

CITY OF SAINT PAUL
HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION
FILE NUMBER: 412 Holly Avenue; Remove or Repair VB3
RA-SPC-1777 – RLH RR 19-15
DATE: April 22, 2019

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul has declared as a matter of public policy, in Chapter 73 of the Saint Paul Legislative Code, “that the preservation, protection, perpetuation and use of areas, places, building, structures and other objects having special historical, community or aesthetic interest or value is a public necessity and is required in the interest of the health, prosperity, safety and welfare of the people;” and

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 also establishes the purposes of heritage preservation to be to: “safeguard the heritage of the City of Saint Paul by preserving sites and structures which reflect elements of the city’s cultural, social, economic, political or architectural history; protect and enhance the City of Saint Paul’s attraction to residents, tourists and visitors, and serve as a support and stimulus to business and industry; enhance the visual and aesthetic character, diversity and interest of the City of Saint Paul; foster civic pride in the beauty and notable accomplishments of the past; and promote the use and preservation of historic sites and structures for the education and general welfare of the people of the City of Saint Paul;” and

WHEREAS, Chapter 73 also establishes the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission and states that it “shall serve as an advisory body to the mayor and city council on municipal heritage preservation matters;” and

WHEREAS, the Dr. Louis Gilbert House, located at 412 Holly Avenue has been declared a Category 3 vacant building and is now threatened with demolition as the City has issued an *Order to Abate a Nuisance Building*; and

WHEREAS, the Dr. Louis Gilbert House at 412 Holly Avenue is a two-and-one-half-story, wood-frame, residence that is L-shaped in plan. The first story is narrow lap-siding and the second story, dormers and gable-ends are clad with wood shake. Additions in the early 1900s introduced Tudor revival-style and craftsman-style details to the property. The residence constructed in 1874 by John Grace, a long-time Sherriff of Ramsey County for his brother-in-law, John Corcoran who purchased the house in 1876. Between 1884 and 1888, the house was moved one lot west of its original site, from Lot 17 to Lot 16, it was enlarged, and a wrap-around porch and new limestone basement were constructed. Between 1891 and 1903, a large two-story wing was added to the west elevation. Between 1903 and 1916, a large library/master bedroom wing was added to the east elevation of the home, the stable was removed, and an auto garage was built at the back of the lot. The later addition(s) is/are attributed to prominent American architect Cass Gilbert. The property is located in the State and National Register Historic Hill District and is contributing to the local Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District. Although added to and altered during the Period of Significance, 412 Holly Avenue is one of the oldest surviving residences in the Summit Hill area; and

WHEREAS, this property became a Vacant Category 2 building on September 5, 2013, then was reclassified as a Vacant Category 3 on November 28, 2018. Records indicate that the owner is Daniel E. Wagers and on December 7, 2018, an Order to Abate a Nuisance Building was issued. A Code Compliance Inspection Fee was paid and on February 18, 2019, the Compliance Report was completed. The property was before the Legislative Hearing Officer on March 26, 2019. The Legislative Hearing Officer heard testimony and on April 24, 2019, will ask the City Council to refer the matter back to the Legislative Hearing on May 14, 2019. Given the building is located within the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District, the HPC is required to review and approve or disapprove the issuance of city permits for demolition pursuant to Leg. Code § 73.06(a)(4) generally and Leg.

Code § 74.90(j) specifically, with the exception for structures that are subject of a resolution adopted by the City Council requiring the demolition in accordance with Chapter 45 of the Legislative Code or MN Statutes Chapter 463;” and

WHEREAS, the Saint Paul Heritage Preservation Commission, based upon property history researched by Jim Sazevich and information provided and presented by staff at their April 22, 2019 meeting, made the following findings of fact:

1. On April 2, 1991, the most recent expansion of the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District was established under Ordinance No. 17815, § 3(II), reflecting today’s boundaries. The Heritage Preservation Commission shall protect the architectural character of heritage preservation sites through review and approval or denial of applications for city permits for exterior work within designated heritage preservation sites §73.04.(4).

2. Leg. Code § 74.67. - The Preservation Program for the Hill Historic District states:

In the case of the proposed demolition of a building, prior to approval of said demolition, the commission shall make written findings on the following the architectural and historical merit of the building, the effect of the demolition on surrounding buildings, the effect of any proposed new construction on the remainder of the building (in case of partial demolition) and on surrounding buildings, and the economic value or usefulness of the building as it now exists or if altered or modified in comparison with the value or usefulness of any proposed structures designated to replace the present building or buildings.

3. *The category of the building.* The property is categorized as contributing to the character of the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District. It was constructed in the 1870s and remodeled in the early 1900s during the period of significance for the historic district (1857-1930). Staff considers the building exterior’s historic and architectural integrity to be good.
4. *Architectural and historical merit of the building and effect of demolition on surrounding buildings.* Although in need of repair, staff considers the building’s historic and architectural integrity to be good. The house is an example of a blend of design and form; there are hints of shingle, Queen Anne and craftsman styles evident on the façade. The house was constructed prior to the building boom of the 1880s and early 1890s. The additions and remodeling were undertaken during the period of significance and during a time when other homes in the neighborhood were keeping up with the Joneses as far as architectural styles were concerned. The addition(s) and remodeling, designed by Cass Gilbert, were completed during a time when new homes designed by this famous architect were being constructed throughout Ramsey and Summit Hills. The Saint Paul Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District Guidelines for Design Review Booklet states the following about late 19th century vernacular properties:

The original Ramsey Hill neighborhood expanded north and west from Summit Avenue. Houses north of Summit were of wood frame construction with some brick or stone, contrasting with the more substantial masonry houses along Summit. While these houses are generally not of the same design quality as those found along Summit Avenue, they represent upper-middle class, late nineteenth-century architectural taste.

The Sanborn Insurance map for this site indicates the footprint of the house since 1925 has not changed.

Holly Avenue, between Arundel Street and Western Avenue, retains a good degree of architectural integrity.

Staff has not researched other historical associations, such as persons that have contributed in some way to Saint Paul's history and development, other architects, nor associations with any important events. The building permit index card is missing, and staff has not located any early building permits for the property. A draft historical summary of the property was provided by local historian, Jim Savevich, and was entered into record at the HPC meeting.

5. *Structural condition of the building.* Building deficiencies are noted in the Order to Abate letter dated December 7, 2018. The list of deficiencies is not necessarily all the deficiencies present at the time and does not substitute for a team inspection and Code Compliance Report. The Code Compliance Report, dated February 18, 2019, provides a more comprehensive list of necessary work at the property. While there is not an engineering report regarding the structural condition of the building, a visual assessment from the recent photos shows a lack of maintenance.
6. *The economic viability of the structure.* According to DSI Code Enforcement, the rehabilitation costs of the structure exceed \$200,000 and demolition costs are estimated to be \$30,000. For 2019, Ramsey County estimates the market value of the property to be \$319,300 with the land value at \$267,100 and the building value at \$52,200. The property is sited on a 92 ft. wide by 144 ft. deep parcel (13,248 sq. ft.).
7. In general, the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation recommend against removing buildings that are important in defining the overall historic character and destroying historic relationships between buildings and open space. Given the historic and architectural integrity of 412 Holly Avenue and its association with the work of Cass Gilbert, HPC staff find that the building reinforces and contributes to the architectural and historic character of the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District and its removal would destroy the historic relationship of the built environment in the District and especially along the 400 block of Holly Avenue.
8. The HPC finds that the potential demolition of the Dr. Louis Gilbert House at 412 Holly Avenue would have a negative impact on the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District. A vacant lot can have a negative impact on the historic district and the loss of historic fabric is irreversible; now

BE IT RESOLVED, based on the findings, the HPC concur that the property has incredible historic significance and architectural value. The HPC recommends that 412 Holly Avenue not be demolished and encourages the City Council to delay an order to demolish the property and allow the owner time to undertake an option for rehabilitation, so the residence may continue contributing to the historic and architectural character of the Historic Hill Heritage Preservation District.

MOVED BY Commissioner Richard Dana
SECONDED BY Commissioner David Wagner

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AGAINST 0
ABSTAIN 0

HOLLY 6" W. PIPE



AVENUE

66'

MAP-1888

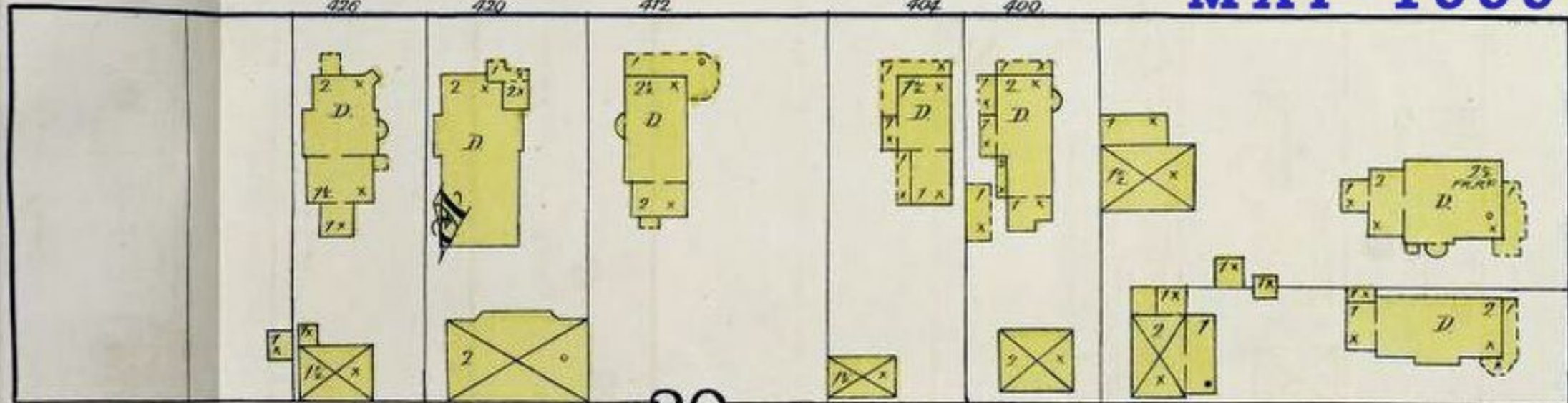
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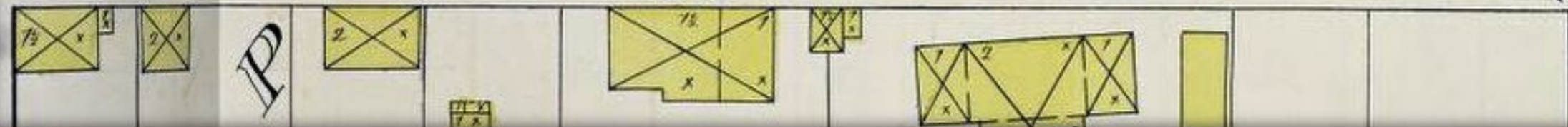
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WESTERN AVE.

12" W. PIPE

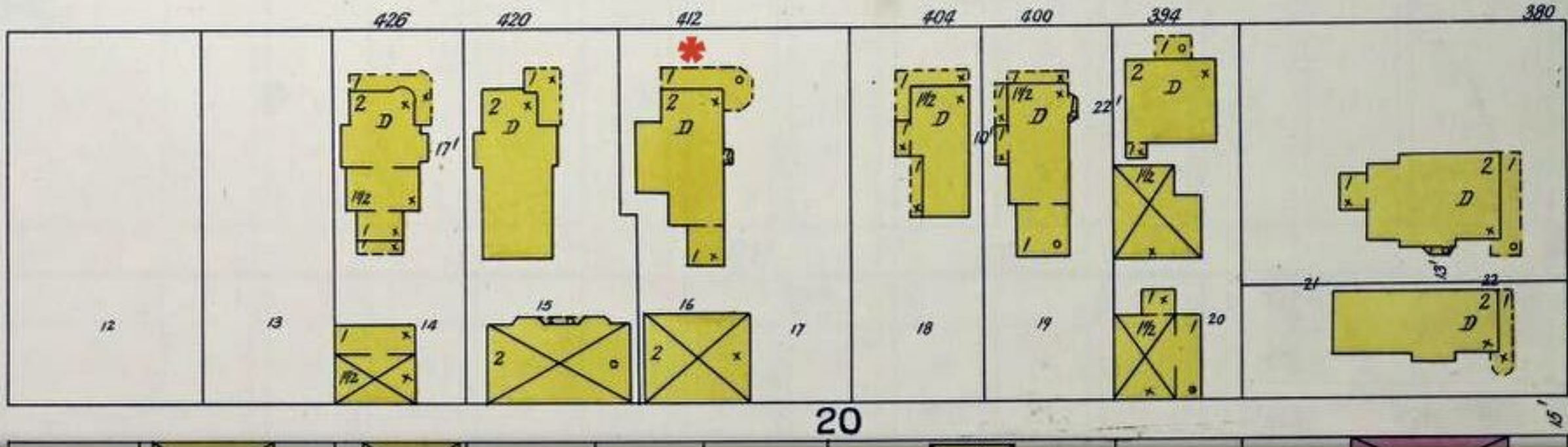
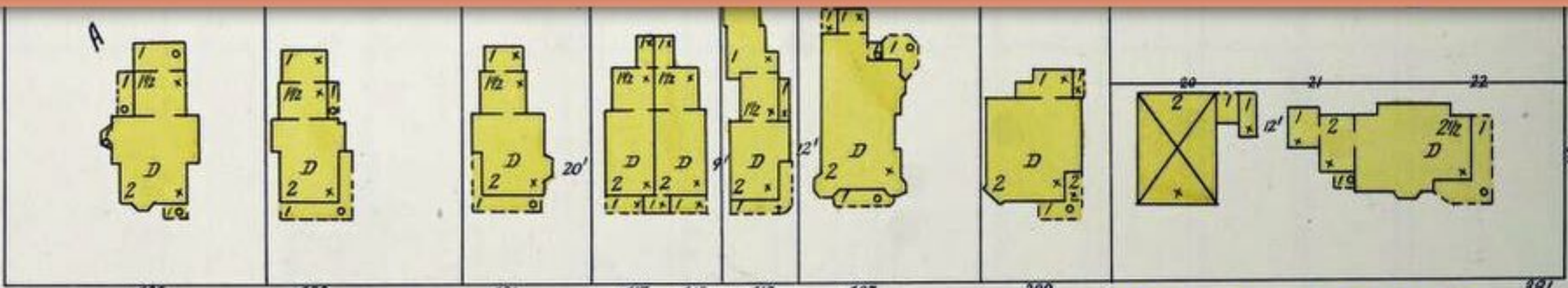


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HOLLY AV.

MAP-1903



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T.H.

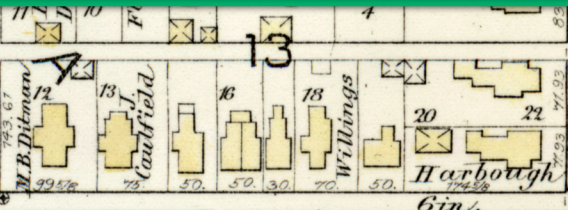
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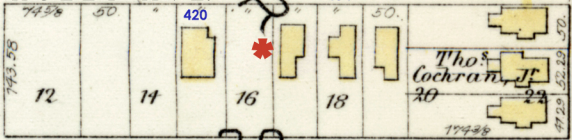
Fire Damages Residence

Fire of unknown origin damaged the residence of Dr. A. Maclaren, 412 Holly avenue, to the extent of \$2,000 early yesterday morning, and only the prompt work of the firemen saved the building from destruction. The blaze was discovered on the second floor, spreading rapidly, and the roof was ablaze before the department arrived. The loss to the house is estimated at \$1,500 and to the furnishings at \$500. The property was insured.

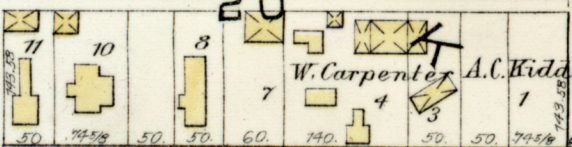
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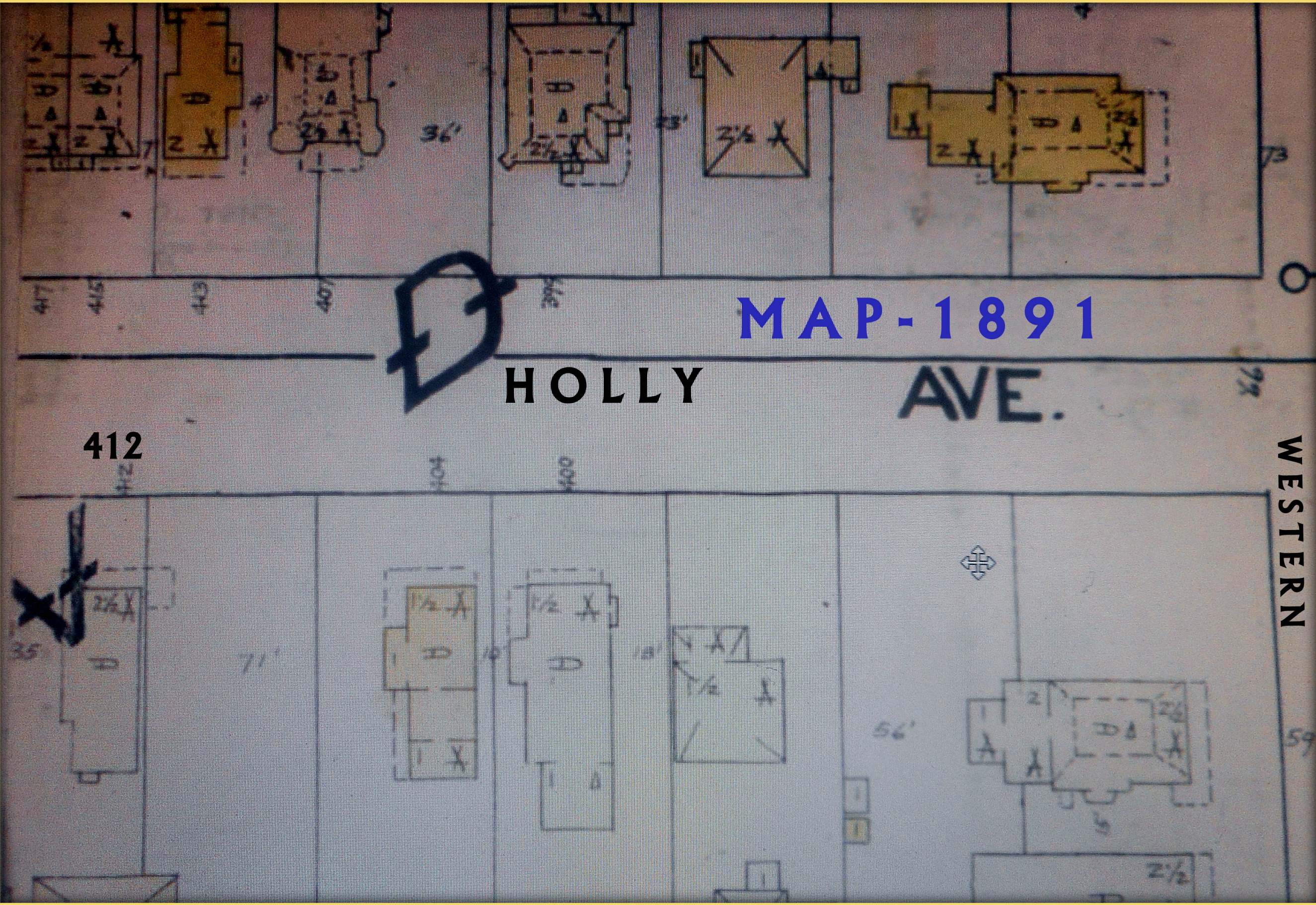
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MAP - 1884



MAP-1891

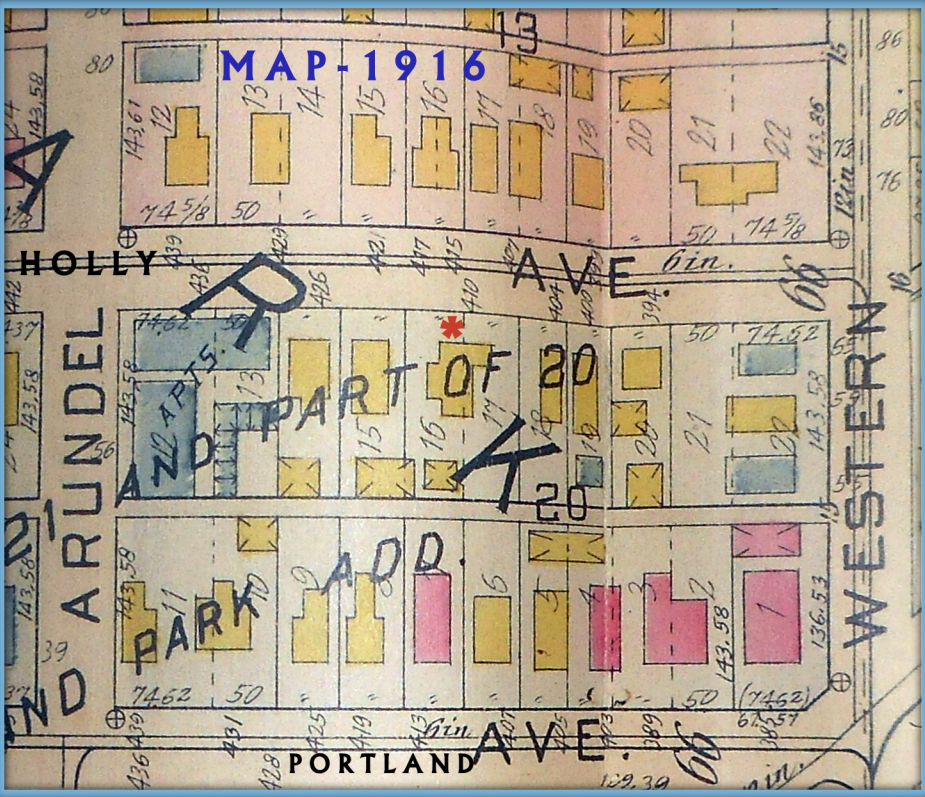
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Historical Summary

412 Holly Avenue

St. Paul, Minnesota

by Jim Sazevich

April 22, 2019 -

- D R A F T -

The original portion of the large frame house located at 412 Holly Avenue in St. Paul was built in 1874 by John Grace, long time Sheriff of Ramsey County. Grace purchased four lots on Holly Avenue, in the Woodland Park Addition in 1872, just two years after the property was platted in 1870.

Grace went into the real estate business after leaving law enforcement. He died owning about \$50, 000 in real estate holdings.

John Grace and his wife Mary died in the summer of 1884, just weeks apart.

Grace and his wife, who had no children, lived on McBoal St. in the Uppertown neighborhood.

Several lots sold on Holly Ave. between Western and Arundel in the 1870s, and several houses built on both sides of the street. Very few of the earliest original houses remain.

Although added to and changed greatly since 1874, No. 412 Holly is one of the oldest structures in the entire Summit Hill area.

John Grace built the house for his brother in law, John Corcoran, who was employed as turn-key at the Ramsey County Jail. Grace's wife Mary was the sister of John Corcoran. Corcoran rented the house for a year, and then purchased it in 1876 from Grace.

John Corcoran was born in Ireland, came to the U.S. in 185__, married in Massachusetts, and came to St. Paul about 1867. John and Nellie Corcoran had three children. The Corcoran's owned and lived in the house until 1886. Son Charles Corcoran became a Catholic Priest and served St. Michael's Church in Stillwater for many years.

House was rented from 1886 to 1889, while owned by Frederick & Harriet Driscoll. Driscoll was publisher of the Pioneer Press newspaper.

Later owners and residents of the house include:

1. 1889 – 1923 - **Anna McLaren**, widow of Civil War General Robert N. McLaren, and son, **Dr. Archibald McLaren**, physician and surgeon. McLaren was a professor at the University of Minnesota for many years.
2. 1924 – 1925 – **Col. Frederick Mears**, Assistant Chief Engineer, Great Northern Railway
3. 1926 – 1931 – **Andrew D. Goldsmith & wife Blanche Goldsmith**. Andrew was General Manager of the Emporium Dept. Store in downtown St. Paul.
4. 1934 – 1939 – **Dr. Harold E. Hullsiek**, physician, and wife **Jeanette T. Hullsiek**
5. 1940 – 1964 – **Louis A. & Marie C. Gilbert**. Louis was a real estate dealer.
6. 1964 – 1970 – Used as a **rooming house**.
7. 1974 – 2019 – **Daniel Wager** and family.

Physical changes to the structure: 1874 to 1916

1. Two-story frame house built in 1874 by John Grace, Sheriff of Ramsey County. Original address of house in No. 9 Holly Ave. Number changed to 410 Holly in 1881. Number changed to 412 Holly in 1887.
2. Between 1884 and 1888, House is moved one lot west of its original site, from Lot 17 to Lot 16, Block 20, is also enlarged, and wrap-around open front porch added. New full basement constructed of limestone. House is updated with indoor plumbing connected to city water and sewer.
3. Between 1888 and 1891, Large barn / stable is built behind the house, at the back-lot line on the alley.
4. Between 1891 and 1903, large two-story side wing added to house on the west elevation.
5. Between 1903 and 1916, large library / master bedroom wing added to east/side elevation of house. Stable removed and garage built at back of lot.

Dear City of Saint Paul

As the Heritage Preservation Chair of the Ramsey Hill Association, I request with great urgency that you respect and save the magnificent home at 412 Holly Avenue.

Indeed, it needs help, but these issues are being embraced and corrected in order to once again return it to its handsome, historical and architecturally significant place in our district. We, the neighborhood, are 100% behind this effort. Please listen. To allow it to be raised, will place you, the City, firmly on the wrong side of history. It will be an unfortunate legacy, one that has allowed other significant structures to be erased, forever, from the streets of Saint Paul. It goes without saying that the City deeply regrets this legacy.

Living at 462 Holly since 2008, I have long appreciated 412's architectural integrity, its exceptional beveled windows and design detail, and its perfect scale in relationship to its city lot. Such vision and placement do not come easily. It is, unarguably, important to aesthetic integrity of Holly Ave. and to the larger Ramsey Hill district. However, do know, 412 first came to my attention when I resided previously at 612 Ryan Ave., the 1850 Charles Symonds House in Irvine Park, which is the oldest standing residential structure in Saint Paul. This home, too, was once threatened by short-sightedness and lack of imagination for the future, but it now exists as a focal point of Irvine Park, and is on everyone's walking tour of our Capital City.

Please consider everyone's work and good will to save this property as a sincere commitment to return 412 Holly to its former stature and glory. We simply need time. We the citizens of Saint Paul and Ramsey Hill have assembled a plan to breathe new life into 412. Why have it raised, at great expense, when there is no need? It will be a showplace for Saint Paul's future history. We will be proud. You will be too. Thank you.

With respect,

Mason Riddle

Mason Riddle
Art & Architecture Critic, International Society of Art Critics, USA
Fine & Applied Arts Appraiser, International Society of Appraisers
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