaukee German-American neighborhoods, the district possesses a building stock that exhibits a high level of craftsmanship and a particular quality that distinguishes it from the great body of West Side building fabric that lies adjacent to it. Throughout the district, there was a strong tendency to employ elements from the Elizabethan Revival and Arts and Crafts style. These styles stressed honesty in construction and material and were popular with German-Americans seeking an "old world" look for their homes. The end gable designed with half-timbering and stucco, for example, was common in the district, probably because it was reminiscent of the German medieval half-timbering.

The list of architects who designed houses in the district reads like a who's who of German-American architecture firms in Milwaukee: Henry Messmer & Son, John Mange, Jr., Fred Graf, Otto C. Uehling, Charles f. Ringer, Charles Tharinger, Julius Leiser and Charles Holst, and Herman W. Buemming and Gustave A. Dick. The clients they designed these houses for were also of German extraction. As a matter of fact, a survey of city directories reveals that during its peak from 1900 to 1930, the district was overwhelming German-American in its ethnic composition. Most of the residents whose economic mobility allowed them to live great distances from the job centers in what was considered to be a suburban setting at the time. Downtown was easily reached by the electric streetcar line that had been in operation since 1894. The families who lived in the district were characteristic of the general West Side demographic patterns. City directories revealed that a large percentage of the district

residents had previously lived nearby in the area west of North 17th Streets between Kilbourn and Highland Avenues. Their previous neighborhoods, almost exclusively German-American, contained a mixture of social and economic classes. As the succeeding generations prospered, new enclaves like McKinley Boulevard developed that became increasingly segregated based on income, occupation and social standing. Ethnic association still held strong, however. This was the case on McKinley Boulevard that attracted the upper-middle income German-American business executive and professional class of the early twentieth century, while the surrounding streets were settled by German-Americans of lesser means.

Among the residents who lived in the district were a number of businessmen who were presidents of their own small companies. These included Theo Sternmann, 3002 West McKinley, a wholesaler of leaf tobacco; Edward Wild, 2932 West McKinley, a wholesaler of crockery; and Fred Leopoldt, 2801 West McKinley, whose company produced carbolineum wood preserver. The professionals who resided here included attorneys Leopoldt Hammel, 3009 West McKinley, and Fred Westfahl, Jr., 3001 West McKinley; and banker Charles H. Mueller, 2902 West McKinley. In addition there were lesser merchants such as jeweler Edwin F. Rohn, 2903 West McKinley and baker Huldrick Franke, 3019 West McKinley. A number of building contractors also lived here including Richard Buchholz, 3120 West McKinley, Henry Hase, 2902 West McKinley and George Zimmermann, 3102 West McKinley.

The neighborhood began a slow decline in the late 1930s and 1940s as the large houses were converted into apartment buildings or rooming houses. The trend continued into the early 1970s as most of the houses became absentee-owned rental properties. In the mid-1970s an effort was begun to revitalize the street by the increasing number of owner-occupants attracted to McKinley Boulevard by its fine housing opportunities. These residents formed the Cold Spring Park Association to coordinate the area's renewal. In 1985 McKinley Boulevard was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in recognition of its historical and architectural significance.

IX. Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that McKinley Boulevard be designated as the Cold Spring Park Historic District as a result of its fulfillment of criteria one, five and nine of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 2-335(2)(e).

X. 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. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the Cold Spring Park Historic District. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Guidelines for Rehabilitation

The Cold Spring Park Historic District is important as one of Milwaukee's best concentrations of well-designed early 20th century domestic architecture exhibiting fine craftsmanship and materials. Throughout the district's history owners have maintained their properties with few exterior alterations. This has resulted in a neighborhood of well-preserved period residences and intact sites. These guidelines are not intended to restrict an owner's use of his/her property, but to serve as a guide for making changes that will be sensitive to the architectural integrity of the structure and appropriate to the overall character of the district.

1. Roofs

- a. Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they do not visually intrude upon those elevations visible from the public right-of-way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline, pitch or gable orientation.
- b. Retain the original roofing materials, wherever possible. Avoid using new roofing materials that are inappropriate to the style and period of the building and neighborhood.
- c. Replace deteriorated roof coverings with new materials that match the old in size, shape, color and texture. Avoid replacing deteriorated roof covering with new materials that differ to such an extent from the old in size, shape, color and texture that the appearance of the building is altered.

2. Exterior Finishes

- a. **Masonry**
 - i. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone and unpainted brick. This is likely to be historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
 - ii. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original 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.

- iii. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration with 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.
 - iv. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer.
 - v. Repair stucco with a stucco mixture duplicating the original as closely as possible in appearance and texture.
- b. Wood
- i. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features such as half-timbering, window architraves and doorway pediments. These are, in most casts, an essential part of a building's character and appearance that should be retained.
 - ii. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed such as artificial stone, brick veneer, asbestos or asphalt shingles, vinyl or aluminum siding.
- c. Terra Cotta
- i. Unpainted terra cotta should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering naturally glazed or finished terra cotta. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.
 - ii. Clean terra cotta only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method available. Sandblasting terra cotta is prohibited. This method of cleaning destroys the material.
 - iii. Repair or replace deteriorated terra cotta with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Precast tinted concrete or cast fiberglass are acceptable replacement materials as long as it is finished with a coating to resemble the original appearance. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or does not resemble the original.

3. Windows and Doors

- a. Retain existing window and door openings that are visible from the public right-of-way. Retain the original configuration of panes, sash, lintels, keystones, sills, architraves, pediments, 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 doors and door hardware when they can be repaired or reused.

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

4. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

- a. Retain porches and steps visible from the public right-of-way that are historically and architecturally appropriate to the building. Avoid altering porches and steps by enclosing open porches or replacing wooden steps with cast concrete steps or by removing original architectural features, such as handrails, balusters, columns or brackets.
- b. Retain trim and decorative ornamentation including copper downspouts and guttering, copings, cornices, cresting, finials, railings, balconies, oriels, pilasters, columns, chimneys, bargeboards or decorative panels. Avoid the removal of trim and decorative ornamentation that is essential to the maintenance of the building's historic character and appearance.
- c. Repair or replace, where necessary, deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using replacement materials that do not accurately reproduce the appearance of the original materials.

5. Additions

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

B. Guidelines for Streetscapes

The streetscape on McKinley Boulevard is visually cohesive because of the intact building stock and the retention of period street and landscaping features. There are no non-contributing buildings. The traditional landscape treatment of the building lots and esplanade contribute to the maintenance of the district's traditional residential character.

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

C. Guidelines for New Construction

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

1. Siting

New construction must reflect the traditional siting of buildings in the district. This includes setbacks, spacing between buildings, and the orientation of openings to the street and neighboring 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 must be compatible with the surrounding structures.

3. Form

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

4. Materials

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

D. Guidelines for Demolition

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

1. Condition

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

2. Importance

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

3. Location

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

4. Potential 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.

6. Replacement

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is to be replaced by a compatible new building that would fulfill the same aesthetic function in the area as did the old structure (see New Construction Guidelines).