

towers of different heights. The lower level of the central portion of the façade is fenestrated with a grouping of three sets of pointed-arched double doors separated by engaged columns. Above this entrance portal is a massive, Gothic arched, traceried stained glass window. The gable is pierced by a band of five lancet windows surmounted by a stained glass quatrefoil window at the peak of the gable.

The brick buttressed east tower is the taller of the two, and rises in five steeple-topped stages to a height of 197 feet. It is fenestrated with lancet and quatrefoil windows in its lower three stages while the fourth stage is a louvered belfry. The fifth stage, or clock tower, is the most ornamental part of the tower and is extensively trimmed with decorative sheet metal architectural elements including Gothic balconies, columns, pinnacles, copings and crockets. The central feature of the fifth stage is a large round clock face on each side of the tower. Above the clock tower stage, a tall, slate-clad, faceted steeple with sheet metal copings at the sides and lucarnes at the midpoint rises to a cross-tipped point.

The west tower is only 127 feet tall. The first three stages are nearly identical with those on the east tower. The fourth stage contains an open, Gothic-arched, belfry trimmed with extensive sheet metal ornamentation that is nearly identical to that on the clock tower stage of the east tower. The belfry is surmounted by a tall, slate-clad, faceted steeple with sheet metal copings that rises to a cross-tipped point.

The east and west elevations are nearly identical. Each is composed of three bays of Gothic-arched traceried, stained glass windows separated by stone-trimmed buttresses. The fourth or northernmost bay is a shallow, brick, gabled transept. Although they are actually nearly flush with the sidewalls, these transepts are made to appear deeper by the use of corner buttressing that terminates in colonnette-enriched pinnacles. The transepts are each fenestrated with a massive, traceried, Gothic-arched, stained glass window surmounted by a band of five lancet windows in the gable. A paneled chimneystack rises behind the cross-tipped gable peak. Centered on the roof over the crossing of the transept is an ornate, louvered, sheet metal lantern.

The rear or north elevation is less ornamented than the other sides of the building. Its principal feature is a five-sided, buttressed apse that projects from the plain brick north wall. The peak of the gabled north wall is fenestrated with only a grouping of three lancet arched windows.

The church auditorium is reached from Vliet Street through a vaulted narthex flanked by the balcony staircases located in the bases of the towers. Three sets of double doors, one from the narthex and one each from the stair towers lead into the auditorium. The auditorium is a two-and-one-half story tall, vaulted, plaster-finished space with a broad center aisle and two side aisles. A U-shaped balcony extends across the rear and down the side walls of the auditorium to the transepts. The balcony is supported on plaster columns with Gothic crocketed capitals and is faced with a paneled oak railing. Additional columns rise from the balcony to support the ceiling vaulting. The rear wall of the balcony is filled with the paneled case and pipes for the organ with the choir loft in front of it. Pews fill the side balconies.

The faceted apse on the north wall is the focal point of the church interior. The raised podium is bordered by a gothic, arcaded, oak balustrade. The two-story tall, elaborately carved and pinnacled Gothic reredos is ornamented with statues of saints and angles, while the altar, suspended from the pier supporting the frontal apse arch, is the Gothic raised pulpit. The faceted pulpit is reached by a small wooden staircase from the apse and is faced with Gothic-style carved wood panels. Suspended above the pulpit is an elaborately carved and pinnacled

sounding board crowned with a statuette of a saint. To the left of the altar is the Gothic-style, faceted, baptismal font resting on a base of clustered colonnettes.

The church interior is painted in a simple, light colored scheme executed in 1962. Decorative painted details include pin-striping and accent painting as well as some strap work stenciling on the front wall panels flanking the apse enframing two oil paintings depicting scenes from the life of Jesus Christ. Touches of gilt highlight the numerous foliated capitals of the piers and pilaster strips. The windows are all glazed with stained glass. One of the most outstanding interior features is the lining of all of the intrados and soffits with rows of closely spaced, bare electric light bulbs. When lit, more than 800 individual bulbs outline the church's rich vaulting and provide general lighting. This lighting system, more usually associated with theater marquees and amusement park structures, was installed in 1909.

The former rectory is located at 816 West Vliet Street immediately to the west of the church. It is sited well back from the sidewalk in the middle of a grassy lawn. A Victorian iron picket fence with cast iron posts set on a stone curb extends across the front of the lot.

The rectory is a large, rectangular, two story, cream brick, Queen Anne style house built in 1889. The large cross-gabled building is very plainly finished. The prominent stone lintels, simply trimmed eaves, and the denticulated moldings on the front and side porches provide the only decorative touches. The building has been little altered since its construction except for the replacement of the front porch posts and railings with modern wrought iron pieces.

The caretaker's house at 814 West Vliet Street is a 24 by 30-foot, one-and-one-half story, stuccoed bungalow built in 1914. It is located in the rear side yard of the rectory. The flank gable roofed structure has a deep porch across the front supported on square brick piers. At the second story, a broad, shed roofed dormer fills most of the front roof slope.

The church garage is a flat roofed, rusticated concrete block building measuring about 16 by 21 feet that was built in 1921. It has several large windows and doors that are now boarded up.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Complex, 804-16 West Vliet Street, is architecturally significant as one of Milwaukee's finest examples of High Victorian Gothic ecclesiastical architecture. The church exemplifies the skillful design, careful craftsmanship, and exuberant ornamentation typical of the best High Victorian Gothic church architecture. It is a major work of the important nineteenth century architecture Herman Paul Schnetzky. Together with the rectory, it is a fine example of a prosperous Victorian-era Protestant church complex.

VIII. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On December 4, 1848, a group of German Lutheran families led by Pastor Ludwig Dulitz started "Evangelische Luth. St. Johanneskirche," St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1850 the old Trinity Episcopal Church on the corner of Fourth and Prairie Streets (Highland Avenue) was bought and dedicated. As their membership increased, the congregation expressed interest in joining the Missouri Synod; this request was denied because there was already an affiliate in the vicinity, the still extant Trinity Lutheran Church. In 1857 Pastor Wilhelm Streissguth was called, and St. John's joined the newly formed Wisconsin Synod.

The following years were a time of growth and expansion for St. John's as immigration swelled the congregation's ranks. Pastor Johannes Bading was called in 1868, new schools were built

in 1871 and 1877, and the congregation grew to well over 2,500 members. The need for a larger church became crucial, and in the spring of 1889, the architect H. Paul Schnetzky was hired to design the new building.

On August 18, 1889, the corner stone was laid at a service officiated by Pastor Theodore Jaekel of Grace Lutheran Church. The contractor was Johann Langenberger. The chairman of the building committee was Carl Kieckhefer, and he was joined by Franz Henden and Freidrich Bues, who donated the three bronze bells, and Heinrich Pohl, Johannes Schmidt, and Franz Sulflow, who donated the four-sided clock for the east tower. Other members were Johann Schroeder, who donated the German-built alter, Georg Geigor, and Christoph Starcke, who donated all of the pews. The \$3,500 organ was donated by committee member Ferdinand Kieckhefer, and the large stained glass windows were given by his brother, Wilhelm Kieckhefer, at a cost of \$2,000. The pulpit was donated by Conrad Starke, and the baptismal font by the Kutemeyer family. The ladies group donated the original carpeting and the confirmation class of 1890 paid for the oil paintings still on the wall at the front of the church. A 14-room parsonage was built for the pastor and his family. On July 28, 1890, the new Gothic structure, with a seating capacity of 1,100 was dedicated.

In 1909 the original gaslights in the church were replaced by the present series of electric light bulbs. Over 800 individual fixtures were installed surrounding every arch in the nave.

In the twentieth century, the neighborhood around St. John's declined precipitously until in 1950 it was condemned by the city and replaced with the Hillside public housing project. The expansion of the Milwaukee freeway system further restricted access to the building, coming to within three blocks of the site on the west and the south and cutting off direct access from the church to the west side residential areas and downtown. As the church became more physically isolated, its congregation began to shrink. The congregation aged and the number of young families with children steadily declined. The school building, directly to the north of the church, was closed in 1961 and eventually razed. At the present time the congregation of only 72 members is struggling to remain viable.

Herman Paul Schnetzky, Architect

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church is an outstanding example of the ecclesiastical work of Milwaukee architect Herman Paul Schnetzky. 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 Mygatt and Koch. Mygatt was one of Milwaukee's first architects, but his direct influence of Schnetzky was probably minimal because the firm dissolved in 1870. Mygatt and Koch then each opened individual offices. Koch, who had been an apprentice to Mygatt before becoming a partner, entered into a partnership with Julius Hess in 1870 and probably hired Schnetzky as a draftsman.

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 severed his partnership with Koch during 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 immigrant draftsman, who had arrived in Milwaukee a year earlier from Germany. Liebert worked and trained in the Koch and Co. office until 1887 when Schnetzky started his own architectural firm and hired Liebert as his draftsman and foreman. It was during this time period that St. John's was designed and built. Some of Schnetzky's other work at this time included the National Register listed St. Martini Lutheran Church (1887), 1520 South 16th Street; the McGeoch Building (1890), 322 East Michigan Street; and the Blatz Brewing Company office building (1890), 1120 North Broadway.

Schnetzky formed a partnership with Liebert in 1892. Some of their collaborative design work included: St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church (1892), 1453 North 24th Street; the Arthur Vogel Residence (1892), 939 North 14th Street; St. Stephen's School (1892), 1136 South 5th Street; and the Germania Building (1896), 135 West Wells Street.

The partnership dissolved in 1897 and Schnetzky and Liebert each continued their own separate practices. Schnetzky later formed another partnership with his son and together they designed several commercial buildings in the city's central business district including the large Manufacturer's Home Building (1909) at 104 East Mason Street. Schnetzky died in 1916.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church Complex, 804-16 West Vliet Street, be designated as a historic district as a result of its fulfillment of criteria one, five, six and nine of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(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. 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. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces of the rectory or caretaker's cottage if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch.

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 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.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick, terra cotta or stone

surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration and the accumulation of dirt on the exterior of the building. 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 terra cotta.

- 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.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.
- 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.

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 building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block. 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. The leaded glass windows in the church should not be altered or removed except for restoration.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should 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 member in scale, design and appearance.

E. Additions

All of the elevations of the church are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions are not recommended and 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 and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevation. Additions may

be made to the north elevations of the rectory and caretaker's cottage, subject to Commission approval.

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.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

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

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the old 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 the historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of that structure.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the old building 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 structure if they are in close proximity to it.

4. Materials

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