

PRELIMINARY HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. NAME

Historic: Emil Blatz Recreation Building, Lincoln Park

Common Name: Same as above

II. LOCATION

1301 West Hampton Avenue a.k.a. 4700 North Green Bay Avenue a.k.a. 1270 West Glendale Avenue

Legal description: That portion of Lincoln Park in the NW ¼ SEC 5. T.7N. R.22E in which is situated the Emil Blatz Recreation Center. The park is otherwise described as: LANDS in SE ¼ SEC 31-8-22-SW 1/4 SEC 32-8-22-NE ¼ SEC 6-7-22 & NW ¼ SEC 5-7-22 THAT PART OF SD LANDS COM NE COR LOT 19 IN HORSE SHOE VILLA IN SD SE ¼ SEC-TH SELY & SLY ALG MILWAUKEE RIVER TO W LI OF ASSESSMENT SUBD NO 75-TH S ALG SD W LI TO N LI OF W GLENDALE AVE-TH W ALG SD N LI TO E LI OF N GREEN BAY AVE-TH NLY ALG SD E LI 2203.39' TO A PT 146.35' SLY OF HORSE SHOE VILLA-TH E 491.2'-TH N 214'M/L TO BEG

Tax Key No.: 205-9981-100-2

Aldermanic District 1
Alderman Marvin E. Pratt

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

Milwaukee County
Department of Parks, Recreation and Culture

V. DESIGNATION APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY:

Donna Schlieman

VI. YEAR BUILT:

1954

ARCHITECT:

Fitzhugh Scott, Jr.

VII. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Emil Blatz Recreation Building is located in Lincoln Park, part of the Milwaukee County Parks Department, approximately four and one half miles from the Central Business District. It is roughly bounded by North Port Washington Road to the east, Glendale Avenue to the south, North Green Bay Avenue to the west and West Lawn Avenue to the north. The park falls within the borders of two municipalities, Glendale and Milwaukee. The park was created to take advantage of a loop in the Milwaukee River that broadens out to encompass four islands. That portion of the park between the west bank of the Milwaukee River and Green Bay Avenue falls within the city limits of Milwaukee. Those portions of the park east of this area are within the jurisdiction of Glendale.

The Emil Blatz Recreation Building is situated in the southwest portion of the park, south of the parkway that forms an extension of Hampton Avenue through the park. The gable-roofed building is built of Sienna colored brick and is sited into a hill along the west bank of the Milwaukee River. The west or main elevation is one story and fronts onto a broad green meadow. The east elevation of the building faces a small cove in the Milwaukee River and is two stories high.

The west elevation appears as a low rectangular structure punctuated by a front gabled entry bay at the south and a front gabled bay at the north end. This north bay enframes the recessed main entrance and is clad with Lannon stone. The double leaf glass entry doors are surmounted by glass panels up to the ridge of the gable. Pin letters spelling out "Emil Blatz Recreation Building " are located to the right of the entry doors and are balanced by a pair of one-over-one sash windows at the left. A Lannon stone chimney is positioned adjacent to this entry bay. Other one-over-one sash windows are grouped by threes along the remainder of the façade.

The east elevation is more irregular in form. Gabled pavilions extend out from the building at the north and south ends of the building. Banks of windows are grouped on each story to take advantage of the river view. A balcony extends between these pavilions on the second story. Tucked under this balcony and adjacent to the south pavilion is a small addition with two pairs of one-over-one sash. Various other windows and doors are arranged along the façade to conform to the interior floor plan. The south and north facades are utilitarian in character and feature various windows. A chimney is located at the north elevation. A broad concrete staircase with metal railing connects the front of the building to the lower grade at the riverfront.

The recreation building is integrated into the landscape design along the water's edge. A broad concrete terrace leads from the structure out to the cove and stairs descend to the water's edge. A stone retaining wall and bulkheads secure the shoreline around the cove. A concrete walkway extends from the terrace and follows along the north arc of the cove to a lookout that provides a view of the river and the Blatz Recreation Building. A grove of trees is located along the south arc of the cove.

The interior of the building consists of a series of offices, restrooms, a large community or all-purpose room on the upper level, and a memorial room that featured a fireplace and which had furnishings and artwork from Emil Blatz. The wall surfaces are simple painted concrete

block and tile. Alterations to the exterior appear to be minimal. Original plans show that the windows had horizontal muntins. The current replacement windows are one-over-one sash to which security bars have been added.

VIII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Blatz Recreation Building is a typical example of a post-World War II parks building. Following the trend toward a more modern treatment of public facilities, the building departs from the period revival designs that characterized earlier parks buildings in Milwaukee such as the Mediterranean style structure at South Shore Park, the Tudor style building at Kletsch Park, and the Colonial style building at Humboldt Park. The elimination of all decorative elements in favor of simple brick and Lannon stone, and the simplification of the form into a long, low slung front reminiscent of the ranch house were features that came right out of the modernist vocabulary that was wholeheartedly embraced in the late 1940's and 1950's.

The building is associated with one of the famous beer baron families of Milwaukee, the Blatz family. Emil Blatz was the son of pioneer brewer Valentine Blatz and first worked at the Second Ward Savings Bank before starting at the family brewery at age 19. By age 30 he had retired from active business and devoted himself to investments and the arts. He donated two structures to the people of Milwaukee, the Blatz Temple of Music in Washington Park and the Emil Blatz Recreation Building in Lincoln Park.

IX. HISTORY

Initially, Milwaukee had no public parks, as we know them today; just a collection of scattered lots donated to the city by public-spirited individuals. As the city was platted, pioneer real estate speculators, including Juneau, Kilbourn, Rogers and others set aside public squares and small green spaces such as Walker Square, Clark Square, Franklin Square, Fourth Ward Park (Zeidler Park today), First Ward Park (Burns Triangle/Burns Commons today) and Courthouse Square (Cathedral Square today) for public use. They were mostly barren, unimproved spots used chiefly for public assembly and militia drill and were not generally viewed as recreational or aesthetic amenities. Maintenance of these squares fell under the jurisdiction of the individual wards into which the city was divided for administrative purposes. Since general city revenues could not be spent on these parks, ward funds were raised by special taxes levied within the particular ward where the park was located. The Department of Public Works provided the actual work crews, and the costs were charged to the wards. As a result, the quality of the parks varied from ward to ward according to the affluence and interest of the residents.

Public demand for larger, naturally landscaped parks began to grow in the 1840's and resulted in city tree planting as well as attempts to develop a lakefront park promenade. Interest in a park system grew in succeeding decades, but the city found itself financially unable to support a park board. So, the local wards continued to handle their own small ornamental green spaces. With the Common Council's approval of the construction of a city park on the grounds of the new reservoir (Kilbourn Park) on October 14, 1872 the public agitation for the establishment of more municipal parks resumed. In the late 1870's park advocates succeeded at introducing park legislation in the State legislature. When this first initiative failed, they continued their efforts until they were finally successful in passing some legislation in 1889. The resulting Park Commission was empowered to purchase sites and develop parks and was determined to create a chain of parks dispersed throughout the city. The first park sites had been chosen by the fall of 1890 and consisted of Lake Park, Riverside Park, Mitchell Park, Humboldt Park and Kosciuszko Park. In

many instances land was purchased outside the city limits of Milwaukee in anticipation of the city's growth and in order to acquire enough acreage to create large parks. These would become the nucleus of today's County Park System.

The first portion of today's Lincoln Park was acquired in 1907 and consisted of 180.61 acres that comprised the Lindwurm tract and the Allering tract. The property was located at a loop in the Milwaukee River that provided two and one-half miles of water frontage, a feature very desirable for park purposes. To quote the Park Commission report of 1907:

A better selection than these tracts of land for a north side park could not have been made. Its eastern boundary, the Port Washington road, and its western boundary, the Greenbay road, are both main arteries of travel, connecting Milwaukee with the suburbs and also with interurban towns. Hampton Avenue, which bounds the Allering tract on the north and cuts through the southern portion of the Lindwurm tract, extends from Lake Michigan to the village of North Milwaukee. At its eastern terminus this street intersects with the Whitefish Bay road, thereby making a direct connection with Lake Park. Sherman Boulevard extended in a northerly direction from Sherman Park would intersect with Hampton avenue at the present western limits of the village of North Milwaukee. Thus this park connects with all prominent thoroughfares, which, in our opinion, will eventually be converted into parkways and boulevards.

The Lindwurm tract had belonged to Captain William H. Lindwurm who had come to Milwaukee from Seesen, Germany in 1845. He had a farm at this location and was also a well-known real estate developer and county supervisor. He died in 1879 at the age of 61 but it was not until 1907 that his property was sold to the city for the sum of \$188,320.

By the end of 1908 the newly acquired property had been surveyed and a park entrance had been created off Port Washington Road. By 1909 efforts began to enlarge the park so that its boundaries would encompass both banks of the Milwaukee River. A concrete bridge was constructed over the river at Hampton Avenue in 1913, and a golf course was added in 1916. The name Lincoln Park was officially adopted in 1915 after have been called the Lindwurm tract or Evergreen Park earlier. A two-story pavilion was built in 1918 that included kitchen facilities, dressing rooms and lavatories. Additional land was acquired in 1919 and 1926. By the end of 1929 park acreage had grown to 259,906 acres with park attendance climbing to 350,000. Some 100,000 people enjoyed the bathing beaches along the Milwaukee River. By 1934 acreage had increased to 307,920. Due to cut backs in operating funds during the Great Depression and in response to a climate favoring mergers and consolidations, the city of Milwaukee deeded thirty seven of its parks over to Milwaukee County on January 1, 1937. Lincoln Park today offers a range of recreational opportunities including football, softball and hardball diamonds; cross country skiing; an archery range; picnic areas; playgrounds; an area for day camping; a casting pier; hiking trails; nature study areas; ice skating; and a neighborhood and recreation building, the Emil Blatz Recreation Building.

Emil Blatz was the son of pioneer brewer Valentine Blatz. A native of Bavaria, Valentine Blatz immigrated to Buffalo, New York and then came to Milwaukee and began working for John Braun's brewery at the southwest corner of East Juneau Avenue and North Broadway. He married Braun's widow in 1851 after Braun died and assumed control of the brewery renaming it after him. The Blatz Brewing company was known for its innovation and was the first Milwaukee brewery to establish a bottling department when bottle manufactures perfected a cap that could withstand the pressure of carbonation in 1875. In 1876 the company took the top-brewing award at the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition. By 1880 Blatz had established agencies in New York,

Boston, Chicago, New Orleans, Memphis, Charleston, Savannah as well as other principal cities across the country. Other innovations included the first pipeline between the brewery and the bottling works the second such pipeline in the country and the first in Milwaukee (1889), and the first installation of electrical power in a brewery (1892). Blatz sold his interest in the brewery to a London syndicate in 1890/1891 but retained presidency of the company until his death at age 68 in 1894. In addition to his brewery pursuits Valentine Blatz was involved in numerous civic projects as well as banking, real estate and insurance. His son Albert followed him as company head until 1920.

Valentine's son Emil led a quiet life and pretty much stayed out of the public eye. He was born in 1858 and started working at age 14 in the Second Ward Savings Bank of which his father had been one of the organizers. He then began work in the brewery at age 19 and would become the company's treasurer. Emil retired from active business life at age 30 and devoted himself to music and travel. Emil Blatz would leave two structures as his legacy to the people of Milwaukee, the Blatz Temple of Music at Washington Park and the Emil Blatz Recreation Center in Lincoln Park.

Emil Blatz intended to make the Temple of Music a posthumous gift and was going to make provisions for the structure in his will. Working closely with his architect Fitzhugh Scott, Sr., Mr. Blatz studied potential sites and after checking out all the parks in town decided that Washington Park would be best suited to receive his gift based on the west side's population density and the park's location along public transportation lines. A friend convinced Blatz to make the gift while he was still alive and the band shell was completed in Washington Park. Although he wanted the gift to remain anonymous, friends again convinced Emil Blatz to allow his name to be used and be recognized for his generous gift. The grateful populace poured out some 40,000 strong to honor him at the band shell's dedication on August 10, 1938. The Art Moderns style structure was designed by Fitzhugh Scott and is flanked by pylons that house the sound system. Blatz reportedly enjoyed concerts at Washington Park thereafter for a number of years.

The Emil Blatz Recreation Center was a posthumous gift to the city. Again, working with architect Fitzhugh Scott, Emil Blatz wanted to erect a monument in honor of former president Theodore Roosevelt whom he admired. Keeping himself out of the correspondence, Blatz directed Scott to write to Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. to ask his opinion about the type of monument that would be appropriate to memorialize his father. Roosevelt replied that his father would have preferred something that the public could use rather than a monument. After consultation with architect Scott and Mayor Daniel Hoan, Emil Blatz chose to leave funds for a recreation center. Upon his death at age 86 on May 15, 1944, Blatz' \$1,750,000 estate went to charity. Various social service groups as well as Columbia Hospital, St. Mary's Hospital and St. Joseph's Hospital were the beneficiaries.

An amount of \$175,00 was willed to Blatz' secretary Mary Monica Fitzgibbon to be spent in the construction of a building to be known as the Emil Blatz Recreation Center. The will specified that the building be constructed on property donated by Milwaukee County and that it be turned over to the County for public use as an athletic and recreational facility. He directed that one room be known as the Emil Blatz room and contain his furniture, rugs, paintings, and statues. Arrangements were made before his death for the building to be constructed in Washington Park. The two-story building had an ambitious program and was designed to house a gymnasium, a stage with a balcony to seat 500 people, a scenery and painting room, a dressing room, check and supplies room, a wood and metal shop, a kitchen, a games room, an office, rooms for artwork and table tennis and sewing as well as a laboratory and two classrooms.

It would take a decade for the Emil Blatz Recreation Building to be constructed, and changes occurred to its location and design before it would finally open to the public. Instead of Washington Park, the decision was made to construct the center in Lincoln Park. The permit was taken out on January 8, 1954 and the final design work was said to have been done by Scott's son, Fitzhugh Scott, Jr. The building was sited along the Milwaukee River and the gymnasium and stage were dropped from the project. The two-story structure housed restrooms, a lounge and rooms for games on the first floor and an all-purpose room and Blatz memorial room on the second. The occupancy permit for the building was issued on January 14, 1955.

The Emil Blatz Recreation Building today houses an office for the County Sheriff in that north portion of the building once designated as the Blatz Memorial room. Other spaces in the building are occupied for park offices and the lower level now houses the Lincoln Park Community Center, Inc. a social service agency nearing its tenth anniversary. The Lincoln Park Community Center provides a variety of programs for seniors, youth, job seekers, and ex-offenders and runs programs for crime reporting called Hot Spots as well as Reclaim the Streets which focuses on communication and neighborhood pride for youth. The all-purpose room is still located on the upper story and can be reserved by community groups.

Alterations to the building appear to be minimal. Permit records show new replacement plumbing fixtures in 1985, alterations to windows and the overhead door at the garage in 1987, repair of fire damage in 1990, and work on the mezzanine storage area in 1996. The exterior of the building has remained in good repair. Milwaukee County currently plans to demolish the building. The County will be giving the site to a private not-for-profit organization, M7 Community Development Corporation, for the construction of a privately owned 53,800-foot facility for banquets, private events, moderately-priced dining and club dining.

The Architect

Fitzhugh Scott was born in Milwaukee in 1881, the son of Frederick Meyers Scott and Mary Evelyn Caswell Scott. He was one of seven children. The family relocated to Atlanta, Georgia where Fitzhugh was raised and attended the local public schools. In 1897 he entered the Georgia Institute of Technology which he attended for three years. He then worked for an architect for a year and a half. He subsequently enrolled in Columbia University in New York City and graduated in architecture in 1905. Scott then returned to Milwaukee to join his parents who had returned around 1902. Fitzhugh first lived with his parents at 2328 East Back Bay, the former Charles Sprague Forsyth House. Fitzhugh's father worked in the real estate, insurance, and investment departments of the Wisconsin Trust Company and held this position until his retirement in 1910. He later died at the age of 61 on September 22, 1911.

Fitzhugh Scott's architectural career in Milwaukee began with work for the architectural firm of Alexander C. Eschweiler with whom he worked until 1908 when he opened his own practice in the Pabst Building downtown. Fitzhugh married Elise Landrum in 1909 in Atlanta, Georgia. The couple had three children, Fitzhugh, Jr. (born 1910), William Frederick (born 1911) and Elise Warren (born 1913).

Fitzhugh Scott moved his offices from the Pabst Building to 730 North Jefferson Street (razed) and shared this space with his brother Frederick M. Scott, Jr. who sold real estate. In 1914 the brothers formed Scott and Scott, an architectural firm. Fitzhugh was on his own again in 1915 when his brother left Milwaukee.

Fitzhugh Scott continued to practice on his own at the Jefferson Street office until he entered the U.S. Army in 1918. After the war, Scott reopened his practice in the Colby-Abbot Building at 330 East Mason Street (a.k.a. 753-761 North Milwaukee Street) in 1919. A year later, Scott took McDonald Mayer into partnership under the firm name Scott & Mayer. In 1924 the firm moved to new offices at 724 East Mason Street (razed). In 1925 or 1926 the partnership dissolved. Little is known about Mayer since he only appears in the city directories during the years of his partnership with Scott.

Scott practiced alone until 1931 when he took Ralph Kloppenburg into his office, first as draftsman and later as architect. Like Scott himself, Kloppenburg had worked for the Eschweiler firm in 1928 and 1929. During the Great Depression, Kloppenburg was let go. Scott then began working out of his home in 1934.

Fitzhugh Scott's obituaries state that Fitzhugh, Jr. was associated with his father's firm beginning in 1935, but city directories show that the son worked as a clerk for the Village of River Hills until 1938, after which time he joined his father's practice. The firm name remained "Fitzhugh Scott" until the late 1940's when it was changed to Fitzhugh Scott-Fitzhugh Scott, Jr.

The firm relocated its offices to 5623 North Lake Drive in 1952. Around 1954 Ralph Kloppenburg rejoined the Scotts, along with his son Jack R. Kloppenburg under the firm name Scott Kloppenburg Scott. Fitzhugh Scott Senior died of a heart attack on Saturday, October 12, 1957 at his home at 7800 North River Road in River Hills, a home he had occupied since 1925. He was 75. His obituaries state that he had been a member of a number of clubs in Milwaukee but resigned from them after the death of his wife Elise in 1951. Scott was known as a quiet man who preferred work to any other activity and preferred functional architecture. In 1948 the American Institute of Architects honored Scott for advancing his profession.

Scott's many architectural patrons were well-known socialites of Milwaukee. His projects include: the Armin Schlesinger house (1911-1912); the Caleb Johnson house (1913); the Herold Seaman house; the W.R. Helmholtz house; the Myron T. McLaren house (1920) with Mayer; the Dr. Curtis A. Evens house (1923) with Mayer; the Blatz Temple of Music (1938); the Milwaukee Country Club; the Camp Randall Memorial Practice Building at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; several buildings at the Milwaukee Country Day School; the Allen Bradley plant; and St. Mark's Church. Scott had a fondness for hospital buildings since he thought they benefited the largest number of people. During his career, he designed the south wing of the Milwaukee Protestant Home (1925); an addition to the Milwaukee Infants Home at 2301-2307 East Bradford (razed); the tuberculosis hospital on the Veterans Administration Hospital grounds; the Milwaukee Children's Hospital and its addition at 17th and Wisconsin Avenue.

Scott's architectural practice was continued by his son Fitzhugh, Jr. under the name Scott & Kloppenburg in 1958. When the Kloppenburgs left to set up their own firm Fitzhugh, Jr. worked under his own name at the North Lake Drive office. In 1966 Scott took David T. Kahler into the practice first as a draftsman then as an architect. Later name changes reflect restructuring in the firm over time:

- ◆ Fitzhugh Scott Architects and Planners (1974)
- ◆ Kahler Slater Fitzhugh Scott (1975)
- ◆ Kahler Slater Torphy Engberg Inc. (1983)
- ◆ Kahler Slater Torphy Architects (1987)

- ◆ Kahler Slater Architects Inc. (present)

Fitzhugh Scott, Jr. moved to Vail, Colorado in 1977 and was associated with the firm until 1983. The firm now employs 98 staff members and has offices in Milwaukee and Madison. It specializes in planning, architecture and interior design for corporate, health care, civic/cultural, higher education, hospitality and historic restoration projects. Since David Kahler became part of the firm, projects and awards have included:

- ◆ UWM Golda Meir Library (1969 Wisconsin AIA Merit Award)
- ◆ Whitefish Bay High School Field House and Swimming Pool (1969 Wisconsin AIA Merit Award)
- ◆ Milwaukee School of Engineering Fred Loock Engineering Center (1969 Wisconsin AIA Honor Award)
- ◆ Yale University Mathematics Building competition runner up
- ◆ W.H. Brady Co. Manufacturing and Warehouse Building (1971 Wisconsin AIA Merit Award)
- ◆ First Wisconsin Center local coordinators for project designed by SOM, Chicago (1972)
- ◆ Edward Demmer Memorial Center for Junior Achievement of SE Wisconsin (1974 Wisconsin AIA Merit Award)
- ◆ UW-Madison Physics/Astronomy Building (1974 Wisconsin AIA Honor Award)
- ◆ Condominium Complex in Alta, Utah (1974)
- ◆ Addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum (1975)
- ◆ Milwaukee Landmark Lighting master planning project (1989 American Institute of Architects urban design award)
- ◆ Wisconsin State Capitol restoration (1991)
- ◆ Santiago Calatrava addition to the Milwaukee Art Museum local coordinators
- ◆ Kahler Slater awarded the inaugural 1998 AIA Wisconsin Architecture Firm Award

The Emil Blatz Recreation Building, when viewed in the context of the firm's work, appears to have been a minor commission although it was designed for a prominent patron. The building did not break new ground in terms of design or innovation. Whether this can be attributed to the fact that the final drawings were prepared after Mr. Blatz's death is not known. The Blatz Temple of Music, also by the firm, showed a striking degree of originality and is one of the outstanding park buildings in Milwaukee.

SECTION XI. SOURCES

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