



HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – STAFF REPORT

HPC2020-17

Address: 203 S Marion St
Meeting Date: June 17, 2020
Property Owner: 203 S Marion Street Corporation
Project Architect: Focus Construction / Booth Hansen
Historic Designation: Contributing Resource in the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District
Zoning: DT Downtown
Project Description: Demolish existing historic building and garage
Guidelines: Secretary of the Interior's Standards



Historic Preservation Ordinance

The following sections from the Historic Preservation Ordinance address demolition:

7-9-1: The purpose of the Ordinance is to improve values of historic properties, enhance the attractiveness of the Village, and encourage the rehabilitation of historic structures to prevent blight.

7-9-2: Non-Contributing Resource - a property within a historic district that does not represent significant historical and/or aesthetic characteristics which qualified the area as a historic district.

7-9-12(A): Review criteria for COAs. The HPC should consider the effect of the COA on the historic, aesthetic or architectural value, characteristics and significance of the historic district.

7-9-12(B): The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the Architectural Review Guidelines should be used when considering demolition. Standard 2 of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards encourages the retention and preservation of the significant original qualities and/or character of a property. If a

property is determined to be a Non-Contributing Resource, then the HPC must approve the COA without further review.

Architectural Review Guidelines

The purpose for architectural review is to protect the unique visual qualities of a building and its site that define their sense of history from inappropriate proposed alterations that will reduce that sense.

The relevant standards from the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation include the following:

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.
2. **The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.**
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Section A of the Architectural Review Guidelines (preamble) states that their purpose is to protect unique visual qualities of a building and site and determine if siting, massing, scale, materials and street rhythm are compatible with the neighborhood context.

Section B further discusses establishing contextual character through the following:

- a) Siting – trees, landscaping, building setbacks, garage access, driveways
- b) Massing – building height, roof forms and shapes
- c) Scale – number of stories, lot width to building width
- d) Materials – Roof, walls, trim, windows, porches

- e) Street rhythm – Historic styles in the area, massing, roof forms of adjacent buildings

Applicant's Proposal

The applicant plans to demolish the existing building and garage at 203 S Marion St. The applicant intends to build a new building at this location.

Due to substantial alterations completed outside the district's period of significance (1870-1929), the applicant has also requested that the Historic Preservation Commission provide their recommendations on whether the building may be reconsidered as non-contributing. While reclassification must ultimately come from the National Park Service, the State Historic Preservation Office would ask for the Commission's recommendations should a reclassification request be made.

Historical Summary

Statement of Significance for 203 S Marion St

203 S Marion St is a contributing building within the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District. It contributes to the story of the historic district on multiple levels: it is an example of the district's early single-family architecture and it directly embodies the growth and change of the district from a largely single-family neighborhood to a neighborhood noted for its diversity of building types. In this case, the building was converted from a single-family dwelling into apartments by prominent local architect E. E. Roberts, though it is unknown if there were any exterior changes made at this time or if those changes are extant. While the building continues to tell the story of the growing and changing neighborhood in its conversion to the Drechsler Funeral Home in 1933, this change and the associated alterations fall outside the district's period of significance (1870-1929). As such, the expansive brick addition that obscures the original front façade detracts greatly from the building's historic integrity and its ability to successfully contribute to the historic district.

History of 203 S Marion St

203 S Marion St (originally 203 Wisconsin Ave) was built in 1881 by James Campbell Rogers (1841-1927). Rogers, a pioneer settler originally from New York, lived with his family in the house for 45 years, until 1926. Rogers was a prominent early Oak Park resident, grain merchant, and a member of the Chicago Board of Trade for fifty years. Rogers notably gifted a Frank Lloyd Wright house, the Frank Thomas House (210 Forest Ave, 1901), to his daughter and her husband as a wedding gift.

While James Rogers's wife, Mary Rogers, lived the last four years of her life at 233 Linden Ave, her obituary noted that "the Rogers homestead [203 S Marion St] was for many years the center of social life in the village and its hospitable doors were always open to friends as well as to community interests" (Oak Leaves, September 26, 1930). In 1920, the Rogers had 203 S Marion St converted into two apartments in 1920 by E. E. Roberts.

203 S Marion St was sold to Earl Drechsler in ca. 1926. Drechsler owned a funeral home business founded in 1880 by J. W. Senne and bought out by his father, Charles Drechsler, in 1894. The original Drechsler Funeral Home was built by Charles Drechsler in 1894 at 1116 Lake St. Earl Drechsler converted 203 S Marion St into a funeral home with the help of architect Norman D. Barfield and moved the business to 203 S Marion St in 1933. At the opening of the new location in 1933, the Drechsler Funeral

Home was the only funeral home in Oak Park. It was noted in a 1933 Oak Leaves article that the new location could accommodate 300 and the opening was attended by 500 people. A later addition and alterations occurred in 1957 by architect John Barr Todd for Earl A. Drechsler.

203 S. Marion Street Building Permit Records:

1920, April 20 – Changing old residence to apartments. Metal lath and cement plaster interior walls and ceiling of stair hall to upper apartment.

Owner: W. E. Rogers
Architect: E. E. Roberts
Contractor: J. L. S. Bernard
Cost: \$7,000

1922, April 18 – Porch extension

Owner: W. E. Rogers
Contractor: J. L. S. Bernard
Cost: \$500

1922, Nov. 27 – Enclose second floor sleeping porch

Owner: James C. Rogers
Contractor: J. L. S. Bernard
Cost: \$500

1933, Aug. 31 – Neighborhood petition in support of allowing an undertaking establishment

1933, Sep. 22 – Alterations for a funeral home

Owner: Earl A. Drechsler
Architect: Norman D. Barfield
Contractor: C. Nelson
Cost: \$2,275

1938, July 21 – Convert old barn into a garage

Owner: Earl Drechsler
Contractor: Martin Schulz
Cost: \$265

1957, Aug. 19 – Addition and alteration to funeral chapel

Owner: Earl A. Drechsler
Architect: John Barr Todd
Contractor: Continental Construction Company

References:

Newspaper Articles:

1927. Oak Leaves. "James Campbell Rogers: Pioneer of Village and Distinguished Chicago Business Man Passes in His 86th Year." January 22, 1927.

1930. Oak Leaves. "Mrs. James C. Rogers: Death Takes Woman Who Was Distinguished in Oak Park Affairs for a Half Century." September 26, 1930.

1933. Oak Leaves. "Funeral Home Opens; Attracts A Large Crowd." December 21, 1933.

1971. Chicago Tribune. "Group is Fighting Time for Oak Park Landmark." July 13, 1972. (Thomas House)

Oak Park Building Permit Records

The Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District

The Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District is significant under three National Register criteria:

- Criterion A for its broad pattern of suburban development,
- Criterion B (more locally but to some extent nationally) for the architects who designed the buildings in the district, and
- Criterion C for architecture.

The period of significance for the Historic District is 1870-1929.

The Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District illustrates a regional and national shift in both architecture and suburban development, including the major re-orientation of domestic architecture from 19th century eclecticism to 20th century modernism, and community planning meant to incorporate a greater variety of building types into what was originally a single-family dwelling setting.

The Historic District's important historic role in suburban development stems largely from its integration of single-family housing with apartment and commercial buildings. The Village Board's first building ordinance adopted in 1902 reflected a local concern for the increase in apartment building construction, detailing requirements for including maximum dimensions, access to natural light, and safety protocols.

Prominent local architect E. E. Roberts was among those to address design challenges associated with the neighborhood's growth. Design solutions used by E. E. Roberts and others included adapting existing single-family buildings into multi-family buildings, designing duplexes, and designing apartment buildings that met existing building lines, offered open porches for apartment dwellings, and provided light and green space. Buildings like E. E. Roberts' Quadrangle Apartments (108-110 S East Ave) were celebrated for having more features in common with private suburban residences than they typical urban flat buildings of the era.

Contributing to the Historic District

203 S Marion St is listed as a contributing resource in the original 1983 Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District National Register nomination. 203 S Marion St is not, however, included on the list of "significant" buildings in the district.

The National Register Bulletin "How to Apply for the National Register Criteria for Evaluation" states: a "component of a district cannot contribute to the significance if:

- it has been substantially altered since the period of the district's significance *or*
- it does not share the historic associations of the district."

The bulletin further states that if a property's exterior is covered by a non-historic false-front or curtain wall, that it cannot be considered a contributing element in a historic district as it does not add to the district's sense of time and place. If the false front is removed and the original building materials are intact, then the property's integrity can be re-evaluated.

It is important also to consider the historic integrity of a historic resource. The National Register uses the seven aspects of integrity:

- **Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
- **Setting** is the physical environment of the historic property.
- **Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
- **Workmanship** is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
- **Feeling** is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- **Association** is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

While 203 S Marion St does not feature a false front, a non-historic addition obscures the first floor of the front, south side, and rear elevations. It is unclear if the original building materials are still found within the addition, but it may be unlikely due to the interior alterations that were likely necessary to convert the building from apartments to a funeral home. The general massing of the house is still apparent, but the numerous non-historic alterations have detracted from the building's historic integrity.

Staff Comments

The Architectural Review Guidelines recommend against demolition of buildings contributing within a historic district. In accordance with the Guidelines, it is recommended that the Certificate of Appropriateness be denied.

The applicant has also requested that the Commission provide their recommendation on whether the building may be reconsidered as a non-contributing building within the Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District. While reclassification is required by the National Park Service, the State Historic Preservation Office would request the Commission's recommendations in considering reclassification.

In considering whether the status of 203 S Marion St should be reconsidered as non-contributing, the Commission should specifically consider whether the non-historic alterations are considered "substantial" and whether, ultimately, the property retains the historic integrity to contribute to the criteria for which the district is significant.

Attachments

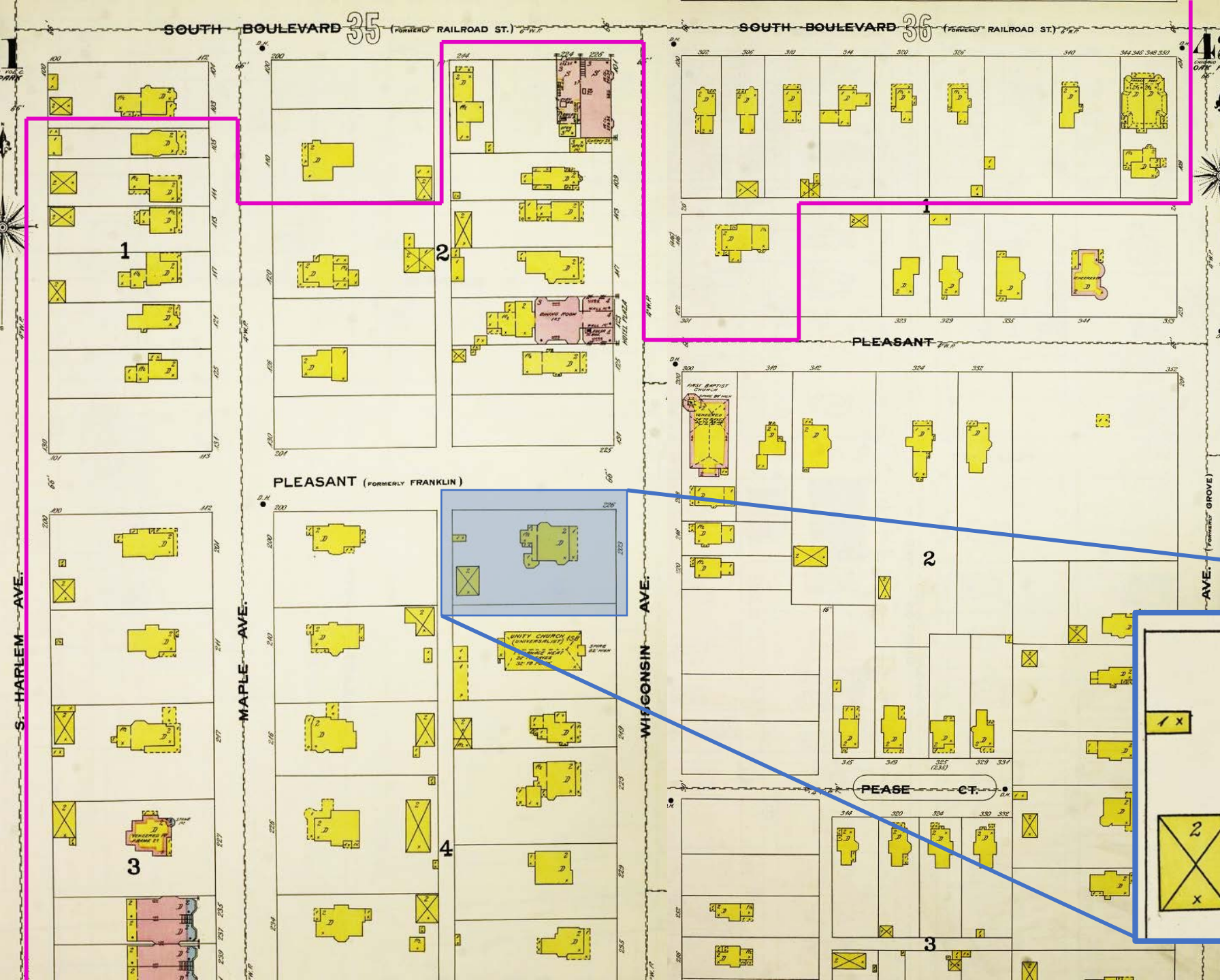
- Village Materials
 - o Village photographs from 2014
 - o Sanborn maps illustrating the building's context 1895-1950
- Applicant submission materials
 - o Historic Overview packet
 - o Certificate of Appropriateness form

Village Photos 2014







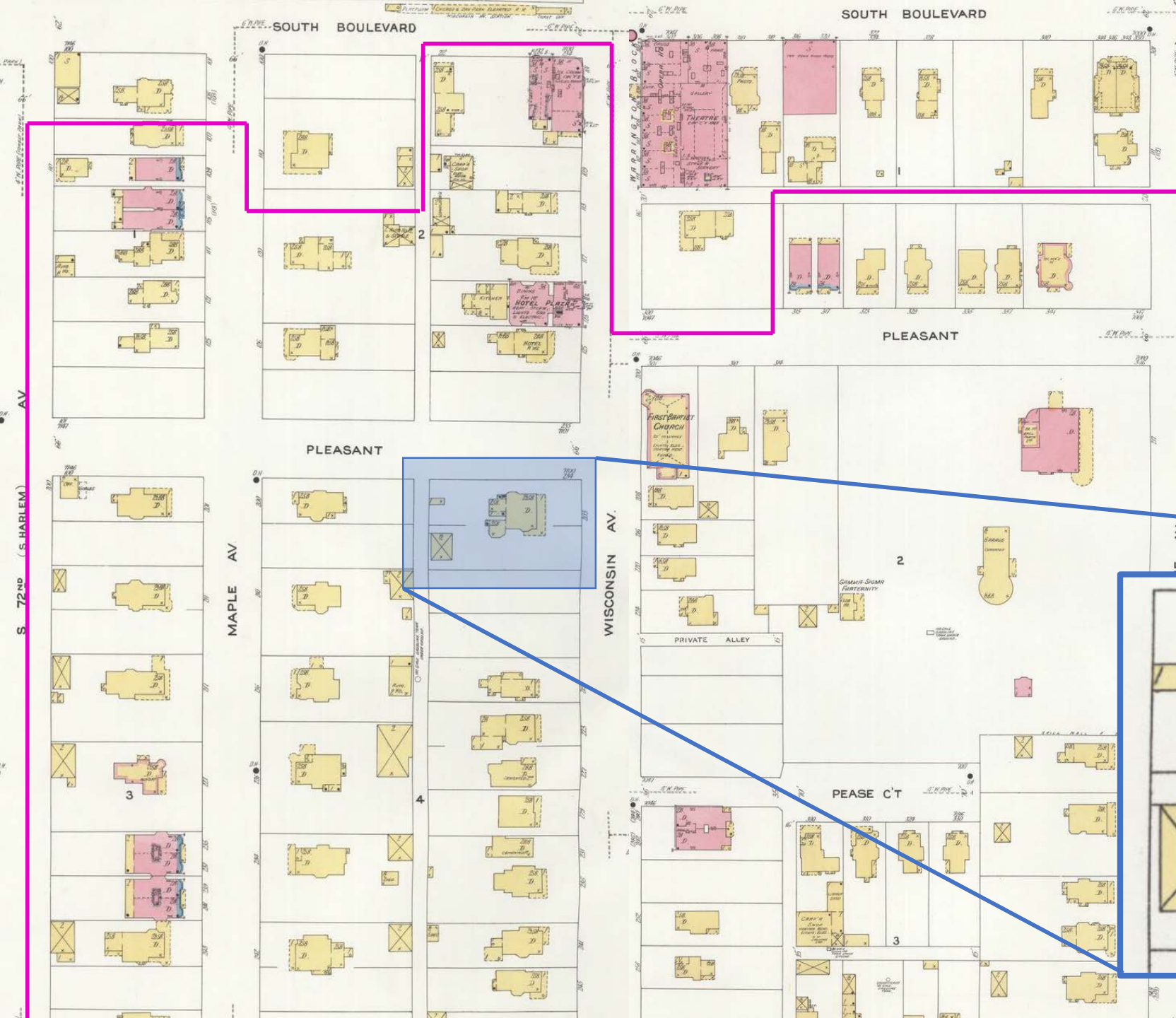


1895 Sanborn Map

Library of Congress

— Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District border

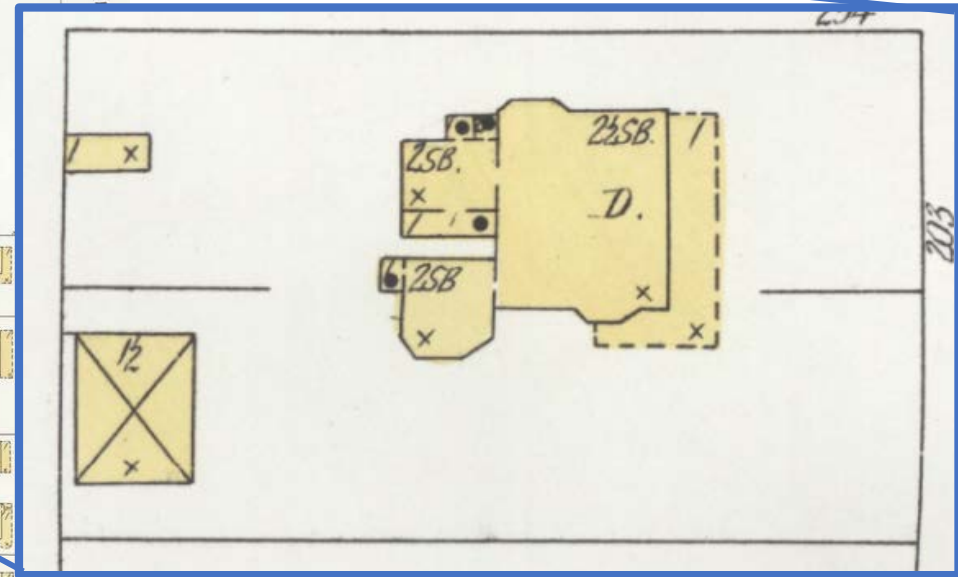


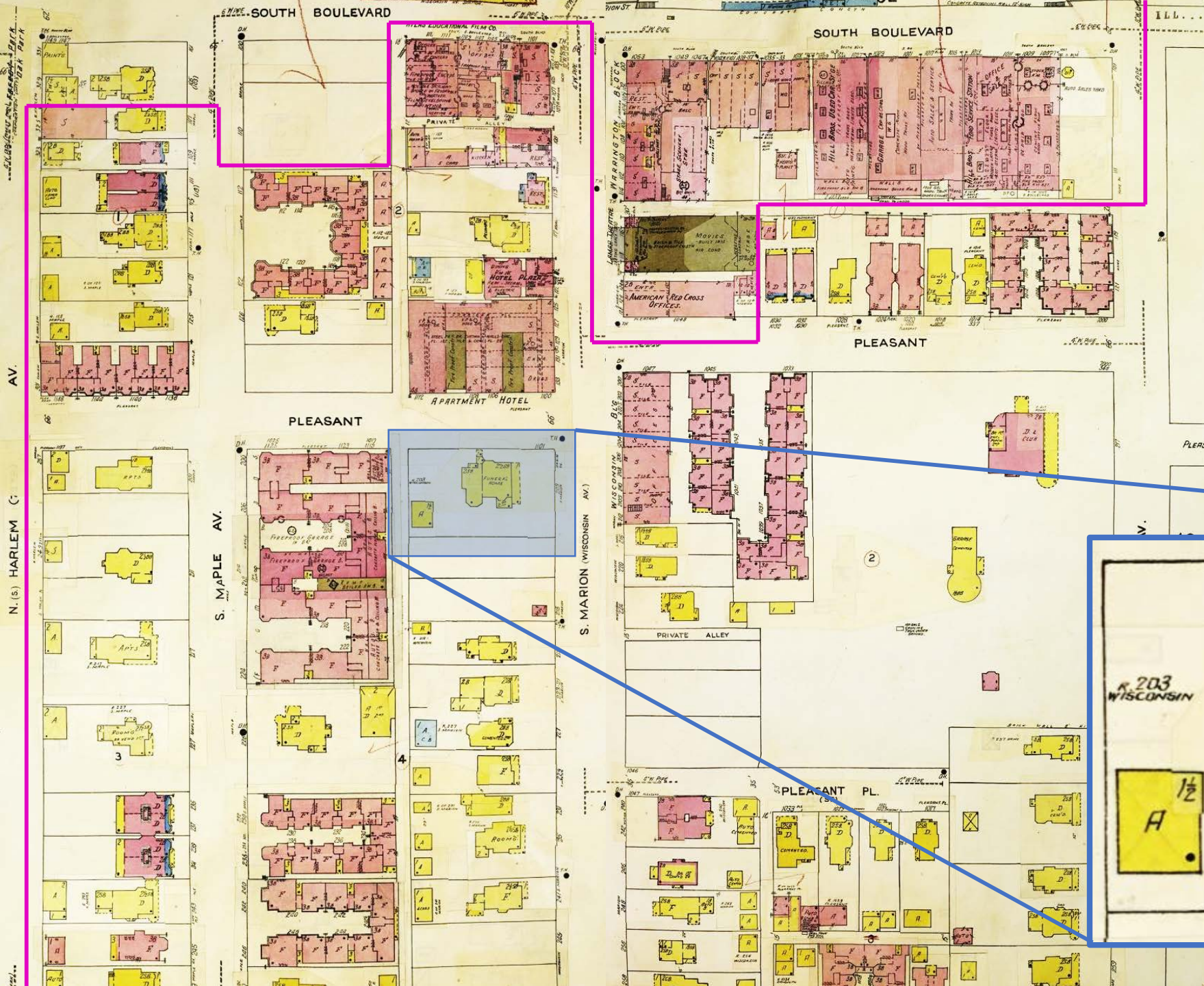


1908 Sanborn Map

Library of Congress

Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District border





1950 Sanborn Map

Library of Congress

— Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District border

