



HIDE HOUSE
(FORMER GREENEBAUM TANNERY)
2625 S. GREELEY STREET
INTERIM HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY
REPORT
JUNE 2009

INTERIM HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. NAME

Historic: **Greenebaum Tanning Co.**

Common Name: **Hide House**

II. LOCATION **2625 S. Greeley Street**

Legal Description - Tax Key No. 498-1601-110
Hackett's Subd in NE ¼ SEC 8-6-22 All of Blocks 1 7 2 SD Subd & Vac (Alley-E Dover St & W ½ S Greeley St) Adj & Lots 4 through 8 BLK 11 Dr E Chase's Subd & N 9.74' Vac Alley & Vac E ½ S Greeley St Adj & lots 9 through 12 Blk 11 Cont of Dr E Chase's Subd & Vac Alley exc N 9.74' & Vac E ½ Greeley St Adj & Lots 5 thru 8 Blk 12 Cont of Dr E Chase's Subd & N ½ Vac Alley & Skywalk Between Sd Blk 12 and Blk 1 Hackett's Subd

NOTE: This nomination includes only that structure(s) located west of S. Greeley Street and north E. Dover Street on what would be Lots 1 through 18 Block 1 Hackett's Subdivision and vacated S. Greeley Street north of E. Deer Place. It does not include the boiler house (1909), the warehouse and waterproofing building (1935-1936), the machine and repair shop (post-1910) and general storage building (date unknown, post 1937)

III. CLASSIFICATION

Site

IV. OWNER

Hide House 2007 LLC
6938 N. Santa Monica Boulevard
Fox Point, WI 53217

ALDERMAN

Ald. Tony Zielinski, 14th Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR

Ald. Tony Zielinski

V. YEAR BUILT

1898 and later (permit number 668 dated March 23, 1898)

ARCHITECT:

Charles Fitzgerald (permit number 668 dated March 23, 1898;
permit number 1459 dated June 18, 1909)

Nicholas Backes (permit number 7299 dated June 7, 1943)

Grasshold & Johnson (permit number 20008 dated December 22, 1944; number 641 dated January 22, 1945; number 10009 dated June 18, 1945; number 12941 dated July 21, 1945)

Walter Memmler (permit number 18273 dated June 23, 1948)

Roy Papenthein (permit number 19634 dated June 17, 1949)

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Hide house is located in the Bay View neighborhood south of E. Lincoln and west of S. Howell Avenues adjacent to the former Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad tracks. It fronts on Greeley Street between E. Deer Place and E. Dover Street. The surrounding neighborhood consists mainly of wood frame single family and duplex houses built during the late nineteenth century. This interim petition does not include several buildings in the general complex: The boiler house, also known as building #12, the warehouse and waterproofing building, also known as building #10 which is across the street from the Hide House, the machine and repair shop, known as building #9 at Greeley and Dover Streets; and the general storage building at the corner of E. Deer Place and S. Greeley Street also known as building #14.

The Hide House itself is a rambling, 3 and 4-story solid brick complex composed of an original 1898 brick core with successive additions all designed in the commercial styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Its footprint is triangular in shape and is referred to as a classic "flatiron" plan. The oldest, south half of the building was constructed in 1898 of Milwaukee's celebrated cream brick. Successive additions to the north and west in 1920's, 1930's and 1940's expanded upon the original flat iron plan and gave a relatively uniform design to the building despite the intervening decades of social and architectural changes in between.

The main elevation faces S. Greeley St. and it is composed of flat brick walls with regularly-placed, double-hung windows on all floors. The building is trimmed with an ornamental corbelled brick cornice at the top of the walls on the south half of the building. There have been no significant alterations to the facade although new metal double hung windows were installed on the south half of the building within the past 10 years.

The north half of the building was constructed during World War II in 1945 at a time during a national moratorium on building construction. It is made of tan pressed brick which blends well with the original cream brick half of the building. The 1945 addition, which was the actual "Hide House" from which the complex derives its present name, is similar in character to the older half of the building, but lacks an ornamental cornice at the top of the walls. It is articulated with regularly-placed windows on each of the two floors.

The south elevation features a large loading dock and a small, two-story brick addition made of Chicago Pink brick that was added in 1945. Windows and doors are randomly placed to respond to the needs of the interior. The west elevation facing the railroad tracks is a long brick wall with regularly placed double hung windows. The north elevation is very short in length and responds to the tip of the flatiron plan. It is all brick with no windows or doors.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Hide House is an impressive industrial complex that is one of the last of its kind in Milwaukee, and is significant to the community of Bay View and is one of our few intact reminders of Milwaukee's world wide prominence in the tanning industry. Structures such as

these which were once synonymous with Bay View's and Milwaukee's industrial heritage are now an endangered species with only a handful of good examples remaining. The unique and eye-catching flat iron form of the building has been preserved on this structure through numerous sympathetic additions/alterations over the decades. This is not typical at many industrial sites. Greenebaum's special niche in the tanning industry was the production of cordovan leather, made from the rumps of horses and not bovine hides as other companies used. Greenebaum Tanning Company received an Army/Navy E Award for their leather production during World War II and published a report on "Oils, fats and waxes in the leather industry" in the *Journal of American Oil Chemists' Society*. The Greeley Street plant was also used in a military study of making leather resistant to the oxidants and reductants used as fuels in guided missiles. Research is ongoing as to the importance of their contributions to the tanning industry.

The Hide House is significant locally as a tangible reminder of Bay View's industrial past. Many of the manufacturing complexes, as Illinois Steel that typified Bay View's character, were demolished long ago although remnants of some of the industry giants remain at the north end of the community. This smaller type of complex, situated within a residential neighborhood, has all but vanished from the community.

The consistency of design at the Hide House is remarkable given the length of time the building evolved. The Hide House is significant as a building that demonstrates the evolution of an industrial complex from the late nineteenth to mid- twentieth century. Begun as a series of connected wings that fronted a railway line and a city street, the structure underwent frequent expansion with the construction of additional stories, new boiler houses, additions and skywalks as the needs of the owner dictated. The complex is intact to its last era of industrial use in the 1950s-1960s. It typifies the type of complex once common throughout Milwaukee along the waterways and rail lines, solidly constructed, utilitarian in form and design but with some touches of embellishment at the cornices and window openings. The open plans of the interiors lent themselves well for adaptive use by a succession of owners/tenants who conducted their businesses within these walls. While Milwaukee had the largest number of industrial buildings in the state, these complexes have diminished greatly in number since the 1960s with the decline of industrialization in the city and the demolitions have escalated dramatically in the last decade.

The Hide House is the last remaining complex associated with the Greenebaum Tanning Company. The business had begun in Chicago in 1914 and had located to the community of North Milwaukee by 1917. In 1923 the company expanded to the S. Greeley Street building where it remained until the business closed in December of 1955. It is one of the few known, and maybe the only tannery in Milwaukee to have undertaken physical expansion in the 1920s and 1930s, a factor that must be attributed to its successful niche in the tanning industry. Greenebaum Tanning specialized in cordovan leather, made from the rumps of horses rather than bovines, and may have been the only such producer in Milwaukee. The former North Milwaukee complex, addressed at 4763 n. 32nd Street, was demolished after a fire in 2007. Google maps show a variety of non-tannery buildings that appear to date from the 1950s at the address known to have been the Greenebaum headquarters in Chicago. The present appearance of the Greeley Street complex is largely due to the additions made by the Greenebaum Tanning Company during their 30 year ownership of the site. Remarkably, the additions have retained much of the character of the original 1898 building with the use of brick in the same color family, corbelled cornices and multi-paned windows and arched window openings and have a consistency of scale and proportion not often seen with additions to industrial buildings.

The southeast Side Area Comprehensive Plan, adopted by the Common Council on October 29, 2008, indicates on page 99 under Redevelopment Strategies for Industrial sites: "promote the reuse of vacant industrial buildings and lots with new businesses. Reuse is preferred over new construction."

VIII. HISTORY

INDUSTRY IN BAY VIEW

The Hide House is also one of the last remaining mid-sized to smaller manufacturing complexes in the Bay View neighborhood. Bay View began its existence as a village with the establishment of the massive Milwaukee Iron Company plant along Lake Michigan in 1868. The company platted land that became the Village of Bay View and thousands of workers poured into what had been an agricultural community. It is said that the Milwaukee Iron Company launched Milwaukee into becoming an industrial giant. Other large manufacturers followed in Bay View, clustered at the north and west ends of the community near the Kinnickinnic River, railroad lines and Lake Michigan. Industries included electrical motors and electrical goods (the Louis Allis Company, locating in Bay View in 1906), metal products (Milwaukee Corrugating Company in Bay View from 1902 through 1912 when it moved to larger quarters), machinery manufacturing (Filer and Stowell, from 1890 to c. 1990s), brick manufacturing (Martin Davelaar and Sons 1880s to early 1920s and Standard Brick Company 1883 to c. 1923), brass and iron foundries (Hoffman, Billings, and Company 1886 to 1930s), iron castings (Wisconsin Malleable Iron Company 1890 to 1930s) and food products (Klement Sausage Co. 1956 to present). Many of the complexes associated with these businesses have been demolished including the Milwaukee Iron Company, last known as a branch of Illinois Steel, which fell to the wrecker's ball in the 1930s.

TANNING

The Hide House at 2625 S. Greeley Street was one of two known tannery operations taking place in Bay View and served this function from 1912 into the 1950s. The second was the Bay View Division of the Pfister & Vogel Leather Company located at the north end of Bay View near the Kinnickinnic River and Jones Island. The latter complex was very large and one of several sites in Milwaukee operated by the giant Pfister & Vogel company. The Hide House belonged to that second tier of tannery operations, not as large as the big three Pfister & Vogel, Gallun and Trostel, but one of number of concerns that thrived here. Virtually all remnants of those mid-sized companies have disappeared.

The following information is taken from the chapter Tanning and Leather Processing, part of the report Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, A Manual for Historic Properties, produced by the Historic Preservation Division of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

The tanning of leather consists essentially of treating animal skins with natural or synthetic chemical agents to preserve and toughen them. The three most essential materials necessary for the operation of a productive tanning concern are: the hides or skins (mainly bovine), water, and a tanning agent, all of which were readily available in nineteenth century Wisconsin as the tanning industry began its move westward. A relatively simple operation, tanning was carried out as an industry as early as the 1620s in New England. Amazingly, the industry progressed from that point well into the late nineteenth century without major technological change. In Wisconsin, the earliest tanning manufacturer was in operation by 1842 and from the mid-1860s until 1925 tanning remained an important growth industry in the state, ranking consistently among the first five in value of product. At its peak around the turn of the century, Wisconsin's tanning industry was producing about 15 percent of the United States' raw leather, ranking only behind Pennsylvania in total production.

Wisconsin proved ideal territory for the development of the tanning industry as industrialists moved westward in search of new resources and markets in the early nineteenth century. The chief tanning agents being used throughout the industry in the early 1800s were derived from the barks of various trees and shrubs including oak, hemlock, chestnut, and sumac. Wisconsin's rich reserves of hemlock timber, which grew exceedingly well in the soils of the eastern half of northern Wisconsin, provided what seemed like a limitless supply of raw material for the expanding

industry. Tanning barks, particularly hemlock, were relatively scarce in other Midwestern states, thus adding to Wisconsin's favor. As well as being abundant, Wisconsin's forestlands were readily accessible. Those of northeastern Wisconsin were easily reached by way of Lake Michigan and Green Bay and the numerous rivers that drained into them. To the west, the Mississippi and "Wisconsin Rivers provided ready supply routes to the more inland forests. Until the introduction of synthetic tanning agents in the late nineteenth century, Wisconsin's hemlock and oak forests provided the solid foundation for the state's amazing growth in leather production. In 1891 alone 57,921 cords of tan bark were cut and shipped to the city of Milwaukee and large amounts were also shipped out of the area to distant tanneries (Schefft 1938:95). A number of the state's larger tanning concerns actually maintained and logged their own private woodlots in order to maintain constant supplies.

Leather tanneries required siting along streams or lakes to enable the factories to take advantage of the enormous amounts of water needed for the processing of hides. The waterways also provided effective means of disposing of industry effluent. (Along with paper plants, tanneries had perhaps the most detrimental effect on local environments in terms of water and odor pollution.) The waterfront locations of most sites provided some concerns with a source of economical power with which to run the new machinery that was in increasingly introduced in the latter part of the century. The early ethnic character of the state had a large part to play in the establishment and success of the tanning industry as well. In the 1840s and 1850s, a great influx of Germans settled in the territory. Many were skilled craftsmen in a host of Old World occupations, including the tanning of leather. Propelled by a knowledgeable and skilled labor force, the industry was able to realize rapid growth in the pre-Civil War era and lay the foundation for later expansion. Of the 13 tanneries operating in Milwaukee by 1860, ten were owned by German-Americans and a majority of the laborers were also of German descent (Schefft 1938:16).

From its inception, the Wisconsin tanning industry was concentrated in a few lake port cities such as Kenosha, Racine, Fond du Lac, Manitowoc/Two Rivers, and Milwaukee. These areas provided the best economic and environmental conditions for the establishment and growth of the industry in the state. With access to abundant supplies of nearby tan bark, excellent facilities for collecting hides and pelts from the interior, and wide convenient consumer markets, these areas quickly thrived as leather processing centers. Perhaps the earliest firm of any size to become established in Wisconsin was started in Milwaukee by Daniel Phelps in 1842. Phelps' concern was located in a frame structure on the West Side of the young community.

By far the most significant growth in the tanning industry in the state took place when Guido Pfister and Fred Vogel of Wurtemberg, Germany, began operations in the city of Milwaukee. Coming to Milwaukee via Buffalo in the late 1840s, Pfister originally set up a small leather goods store in the city, while Vogel began operation of a small tannery. By 1853 the two enterprising businessmen had merged their operations, creating an operation that emerged as the state's leading manufacturer of leather and business of worldwide renown. Today, the firm remains a mainstay of Milwaukee's now depleted tanning industry. In 1853, the Pfister & Vogel plant consisted of a 130' by 60', three-story factory, a separate powerhouse fueled by waste bark, and a leach house to process the tan bark. The brick and wood factory contained 63 vats on the first floor for the processing of leather, hide and bark storage areas, and a bark grinding machine on the second floor, and extensive drying rooms on the third. The 25-person operation could produce about 50 hides a day at peak production. In 1862 Pfister and Vogel began operation of a second tannery at Two Creeks in the northern reaches of Manitowoc County. By the 1870s, the firm operated five separate facilities across the state (Schefft 1938:25; Jensen 1955:1-16).

Although the pre-war years were marked by the industry's establishment and gradual growth in the state, the Civil War decade of the 1860s was marked by incredible production demands that dictated a massive expansion of the industry. Wisconsin firms, large and small, were called upon to meet the army's requirements for shoes, harness work, and equipment (pouches, packs, bags), and the tanning industry quickly became a highly profitable trade for enterprising businessmen. From 45 firms in 1860, the number of operating tanneries in the state rose to 85 by the end of the decade, and production values jumped from \$439,985 in 1860 to over \$2,000,000 in 1870 (Schefft 1938:44). The city of Milwaukee had become the unchallenged leader in the state, far surpassing any other Midwestern community in the number of firms and production. In 1860, Milwaukee had

nine tanneries, of which only, two were substantial operations. By the close of the war, 15 were in operation and by 1872 the number had risen to 30. In total, Milwaukee's tanneries employed over 600 people by 1872 to produce approximately \$2,560,000 worth of tanned leather. The figures for the actual leather output from the city were even more impressive: in 1860 the city had produced a total of 45,000 hides, 18,000 calf and kidskins, and a small quantity of sheepskins. By 1872 the output had risen to 158,523 hides, 125,000 sheep pelts, and a proportional number of calfskins. In addition, deer and goat skins were processed depending on local supply and demand." For the most part the city's processed hides were destined for manufacture into harness, sole and upper leather, while sheep pelts became linings and bindings. The manufacture of boots and shoes, in state and out, utilized a considerable portion of the Wisconsin product. Milwaukee, in particular, had several large boot and shoe factories by the end of the 1860s, most notably the 1843 concern of Bradley and Metcalf (Merk 1916:148-149).

Transportation, perhaps more than any other single factor, was the key to Milwaukee's preeminence as a tanning center in Wisconsin. Bark from nearby forests could be shipped to the city by boat, wagon, or rail; hides from inland points or from Chicago were economically attainable by way of extensive inland railroad systems; and the city's established trade networks opened up markets for Wisconsin goods throughout the United States. Another important factor which added greatly to the city's leadership role in the industry was the concentration of skilled German tradesmen and laborers in Milwaukee.

Milwaukee meat packers were not as important a source of hides in later years as one might assume, for they processed mostly hogs while the tanneries worked principally with beef and calf hides. By the 1860s, industrialized Milwaukee, with its aggressive businessmen, skilled labor force, and extensive trade and transport systems, was recognized as the largest tanning center "west of the Alleghenies" (Merk 1916:149). On a local level, the manufacture of leather ranked behind only iron and clothing in terms of value of product produced in the city. Among the large firms in operation in the city, besides the dominant Pfister & Vogel and Wisconsin Leather Co. concerns, were: the Herman Zourlaut Leather Co. (later taken over by Pfister & Vogel), Trostel & Gallun (NRHP 1984), R. Suhm and Son Kinnickinnic Tannery, Henry Booth, William Elkert & Son, and G.B. Vollhardt (Schefft 1938:40).

Despite the economic crisis that began in 1873, the growth of the tanning industry in the state continued relatively unabated through the 1870s and 1880s. The era, in particular, saw increasingly broadened markets for Wisconsin goods. Firms such as Pfister & Vogel in Milwaukee, F. Rueping in Fond du Lac, and others throughout the state were establishing fine reputations in the eastern and southern portions of the United States, as well as in areas closer to home such as Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, and Louisville. New England, where the shoe industry had grown extensively in recent decades, played an especially dramatic role in the marketing of Wisconsin leather. The northeastern factories provided a market for over 90 percent of Milwaukee's sole leather products alone during the 1870s (Nesbit 1973:277-278).

Increasing demands, however, meant increasing pressures for many of the smaller tanning concerns not able to produce at high levels. The new machinery required to keep pace with consumer demands was often not within the financial range of many small local concerns, and, as the transportation systems in the state improved, many of these firms began to lose their regional markets to the larger urban factories that could deliver a consistent product in sufficient volumes to please a growingly sophisticated consumer audience. The period from the mid-1870s through the 1890s was marked by consolidation and centralization of the industry. Many of the state's smaller tanneries merged with the larger establishments, becoming subsidiary plants, or simply closing down operations. Between 1870 and 1880, the number of firms in the state had declined from 85 to 73, and by 1890 the number had fallen to 38. The decline in no way signified a reduction of production levels, however, as Wisconsin's product value during the same period topped \$4.3 million in 1880 and more than doubled to over \$11.1 million by 1890 (Schefft 1938:40-46).

Milwaukee witnessed the greatest change as the number of firms dropped from 27 to 15 by 1890. Tanning ranked second among the city's major industries by 1890, however, and Milwaukee was aggressively challenging Philadelphia for supremacy in the production of leather in the United

States. In the 1890s the Pfister & Vogel firm was decidedly the largest tanning concern in the state, operating three tanneries, employing over 600 people, and producing as much as \$2 million worth of leather stock annually. Among the state's other significant producers were: the H. Zourlout Leather Co., A.F. Gallun & Son, and the Albert Trostel Tanning Co., all in Milwaukee and each employing at least 150 workers to produce more than of \$500,000 worth of product annually; the La Crosse firm of Davis, Medary & Platz (1880-1910); and the C.T. Roenitz Leather Co., Sheboygan. By the start of the last decade of the nineteenth century Wisconsin was the fourth largest leather producing state in the country, behind Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and New York (Schefft 1928:96, 44-60).

The turn of the century (1890-1910) was noted by industrialists and businessmen alike as an era of technological changes that greatly altered the tanning industry. New machines for all facets of production were constantly being placed on the market to increase the production capacities of plants, and often necessitating site expansion. Tanning "extracts" were introduced that no longer required the delivery of large quantities of tanning bark to the plants. As a result of newly developed processes, much of the work could be performed at the forest sites and only the resulting extracts (often only ten-percent of the weight of bark) needed to be shipped. The development of extracts and extracting processes freed tanning sites from the necessity of being located in close proximity to local wood sources, and dramatically reduced the costs of a major segment of the industry.

The availability of various chemical extract formulas meant a greater diversity of products was possible. In 1884, the chrome process was first introduced to United States tanneries. Utilizing mineral salts such as chromium, iron and aluminum as tanning agents instead of vegetal tannin, the process allowed the manufacture of fine kid and upper shoe leather at moderate prices, in a portion of the time normally required. Wisconsin firms were relatively slow to accept the new process, and it was not until the late 1890s that the F. Rueping firm of Fond du Lac became one of the first in the state to utilize it. The Rueping firm quickly confirmed the value of the process and was among its most successful utilizers in the Midwest.

Electricity played an extremely important role in the industry. Prior to [sic] the advent of the electric light, the tanning industry was predominantly a daylight operation. The greasy, oily nature of the manufacturing process made open-flame lighting with gas or oil extremely dangerous and most firms operated only in the daylight hours. The introduction of electricity meant that tanneries could use the full 24-hour day. Throughout the industry, scientific plant operations were being practiced and the role of the scientist and chemist was quickly ousting that of the skilled craftsman.

The turn of the century era brought forth two new forms of tannery management in the industry: the packinghouse tannery and the trust. As early as 1890 domestic supplies of hides were proving insufficient to meet the needs of the growing leather industry. Imported hides became a prominent feature, favoring east coast firms especially, and many Midwestern firms began to form strong, almost monopolistic ties with area meat-packing plants. By 1919 four packing companies were supplying 54 percent of the country's shoe leather. In an effort to fight rising competition by combining and pooling resources, tanning trusts, such as the U.S. Leather Co. (1893), were formed. Milwaukee remained predominantly independent from trust manipulation, but other Wisconsin concerns were affected, particularly those in the western part of the state. The operation of the tanning trusts remained relatively intact until the end of World War I.

By 1910 the industry was entering upon its final boom period. The total number of tanneries in the state was 32, of which 11 were located in the city limits of Milwaukee. Utilizing approximately 2 million hides annually to produce over \$27.4 million worth of leather, Milwaukee had finally achieved the status as the world's largest leather manufacturing center. The Pfister & Vogel firm alone operated five separate tanneries, including a Menominee Valley operation consisting of 38 buildings spread over a 15-acre site. Employing a total of 2,400 workers to process over 30,000 hides a day, the firm also maintained selling branches in a number of eastern cities and in Europe (Pfister & Vogel 1948:np). Over 13.6 percent of the leather produced in the United States was coming from Wisconsin, and the state remained behind only Pennsylvania in total production

(Pennsylvania produced 23.8 percent and Massachusetts was third with 12.2 percent.) Schefft 1938:96). However, the rumblings of future problems were nearing.

In the 1915, foreign tariffs on leather and leather goods were lifted, introducing increasing competition for United States companies from European and South American producers. The demands of World War I brought the industry back to life briefly, but by the war's end, certain economic and technical factors initiated the steady decline of the industry in the United States and Wisconsin. Increasing foreign and domestic competition, the nature of the hide market, and the leather market itself, which was quickly being eroded by alternative materials, led to steady declines in United States production. The Great Depression of the 1930s was the final shock that ended the operation of many concerns and left only the strongest firms in production. Milwaukee remains prominent in leather production, with nineteenth century firms like Pfister & Vogel, A.F. Gallun, and Albert Trostel still in operation, but the industry now plays only a minor role in local economics. The F. R ueping Leather Co. of Fond du Lac retains a moderately sized operation as well.

TANNING PROCESS

The process of manufacturing tanned leather from animal hides involved relatively few steps. The raw hides and pelts were first cleaned and soaked to remove dirt and excess oils. Tanning agents were then applied which displaced the water from the interstices between the protein fibers that make up the bulk of the animal hide. Well coated, the fibers were combined and cemented together by the tannin (tanning agent), to produce strong but resilient leather. Finally, the leather might be oiled or finished according to the desires of the buyer.

In its simplest form, the tanning was done in large vats or pits commonly located on the ground floor of the main tannery building. The pelts and hides were placed in the vats in alternating layers with ground tan bark. Water was then poured to cover the hides and the whole mixture was left to sit for six to 12 months with only occasional stirring and mixing. Some factories might contain as many as 100 separate vats, each filled with a prescribed amount of tanning agent and hides according to the desired end product. Once the tanning process was completed, the hides were taken from the vats and allowed to dry using simple air drying methods such as hanging the hides on hooks or on horizontal racks, or by mechanical means such as tunnel and cabinet kilns or vacuum drying. In many early firms the drying was done in large open rooms on the top floors of the factories where adequate ventilation was possible.

The tanning material used in the manufacture of leather was available in concentrated extract form by the latter part of the nineteenth century, which aided in shortening the time the hides were required to sit in the vats. To form the extract, the tanning bark (hemlock and oak in Wisconsin) was ground up by machine, leached with water and/or chemicals, and eventually concentrated into solid or powdered form until ready for use. Advancing chemical technology introduced chrome tannage in the late 1880s and early 1890s. The use of mineral salts of different kinds instead of vegetable tannins shortened the tanning process from weeks and months to days in many cases, and produced an end product of greater uniformity with a wider range of performance characteristics. The chromium process is still among the principle methods in use today for light leathers. The use of other synthetic-tanning agents was widely popular after the 1900s.

Many of the hides brought to the tanneries and stored in cooled cellars or storehouses required additional treatment besides a simple washing in order to remove excess oils, preserving salts, hair, or other impurities. Often special enzyme and lye baths were used, in addition to specialized dehairing, scraping, and splitting machines. At the other end of the process, additional treatments to the finished leather might also be required. Depending on its intended use, the leather may have been dyed by hand or machine; oils were often added to keep the material soft and pliable; various fats were applied for waterproofing; and special patterns and textures could be embossed. Additional finishing touches included mechanical or chemical treatments with pigments, resins, lacquers, and waxes.

One of the most distasteful aspects of the industrial process associated with the tanning industry was the disposal of factory effluent, most commonly into nearby streams. For most early concerns the adjacent waterways were not only sources of processing water but also economical means of eliminating wastes which included hair, tannin, oxides, enzymes, trimmings, and other materials. The location of tanning concerns was often well known in a community, thanks to their bad odors and chemical pollution. The areas were not the most likely to be greeted by nearby residential or commercial development.

(Sources used in this report are listed after the sources consulted for the Study Report)

2625 S. GREELEY STREET

The portion of the Hide House under consideration for Interim Historic Designation is located on Block 1, Lots 1 through 18 of Hackett's Subdivision and on part of vacated S. Greeley Street north of E. Deer Place. The property had once been part of the large land holdings owned by Enoch Chase and his wife, pioneers on the south side. Edward P. Hackett and Richard J. Finn acquired 2.773 acres from the Chase's on May 20, 1889 and proceeded to have the land platted for development. Its location along the railroad tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad (Milwaukee Road) probably prompted the creation of the new subdivision. The new subdivision, called Hackett's Subdivision, was registered at the courthouse on December 6, 1889. Additional buildings that are part of the Hide House complex are located in the subdivisions called the Continuation of Dr. E. Chase's Subdivision and Dr. E. Chase's Subdivision. (Milwaukee County Register of Deeds Plat Book 13 page 37)

No activity occurred in Hackett's Subdivision until Joseph Bach and Michael Carpenter purchased all the lots on April 15, 1898. There were also additional lots purchased at the same time in the adjacent Continuation of Dr. E. Chase's Subdivision. The proximity to the rail line was a likely selling point for Bach and Carpenter. Sale of the lots went through the Security, Land and Investment Association, a corporation of which Edward P. Hackett was secretary. Their headquarters were located in the same offices as Hackett & Hoff, a real estate, loan, insurance and steamship agency on Jefferson Street. Richard J. Finn was recently deceased. (Deeds 399:543; Milwaukee City Directory) Some of the lots were later sold off to other businesses, Habbegger and Filer & Stowell, but later re-united under one ownership again.

Joseph Bach (1852 – June 5, 1902) had been a salesman in his early years and in 1882 established the Abel, Bach & Fitzgerald Company with Henry Abel and Henry Fitzgerald. In 1887 the business name changed to Abel & Bach Company and eventually Bach became sole owner. His sons Edmund J., Aloysius A. and Joseph G. all became officers of the company. The firm manufactured trunks.

WESTERN HARDWARE AND MANUFACTURING (AT SITE 1898 – 1907)

Bach apparently decided to branch out into other investments and along with A. Kriesheimer and L. Kriesheimer incorporated the Western Hardware and Manufacturing Company on July 14, 1896. The business was established for "the manufacture and sale of gas, gasoline, and kerosene stoves and other merchandise and of buying and selling materials used in and about and in connection with the manufacture and sale of stoves and hardware, and which business is to be carried on within the State of Wisconsin and especially within the County of Milwaukee in said State." It was capitalized at \$25,000. (Articles of Organization Vol. K, page 505) City directories show that Western Hardware and Manufacturing was producing stoves on Third Street in what is today the Central Business District.

Bach and his real estate partner Michael Carpenter took out a permit to construct a \$25,000 factory at today's 2625 S. Greeley Street on March 23, 1898, almost a month before the land purchase was

recorded at the courthouse. The construction permit describes the structure as a two-story building and an annotated sketch plan on the permit shows that some portions were one story. Erdman Schulz was the builder and Charles Fitzgerald was the architect. The boiler house roof was listed to be of incombustible material. A loading platform was situated along the west wall parallel to the railroad tracks. The solid masonry building was trapezoidal in shape with three connected wings surrounding an open courtyard. The complex must have been completed within the year as Western Hardware and Manufacturing was listed at the premises in the 1898 city directory. In addition to stoves, the business also manufactured iron beds and it appears that beds became a major product within a short time. Joseph Bach served as treasurer of the company, L. Kreilesheimer as president and A. Kreilesheimer as vice-president and secretary. Paul Gauer, in his book, *The Gauer Story, A Chronicle of Bay View*, relates that in 1898 his aunt's friend Louis Hartl was going to be foreman in a new stove works "which had just completed a big factory." Hartl was able to get Gauer a job in the factory and he was soon transferred from the stock room to "another department where they made brass and iron beds." He was soon put to work buffing rail knobs and sweeping and cleaning up. Gauer said they called Western Hardware "the bed shop" and it was "one of our best shops" for employees. (Gauer p. 29) Not much has been researched about the bed making industry in Wisconsin or Milwaukee.

It does not appear that Western Hardware and Manufacturing made many changes to the building. The company is recorded as having taken out a permit on May 14, 1902 to repair and alter and construct an addition to the foundry and build new sheds following a fire.

A second business was also located in the building, named R. J. Preuss Co. The firm was headed by Rudolph J. Preuss and made metal couches, bed springs, woven wire mattresses, spring beds, wire and army cots and children's cribs. The R. J. Preuss Company was incorporated with a capital stock of \$30,000 on February 19, 1896 by R. J. Preuss, John Jung and T. R. Mueller. The company was originally located at 15th Street and St. Paul Avenue then moved to Kinnickinnic Avenue before occupying a portion of the Greeley Street plant in 1905. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas shows Preuss occupying the south portion of our subject building, located perpendicular to Greeley Street. Preuss later moved to 38th and McKinley around 1911. The corporation dissolved on August 1, 1916. (Sanborn 1894-1909 Vol. IV page 368; Articles of Organization Vol. K page 255 and Vol. 38 page 364)

Western Hardware officially changed its name to Western Metal Bed Company on December 13, 1907 by which time George Brumder was president and John J. Wollaeger was secretary. (Articles of Organization Vol. Z page 504)

MILWAUKEE METAL BED COMPANY (1908 – 1912)

The Western Metal Bed Company filed articles of organization on January 21, 1909, to reflect a slight name change, to Milwaukee Metal Bed, and possibly due to new investors. John G. Wollaeger, James A. Sheridan and Arthur A. Mueller were now the principals. The business was capitalized at \$100,000 for the purpose of manufacturing and selling "brass and iron beds, spring mattresses, woven iron mattresses, costumers, cribs and shall have authority to deal in all personal and real estate, and enter into any and all obligations that may be necessary to carry on the manufacture and sale of said articles." Wollaeger served as president-treasurer of the business, and later officers included Alexander S. Putnam as vice-president and Paul G. Meyer as secretary. In 1909 the company constructed three sheds per permit records dated September 29, 1909 and added a new \$7,500 power house per permit dated June 18, 1909. It was constructed by the prominent Bay View based Meredith Brothers contracting firm. This latter building stands today south of the main building. An article in the Bay View Compass by Anna Passante on February 26, 2009 indicated that Wollaeger sold the business in 1912 to the Simmons Manufacturing Company of Kenosha, a bedding and furniture maker. Simmons' mattresses are still being made today. (Articles of Organization Vol. 27 page 438)

MILWAUKEE PATENT LEATHER COMPANY (1912 – 1921)

Today's Hide House first became associated with the leather industry when Milwaukee Patent Leather Company occupied the premises in 1912-1913. Edwin A. Oliver, Gordon S. Falk and William P. Jahn filed Articles of Organization on May 2, 1912 for the purpose of "manufacturing any and all kinds of leather, buying, selling, owning and dealing in any and all kinds of leather, hides, pelts, skins, oils, findings, glue, tanning supplies, materials, machinery, appliances, services, methods and processes." It also stated it was conducting a general tanning business and had rights to patents, trade-marks and trade names throughout Wisconsin, the United States and its territories and that it could buy, own, sell and deal in real estate. Its principal office was to be located in Milwaukee and the business was capitalized at \$100,000. Capitalization was increased to \$500,000 in 1920. (Articles of Organization Vol. 33 page 333; Vol. 44 page 266) Oliver had earlier worked for the American Hide & Leather Company but left to start this enterprise in 1912. He served as president and general manager with William P. Jahn serving as secretary-treasurer. Passante writes that Milwaukee Patent Leather Company produced leather uppers for Army shoes during World War I. The company moved out of the Greeley Street plant in 1921 and the facility was vacant in 1922.

J. GREENEBAUM TANNING COMPANY (AT SITE 1923 – 1955)

The J. Greenebaum Tanning Company was established in Chicago by Jonas Greenebaum in 1914 and appears to have been a family-run business throughout its history. Jonas Greenebaum served as president. Son Sydney J. Greenebaum was secretary-treasurer. Jonas served as director of the Tanners Council of America and was the executive director of the American Hair and Felt Company. He was active in the Masons and established the Jonas Greenebaum Endowment Fund at the University of Chicago to further tanning research. The company was once located at 3057 N. Rockwell Street in Chicago. (Passante; Milwaukee City Directory; Jonas Greenebaum Obituary New York Times October 26, 1947, p. 68; Milwaukee Permit Records 2575-2635 S. Greeley Street)

Greenebaum expanded his operations to Milwaukee by at least 1917, just a few years after the company founding. The Wholesaler and Manufacturer's Directory Year Book for 1917 lists Greenebaum Tannery in North Milwaukee on N. 32nd Street at Hampton Avenue, a location where they would remain for the remainder of their operation in Milwaukee. North Milwaukee was a community established in 1897 at the crossing of two major railroad lines. Its industrialization began in 1893 with the construction of the plant for the Wisconsin Bridge and Iron Company. By 1915 it had one of the largest concentrations of manufacturers in the Milwaukee area. It eventually became part of the City of Milwaukee in 1929. The 1917 Year Book lists 23 businesses associated with tanning and leather products in the Milwaukee area and of these, around 9 were known to actually run tanning operations. (Wholesalers and Manufacturers Directory, p. 135)

Jonas's son Louis J. Greenebaum came up to Milwaukee to oversee the plant. He had been born in Chicago and attended the Lewis Institute of Technology. (Louis J. Greenebaum Obituary July 27, 1990 Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle) The company must have found a favorable climate in Milwaukee and expanded from North Milwaukee into the newly vacated Greeley Street plant in 1923. Its prior use as a tannery most likely made the Greeley Street facility attractive to the Greenebaums. It would be known as Plant No. 3. The company immediately began to expand the Greeley Street facility. Much of the current appearance of the tannery is due in fact to the activities of Greenebaum Tanning and their continued expansion while in Milwaukee.

The Greenebaum Tanning Company specialized in the production of cordovan leather. (Donald Greenebaum, discussion with Carlen Hatala June 11, 2009)

Genuine shell cordovan is rare. Most leathers come from cows, but cordovan come from horses (which are not, by the way, raised for this purpose). The "shell", and let me put this as delicately as possible, is the subcutaneous layer that covers the equine posterior. Each

horse provides two shells, which is just enough for a pair of shoes. A single shell isn't long enough to form a seamless belt, so genuine shell cordovan belts will always be pieced. The most non-porous leather known, shell cordovan is distinguished by its lustrous waxy finish, superior durability, and suppleness that readily conforms to the shape of the wearer's foot.

Cordovan is a corruption of Cordova, the city in southern Spain where the technique of tanning this leather originated. Even today, high volume production and fancy technology are powerless in its manufacture. Old school handwork is what gets the job done. The shells are put through a natural, vegetable tanning process, then hand-stained, glazed, and finished over a six-month period that demands the measured pace of craftsmanship and patience.

It's those things that account for the expensiveness of true shell cordovan leather. Added to which there's only one tannery which still produces cordovan leather, Horween leathers in Chicago. (www.bensilver.com/style04/styleguide_link4.html)

A permit dated July 12, 1923 shows that that they were adding to the second floor (specific portion of building not indicated) at a cost of \$5,000. On September 30, 1924 they took out a permit to construct a flat roofed, 32 feet by 100 feet open shelter shed at a cost of \$300. This was modified to expand the shed to a height of 20 feet per permit dated October 30, 1924. An additional story, 48 feet by 170 feet, was constructed to a two story portion of the building at a cost of \$16,000 in 1926. An Eslien steel garage, 20 feet by 26 feet, was built in 1928 at a cost of \$750. This was followed by a second all metal garage, 12 feet by 36 feet, in 1929.

The 1920s were the last decade of prominence in the tanning industry. As indicated in the summary about the tanning industry, the need for leather products changed as horse drawn vehicles were supplanted by motorized vehicles and shoe leather was replaced with synthetic materials. Belting for equipment also changed as industrial machinery underwent advances. Cheaper foreign imports also hurt the local economy. Declines were starting to become more and more evident in Milwaukee by the end of the decade. In 1925 there were 17 tanneries employing 4,528 workers with the value of the product totaling \$30,873,102. In 1926 the Milwaukee Leader reported that "[o]perations by Milwaukee tanners declined during the year to the extent of 15%." In 1928 there were 15 tanneries in the city. This fell to 14 a year later. The number of employees fell from 3,834 in 1928 to 3,744 in 1929, and the value of the product dropped from \$32,898,635 in 1928 to \$30,295,825 in 1929. Exports as well fell from \$3,355,257 to \$1,510,757 between 1928 and 1929. Edwin A. Gallun of the A. F. Gallun and Sons Corporation was quoted "Milwaukee will again enjoy a prominent place in the leather trade of the world when the present cycle of business depression is ended...The year 1930 has been marked by a continuation of the unsettled conditions of former years, accentuated by the general downturn...The real test of the tariff, imposing moderate duties on foreign leathers, is postponed until 1931. There seem to be reasons for believing that the demand for leather will be appreciably better in 1931 particularly if it proves that foreign leathers cannot easily handle the tariff duty erected against them." While some tanneries felt the effects of the Great Depression, Greenebaum seemed to thrive and went through a series of expansions during the 1930s. (Milwaukee Leader Annual Trade Review December 31, 1926; Milwaukee Its Industrial Advantages 1930-1931, page of statistics; Wisconsin News Annual Trade review 1931, p. 3)

An additional story was added to a portion of the building, 45 feet by 38 feet, in 1930 at a cost of \$500. In 1932 a water shaft was constructed, with special privilege from the Common Council, to connect to the Kinnickinnic River flushing tunnel at a cost of \$3,000. On August 28, 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, Greenebaum built a 160-foot by 45-foot two story addition atop a two-story portion of the complex at a cost of \$6,000. This was followed by a sheet metal clad, 21 foot by 30 foot garage across Greeley Street in 1934 for \$385. On January 20, 1935 a 15 foot by 60 foot addition was constructed at a cost of \$700. A new storage warehouse for finished hides across Greeley Street was begun in 1934 and after some wrangling with the city over the number of stories allowable, the new building was given an occupancy permit on August 19, 1936. This

building is not included in this nomination. A 67-foot skywalk connected the old and new buildings across Greeley Street per permit dated March 14, 1935. A steel smoke stack was replaced by a 130 foot brick chimney in 1937 in connection with the installation of a new boiler. Two additional stories, 160 foot by 45 foot, were constructed in 1938 at a cost of \$6,000.

The few surviving pre-World War II building permits from Greenebaum's other location on 32nd Street show that their expansion was occurring there as well. Several additions were being constructed in 1932 including a four story structure built at a cost of \$80,000. (Permit Records 4763 N. 32nd street)

The 1930s were also a period of labor upheaval at Greenebaum. Rioting at the plants on Monday November 12th and Tuesday November 13th 1934 resulted in the arrests of 28 persons. Pickets were withdrawn when company officials stopped work on an addition to the Greeley Street complex which had been employing non-union labor. There were also issues in later years surrounding the firing of employees for union activities and the company's domination of independent unions at its plants. One case had significance for the State of Wisconsin and other states when the national War Labor Board (WLB) ruled that its powers overruled state laws in labor relations matters. As reported in the Wisconsin State Journal, "The WLB directed the J. Greenebaum Tanning Co., Milwaukee to grant a standard maintenance [sic] of membership clause and a voluntary dues checkoff to the International Fur and Leather Workers of America and Canada (CIO) ... The company contended that the WLB had no authority to grant maintenance of membership without approval of three fourths of the employees as required by the Wisconsin law. Disputing the company's stand, Morse declared the WLB ruling "constitutes an exercise of federal war power over private contracts, which power supplants that of the state in time of war. In cases of this type, the safety of the nation demands that the war powers of the United States be regarded as supreme." There are at least seven court cases cited involving Greenebaum Tanning with the National Labor Relations Board on the website vlex.com. Further research is warranted to determine if any of the cases were precedent-setting. (The Rhineland Daily News, November 14, 1934, November 17, 1934; Oshkosh Daily Northwestern November 20, 1934 p. 5; Wisconsin State Journal August 5, 1939; Wisconsin State Journal August 29, 1943; Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune June 5, 1943; The Rhineland Daily News August 10, 1944; Oshkosh Daily Northwestern October 14, 1940)

It is evident that Greenebaum Tanning had its share of contracts during World War II and continued to expand the plant on Greeley Street to meet war production requirements. Louis Greenebaum's obituary indicated that the corporation received an Army/Navy E Award for leather production during World War II. A permit was taken out on November 2, 1942 for a foundation for temporary coal bin and boiler room costing \$3,000. On June 7, 1943 a permit was taken out to raise the boiler house roof at a cost of \$3,500. The foundation permit for a brand new Hide House was taken out on December 22, 1944, followed by a permit for the remainder of the building on June 18, 1945. The combined foundation and building totaled \$57,000. Prominent Milwaukee architects Grassold and Johnson were chosen for the project. This is the building for which the remainder of the complex was named.

Other projects included a frame shed, 14-feet by 25-feet, in 1945 and a two story addition to the south side of the building, permit dated January 22, 1945, that cost \$2,800. The Hide House was modified with the addition of a partial second story costing \$60,000, per permit dated July 31, 1945, again designed by Grassold and Johnson. A one-story engine room followed per permit dated May 6, 1946. A covered loading platform was constructed on the east side of the Hide House in 1946. There was also a new lime building addition that cost \$2,300 per permit dated September 24, 1945. The following year, the water tank was moved east and a new 50,000 gallon wood tank was constructed. Architect Walter Memmler designed a new 50-foot by 100-foot storage building in 1948. Architect Roy Papenthein designed a 29-foot by 17-foot pump house in 1949. The engine room was enlarged and the area between the engine room and factory was roofed over in 1949.

By 1950, with war production ended, the tanning industry was in full decline. Fortune magazine, in its story "Made in Milwaukee" stated that "[e]ven Milwaukee's tanneries, the world's largest by 1890, today are mere remnants of once great houses." (Fortune Vol. 42 No. 5, November 1950, p. 97)

Permit records show no further construction at the Greeley Street complex after 1949. Founder Jonas Greenebaum had died on October 25, 1947. Louis J. Greenebaum assumed the presidency by 1952. For many years he lived at 4720 N. Cramer Street in Whitefish Bay then moved to 705 E. Glendale in Shorewood. His son Louis Jr. worked at the tannery.

The Janesville Daily Gazette reported on Friday, October 21, 1955 that the tannery was closing its Milwaukee operation in December with activities being consolidated in Chicago. The firm had 180 to 200 employees. Louis L. Greenebaum subsequently moved to 2015 E. Glendale in Whitefish Bay and was involved in Willowbrook Farm. He eventually moved to Green Lake, Wisconsin where he lived for 35 years. He had been a board member of the former Mt. Sinai Hospital and the Hynite Corporation. He was a member of Congregation Emanu-El B'ne Jeshurun, the Milwaukee Athletic Club and the Wisconsin Club. He was said to have been a "gentleman farmer and an avid horseback rider in the Hartland area. He really loved having the farm and owning horses." Son Louis J. became the president-treasurer of Greentree Inc. Son Donald was the president of Eldon Manufacturing Co. Louis J. Greenebaum died at the age of 93 on June 7, 1990 in Green Lake. (Louis J. Greenebaum Obituary Wisconsin Jewish Chronicle; City Directories)

GREENEBAUM TANNERY/HIDE HOUSE 1956 - PRESENT

The Greeley Street facility was subsequently acquired by Kaiser Properties. The new owner leased out portions of the buildings to a variety of occupants who ran a number of businesses on the premises. Early occupants included Castings Inc., LeRoi Motors Company warehouse, Pioneer Terminal Warehouse Inc., Steven Donay Metal Stamping, Toy Shoppers Service, August G. Barkow Manufacturing warehouse, Signicast Corporation Foundry, and Newark Leather Finish Company.

Kaiser Properties sold the complex to Alton Enterprises in 2001 for \$950,000. New owners Alton and Gibson Bathrick renamed the complex the Hide House after the building designed by Grassold and Johnson in 1944-1945. Gibson Bathrick was a photographer and converted portions of the building into studios and rehearsal space for musicians and artists and office space for businesses. Some portions are leased for light industrial use. In 2004 a portion of the Hide House was featured as part of the Bay View Homes Tour to showcase some of the 45 tenants occupying the converted spaces.

General Capital Group acquired the 200,000 square foot complex in 2006 for two million dollars with the plan of converting some of the space to condos (some sources say 24 to 32 condos, some say 150 condos), targeted to artists. General Capital is working in partnership with developer Robert Joseph.

Current occupants consist of artists, bands who have practice space, a nonprofit organization, photography, design and computer firms as well as a motorcycle repair shop, The Shop, in the former boiler house. Tenants can also lease storage and there is multi-purpose space for special events like weddings. (Passante; Bay View Compass "Transforming Hide House" January 2007; "General Capital plans \$20 million project" The Business Journal December 15, 2006)

Demolition of the north end of the main building is part of the current owner's plan. This portion of the building was constructed as the Hide House for Greenebaum Tannery in 1945 and is the building for which the complex was named. Due to the current economic downturn, the developer's plans have changed from condos to tax credit sponsored housing through WHEDA. The new housing is targeted to artists. It is the proposed demolition of the Hide House building from 1945 that prompted Ald. Zielinski to file an interim petition for historic designation on the main building of the complex.

There are currently no raze orders or condemnation orders on any portion of the complex.

The current owners submitted a questionnaire to the State Historic Preservation Office for an opinion on National Register eligibility. The state staff replied that the complex did not appear to meet National Register eligibility based on the information supplied by the owner, which did not include this study report as it was still being researched. A copy of this letter is attached.

THE ARCHITECT

Charles Fitzgerald

Charles Fitzgerald is listed as the architect who constructed the original complex at today's 2625 S. Greeley Street for Western Hardware and Manufacturing. Not much is known about Fitzgerald at this time. He did design the Patrick Donnelly House at 815 N. Cass Street (1896) in the Cass and Wells Streets Historic District.

Grassold and Johnson

The prominent local architectural firm of Grassold and Johnson were responsible for the design of the Hide House in 1944-1945. They had one of the largest, if not the largest, architectural firms in the state and would have had the expertise to handle a manufacturing building. The firm was in existence for well over 30 years and is known for its modernist design. The Hide House is in fact, a modern utilitarian building designed to fit its unusual lot configuration. It looks forward to the unornamented factories that would become the norm after World War II but respects the scale and materials of the original building. This excellent sensitivity to context and the existing design ethic is almost never practiced today.

Elmer A. Johnson worked for Martin Tullgren & Sons in his early years and would have gained experience there in commercial as well as apartment building design. Herbert Grassold studied at the College of the City of New York and the Columbia University School of Architecture before working for George B. Post & Sons in New York City and then Clas-Shepherd-Clas in Milwaukee from 1928 to 1934. Grassold & Johnson established their partnership in 1935.

Among their major projects were County Stadium (demolished), Central YMCA (altered by Marquette University), Mayfair Shopping Center (altered), Southgate Shopping Center (demolished), the Becker Funeral Home at 5322 W. Lisbon Avenue, the Mt. Olive Lutheran School on Washington Boulevard, the addition to the Llewellyn Library addition on E. Russell Street, an addition to Northwestern National Insurance Building 731 N. Jackson Street (completely remodeled), the addition to the Central Library (recently altered), the Atkinson Library, the Community Branch YMCA in Bay View, the Milwaukee School Board Administration Building, the Hill Farms State Office Building in Madison, and the Port Washington State Bank Building among others. The firm also designed residences, factories, and commercial buildings and had commissions across the country. By 1969 the firm had designed more than 2,000 buildings. The appreciation for modernist design has, unfortunately, not extended to architecture of the 1950s and 1960s and as indicated above, many of Grassold and Johnson's prominent commissions from those decades have been either demolished or significantly altered. A good portion of the firm's drawings have been destroyed and further evaluation of their industrial work is warranted. (City Directories; "Design Firm Reports Shifts in Management." Milwaukee Journal December 24, 1969; Herbert J. Grassold Obituary Milwaukee Journal November 30, 1965)

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IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Buildings 1, 2, 3 and 4 of the Hide House, former Greenebaum Tannery, be given interim historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1 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.

Rationale: Greenebaum Tanning Company was founded in the early 20th century, in the last era of prominence of the tanning industry. The presence of a number of tanneries in Milwaukee spawned a host of related leather working companies, most prominently, shoe manufacturers. The tanning industry jockeyed between third and fourth place in the ranking of manufacturers in Milwaukee during the 1920s at which time Wisconsin was second only to Pennsylvania in the production of leather. Greenebaum Tanning, with its headquarters in Chicago, found a successful niche here with the production of Cordovan leather, a labor intensive form of tanning utilizing the “shell” or “glassy layer” at the rump of horses. The product went into shoes for adults and children.

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

Rationale: Structures such as these which were once synonymous with Bay View's and Milwaukee's industrial heritage are now an endangered species with only a handful of good examples remaining. The unique and eye-catching flat iron form of buildings 1, 2, 3, and 4 has been preserved on this structure through numerous sympathetic additions/alterations over the decades. This is not typical at many industrial sites.

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. Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. Skylights may be installed if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. Use of the rooftop is encouraged as long as no major changes or additions are made which would significantly alter the roof slope or height of the Hide House. New rooftop mechanical rooms, stairwells for rooftop access, rooftop patios

and green roofs are allowed but must not be visible from the street or minimized to the greatest possible extent from street level view. Solar collectors, both reflector and photo-voltaic, may be installed on the roof as long as they are not visible from the street.

Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible from the public right of way. If the building gets re-roofed, consultation with historic preservation staff is required to review and approve the new materials. Rooftop additions, such as adding another floor are not allowed.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, or stone must not be painted or covered. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, etc.) is not allowed. Any further paint removal from the exterior requires a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width. See the masonry chapters in the books, As Good As New or Good For Business for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Do not use mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any repointing.
- c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (soda, nut shells, etc.) on limestone, terra cotta, pressed brick or cream brick 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. Work should be done by experienced individuals. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before any cleaning would begin.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Do not use new material that is inappropriate for the time period when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Do not remove 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. Do not cover architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension and spacing of the original.

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. Do not make 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. Do not change the size or configuration of the original windowpanes or sash. It may be possible to add new window openings to the secondary elevations facing west and north, but they would have to match the same proportions, materials and details of the original windows.
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 and material of the original window sash or door. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

Any original windows on the Hide House should be retained and repaired if at all possible. Vinyl, vinyl-clad or fiberglass prime windows are not permitted. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally discouraged but if needed they must be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for this type of installation.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing historic trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and appearance. Existing historic trim throughout the building, shall not be removed unless it is for the

purpose of repair. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the main elevation of the Hide House which faces South Greeley St. Any other addition requires the approval of the Commission. Ideally an addition should either compliment or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of window size and placement, building height, roof configuration, 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. Additions must be smaller than the building and not obscure the historic building.

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 with the historic and architectural character of the building. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to assist in the selection of exterior fixtures. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted.

G. Site Features

Given that the building proposed for designation does not include adjacent property that is part of the greater complex, it is unlikely that landscape features will be incorporated into the property. Should landscape matters or parking come up, however, consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any work.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. Should a portion of the building be approved for removal, new construction should not alter the historic building or negatively impact the ability to interpret its history. New construction should be designed as sympathetically as prior additions.

1. Siting

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

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 building. New construction is to be smaller in size and shorter in height than the historic building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the building as a freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and receded from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic building 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 historic building should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained and materials not available when the building was constructed should be avoided.

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.

The Hide House (1945)





The Hide House (1945)
Loading Dock (1946)