

NORTHWESTERN HOTEL
(CLUB 400)
322 WILLIAMS STREET
SUMMER, 1992

(Rev. 8/86)

Wisconsin Word Processor Format (1331D)

(Approved 3/87)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only archival paper (20 pound, acid free paper with a 2% alkaline reserve).

1. Name of Property

historic name Northwestern Hotelother names/site number Club 400

2. Location

street & number 322 Williams Street N/A not for publicationcity, town Waukesha N/A vicinitystate Wisconsin code WI county Waukesha code 133 zip code 53186

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	contributing	noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

NoneNo. of contributing resources
previously listed in the
National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register.

 removed from the National Register.

 other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/hotel

COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(enter categories from instructions)

other: Commercial Vernacular

foundation Stone

walls Brick

Wood

roof Asphalt

other Wood

Tin

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Northwestern Hotel is a highly intact two-story rectilinear plan Commercial Vernacular form brick building that was built as a hotel and saloon ca. 1893-4. The proprietor of the hotel, Valentine Imig, built it to cater to travelers arriving at the depot of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad (319 Williams Street), which, although now a restaurant, is still intact and is located directly across Williams Street from the hotel. Imig operated the hotel until his death in 1914, and a succession of later owners have since operated the building as a well known tavern and music club that has been known as the Club 400 since the early 1930s. Except for changes to the first story of the main facade that were recently reversed by a sensitive restoration, the original exterior appearance of the hotel has survived the 100 years since it was built in an almost totally intact state.

At the time the hotel was built Waukesha enjoyed a national reputation as a summer resort due to its assiduous promotion of the health-giving properties of the local spring waters. This promotion began in 1868 and its success led to the construction of numerous large hotels throughout the city and caused the local population to increase from 2500 in 1870 to 8740 by 1910. By the turn-of-the-century, however, the economic importance of the city's resort trade began to decline and numerous manufacturing concerns were created to take its place, transforming the city's economic base. This transformation, coupled with Waukesha's close proximity to the city of Milwaukee, greatly increased Waukesha's population, which by 1980 numbered 53,941, making it Wisconsin's eighth-largest city. This transformation was also accompanied by the gradual demolition of all of the city's nineteenth century resort hotels. Today only a few early downtown hotels and the two railroad-related hotels on Williams Street survive to give testimony to this era in Waukesha's history.

Williams Street is one block in length and runs from east to west between Grand Avenue and Maple Avenue. The topography in this vicinity is flat and the neighborhood in which the hotel is situated is located four blocks south of the central business district of Waukesha. This neighborhood was once the prime residential district in the city, and although changing usage has altered it, a number of the important Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne style houses that once dotted this area still survive, particularly along Grand Avenue. The construction of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks across the southern edge of this area in 1881, however, resulted in the creation of an island of mixed commercial and manufacturing building types in its immediate vicinity, and the Northwestern Hotel is one of these buildings.

The hotel is placed on the left half of a large 74-foot-wide by 121-foot-deep lot that is located in the middle of the north side of Williams Street. This lot faces the depot on the south side of the street and the rear of the lot once contained a large one-story shed and there was also a narrow two-story dwelling located on its right-hand portion. Neither of these other buildings is now extant and the surface

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 1 Page 1

of the lot not occupied by the hotel has recently been completely blacktopped for parking. Several contemporary neighboring buildings still survive, however, including a frame construction Boomtown form store (330 Williams Street), a vernacular Queen Anne style frame dwelling (324 Williams Street), and the slightly earlier and recently resided frame construction Chicago House hotel (316 Williams Street). All of these buildings line the north side of Williams Street facing the depot and, with the Northwestern Hotel as their centerpiece, constitute a surprisingly intact part of Waukesha's nineteenth century heritage.

The Northwestern Hotel is a freestanding frame construction two-story building having a rectilinear plan and painted brick exterior walls that rest on ashlar Waukesha limestone foundation walls. These walls enclose a full basement story and the basement is floored in concrete. Several courses of the foundation wall stone are visible above grade and they are terminated on the side and rear elevations by a slightly projecting brick watertable that is three courses wide. The principal facade abuts the concrete sidewalk that parallels Williams Street. This facade faces south and is 26-feet-wide and its first story is framed by brick pilasters at the corners and by a heavy cast iron lintel above that spans most of the width of the facade. Each of these pilasters is decorated by two large cut stone quarry-faced blocks, one of which is placed at the level of the watertable and the other of which is placed about eight feet above grade. The windows and the main entrance door that originally filled the space between these pilasters were all removed many years ago, but in 1989 the present owner renovated this portion of the facade by inserting three large single pane snow windows to the left of a nine panel oak entrance door. Paneled bulkheads were then placed below each of the windows and windows and the wall surfaces above and to the sides were then covered with thin vertically placed boards of the type commonly called 'wainscoting.' A large canvas awning was then suspended above the windows and door. The resulting appearance is faithful to the period and represents a good attempt at recreating the original window treatment.

The cast iron lintel that supports the second story of the facade is surmounted by a cast iron cornice that is decorated with cast iron brackets at either end. The second story is symmetrical in design and three-bays-wide and each bay consists of a single flat-arched window opening that contains a one-over-one-light double hung wooden sash window. Both the left and right-hand bays are identical in size and they flank the almost identical but slightly wider center opening. Each opening has a cut stone quarry faced sill and is surmounted by a semi-circular arched brick voussoir that entrames a brick spandrel. These spandrels are surfaced in brick that is completely formed out of headers arrayed in a stacked bond. Every other header in each course then projects forward from the spandrel face, creating a highly distinctive three-dimensional checkerboard pattern. The voussoirs of the two smaller openings are each formed out of a single course of soldier bricks while that of the wider center opening is formed out of a course of soldier and header bricks. Imposts placed at the ends of each voussoir consist of a single small cut stone quarry faced block.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET
Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 7 Page 4

The hotel has a simple gable roof with overhanging eaves, a ridgeline that runs from north to south, and slopes that are sheathed in asphalt shingles. Centered in the gable end of the main facade above the second story's center window opening is a pair of small flat-arched window openings separated by a thin brick mullion. These two openings share a common cut stone sill and they each contain a single double hung wooden sash window whose bottom half is a single light and whose top half contains four lights created by "X" shaped muntin bars. The most prominent feature of the gable end, though, is the elaborate painted tin cornice that terminates it. This cornice consists of a broad fascia that is decorated with large brackets and elaborate crown moldings. It sits on top of the wall (which rises slightly above the roofline) and its two lower ends are each ornamented by a single large console bracket. The cornice then follows the angle of the roof as a raking cornice until reaching the level of the sill of the windows in the gable end. At this point the cornice becomes horizontal, terminating against the sides or the outer edges of the windows in the gable end. Large decorated console brackets are then positioned on either side of these windows and they help support a second bracketed cornice that forms the base of a large arched pediment that surmounts the window group. Most of the semi-circular tympanum of this pediment is filled with raised tin-covered flower petals that radiate from a center in sunburst fashion. A bracketed frieze then completes the tympanum and the pediment is then terminated with crown molding.

The two side elevations of the hotel are each 62-feet in length and asymmetrical in design. The fenestration plans of these elevations and of the rear elevation appear to have been determined largely by functional needs. The east-facing side elevation is six-bays-wide and its left half is essentially featureless, having a wall surface that is broken only by a single one-over-one-light flat-arched double hung window in the center (Bay No. 1) of the second story level and by an identical but smaller window that is offset slightly to the right on the floor below (Bay No. 2). These windows, like all the other original windows on the side and rear elevations of the hotel, are flat-arched, have wooden sash, wooden sills, and cut stone quarry faced lintels.

The right half of this elevation is much more densely fenestrated. Bay No. 3 contains a single large one-over-one-light window in both its first and second stories. Bay No. 4 contains a small one light window in its second story and a single large one-over-one-light window in the story below. Bay No. 5 contains a single large one-over-one-light window in both its first and second stories, and Bay No. 6 contains a single large one-over-one-light window in its second story only, there being no openings in its first story. The first floor windows in Bays No. 3, 4, and 5 are still intact but they now hidden behind closed pairs of louvered wooden shutters. Bays No. 3, 4 and 5 also have small basement story windows with cut stone lintels as well, although the opening in Bay No. 5 was filled in with stone at a later date. This elevation is then surmounted by overhanging wooden eaves decorated with molding that represent a continuation of the crown molding used on the main facade and there is also a highly intact cream brick chimney shaft placed on the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 1 Page 3

slope of the roof above and between Bays No. 5 and 6. This shaft is supported by a metal rod that is anchored on the roof slope and it is surmounted by a decorative corbelled brick cap.

The rear or north-facing elevation of the hotel is also 26-feet-wide and it too is asymmetrical in design. A single large one-over-one-light double hung window that is now covered by a pair of louvered wooden shutters is placed at the far left side of the first story. Just to the right of this window and slightly to the left of the center of the elevation is the rear entrance door opening. This flat-arched opening contains its original six-panel wood door and it is topped by a transom that is now filled with an air conditioner. The door opens outward onto a modern wooden stoop and three wooden steps then descend to grade. Centered in the second story is another large one-over-one-light double hung window and centered in the gable end above is a smaller one-over-one-light double hung oblong-shaped window. All these windows and the rear door opening have cut stone lintels and wood sills that are identical to those found on the side elevations. The overhanging eaves and crown moldings that terminate this gable end are also identical to those on the side elevations as well except for the fact that on this elevation these eaves are returned.

The 62-foot-long west-facing side elevation is largely hidden from view by the house next door but it is five-bays-wide and nearly identical to the east-facing elevation in its asymmetry and fenestration. The window openings on this elevation are all concentrated in the left-hand half of this elevation (this is its northern or rear half). Large one-over-one-light double hung windows are placed in both the first and second stories of the first three bays from the left. A smaller one-over-one-light double hung window is then placed in the second story of the fourth bay and a still smaller one-light window is located in the story below it. The fifth bay from the left then contains a single larger one-over-one-light double hung window in its second story and there is no opening in the story below or on the remaining half of the elevation. This elevation is then terminated by the same overhanging eaves and crown molding that are employed on the east-facing side elevation.

The interior of the hotel has been greatly altered over the years and virtually nothing of the original now remains except for some of first story's original oak flooring. The first story originally contained a saloon and the second story contained hotel rooms. Beyond this, however, little information has been found that allows the original configuration of these stories to be reconstructed with any accuracy. It is known, though, that a major reconstruction of the first story took place between 1947 and 1950 and that this remodeling resulted in the room layout that exists today.* The then owner, George Pollruss, had the original storefront

* City of Waukesha Building Permits. City of Waukesha Building Inspection Unit. City Hall, 201 Delafield Street, Waukesha.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET
Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 7 Page 4

that had been located between the two corner pilasters removed and this space was then filled in with brick and with glass block and a smaller oblong window was then centered on this part of the facade. In addition, the original centered entrance door, which was inset several feet into the facade and reached by climbing a short curved flight of stairs, was lowered to ground level and moved to the right hand side of the facade where it is today. The floor of the front hall or the saloon area (the barroom) was then lowered to ground level as well, resulting in the two-level interior that is still extant today.

Besides these structural modifications, the interior of the first story was also modernized at this time. A small interior entrance vestibule was created in the southeast corner of the first floor. The remaining wall space along the east wall of the lowered barroom area was then given over to a long leather or Naugahyde-covered banquette and four small square single pedestal tables were then bolted to the floor in front of this banquette. Positioned along the west wall opposite was a new streamlined bar and back bar. At the same time, the ceiling was also lowered and a large rectangle opening with rounded corners was cut into the new ceiling, the shape being accentuated by the use of hidden ceiling lighting placed just inside the perimeter of the cutout. The result was a simple modern-looking interior that owed more than a little to the Art Moderne style designs of the 1930s and early 1940s.

The present owner of the hotel began a major reconstruction of his own in 1989.² In that year the brick and glass block 1948 storefront was replaced with the much more sympathetic three window front described on Continuation Sheet 7.1. Beaded wainscotting was placed on the inside wall of the barroom below these new windows, the banquette seating on the east wall was replaced by four raised plywood booths, and the mirrored 1948 back bar, with its banded lighting and curved glass shelving, was removed and replaced with more elaborate wooden fixtures having a neo-Victorian appearance. The 1948 bar, though, is still extant and is in good, largely original condition. When seen from above this bar has the shape of a lowercase letter "b" and it features a molded solid wood top rail, birch veneer panelling, and a projecting bottom rail or foot rest. The ceiling cutout too was altered by having elaborate fake beams, stenciled panels and ceiling fans placed inside it. The result of this remodeling has been to give the barroom a more "Victorian" appearance that, while not historically accurate, is never-the-less, still in keeping with the spirit of the building.

The north end of the bar room (which comprises the south half of the first story) is terminated by a five-foot-tall wainscot-sided partition wall that is surmounted by two open basket-handle-shaped arches. These arches echo the shape of the ceiling cutout and date from the 1948 remodeling. The easternmost of these arches spans a flight of five steps that lead up from the barroom to the games room that occupies the middle and a part of the rear of this story. This is the most intact remaining

² City of Waukesha Building Permits. Op. cit.

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Wisconsin Word Processor Format

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 7 Page 3

portion of the original saloon, but its only surviving historic features are the walls, which are plastered, and the simple window and door surrounds, which are original.

The interior of the Northwestern Hotel is now an interesting mixture of old and new elements, which although not of historic significance, still manage to convey a sense of the history of the building. The exterior, however, is in excellent and largely original condition. The recent renovation of the first story of the main facade and the attendant restoration of the rest of the exterior has returned the hotel to a state that is very close to its original historic appearance.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1893-1894

Significant Dates

Ca. 1893²

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Significance

The Northwestern Hotel building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its local significance under National Register (NR) criteria A and C. More specifically, the Northwestern Hotel is being nominated because of its associations with the NR significance areas of Architecture and of Commerce, themes that are also identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). Research centered on the Vernacular Commercial form subsection of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP and the Industry and Commerce and the Architecture Theme sections of the final report of the Waukesha Intensive Survey. The results of this research is detailed below and confirms that the Northwestern Hotel is locally significant under criterion C as a highly intact example of Commercial Vernacular form design as applied to a small late nineteenth century railroad hotel. The hotel is also locally significant under criterion A as one of the few nineteenth century hotels that still exists in a city that was once nationally famous for its hotels.

The Northwestern Hotel was built across Williams Street from the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad depot Ca. 1893-4 by Valentine Imig, who operated the hotel and its first story saloon until his death in 1914. Subsequently, the hotel function of the building ceased and the hotel rooms were transformed into apartments. The

² The precise date of construction of the hotel is unknown since surviving tax records are incomplete for this period. The Waukesha city directories for this period, however, first list the Northwestern Hotel in 1895-1896 and Valentine Imig is listed as working at a different location in the 1892 directory. Since the plat map of the city that is included in the Waukesha County Plat Book of 1891, shows an earlier building on this site and since the 1895 Sandborn-Perris map of Waukesha shows the hotel as it exists today, a construction date between 1893 and 1894 is almost certain.

X See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 8 Page 1

saloon, however, has been operated continuously by a succession of later owners. In its 1948 reincarnation as the Club 400, the building also became well known locally for its associations with internationally famous Waukesha-born musician Les Paul (1916-), a nationally prominent recording artist in the 1930s - 1950s. Besides receiving 32 gold records in collaboration with his partner and then wife, Mary Ford, Paul is also credited with the creation of the amplified solid body guitar and with the development of the first multi-track tape recording techniques, inventions that helped to revolutionize popular music both in this country and abroad after World War II. While these associations with Paul are not believed to be of NR significance since Paul is still living as of this date, they are of local importance and were an important factor when the hotel was designated Waukesha Landmark No. 15 in 1990.*

Commerce

A general history of the city of Waukesha and its hotels is contained in both the final report of the Waukesha Intensive Survey² and in the text of the Historic Resources of Waukesha Multiple Resource Nomination form.³ Consequently, the following historic context deals mostly with hotel development in the area immediately surrounding the Northwestern Hotel and with Valentine Imig and the successive proprietors of the hotel.

Nineteenth century hotels in Waukesha can be divided into two groups; year-round hotels dating from both before the beginning of the "Springs Era" in 1868 and after, and summer resort hotels that were intended to cater to the tourist trade. The earliest group of hotels in the city were those built before 1868 and this small group had their origins in the earliest years of the pioneer settlement first known as Prairie Village.

The first "hotel" was McMillan's Hotel which was simply a log cabin built in 1835 by B.S. McMillan and his wife where travelers were allowed to stay overnight for a small fee. Although often referred to as a hotel, it was really just a dwelling. ... The first real inn was the Prairie Village Hotel, another log structure, erected by Henry Bowron and opened by James Buckner in 1837. It was located on the northwest corner of the present intersection of White Rock Avenue and Main Street. ... In the late 1840s, the village business district began to shift to the Five Point area and the popularity of the Prairieville House, as it was then

* Milwaukee Journal. 'Waukesha club named a landmark.' October 30, 1990.

² Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff. Spring City's Past: A Thematic History of Waukesha and the Final Report of Waukesha's Intensive Resources Survey. Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1982.

³ Ibid. Historic Resources of Waukesha Multiple Resource Nomination form. September, 1982. On file at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Historic Preservation Division, Madison, Wisconsin.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 3 Page 2

called, declined sharply. In the late 1840s, portions were moved to other sites and the remainder used for a variety of purposes. When it was destroyed by fire in 1898, it was in use as a butcher's shop and tenement.

The next hotel was a great improvement. The Barstow House, built in 1844 by William A. Barstow, was a frame, rather than log, building managed by his brother Samuel (Barstow) who had previously managed the Prairieville House. ... In 1851 it became the Railroad House under Silas Barber (in honor of the arrival of the new Milwaukee and Mississippi Railroad) and the American House in 1864 under J.R. Cable. The hotel, located at the present (1982) site of 294 W. Main Street, burned in 1891.

Jacob Hengy, a Swiss immigrant, founded the Exchange Hotel as an adjunct to his tailor shop around 1846 and additions were made from time to time. In 1864, the hotel on the site of the present Estberg Jewelry Store, was sold to Colonel Rossett M. Putney. In 1870, Putney built a three-story addition to the rear of the hotel, which became the first portion of the Putney Block at 816 N. Grand Avenue. The old hotel was moved from the north to the south side of this section in 1882 and the second portion of the Putney Block at 301 W. Main Street was constructed. The remainder of the block at 802 N. Grand Avenue was built in 1891 (NRHP - 9/23/82) and the old frame hotel was razed.

These pioneer hotels were typical of those found in nearly every early Wisconsin community and their pattern of development is also similar, reflecting as it does the gradual growth of the community and the establishment of a central business district. What made Waukesha unique among Wisconsin's nineteenth century cities, however, was its development of a considerable number of both large and small hotels that were adapted to or designed for the needs of the tourists who came to the city after 1868, the year Col. Richard Dunbar began the promotion of the healthful properties contained in the waters of Waukesha's abundant natural springs.

The springs were responsible for the influx of what became thousands of visitors each year. The hotels existing in 1868 were soon filled and a demand created for much more housing for travelers. Many families in the village took in boarders such as the Hubbard Boarding House at 354 W. St. Paul Avenue where Mary Todd Lincoln stayed in 1872. Others built slightly larger homes for boarders such as the 1880 Samuel Hadfield Boarding House at 402 Wisconsin Avenue (Wisconsin Avenue Historic District, NRHP - 10/28/83). However, a number of larger hotels were also built or adapted from homes.

¹ Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff. Spring City's Past: A Thematic History of Waukesha and the Final Report of Waukesha's Intensive Resources Survey. Op. Cit., pgs. 19-20.

² Ibid. Pg. 23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 8 Page 3

None of the largest of these hotels is now extant, but a brief mention of the more important ones is helpful in establishing the context of the Northwestern Hotel.

Several of these early hotels are now gone such as the Fox River House built in 1869 at the corner of Madison and Anne Streets. It was partially destroyed by fire but was rebuilt. The building was razed in 1955 for a new car dealership.

The Mansion House, later the Spring City Hotel, is another of these starting life as a small residence in the early 1850s. It was enlarged by Jacob Bean in 1856 and became one of the largest homes in the village. Sometime in the 1860s, Elizabeth Clarke Carney purchased the building as the Bruce Hotel. In 1871, taking advantage of the new tourism generated by the springs, she added a 26 by 80 foot four-story addition which made it the largest hotel in the city until 1874. The Mansion House was destroyed by fire in December 1882 but rebuilt as the Spring City Hotel five years later by George K. Jones and had over two hundred rooms. This new hotel was partially destroyed by fire in 1901, rebuilt, and completely burned out in 1911. The building was located on the northeast corner of Grand and Wisconsin Avenues.

Despite the several new hotels, rooms were still scarce and many could not be considered first-class. In the early 1870s, Chicago millionaire Mathew Larlin came to Waukesha to drink the water for his failing health. Delighted with the results, but not with the accommodations, he saw an opportunity and seized it. In partnership with another Chicago millionaire, Thomas B. Bryan, Larlin purchased the Smart farm south of the city for \$15,000, had plans drawn up by Chicago architect William Boynton, and began construction of the massive Fountain Spring House. This building, on Grand Avenue near Larlin Street, was opened July 4, 1874 with 400 rooms at a cost of \$160,000.

On August 31, 1878, a fire destroyed all but one wing of the hotel; however, by the opening of the 1879 season, Larlin had not only rebuilt the original section but doubled it to accommodate 800 guests. This made the Fountain Spring the largest hotel in the Midwest for many years. The hotel continued to operate profitably until 1900 when the Springs Era began to taper off. The hotel was closed and sold to the Metropolitan Church Association in 1905. That group used the building as its headquarters until 1953. The building was razed in 1957.²

Other similar and now-vanished establishments included the Park Hotel; a 250 room establishment on Broadway that began life as a large Second Empire style house in 1874, was expanded in 1879, and was finally demolished in 1953; and the Hyde Park Hotel on the corner of Spring and Madison Streets, which was built by Thomas Spence in 1884, and demolished in 1905.

² Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff. Spring City's Past: A Thematic History of Waukesha and the Final Report of Waukesha's Intensive Resources Survey. Op. Cit., pgs. 23-24.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 8 Page 4

By the mid-1880s, then, as a result of all this hotel building activity, Waukesha had begun to call itself "The Saratoga of the West" and could boast of having major seasonally operated hotels that contained nearly 2000 rooms at a time when the total population of the city numbered less than 5000. The creation of these tourist-oriented hotels transformed Waukesha's economy and they also brought a second railroad to the city in 1881. The first railroad to connect Waukesha to the outside world had been the Milwaukee and Mississippi (later the Milwaukee Road), which was also the first railroad to be constructed in Wisconsin. The first sections of its tracks were built between Milwaukee and Waukesha in 1850, and the first train finally entered Waukesha in February of 1851, Waukesha being the first stop on its eventual journey to the Mississippi River. Waukesha was thus the first community in the state to be connected by rail to another city. The second railroad tracks to reach Waukesha belonged to the Milwaukee and Madison Railway Company.

The Milwaukee and Madison Railway Company was formed earlier in that year (1881) to compete with Milwaukee Road rail traffic between those two cities. That same year the present (1982) depot at 313 Williams Street was begun. ... The railroad began operation in February 1882, but was very short-lived. Before the year was out, it and four other companies had merged to form the Chicago, Milwaukee and Northwestern Railway Company, which became the Chicago Northwestern Railroad. The Williams Street depot, as was the other one (extant - 129 Madison Street, 1890), was a busy place during Waukesha's resort period; however, after that died (around 1905), passenger traffic began a long, slow decline.¹⁰

The laying of the Milwaukee and Madison tracks just to the south of Williams Street and two blocks to the north of the Fountain Springs House brought change to this area. Several of the existing buildings in the neighborhood were converted into boarding houses, including those located at 201 Maple Avenue (the Bethesda House, non-extant) and at 317 Arlington Street (the Arlington, non-extant). New year-round hotels were also built directly across Williams Street from the depot to serve the needs of off-season travelers and off-duty train crews. The first of these hotels was the frame construction two-and-a-half story Chicago House (extant, 316 Williams Street), which was built between 1881 and 1891. The second was the Northwestern Hotel, which was built by Valentine Imig between 1893 and 1894.

Valentine Imig, the son of Nicholas Imig (1826-?) and Katherine Imig (1831-?), was born in New Berlin, Wisconsin on September 15, 1864.¹¹ Imig's parents had come to this country from Prussia, settling on a farm in the Town of New Berlin, some eight miles east of Waukesha. Their first child, Katherine, was born in New Berlin in 1855 and their son Valentine and his twin brother, John, were born in 1863, being

¹⁰ Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff. Spring City's Past: A Thematic History of Waukesha and the Final Report of Waukesha's Intensive Resources Survey. Up. Cit., pg. 94.

¹¹ Waukesha County Death Records. volume 12, pg. 95. Waukesha County Courthouse.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 8 Page 3

the sixth and seventh or ten children.⁴⁴ The Nicholas Imig family was just one of several Imig family branches in the vicinity, including another one in New Berlin headed by Phillip Imig Sr. (1835-?) and still another that was headed by an earlier Valentine Imig (1839-1909).⁴⁵ The multiplicity of Imig family members in the vicinity of Waukesha makes for sometimes confusing study but the Valentine Imig who is the subject of this history first appears in the 1892 Waukesha City Directory as a bartender residing at 405 McCall Street. In the 1895-1896 city directory, however, Imig is listed as the proprietor of the Northwestern Hotel (the address then being 312 Williams Street) and he is continuously listed as the proprietor of this hotel until his death in an automobile accident on September 12, 1914.⁴⁶

Imig's choice of Williams Street as the site of his new hotel was undoubtedly prompted by the presence of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad Depot across the street. It also seems probable that Imig did not expect his hotel rooms to be the most profitable part of this business venture. The Northwestern Hotel's saloon took up the entire first story of the building and a small meeting hall originally took up the front half of the second story. This left only the rear half to be divided into hotel rooms and the four or five small rooms that originally occupied this portion of the second story were clearly not intended to be Imig's principal source of income. The Chicago House next door appears to have been run on much the same basis and there was also another saloon two doors to the west in the frame construction building that now bears the address 330 Williams Street. This concentration of saloons and several small scale hotels in the immediate vicinity of a railroad depot was typical of that day and the Northwestern Hotel is a typical example of the type.

The hotel function of the Northwestern Hotel does not appear to have survived Imig's death. Subsequent owners and operators including James Cavanaugh and William C. Clempau, rented out the former hotel rooms and operated the saloon until the advent of Prohibition. The saloon was then operated as a sort drinks establishment from 1921 until the end of Prohibition, after which time it was again operated as a saloon by Mary L. Carroll. In 1941, Carroll sold the building to George W. Polruss. Polruss was a Waukesha native who had long operated an automobile garage in Waukesha known as the Polruss and Heinz garage until he purchased the former Northwestern Hotel. His partner in this new business was his son, Ralph Polruss and after a thorough remodeling of the saloon took place in 1948, the building was renamed the Club 400 and the grand opening took place in 1949. The highlight of the opening was the first public performance of Polruss' other son, Lester, and his new partner. By 1948, Lester Polruss was nationally known by his stage name, Les Paul and he was soon to reach international fame with his wife and new partner, Mary Ford.

⁴⁴ Waukesha County Pioneers. Indexed records in the collection of the Waukesha County Historical Museum compiled from the 1870 Federal Census.

⁴⁵ Waukesha County Death Records. Volume 6, pg. 292. Waukesha County Courthouse.

⁴⁶ Waukesha Freeman. September 17, 1914. Obituary of Valentine Imig.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 8 Page 6

Lester William Polfuss (1916-) had grown up in Waukesha and had gotten his early music experience there playing several instruments at various clubs and dance halls around the Waukesha area while also acquiring the nickname "Red" for his hair color. By 1939, he had changed his name to Les Paul and at the age of 23 had become a star on radio as a country singer and harmonica and guitar player, playing with his trio on Fred Waring's nationally popular radio show. In the 40s, Paul moved to California, where he met his future wife Colleen Summers, who had gotten her start singing country music on Gene Autry's radio show in Hollywood. When the couple came arrived in Waukesha for the grand opening of the Club 400, the unexpected loss of Paul's supporting guitarist led him to suggest to his wife that she accompany him instead. They then changed Summers' name to Mary Ford and the resulting performance, played on the raised rear portion of the first story barroom, was the first public appearance of what was to become one of America's most popular performing groups in the 1950s.

In the ten years that were to follow, Les Paul and Mary Ford "combined for 32 gold records, including such hits as 'Tennessee Waltz,' 'Vaya Con Dios,' 'Hummingbird,' 'Goodnight My Someone,' and 'Lover.'"¹² These songs were made still more memorable by their use of electric solid body guitars and revolutionary multi-track recording techniques, both of which Paul originated.

As Paul himself acknowledges, his greatest contributions have been technological. The Wizard of Waukesha, admirers christened him early on, after his hometown. "He invented the electrical guitar, for all practical purposes," says Laurence Libin, curator of musical instruments at the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), who has compared Paul, not entirely jocularly, to Benjamin Franklin as an authentic American tinkerer. Paul's early '40s prototype, which he called The Log because (unlike hollow acoustic guitars) it had a solid wooden body, sounded different from any previous musical instrument.

Long before the microchip or even the transistor, Paul found electronic ways of producing echoes and delays, making one guitar sound like two or five, allowing Mary Ford to sing both the lead and harmony on the same recording. "He was doing it with a two-track studio; today they're using 24 or 48 tracks," says *Guitar World* Magazine editor in chief Noel Goldwasser. "But the whole idea of treating a sound in a studio, bouncing it back and forth, building the track up sound-on-sound, that came from Les. And he came up with all kinds of gizmos to do it."¹³

George Polfuss died later in 1949,¹⁴ and the Club 400 was then operated by Ralph Polfuss until his own death in 1971,¹⁵ and then by his wife, Elsie Polfuss, who continued to operate it until her death in 1979.¹⁶ The building was then purchased

¹² Martino, Sam. "Anything for Music." The Waukesha Journal. February 9, 1990.

¹³ Span, Paula. "The Legend of Les Paul." The Washington Post. Washington D.C. May 10, 1987.

¹⁴ Waukesha Freeman. October 10, 1949. Obituary of George W. Polfuss.

¹⁵ Ibid. September 25, 1971. Obituary of Ralph W. Polfuss.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET
Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 8 Page 7

from the Poltuss estate by its present owner, Dan Pokwinski, who continues to operate it as the Club 400 and who has been responsible for rehabilitating the first story of the hotel and restoring the remainder.

The Northwestern Hotel is locally significant for its associations with the area of Commerce as one of Waukesha's few surviving nineteenth century hotel buildings. The summer resort trade was Waukesha's most important industry in the nineteenth century and hotels are the most important resource type that is associated with this industry. None of the elaborate Victorian style summer resort hotels that gave Waukesha its national reputation as a resort are now extant. Consequently, the few downtown hotels and the few railroad hotels from that century that still survive are of special importance as Waukesha's only extant nineteenth century representatives of this important resource type. And, of the few hotels in the city that were closely associated with the city's railroads, the Northwestern Hotel is by far the most intact example.

Architecture

Commercial Vernacular form buildings account for the majority of Wisconsin's nineteenth century stores and business blocks. These buildings differ from larger and/or more elaborately styled buildings of the same type in being more straightforward in design and in being relatively free of features that can be attributed to specific styles. Most buildings that can be said to belong to this form were not designed to be freestanding, the design emphasis being directed towards the main street-facing facade. The freestanding design of the Northwestern Hotel building is thus somewhat atypical of the form but it too features a main facade that received virtually all of the architectural embellishment that was employed on the exterior of the building.

The architectural significance of the Northwestern Hotel lies in its being an excellent, highly intact example of the Commercial Vernacular form of design as applied to a small-scale nineteenth century railroad hotel. The hotel exhibits a number of features such as the recently renovated "large retail show windows on the ground story," the "simple paneled wood doors with a single window above," and the "upper stories ... characterized by simple window openings" that are specifically mentioned as hallmarks of the form in the Vernacular Commercial form subsection of the Vernacular Forms study unit of the CRMF.²⁰ The design of the main facade of the Northwestern Hotel also makes quite elaborate use of the form's typical decorative features such as "a cornice or 1-beam above the storefront" and especially "an emphatic cornice." The design of this cornice is especially noteworthy for its "metal frieze," "wood moldings" and its ornate and exceptionally well preserved pressed tin features.

²⁰ Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2, 3-10 (Architecture).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 3 Page 3

This highly intact main facade makes the Northwestern Hotel one of the most distinctive of the smaller Commercial Vernacular form buildings in Waukesha and it holds its own when compared to other commercial buildings located in the downtown section of Waukesha. Many of the best and the oldest of these commercial buildings were identified and nominated to the NR by the Waukesha Intensive Survey as part of the Downtown Historic District (NRHP - 10/28/83) and as part of the Historic Resources of Waukesha Multiple Resource Nomination (NRHP - 10/28/83). These nominations included fine nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings whose designs were influenced by one or more of the major architectural styles that were in fashion during the nineteenth century. Vernacular examples, however, being less well understood at the time the survey was undertaken, were not well represented in this nomination activity. Nominating the Northwestern Hotel to the NR is thus intended to further the understanding and appreciation of such buildings in Waukesha.

The Northwestern Hotel is also of local significance as one of Waukesha's few surviving nineteenth century hotels. The most impressive of these hotels is the National Hotel (235 W. Main Street, NRHP - 10/28/83), erected in 1871 and enlarged in the 1880s. "Constructed of Niagra Dolomite, the National retains fine Italianate details including the hood molds and cornice. A pediment has been removed, and a period storefront affixed to the facade; however, the National remains as an important remnant of the resort era as well as a significant example of Italianate design."⁴⁴ Another good downtown example is the Schiltz Hotel, a three-story late Queen Anne style brick building built in 1901 (Downtown Commercial Historic District, NRHP - 10/28/83). This building has classical details gracing an octagonal corner oriel window and it is located at 294 W. Main Street on the site of an earlier hotel, the American House.

Like so many older commercial buildings, both of these hotels and the Northwestern Hotel now have altered first floor storefronts. The recent renovation of the Northwestern Hotel, however, makes it a more intact building than Waukesha's other existing hotels, including also the Chicago House next door, which, though still in good condition has been recently resided in narrow gauge aluminum. Consequently, the Northwestern Hotel is both the most intact of Waukesha's extant railroad hotels and it is also among the best of the city's remaining nineteenth century hotels as well.

Preservation Activity

The intact state of the old Chicago and Northwestern Depot and the recent renovation of the Northwestern Hotel appear to be having a positive affect on other Williams

⁴⁴ Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff. Spring City's Past: A Thematic History of Waukesha and the Final Report of Waukesha's Intensive Resources Survey. Op. Cit., pg. 113.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 8 Page 9

Street buildings. The Chicago House at 316 Williams Street has been recently resided and is in good condition and the small vernacular Queen Anne style frame construction house next door to the hotel at 324 Williams Street is also in the process of being restored. As a consequence, Williams Street still retains a good deal of its period appearance and flavor.

Archeological Potential

While it is known that earlier buildings were once located on the lot occupied by the Northwestern Hotel, no trace of these buildings now survives. An earlier residence at 318 Williams Street was demolished in 1948 and an earlier wooden shed that was once located across the rear of the lot has also since been demolished. The sites of these buildings have also recently been covered by an asphalt parking lot that covers all of the lot not occupied by the hotel. Consequently, the ability of this site to convey historic information from the period of European settlement onward would seem to be very limited.

Current Owner

Daniel J. Pokwinski
138 S. East Avenue
Waukesha, WI 53186

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

X See continuation sheet

 preliminary determination of
 individual listing (36 CFR 67)
 has been requested
 previously listed in the National
 Register
 previously determined eligible by
 the National Register
 designated a National Historic
 Landmark
 recorded by Historic American
 Buildings Survey #
 recorded by Historic American
 Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

X State Historic preservation office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
X Local government
 University
 Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage or property Less than one acre

UTM References

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/9/9/5/1/0</u>	<u>4/7/6/1/9/8/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
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 See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Section SE3 T6N R19E. Davis and Heisleuther's Subdivision of Block 7 of Cutler's Second Addition. Lot 7.

 See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The above boundaries enclose all that land historically associated with the Northwestern Hotel.

 See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Timothy F. Heggland/Consultant

for: City Plan Commission, City of Waukesha

organization 201 Delafield Street Waukesha WI date August 13, 1991

street & number 1311 Morrison Street telephone (608) 251-9450

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET
Northwestern Hotel, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin
Section number 9 Page 1

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