

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. NAME

Historic Name: Charles Muehlbach Pharmacy Building

Common Name:

II. LOCATION

3521-23 North Teutonia Ave. (a.k.a. 1905 W. Keefe Ave.)

Milwaukee, WI 53206

10th Aldermanic District - Alderman George Butler

Tax Key Number: 284-1501-000

Legal Property Description:

RODDIS SUBDIVISION NO. 4 (W H) in SE 1/4 SEC 7-7-22 BLOCK 1 LOT 1.

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

Evelyn Taylor c/o Louis and Ida Taylor

P.O. Box 64065

Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204-6465

V. **YEAR BUILT:** Permit taken out January 4, 1915

ARCHITECT: Valentine A. Siebert

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

A. ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTER

The property at 3521-23 N. Teutonia Ave. (a.k.a. 1905 W. Keefe Ave.) is a 2 1/2 story, hip roof rectangular structure in the Arts and Crafts style that is located at the corner of Teutonia and Keefe Avenues. The building occupies most of its lot and is built up to the east and north property lines with a small paved parking area to the rear and a narrow walkway on the south. The lower story is brick veneered while the upper story is stucco clad. In the tradition of the Arts and Crafts the stucco is slightly flared where it meets the brick of the first story and the eaves are enlivened by exposed shaped rafter tails. The Teutonia Ave. elevation features a storefront with the entrance at the corner of Keefe Ave. and an additional entrance to the upper level flat. Above the storefront is located a three-sided bay and a pair of sash and the attic story features a rectangular dormer with hip roof. The Keefe Ave. elevation is likewise simple in detail with an entrance to the upper flat and a small window set high in the wall on the first story and a three-sided bay, a pair of piano windows and four other sash on the second. A rectangular dormer with hip roof is situated above the bay at the attic level and a chimney extends from the roof slope. At the south elevation are located various window openings. Windows are cottage style with 6 or 8-over-1 sash. Changes to the original building include a second story rear porch supported by metal pipes which was added in 1921 and enclosed with cement asbestos shingles; a fiberglass roofed carport at the rear; a billboard added to the Keefe Ave. facade which covers a small window; a metal security door at the entrance to the second story on Keefe Ave.; the closing up of various windows with plywood; a scissor style security gate across the storefront entrance. All of the alterations are reversible and none have permanently compromised the structure of the building.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Muehlbach Pharmacy Building is a fine example of an Arts and Crafts commercial structure and one of a number that were built in the city in the years before World War I. The relative simplicity of the design make these Arts and Crafts style buildings less noticeable than their gaudier Queen Anne counterparts and it is only in recent years that the subtle craftsmanship of this style has come to be appreciated. The simplicity and reliance on the materials to make the architectural statement were consciously part of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic which turned away from the flamboyant playfulness that characterized much late 19th century commercial design. As a building type, the neighborhood corner store has had a long history in the city, with many serving as grocery or hardware stores or pharmacies like this one. The changing nature of retailing has meant the demise of most of the small businesses once located in these buildings with the result that many of these structures have been demolished in recent decades while a few have been converted to rental

units. Corner stores are now considered an endangered building category.

VIII. HISTORY

The building at 3521-23 N. Teutonia Ave. (a.k.a. 1905 W. Keefe Ave.) is located on land originally platted in 1891 by William H. Roddis as Roddis Subdivision No. 4. The subdivision consisted of 24 lots bounded on the south by Union Cemetery, on the north by Keefe Ave, on the east by Teutonia and on the west by 20th St.. William and Sara L. Roddis sold this corner lot to Charles and Laura Muehlbach for \$1,000 on December 19, 1914 and permits to construct the building were taken out several weeks later on January 4, 1915. The \$8,700 structure was built by mason contractor William Dahlman and carpenter William Bublitz. Milwaukee architect Valentine A. Siebert designed the Arts and Crafts style structure. Siebert began his architectural career around 1908 in the firm of Betts & Hosmer in downtown Milwaukee and later formed a series of partnerships with such designers as John P. Bruecker, August G. Wolfe, Frank E. Gray and Henry Voelz. Historic Preservation Commission staff surveys have turned up only one other known commission by Siebert, at 3017 N. Marietta Ave., and he does not appear to have been among the prominent architects of his era.

Charles Muehlbach was a pharmacist who had experience working in other drug stores on Walnut St. and Center St. before building this structure to house his own business and residence. In addition to dispensing drugs, the pharmacy also advertised that it carried stationery and cigars. Muehlbach's was similar to the dozens of local neighborhood independent pharmacies that could be found throughout Milwaukee into the 1970's. This building would remain a pharmacy until the 1960's under the proprietorship of Charles Muehlbach (1915-1925), Edwin B. Manhardt (1926-1939), Arthur E. Keinth (1940-1946), Ralph H. Stark (1947-1952), LeRoy McClelland (1953-1962).

It is unclear whether or not the second story living space always had more than one unit but by the early 1920's various physicians and dentists also had their practices in the building. Among those documented are dentists Jerome A. Reichert (1922-1939), Lewis R. Rubin (1942-1944), Ralph R. Espersperger (1950-1962) and physicians George J. Schweitzer (an ear, nose and throat specialist from 1923-1933) and John P. Scheible (1936-1941). Various other tenants are also shown living here throughout the years.

Perhaps failing health led Charles Muehlbach to change his occupation. The Muehlbachs moved from the upper flat here to a new residence at 2251 N. 53rd St. in 1924 and went on to open a restaurant on State St. Muehlbach subsequently died in 1927 and his widow followed him in 1929 at the young age of 36. Before his death, Muehlbach sold the Teutonia Ave. building to Edwin B. and Margaret Manhardt on January 8, 1926. The new owners continued the pharmacy operation on

Teutonia Ave., calling the business the Unity Pharmacy. The Manhardts originally lived off the premises but during the Depression moved into one of the upper units in 1934. Manhardt eventually lost ownership of the building in a foreclosure action in 1939 but worked out an agreement with the financial institution to continue the pharmacy and maintain residency at the building. In 1943, dentist Jerome A. Reichert, a former tenant in the structure, acquired the property and he in turn sold the building to Ludwig and Therese Trummer in 1950. The Trummers lived in the building through 1969 and Ludwig worked for International Harvester.

The pharmacy, as indicated above, remained in operation under Arthur E. Keinth, then Ralph Stark and lastly under LeRoy McClelland. After its closure in 1962, the first floor storefront remained vacant until Syl's Cleaners opened on the premises in 1965. Syl's was managed by Thomas A. Williams and then T. C. Winters. Thomas and Joan Hegwood purchased the building on December 12, 1968 and took over the dry cleaning operation under their own name in 1970. The Hegwoods sold the building to Louis and Ida Taylor on December 8, 1975. They had been running a dry cleaning establishment at 3114 north 16th St. called Economic Cleaners and added the business on Teutonia Ave. which they also called Economic Cleaners. They specialized in leather and suedes and also advertised that hats could be blocked and cleaned there. The Taylors moved to upper flat and still reside there today. Economic Cleaners closed after 1993 and the signage identifying the business has recently been painted over.