



CITY OF LA CROSSE HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Historic Landmark Nomination Form

1. What is the historic name of the Landmark or Landmark District?

Northern States Power Building

2. What is the current name of the Landmark or Landmark District?(If applicable)

Vacant N/A

3. Property Address: 122 5th Avenue North

4. OWNERSHIP

- a. Owner(s): Kellogg Investments, LLC
- b. Street: 126 5th Avenue South, Suite 100
- c. City, State, Zip Code: La Crosse, WI 54601 Phone: (608)792-9333
- d. Email: kbksparks@yahoo.com Parcel ID#: 20037-100

5. NOMINATED BY (If different):

- a. Name: Marcus J. Zettler - Zettler Design Studio, LLC
- b. Street: 1609 Mississippi Street
- c. City, State, Zip Code: La Crosse, WI 54601 Phone: (608)844-1208
- d. Email: MZettler0916@gmail.com

6. CLASSIFICATION AND USE (Check all that apply):

Proposed Designation (choose one)

☐ Landmark District

☒ Landmark

If it is a Landmark, choose a category (definitions can be found on the instructions page)

☒ Historic Structure

☐ Historic Site

☐ Historic Object

Present Use

☐ Agriculture

☐ Industrial

☐ Religious

☐ Commercial

☐ Military

☐ Scientific

☐ Educational

☐ Museum

☐ Transportation

☐ Entertainment

☐ Park

☐ Government

☐ Private Residence(s) ☒ Other ☐ Vacant

Condition:

☐ Excellent ☐ Deteriorated
☐ Good ☐ Ruins
☒ Fair ☐ Other

Has the property been nominated previously? ☐ Yes ☒ No

When? _____

What was the outcome? _____

Is the proposed Landmark or District on the National Register? ☐ Yes ☒ No

When? _____

7. SIGNIFICANCE:

Section 20.90 of the *Municipal Code of Ordinances* lists 4 criteria that a district, site, structure or object may be designated under.

Please check one or more of the listed criteria that apply to this Property:

☒ Associated with events or person(s) who have made a significant contribution to the history, heritage, or culture of the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin, or the United States.

☒ It embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style or method of construction or of indigenous material or craftsmanship.

☒ It is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work is significant in the development of the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin, or the United States.

☒ It exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, or community.

8. HISTORIC OVERVIEW/ANALYSIS (See attached instructions for analysis outline):

Please attach the analysis as a separate document containing the following sections:

A. Existing Physical Description

- a. Write a physical description of the nominated property or district in its current state.
- b. If it has been altered over time, indicate the date(s) and nature of the alterations.
- c. Include additional information as applicable.

B. Narrative History

- a. Provide a complete narrative history of the district, structure, site, or object.
- b. If known, include the year it was built, the architecture style, and the name of the architect or builder.
- c. Include references to source material that are listed in the bibliography.

C. Additional Information

- a. Include any additional information that helps support the claim of criteria (Section 7) made in this document; or is otherwise deemed useful for the purposes of evaluation.

D. Bibliography

- a. Include a list of all sources consulted.
- b. Include copies of relevant source materials with the nomination form.

9. PHOTOGRAPHS:

Include photos, as applicable, of the nominated district, structure, site, or object as follows:

A. Current photographs

- a. Exterior photographs are required.
- b. Interior photographs if available and relevant to its historic significance.

B. Historic photographs

- a. Interior and exterior if available.

Each photograph must be labeled with the street address of the building(s) and the month and year the photograph was taken.

Designation of property will require affixing a plaque to said property and that the plaque will be the sole property of the City of La Crosse. Signature of the property owner assures the Heritage Preservation Commission that designation and installation of a plaque are supported.

Signature of Property Owner



Date

Aug. 14, 2020

Signature of Nominator

Date

When completed, submit application to the City of La Crosse Planning Department, 400 La Crosse Street, La Crosse WI.

PLEASE NOTE: It is the responsibility of the nominator to provide the Heritage Preservation Commission and its Staff with information sufficient to fairly evaluate the nomination. **Incomplete nomination forms will not be accepted. A fee, in the amount stated in the Schedule of Fees and Licenses table in Section 25.01 of the Municipal Code, must be included.**

A. Property Description:

By Marcus J. Zettler – Zettler Design Studio, LLC

Property Overview:

Former Name: New Beginnings Church

Historic Name: Northern States Power

Address: 120-124 5th Avenue N, La Crosse, WI

Building Description:

The City of La Crosse Plumber's Return for 122 5th Avenue North was submitted November 15, 1916 as construction work was nearing completion (water hookup was December 5th). D. S. Law was the owner and developer of the property. According to a La Crosse Tribune article dated September 5, 1916 the second floor was to be occupied by the Chamber of Commerce. "In the tentative plans, a kitchen and serving room is provided, to handle the luncheons. The other space is cut up into the large convention hall, the offices of the executive secretary and his staff, quarters for the traffic bureau, and committee rooms." The article goes on to describe the building as being of "fire proof" construction. Wells E. Bennett was listed as the architect for the building. A circa 1920s photo clearly illustrates the original design of the front façade. The building was constructed as a two-story brick building occupying most of the lot. There was a pair of entry doors at the southwest corner of the building opening onto the stairs leading up to the Chamber of Commerce. These doors had an ornate limestone surround with classical detailing. The remainder of the first floor was occupied by a three-bay storefront. This storefront appears to have had metal frames, possibly bronze. Two side bays have large plate glass windows with prism glass transoms above. The center bay was deeply recessed and had a full lite entry door flanked by two side lites with Prairie influenced leaded glass. The façade is constructed out of tapestry brick, a very common building material in the 1910s-1930s.

This brick has a range in colors, but browns and burgundy tones dominate. There was a continuous limestone band that served as the lug sills for six evenly spaced double-hung windows. Above the windows was a large band of bricks set in a running bond soldier course. This brick band was terminated by a decorative band of limestone. Above the limestone was a sign band that was situated just below the main limestone cornice. Above the cornice were more brick and a limestone parapet cap.

The south and east facades are constructed out of common brick that once featured numerous double-hung windows. These walls are very utilitarian in appearance. The north wall was never visible since it was a party wall with the adjacent Elks Club Building.

The inside of the building has undergone numerous changes on the first floor, but a high degree of original building fabric remains on the second floor. The basement was always more of a utilitarian space and remains that way. Much of the exposed concrete has been painted, but it remains exposed.

The first floor has been remodeled numerous times. There are two suspended ceilings in the space, one of wood fiber tiles and the other a modern suspended acoustic ceiling. Modern carpet covers most of the floor areas except for the kitchen which appears to have a fluid applied coating over the previous VCT and ceramic tile in the restrooms. Many of the partition walls appear to be modern as well. The building only had one stair originally with the swing-arm steel fire escape located on the south side near the back of the building. The grand stair was reconfigured when the pair of entry doors was removed at the southwest corner of the building. The stair was a straight run and is now an 'L' shape.

The second floor retains a great amount of historic integrity. The grand stair leads to a

hallway still featuring patterned linoleum tile floors. There is a large amount of varnished woodwork still extant. Many of the offices and other rooms still feature patterned “Floralite” glass. The spaces at the back half of the building have had carpet installed over the original hardwood flooring. The original plaster ceilings are still exposed to view. The floor plan has had only minor revisions over the past 100+ years. The largest change has been the addition of a stair on the east side of the space.

The biggest changes to the building have occurred to the exterior. Sometime around 1950, the storefront was removed and replaced with a mid-century modern design. The face brick was removed from first floor and replaced with limestone veneer. The entry was moved to the southern half of the façade and the pair of doors leading to the stairs was replaced with a window. The second floor windows were mostly removed and replaced with small aluminum windows. Another renovation completely covered the second floor façade with a metal slip cover. An exact date could not be confirmed, but it appears that this work was done in the 1970s. The first and second floor windows on the south and east facades were also removed and either infilled with brick or had small aluminum windows installed.

B. Historical Analysis:

Building History:

The building at 122 5th Avenue North in downtown La Crosse replaced an earlier two-story wood frame building used as a boarding house. The earlier building was constructed sometime between 1884 and 1887. The Northern States Power Building was designed by architect Wells E. Bennett in a 19th Century Commercial Vernacular style with classical detailing. The structure was completed in 1917.

D. S. Law was the owner and developer of the property. He signed a ten year lease with the Chamber of Commerce, who was the building's first tenant. The 1917 City Directory lists the Chamber of Commerce as the only building occupant. The 1919 Directory has the Chamber of Commerce along with the Red Cross Information Bureau, Traffic Bureau, La Crosse Steel and Construction Co. and the WI and MN Light & Power Co. The Light and Power Company would change its name to Northern States Power Company circa 1926. Northern States Power Company would purchase the building in 1928. The Chamber of Commerce and the Bureaus would relocate to the Hotel Stoddard around the same time. The 1930 Directory lists Northern States Power Co. as the only occupant. The Eureka Vacuum Cleaning Co. shared space in the building starting around 1934 and was gone sometime between 1943 and 1945. Northern States Power Company remained in the building until 1994.

There were numerous changes made to the building by Northern States Power. The first major renovation occurred in 1929 when NSP remodeled the former Chamber of Commerce space into expanded office quarters for the company. Another modernization occurred circa 1950 when the storefront was modernized. The final major renovation by NSP occurred when the storefront was removed and infilled with limestone. The metal slip cover was probably added at that time. NSP was the

longest occupant of the building and was the second owner of said structure. On a side note, Northern States Power became Xcel Energy in August 2000. (Doering, p.2)

The building was listed as vacant in City Directories from 1995-2002. Anita Doering, Senior Archivist at the La Crosse Public Library, confirmed that the building was sold by NSP to Calvary Assembly of God in 1997. They operated in the space as New Beginnings Christian Church.

In 2003 New Beginnings Christian Church is listed as the building occupant in the City Directory. This last tenant moved out and sold the building on January 31, 2020. Kevin Kellogg purchased the building and is planning on converting the upstairs to apartment units and rehabilitate the first floor for a commercial tenant. The building has had multiple long term occupants which speaks to the flexibility and quality of the original design.

C. Additional Information:

or of indigenous material or craftsmanship.

Statement of Significance:

1. *The Property is associated with events or persons who have made a significant contribution to the history, heritage, or culture of the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin, or the United States.*

The Northern States Power Building was constructed for the newly formed La Crosse Chamber of Commerce. (Formed in 1916) The September 5, 1916 La Crosse Tribune article “New \$25,000 Home to be Built for Chamber of Commerce” has a detailed description of the space and lists some of the prominent members. The Chamber was located on the second floor. There were office quarters as well as an auditorium for speakers and demonstrations. Many of La Crosse’s business leaders were part of the Chamber of Commerce during this period, including F. P. Hixon (President), L. C. Coleman, Professor D. O. Coate among others.

Within a couple of years after completion, the company that would become Northern States Power Co. (later bought out by Xcel Energy) moved in on the first floor. This was the office for the utility company that supplied La Crosse with electricity. NSP remained in the building for almost 75 years giving the building a period of significance from its completion in 1917 until 1994.

2. *The Property embodies the distinguished characteristics of an architectural type of specimen, inherently valuable for a study of period, style or method of construction*

The building was constructed at the height of the Neo-Classical Revival that began as a result of the 1893 Columbian Exposition (World’s Fair) in Chicago. The front façade originally contained a classically detailed limestone surround framing a pair of doors leading up to the second floor Chamber of Commerce. These doors were removed in a later renovation. The upper portion of the building has a small limestone belt course and a larger limestone cornice with classical proportions. The building does not hold true to the Neo-Classical style since the tapestry brick is more common of craftsman architecture from the period. The original storefront had Prairie School influences in the leaded glass.

The building was constructed to be “fireproof”. Its primary structural frame is reinforced concrete with concrete columns, floors and ceiling slabs. Large concrete beams clear-span the first floor creating a large open space. The exterior walls are constructed of tapestry brick on the front façade and common brick on the other facades. This construction became common in the 1910s as a result of insurance companies and building codes getting more restrictive.

3. *The Property is representative of the notable work of a master builder, designer or architect whose individual work is significant in the development of the City of La Crosse, the County of La Crosse, the State of Wisconsin, or the United States.*

The building was designed by notable local architect Wells Bennett. Not as much is know

about Mr. Bennett since Parkinson and Dockendorff were the prominent architects in the La Crosse market. We do know that he was the architect that Percy Bentley apprenticed under before starting his own practice. Mr. Bennett also designed the YMCA building at the corner of Main and 7th Streets according to the WHS property record.

4. *The Property exemplifies or reflects the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, or community.*

The building on this property embodies the entrepreneurial spirit of the downtown since it was constructed as an investment property, and was the original home of the Chamber of Commerce. The formation of the Chamber of Commerce reflects the refinement and advancement in business education across the community and the country as a whole. The Northern States Power Company signifies the unification and advancement in public utilities as the nation built up its infrastructure. With the utility occupying the building for over seven decades, the structure has a long period of significance. This period of significance includes the ca. 1950 renovation where the front of the first floor was modified to have the brick replaced with Lannon Stone.

D. Bibliography:

Works Cited:

City Directories, La Crosse, Wisconsin. Spicer & Buschman's Directory Company, Philippi's Directory Company and Wright Directory Company, Milwaukee, WI, various, La Crosse Public Library archives.

City of La Crosse Plumbers Returns, 1916 and 1942.

La Crosse Tribune. New \$25,000 Home to be Built for Chamber of Commerce. 5 Sept. 1916.

La Crosse Tribune. Expansion is Begun. 28 Nov. 1916.

La Crosse Tribune. Gas Company Plans Two Big Changes 18 Jan. 1929.

La Crosse Tribune. Northern States Power in Formal Opening. 20 Nov. 1929.

La Crosse Tribune. New Offices of Power Company Opened Today, 21 Nov. 1929.

Rausch, Joan. City of La Crosse, Wisconsin, Intensive Survey Report, Architectural and Historical Survey Report. City of La Crosse, Wisconsin, July 1996.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. Fire Insurance Maps for La Crosse, Wisconsin. 1884, 1887, 1891, 1906, 1944, 1954, 1964. Located online at the Wisconsin Historical Society website and on microfilm at the La Crosse Public Library archives.

Historic photographs, archived at La Crosse Public Library Main Branch, Archives and University of Wisconsin – La Crosse, Murphy Library – Special Collections.

Wisconsin Historical Society Architecture and History Inventory, record #32292.

A special thanks goes out to Anita Doering of the La Crosse Public Library Archives and the staff of the UW-La Crosse Murphy Library Special Collections for their assistance in this research.

E. Sanborn Fire Insurance

Maps:

122 5th Avenue North

La Crosse, WI



Figure 1 – 1884 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (Wood framed shed on back of property)

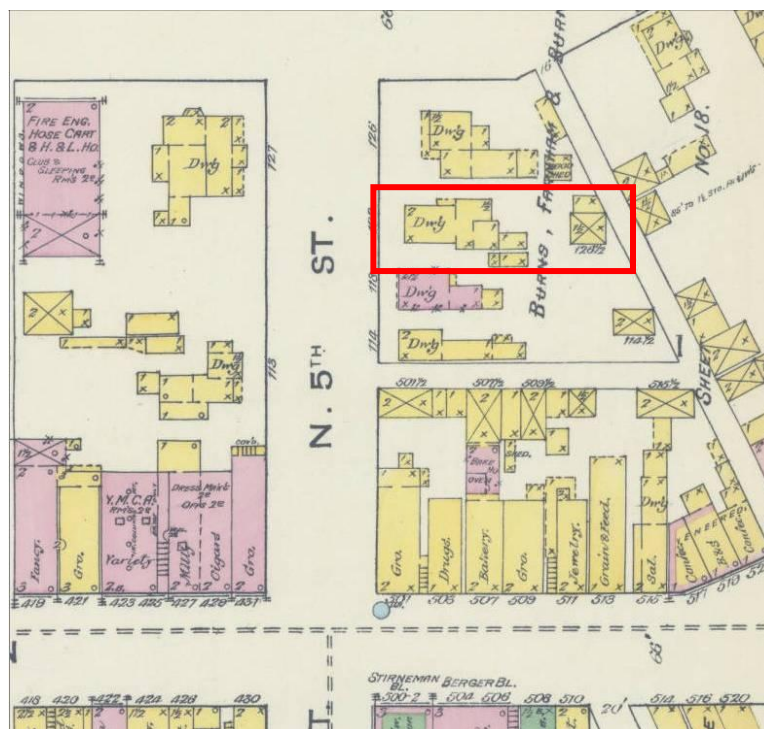


Figure 2 – 1887 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (Previous two-story boarding house shown)

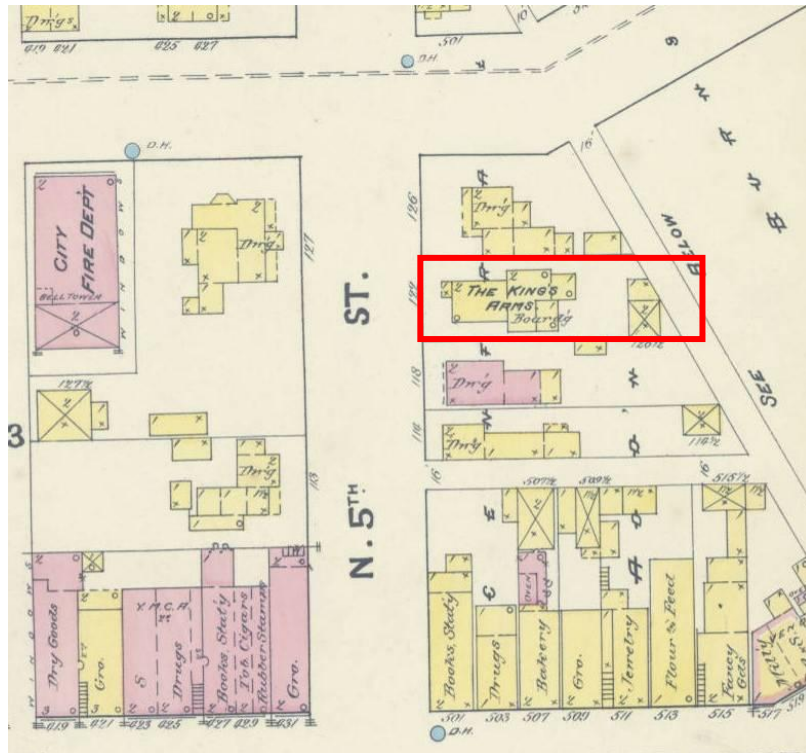


Figure 3 – 1891 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (Boarding house still shown)

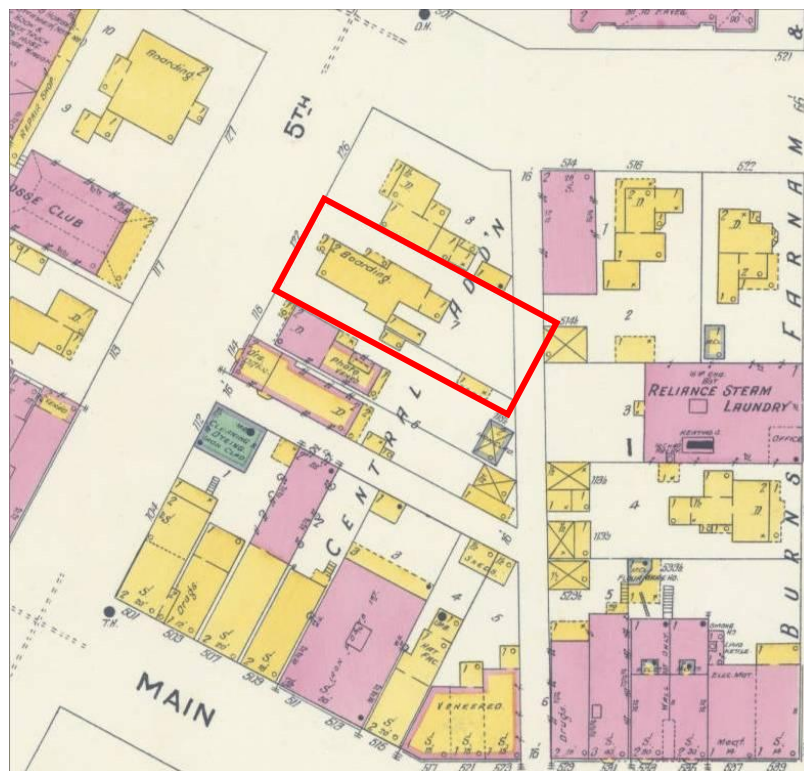


Figure 4 – 1906 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (Reclassified at 5½ story building, freight elevator shown)



Figure 5 – 1944 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (Current building shown, 2 stories “fireproof”)

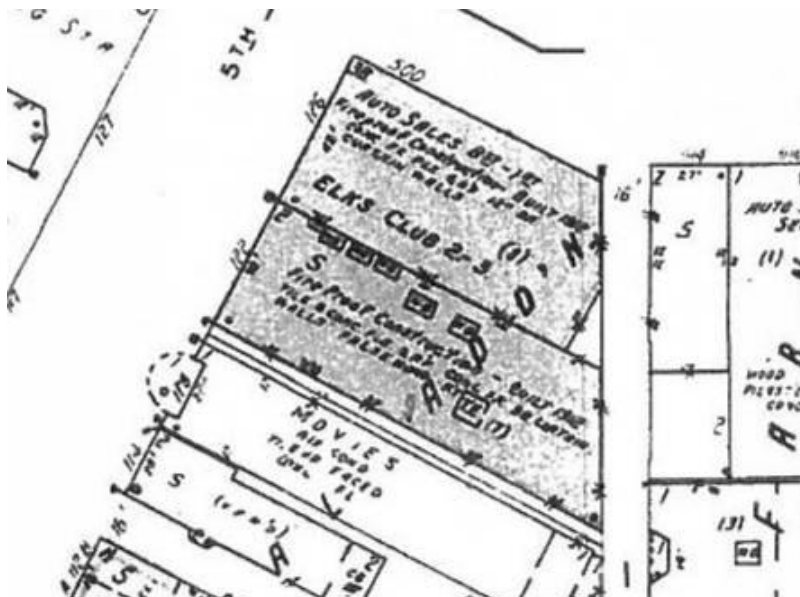


Figure 6 – 1954 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, City of La Crosse, WI. (No major changes, skylights indicated)

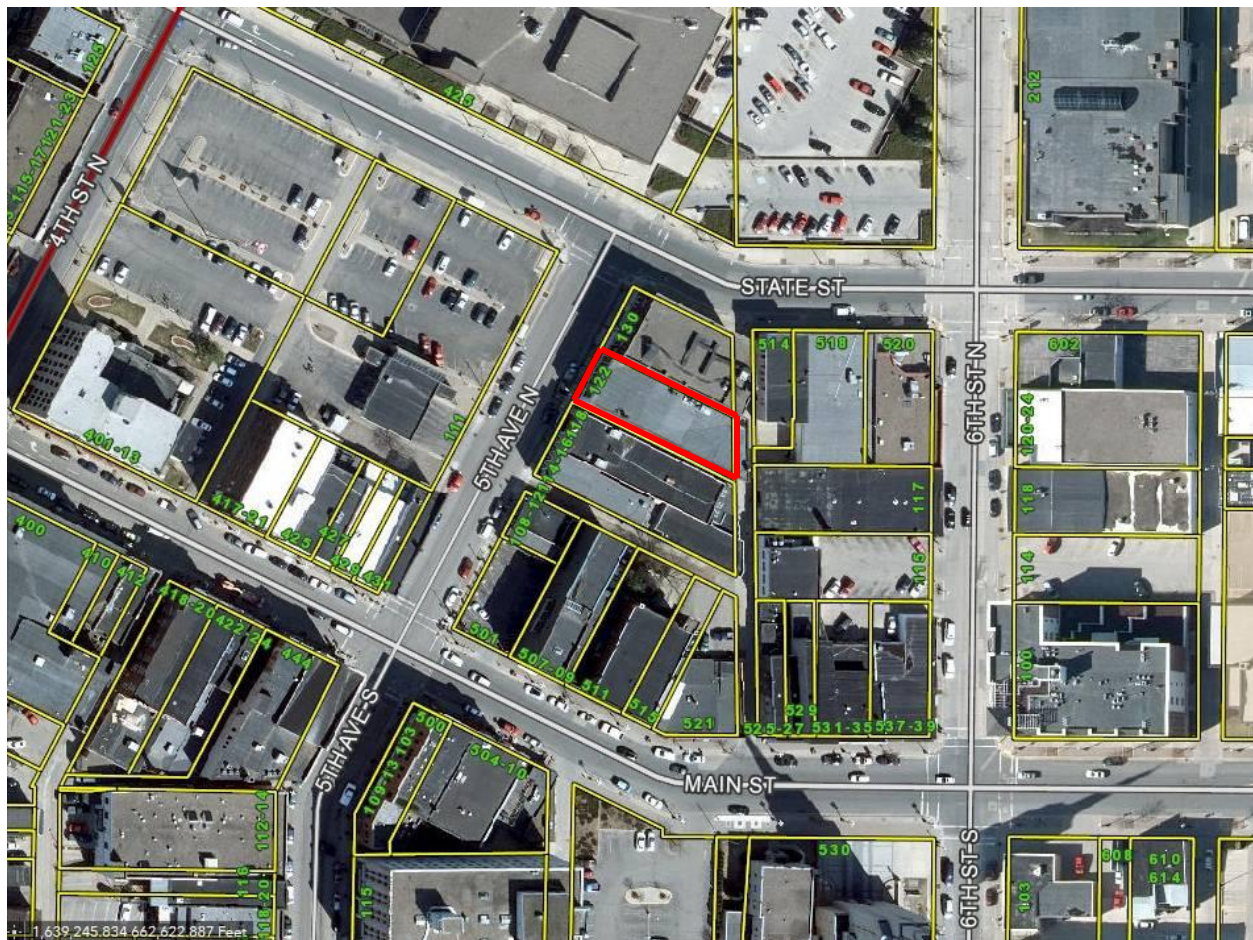


Figure 7 – 2015 aerial image of the site, City of La Crosse, WI.

F. Historic Building Photos:



Figure 8 – West façade of NSP Building with Chamber of Commerce ca. 1919-1927. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 9 – Elks Club Postcard, prior to NSP Building. Circa 1914. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

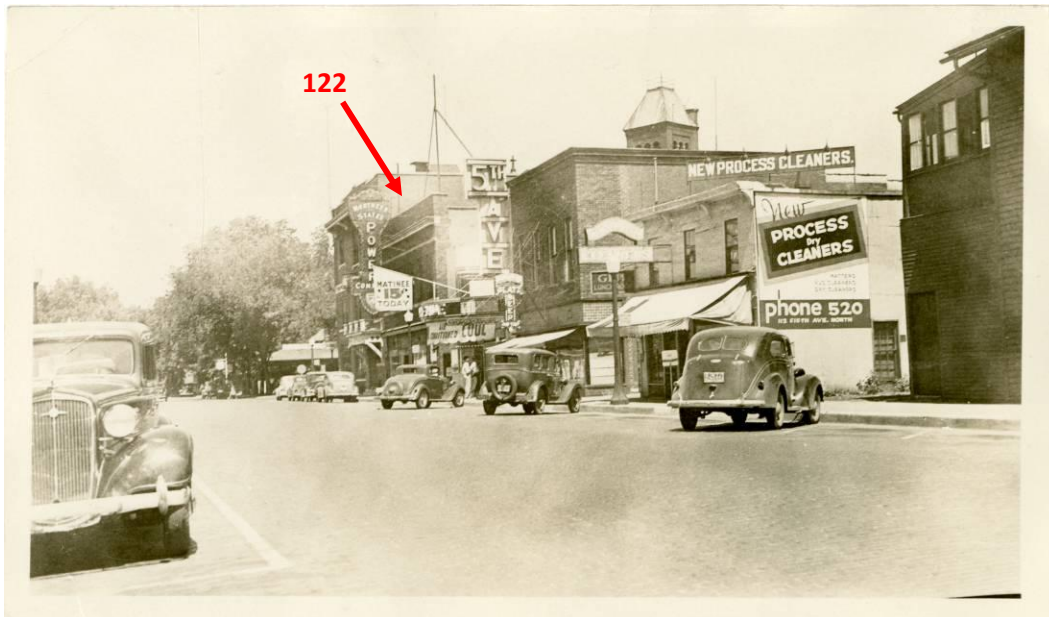


Figure 10 – View looking north at 5th Avenue and Main Street. Circa 1940s. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

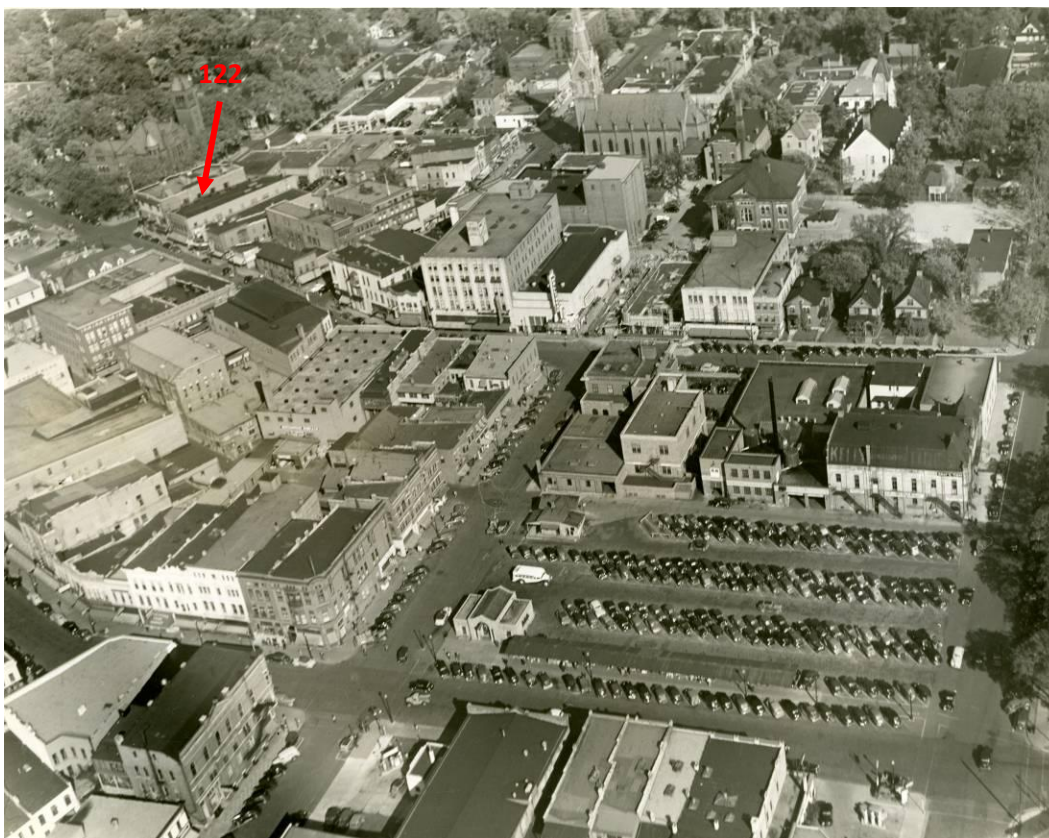


Figure 11 – Aerial view looking northeast. Circa 1940. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 12 – Appliance showroom at NSP. Circa 1932. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 13 – Mary Lamb – Home Economist demonstration at NSP. Circa 1932. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 14 – Stokely's Finest Display at NSP. Circa 1930s. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

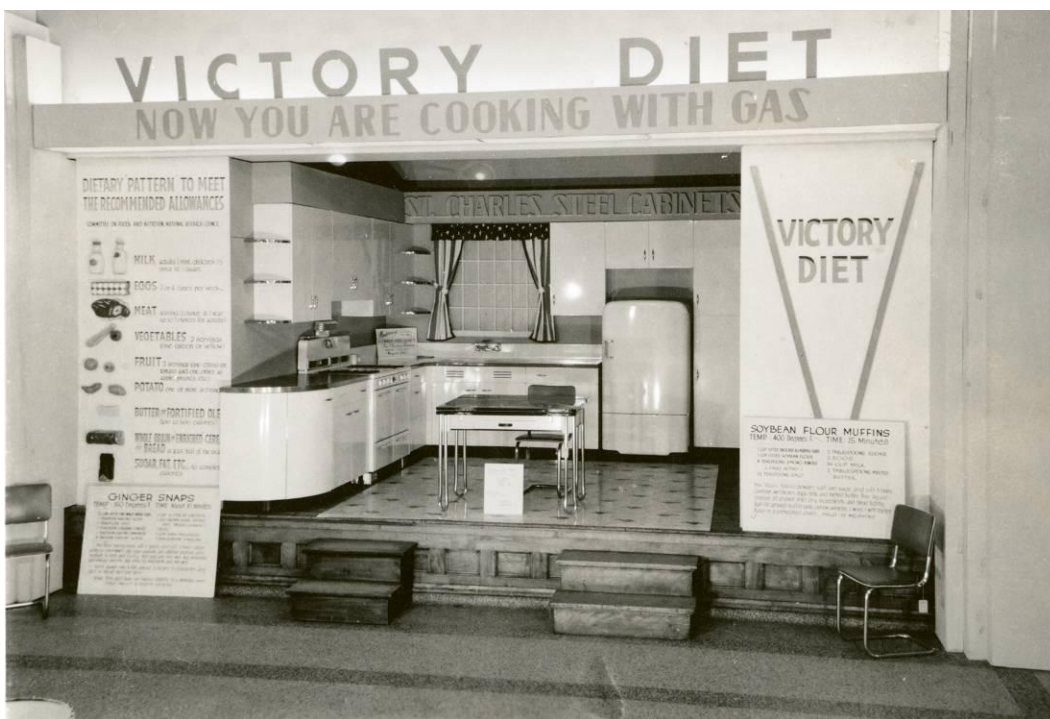


Figure 15 – Victory Diet Display at NSP. Circa 1940s. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 16 – Modern Cookery storefront display at NSP. Circa 1940s. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 17 – Construction photo at NSP Building. Circa 1949. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.



Figure 18 – Refrigerator storefront display at NSP. Circa 1950s. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

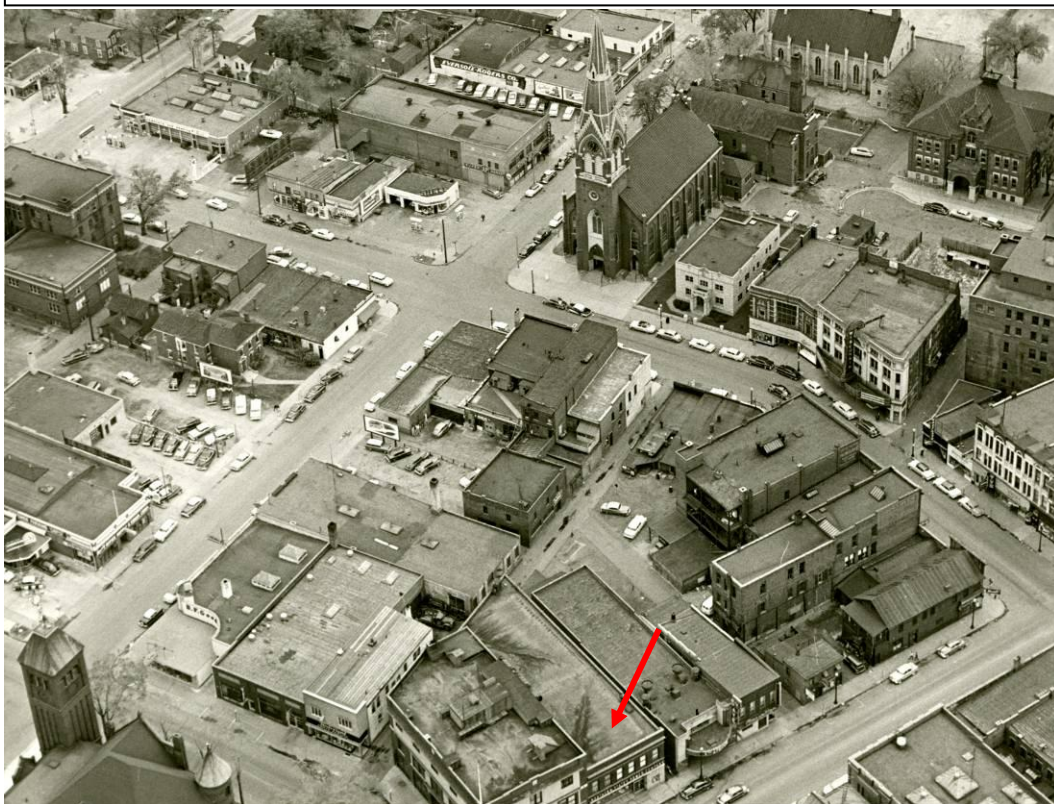


Figure 19 – Aerial view looking southeast at 5th and State Streets. Circa 1956. Courtesy of Murphy Library Special Collections, University of Wisconsin – La Crosse.

G. Current Building Photos:

(All photos by Marcus J. Zettler)



Figure 20 – West Façade (Front) prior to removing the metal slip cover. May 2020.



Figure 21 – West Façade during metal slip cover removal. August 2020.



Figure 22 – West Façade (Front) prior to removing the metal slip cover. May 2020.



Figure 23 – West Façade during metal slip cover removal. August 2020.



Figure 24 – View looking at the northeast corner of the building. January 2020.



Figure 25 – View looking at the southeast corner of the building. January 2020.



Figure 26 – Front office looking west. January 2020.



Figure 27 – Main room, first floor looking East. January 2020.



Figure 28 – Main room, first floor looking West. January 2020.



Figure 29 – Kitchen at the back of first floor. January 2020.



Figure 30 – Men's restroom first floor.
January 2020.



Figure 31 – Stair and entry hall, second floor.
January 2020.



Figure 32 – Main hallway, second floor.
January 2020.



Figure 33 – Typical door, second floor.
January 2020.



Figure 34 – Safe door, second floor. January 2020.



Figure 35 – Front hall looking south, second floor. January 2020.



Figure 36 – Former assembly room looking north, second floor. January 2020.



Figure 37 – Doors to former assembly room looking south, second floor. January



Figure 38 – Back room looking east, second floor. January 2020.



Figure 39 – Typical office partition, second floor. January 2020.