

Kalamazoo Historic District Study Committee Report

North Douglas Addition to the Stuart Area Local Historic District

1. Charge of the Historic District Study Committee

The Kalamazoo City Commission appointed a historic district study committee at their regular meeting of December 20, 2004. The committee's charge is to study potential historic districts in the City of Kalamazoo including the Marlborough Local Historic District at 471 West South Street, the North Douglas Addition to the Stuart Area Local Historic District on the southeast corner of West North and Douglas and the West Main Hill Local historic district bounded by West Main, Bulkley, Monroe, West Lovell, West Michigan, Burrows, West Lovell and the city limits.



2. Composition of Committee Membership:

Lisa Poole-Woldring - Kalamazoo Historic District Commission, South Street-Vine Area Local Historic District property owner
BJ and Barb Shell – South Street-Vine Area Local Historic District property owners
Norman Jung - Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission
Leslie Decker - Executive Director, Stuart Area Restoration Association, Stuart Area Local Historic District property owner
Nelson Nave, AIA - Kalamazoo Historic District Commission, South Street-Vine Area and Haymarket Local Historic District property owner

3. Name of the Historic District Studied:

North Douglas Addition to the Stuart Area Local Historic District

4. Boundaries of the Proposed District

a. Verbal Boundary Description

The following boundary description includes the buildings in the North Douglas Addition to the Stuart Area Local Historic District:

4586 BEG ON S LI NORTH ST 134.83FT E OF E LI DOUGLAS AVE TH S PAR WITH E LI DOUGLAS AVE 116FT TH E PAR WITH S LI NORTH ST 48.53FT TH N 116FT TO S LI NORTH ST TH W ALG S LI NORTH ST 48.63FT TO BEG EXC E 11FT.

b. Visual Boundary Description

MAP – See attachment A

c. Boundary Justification

The area described above includes the southeast corner of the Stuart Area Local Historic District, excluded by the owners when the district was established in 1976. The lots have been combined into one parcel by the previous owner. It extends the boundaries of the Stuart Area Local Historic District to Douglas and West North, a natural boundary of the street. There are no additional potentially contributing historic structures on the opposite sides of the streets specified.

5. History of the District

The structures on the southeast corner of West North Street and Douglas Avenue were many different businesses over the years and displayed a variety of addresses. Now the buildings are joined together, but still maintain two addresses. Both addresses are, at the time of this report, vacant. Please note that due to

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the discrepancies in information between the primary sources consulted in developing this report certain assumptions were drawn as to addresses and locations.

The building known today as 1025 West North St. used to be four separate buildings. The last time each of the structures held a separate address the numbers ran from 1021,1023,1025,1029. Over the history of this corner these numbers changed, the biggest shift was in 1923 when Kalamazoo in general saw an overall renumbering of addresses. Construction in the early years of the twentieth century also caused the addresses on this corner to vary slightly.

Starting from the furthest east, the address 1021 is first recorded in the city directories in 1908 and listed as vacant. A look at the Sanborn Map Company's fire insurance maps for the city of Kalamazoo also shows 1021 West North in 1908 but several properties west of its final location. In 1910 the city directories lists the first occupant at 1021 West North as Jay B Rhodes Co., which it claims as a machinist shop. A look at the façade of the old Rhodes building shows a stone plaque that was imprinted with "Rhodes 1911" meaning that the building was built or more accurately completed in 1911 and possibly started in 1910. This building is not in the same location as the 1021 West North on the 1908 Sanborn Map, but the structure is still standing today and makes up the northern most building in 1025 West North St. The city directory from 1912 lists 1021 West North as the location of Martin Luther Drugs and a single resident and makes no mention of Jay Rhodes until 1917 when 1025 West North St. is listed as Jay B. Rhodes Auto Supplies as well as a single resident.

Jay B Rhodes is probably the most colorful person in the history of this location. He was born on March 2, 1865 and is mentioned frequently in the Kalamazoo Gazette for his inventions and achievements. He could be seen driving Kalamazoo's first car, which was powered by steam up and down the city streets. Rhodes was the holder of around 232 patented inventions, ten of which actually made him substantial. His most popular invention was a glass jar with a dipper spout and circulation vent that was purchased by the thousands to be used at filling stations. These jars were made at his shop on North St. Rhodes also invented an air dumping device for railroad cars that was used on the front in World War I and in the digging of the Panama Canal. One of his more forward thinking inventions was an early directional navigation device for automobiles. A traveler would input the distance desired for travel and the direction, when the device (which was hooked to the wheels of the car) recorded the desired distance a light would turn on indicating which direction to turn. Before this device could gain recognition the use of street signs became common and the device was thought to be obsolete. Jay Rhodes was the owner of Kalamazoo Fishing Tackle Co. from 1903-1905 when he sold it to William Shakespeare where it became the Shakespeare Co. Jay Rhodes is reported to have died on October 12, 1931 having spent most of his life in Kalamazoo.

1021 West North St. stayed Martin Luther Drugs until 1923 when the address shift moved the drugstore to 1025 and 1021 became Ulrich & Law. 1021 West North disappeared from the city directories until 1929 when it is attached to the name Henry Clapp who worked repairing shoes. In 1934 the name Max Doolittle appears at 1021 West North St. operating a watch repair shop. The Doolittle shop, which functioned mainly as a jewelry store, had varying companions at the 1021 location ranging from shoe repair to beauty parlors and business here ran until 1990 when the directories list the property "vacant".

The next structure is 1023 West North St. does not show up in the city directories until 1924 when the address shift moved Hickok grocers from 1025 to 1023. The next name to appear is name Carroll D. Harrison who was running a bakery out of this location. The Sanborn maps substantiate this with the indication of an iron over at this location. 1023 remained a bakery until 1931 when the Great A&P Tea Co. moved in from down the street. Kroger Grocery & Baking Co. is the next listing in 1939 and functioned for three years when Charles Jaquays is listed as running a grocery there. Jaquays Food Market is listed, with the occasional single tenant, until 1990 when this property is also vacant.

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The next property is 1025 West North which first shows up in 1917, as earlier mentioned, as Jay B Rhodes Auto Accessories and resident John Miller. 1919 has 1025 occupied by Baldwin & Hickok, which functioned as a grocery and had a meat dealer Thomas Hamden as well as a resident. In 1922 Hickok grocers is still in place but the meat vending has been taken over by John J Metzgen. The address shift on 1923 moves Hickok grocers to 1023 and 1025 is now the home of Martin Luther Drugs and the resident Kathryn M Ross at 1025 1/2. The 1926 directory still places Kathryn Ross at the 1025 residency but now the commercial space is home to John Metzgen grocery. Metzgen stays until 1929 when the location becomes a Piggly Wiggly store. The directories show a switch back to John Metzgen grocery in 1937, which stays until 1943 when the property shows up as vacant. It does not stay vacant long, in 1945 Sires Food Distribution Co. opens and in 1947 George Gardella opens a whole grocery. In 1950 the nature of the business changes and Peacock Cleaners moves in. The business changes again when in 1952 Lyons Drug Store is recorded at 1025 West North along with Post Office Substation No.5. The post office substation is not recorded in or after 1956 but Lyons Drugs stays until 1967 when Allen Super Drug takes over. This business is recorded until 1974 when the location is noted "vacant". The city directories record 1025 as "vacant" until 1981 when Beaver Research Company starts occupancy. Beaver Research is listed until 1999 when it moves to a Kilgore Rd location. The 2001 city directories list 1025 "vacant".

The last relevant property on West North St is 1029, which appears in 1926 as Martin Luther Drugs and a single tenant occupancy. The physician Albert Hodgman is on record in 1934 as the resident at 1029 1/2 North. The 1939 directories list Aldrich Cut Rate Drugs at 1029 with Hodgman remaining in the half number address. In 1942 John Lyons Drugs is listed and another physician joins Hodgman. In 1952 as mentioned earlier Lyons Drugs moves out and Hardings Market moves in along with the market's offices occupying the half number space. In 1956 the office space is recorded as Harding's accounting office and in 1957 the directory reads Harding and Corum accounting office. By 1966 the grocery was gone and by 1967 the directory records the 1029 occupant as Harding and Corum Inc. By 1969 Garlick's Paints was in and by 1970 it was out. 1971 shows a small engine parts shop in place and by 1978 the record shows a vacancy at 1029. In 1983 Beaver Research Co took over 1029 as additional space and by the 1987-88 city directory 1029 West North was no longer a recorded address.

This brings up the intersection at Douglas where one building is attached to the rest. Today this building bears the address 626 and is a curved cinder block structure that looks plainly to be a service station. It first appears in the directories in 1922 when the numbers read: 612- the residency of Jay B Rhodes, 618- Jay B Rhodes Auto Accessories, 618-622-Albert W Carr service station. By 1924 Mr. Rhodes was still at 612 but 618-622 was a Standard Oil service station. In 1926 the service station was listed as 618 and stayed that way until the 1931 directory listed it at 626 Douglas. In 1939 Terry Forrest was operating a filling station at 626 Douglas and did so until the city directories list a Boss Standard filling station in 1966. Occupancy stayed that way until 1978 when it was vacant until Deni's Auto Service moved in the following year. 1984 brought in Northwest Auto Repair which remained until 1993 when the directories no longer listed 262 Douglas.

An inspection of the buildings would suggest that Beaver Research Co took control of all five structures for its operations and connected them to each other before leaving the location.

6. Significance of The District

The significance of the North Douglas Addition to the Stuart Area Local Historic District has been evaluated according to the criteria for listing properties in the National register of Historic Places, and meets Criteria A and B.

Criterion A: Property is associated with Significant Events

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Criterion B: Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

8. Resource Counts and Percentages

The district contains four contributing resources, the two-story Rhodes Block and single story Lyons Drug Store Block. The former gas station on the southeast corner of Douglas and West North, stripped of its enameled metal siding is a non-contributing resource.

9. List of Historic and Non-Historic Resources

Historic Resources: None

Non-Historic Resources: None

10. Bibliography

BOOKS:

City Directories, Kalamazoo Michigan 1900-1970

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992

O'Connor, Pamela Hall and Lynn Smith Houghton, Kalamazoo: Lost & Found, Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission, 2001

DOCUMENTS:

Historic District Study Committee Report, Stuart Area Local Historic District, 1976

Kalamazoo Michigan: Multiple Resource Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places, 1983

MAPS:

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps - 1902, 1908, 1932, 1957

Combined Atlases of Kalamazoo Michigan 1873 and 1890, Republished, Kalamazoo County Historical Society, Whipporwill Publications, Evansville, IN 1984

PERIODICALS: None