

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. Name

Historic: Eagles Club

Common: same

II. Location

Street Address: 2401 West Wisconsin Avenue

Legal Property Description: Tax Key No.: 400-0708-000

Mariner's Addition in Quarter Section 30-7-22, Block 2,
Lots 1-2-3-18-19-20

III. Classification

Historic Site

IV. Owner

Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie #137
2401 West Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53233

V. Year Built: 1925-27
Builder/architect: Russell Barr Williamson

VI. Physical Description

The Eagles Club headquarters is a monumental five-story structure designed by local architect Russell Barr Williamson and completed in 1927. It occupies nearly a quarter block at the southwest corner of 24th Street and Wisconsin Avenue. Inspired by the Mediterranean Revival that was so popular in the 1920s, the facade features a series of rich decorative elements accented against the starkness of the plain stone wall surface. A central projecting pavilion contains three rectangular entrances which are surmounted by three arched windows that rise for two stories. The pavilion is capped by what had once been an arcaded loggia roofed with terra cotta tiles. A parapet wall hides the fifth floor. An eagle-topped urn once graced each side of the loggia. To either side of the entrance pavilion is a tier of three windows, the topmost surmounted by a tympanum with a carved eagle, while the second floor window below it has a balcony. In addition to such Mediterranean features as the tile roof, twisted columns and pierced balustrade, foliated motifs decorate all of the spandrels, and cartouche-like

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Eagles Club

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VIII. Historical Background

The Eagles organization was founded on February 6, 1898, in Seattle by six men who wanted to establish "an order of good things" and to help the underprivileged. The original name, Order of Goodfellows, was changed in 1899 to the Eagles. Local chapters are called Aeries.

The Milwaukee Aerie #137 was organized in 1901 by a group of theater men. Most of the 58 charter members were actors, managers, or other men connected with the stage. The first president was Bart Rudells, press agent for the Bijou Theatre. Meetings were often held after 11:00 p.m. when the theaters closed and the employees were off work. Early meetings featured vaudeville acts to attract new members; most of the acts were performed by members. Membership grew quickly, and it was not unusual for several hundred men to be initiated at each meeting.

When their original headquarters on Second Street between Michigan Street and Wisconsin Avenue burned, the Eagles temporarily moved to Sixth Street between Michigan Street and Wisconsin Avenue while they looked for a permanent site. In 1924 the Eagles bought the Franz Wollaeger residence at the southwest corner of North 24th Street and West Wisconsin Avenue for \$100,000. Wollaeger had been an officer of the Pritzlaff Hardware Company. The site was said to be the best of 30 inspected. The original plan called for the handsome 16-room mansion to be used for administrative purposes while a \$500,000 clubhouse was to be built elsewhere on the 150' x 374' tract. This did not happen. Instead, the residence was replaced with a new structure constructed at the then considerable cost of \$1,250,000. Excavation began on April 16, 1925. The cornerstone was laid on July 29, 1926. The building was dedicated on April 26, 1927. At least 25,000 visitors toured the opulent building when it opened. The architect was Russell Barr Williamson, and the general contractor was the Immel Construction Company of Fond du Lac and Milwaukee. The U.F. Durner Company was responsible for the mosaic tile eagle in the entrance lobby.

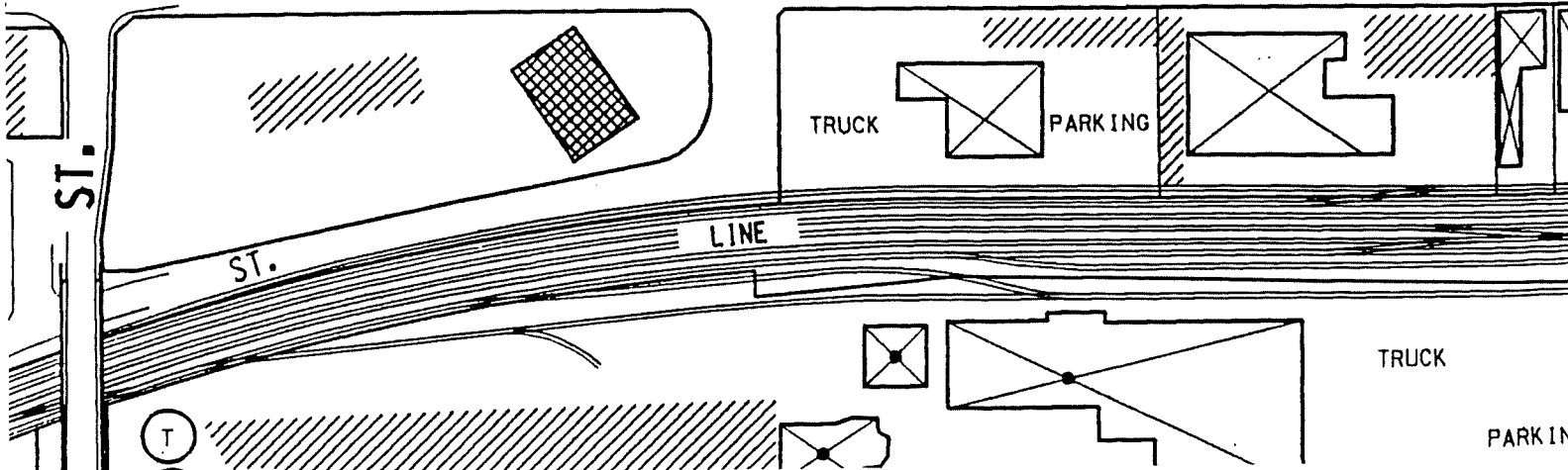
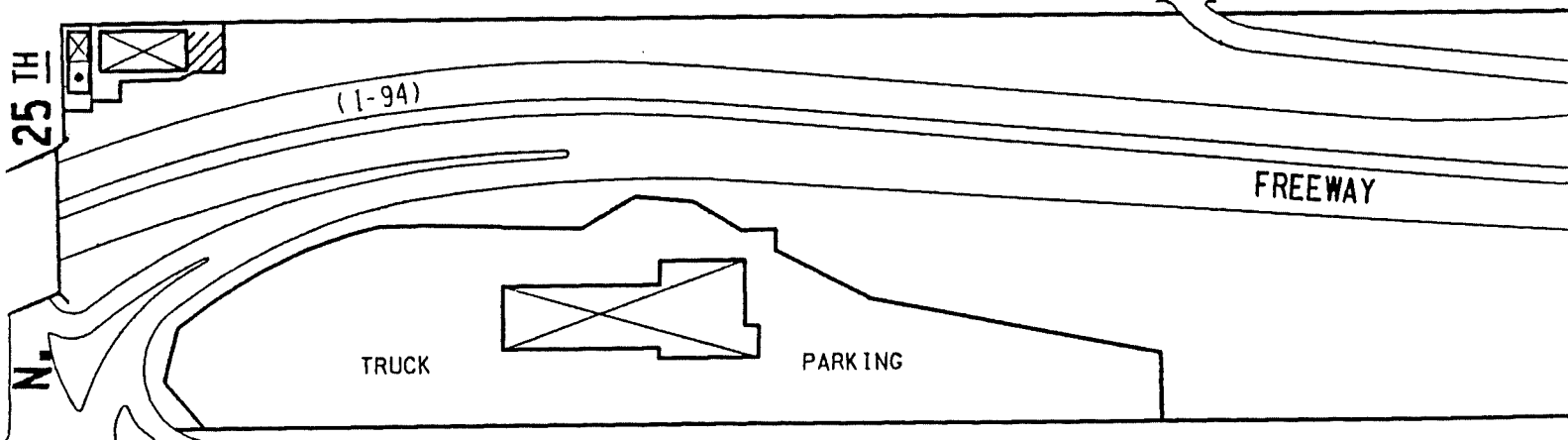
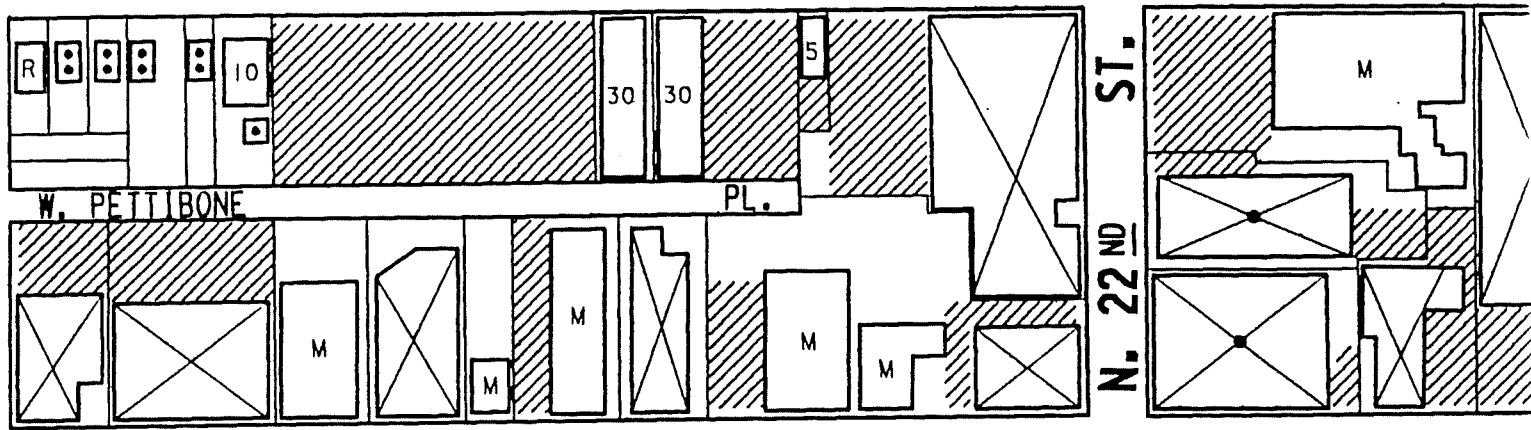
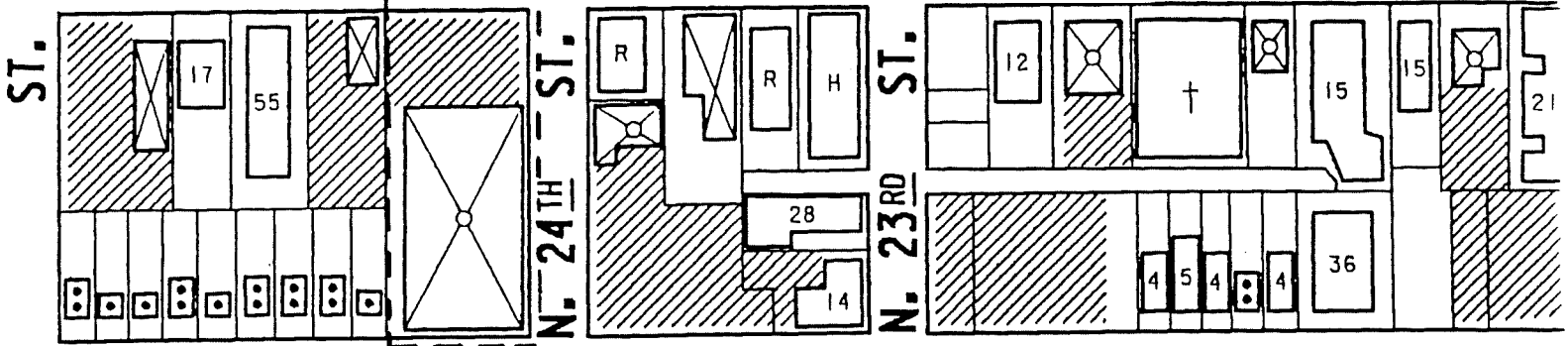
By 1941 Milwaukee's Aerie was the largest in the country with 9,200 members in the city and 29,000 members throughout Wisconsin. It was followed in rank by the founder city, Seattle, which had approximately 8,800 members. By 1948 Milwaukee's membership had grown to 16,000.

The lavish clubhouse included a 75' x 30' swimming pool and athletic facilities designed to meet the standards of the Amateur Athletic Union. The crowning glory of the structure was the ballroom. Measuring 200' x 130', complete with a stage 50 feet wide, 48 feet deep, and 80 feet high, it was deemed large enough to accommodate any New York theatrical group. It was dubbed Devine's Million Dollar Ballroom after being leased to George J. Devine in 1939. Devine had prior experience managing the Wisconsin Roof Garden, a ballroom atop the Carpenter Building at the northeast corner of Sixth Street and West Wisconsin Avenue from 1926 to 1929. Devine continued in this capacity at the Eagles until 1962-1963 when his son, Robert T. Devine, took over

S.W. 1/4 SEC. 30, T. 7N., R. 22E.

EDGLES CLUB
2401 W WISCONSIN AVE

WISCONSIN AVE. 2401



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 restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the original roof shape. Skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape which would alter the building height, roof line, or pitch. Retain the existing roofing tile and metal trim. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the existing materials as closely as possible.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint or coating 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 which 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 limestone surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products which 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 material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material which 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. Retain the historic patina on old bronze or copper metal trim.

- 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 which are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain original window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds, sills, doors, and hardware, except as necessary to restore the building to its 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 window panes 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 or concrete block. Avoid using modern style window units in place of the existing sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the buildings.

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 member in scale, design and appearance.

E. Additions

The north and east elevations and roof line are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions 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.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

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