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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

DIVISION OF  
NATIONAL REGISTER PROGRAMS  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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 Nelson, Charles E., Sr. House

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 520 North Grand Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town Waukesha N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin code WI county Waukesha code 133 zip code 53186

3. Classification

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

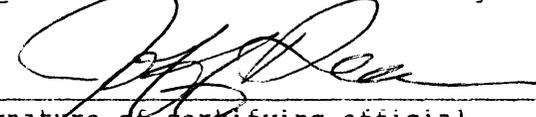
Name of related multiple property listing:

None

No. 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  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.

x 

2/20/90

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer- VI

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

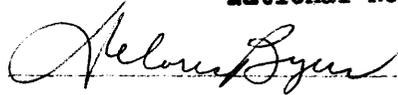
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

**Entered in the  
National Register**

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet



4/5/90

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/single dwelling

DOMESTIC/institutional housing

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials  
(enter categories from instructions)

Tudor Revival

Other: Arts and Crafts

foundation CONCRETE

walls Limestone

STUCCO

roof Slate

other WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Description

520 N. Grand Avenue is a large, well-designed, and exceptionally intact two-and-a-half-story-tall Tudor Revival style residence that was built between 1909 and 1910 for prominent Waukesha businessman Charles E. Nelson Sr. and his family. The Nelson house was one of the last houses built in an architecturally and historically important urban residential neighborhood located just to the south of Waukesha's downtown commercial section and whose core is formed by the rectilinear-shaped public space known as Cutler Park. Cutler Park is bounded on the west by Maple Avenue, on the north by Wisconsin Avenue, and on the east by North Grand Avenue and was originally a private park that contained the Greek Revival style home (extant-NRHP) built in 1845 by Waukesha founder Morris D. Cutler.

During the ensuing period between 1868-1910 when Waukesha became a summer resort of importance in the Midwest, the city's most prominent citizens chose to live in the area surrounding Cutler Park and they lined both North Grand Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue with impressive churches and homes designed in a variety of middle and late 19th Century styles. Waukesha's population grew from 2500 in 1870 to 8740 by 1910 due to the city's success as a resort during this period. By the turn-of-the-century, however, the economic importance of the city's resorts began to decline and numerous manufacturing concerns were created which took the place of these resorts in the city's economy; transforming Waukesha's economic base. This transformation, coupled with Waukesha's close proximity to Milwaukee, greatly increased the city's population which by 1988 numbered 53,941, making it Wisconsin's eighth-largest city. This growth is most evident in the many suburbs that now surround the historic downtown core of the city but it is also evident in the downtown itself.

Over the years the commercial sector of the downtown has gradually encroached upon the northern, Wisconsin Avenue edge of the residential neighborhood surrounding Cutler Park and this has resulted in the demolition of many of the large residences that once lined this street and these have since been replaced with modern commercial buildings and parking lots. Fortunately, though, the exteriors of many of the residences built in the 400, 500, and 600 blocks of North Grand Avenue are still intact. Consequently, these blocks still retain much of their historic appearance and recall a time when residences in this neighborhood sported Waukesha's most elite addresses. The Nelson house in particular serves as a reminder of the last days of this period. Not only is it one of the last of the architecturally important houses to be constructed in this neighborhood but a fortunate series of circumstances have preserved both the house and its contents in an almost totally intact state. The house was lived in continuously by Mr. and Mrs. Nelson until the death of the latter in 1967. A year later both the house and many of its original furnishings were purchased by the City of Waukesha who subsequently recycled the building as a Halfway house. This new usage has proved to be a suitable one for the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.1

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building and the desire of the new tenants to provide a homelike setting for their clients resulted in the retention of both the original floor plan and the reuse of many of the original furnishings.

The topography in this vicinity is flat and the Nelson house rests on a large, visually prominent lot on the east side of the 500 block of North Grand Avenue. This lot lies immediately adjacent to and is bordered by Cutler Park on its north and west-facing sides, providing excellent, unobstructed views from the house in both directions. The architects took further advantage of this situation by placing the house close to the northern edge of the lot, providing the house with a considerable southern exposure as well. Although later reduced in size by street widening activities, the Nelson's rectilinear-shaped lot originally measured 100 feet wide by 150 feet long, both the size and proportions being typical of the large nineteenth century lots in this neighborhood. The design of the house is freestanding and its principal facade faces east onto North Grand Avenue.

The house has a modified L shaped plan consisting of a rectilinear main block measuring 39 feet wide by 42 feet long to whose west-facing rear facade is attached a 23.5 foot wide by 14 foot long two-and-a-half-story-tall ell which contains the kitchen and service rooms of the house on its first floor. Adding the length of the ell to the main block gives the house a total length of 56 feet and a maximum width of 39 feet and approximately 5700 square feet of living space spread over the three full floors. The building's exterior walls rest on a poured concrete foundation whose walls enclose a full, concrete-floored basement story. The exterior surfaces of the foundation walls are sheathed above grade in a thick, well-wrought veneer of random ashlar quarry faced limestone which was originally quarried in Waukesha and formed a part of the exterior walls of the Waukesha First Methodist Church. Nelson bought this building from the church in 1909 and reused an unknown amount of the materials in his new house including the exterior stone which he had reshaped to suit his design.<sup>4</sup> This veneer is then continued upwards and covers the whole of the first floor up to a wide wooden beltcourse which encircles the house midway between the first and second floor windows. The wall surfaces above this beltcourse are covered with a thick stucco and extend upward from a pronounced concave flare just above the beltcourse to the slate-covered multi-gable roof. As is the case with many Tudor Revival style buildings the roof design is complex. The main block of the house is covered by a pair of parallel gable roofs whose ridgelines run in a north-south direction. A third, equally tall gable roof covers the rear ell and its ridgeline runs east-west and intersects the first two at a right angle. The walls are protected by eaves that project out over them. Those which shelter the gable ends are supported by massive projecting beam ends and have wide, simple bargeboards.

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<sup>4</sup> The Waukesha Freeman. July 20, 1968.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.2

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The east-facing North Grand Avenue facade is the principal elevation of the Nelson house and contains the main entrance to the building. This facade is rectangular in shape, is three-bays-wide, and is asymmetrical in composition. The entrance is placed in the middle bay and consists of a single large multi-light oak entrance door flanked by ten-light sidelights, the panes in each of these three elements being made of squares of plate glass having beveled edges. All three elements are placed under a single Tudor arch whose shape dictated the design of the upper portion of each element. The quarry faced ashlar door surround that enframes these elements echoes this Tudor arched-shape and is made of the same limestone that is used to side the rest of the first floor. The bay to the right of the entrance door contains a pair of six-over-one light double-hung windows which light the music room of the house while the bay to the left of the entrance contains a similar triple window group that lights the living room. Each of these two window groups have a smooth limestone sill, as do all the windows on this floor, and each group is also placed under a single Tudor arch whose shape dictated that of the upper portion of the windows. In addition, the limestone framing of each group is treated in the same manner as that of the entrance door.<sup>2</sup>

The main facade's most prominent design element is a full-width front porch salient the left-hand third of which is open and forms a terrace, while the right-hand two-thirds of which is one-story-tall and has a flat roof that shelters the middle and right-hand bays of the first floor of this facade. This porch is rectilinear in plan, has a raised concrete floor, is faced in the same dressed limestone as the rest of the first floor of the house, and the roofed portion has a single large opening at each of its north and south ends and two large openings of unequal width facing east towards the street. Each of these four openings is surmounted by a Tudor arch and has a dressed limestone surround, design features which are also shared by the first floor window groups and the main entrance door. The size of the two east-facing porch openings was dictated by the size of the design elements directly behind them on the main wall of the house. The smaller left-hand opening of the two is placed in front of the main entrance door of the house and originally there was a short flight of steps at the foot of this opening which provided access to the porch and to the front door.<sup>3</sup> This function was emphasized by the placement

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<sup>2</sup> When the usage of the house was altered to that of a halfway house after 1967 these windows were altered by the addition of a wood valence across the top of each group to square off the openings and allow for the installation of aluminum combination storms and screens. These windows and a storm door for the entrance were added at some time after 1967 although the valences were added in such a way as did not alter the original windows which are still intact and are visible on the inside.

<sup>3</sup> When North Grand Avenue was widened in the late 1960s the steps in front of this opening were removed, the opening was closed by filling its lower portion with a balustrade removed from the north-facing opening, and the north-facing opening was transformed into the new porch entrance and steps were placed at its foot.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.3

---

of large, battered limestone buttresses on either side of the opening. The larger, right-hand opening is closed by a simple wrought iron balustrade as was the north-facing opening originally. The south-facing opening opens directly onto the terrace that makes up the left-hand third of the porch. This terrace is enclosed by a continuation of the same simple balustrade already mentioned and it is supported at the southeast corner of the terrace by a short, massive limestone pedestal. This same balustrade design was also used on the roof of the porch as well.

The second floor of the east-facing facade is sided in stucco and the left-hand bay contains a polygonal oriel window that admits light into the master bedroom and it is wholly placed under the eaves of the main roof above. This oriel has four six-over-one light double-hung windows and it is supported by four small wooden brackets. The middle bay contains a small pair of two six-light square windows. Although diminutive in size, these windows are enframed in the same manner as the other windows on the second and the attic floors, each of which has a massive wood lintel above and a simple wooden sill below. These sills have the appearance of being supported by small, simple wooden brackets placed under the ends of the sills and under the mullions of multi-window groups. The right-hand bay contains a paired group of unusually tall six-over-one light double-hung windows which light the bedroom inside and open onto the flat roof of the front porch.

This facade is surmounted by the east-facing, slate-covered slope of the main roof which has two large shed-roofed dormers placed over the left and the right-hand bays of the lower floors. Both dormers are roofed in slate and sided in wood shingles and each has a triple window group containing three nine-light windows.

The complex north-facing elevation of the Nelson house faces Cutler Park and is comprised of the side elevations of both the main block of the house and the service wing behind it. The surface materials used are the same as those used on the other elevations and consist of limestone veneer on the first floor and stucco on the floors above. The detailing of the window surrounds on these floors is also identical with those used on the main facade.

The composition of the north-facing elevation of the main block is asymmetrical in design and is four-bays-wide and two-and-a-half-stories-tall with the uppermost floor consisting of the twin gable ends of the parallel gable main roof. The left-hand bay of this elevation contains a pair of six-over-one light double-hung windows placed under a single Tudor-arched head that determines the shape of the upper portions of both windows. These windows have limestone sills and help light the first floor music room. The second floor of this bay contains a polygonal-shaped oriel window that is smaller than the one on the main facade but is similar in design. This example is also fashioned of wood but has only three six-over-one light double-hung windows and it is topped by a polygonal hipped roof covered in asphalt shingles. The second bay from the left contains the side entrance of the house in its first story and the placement of the window groups above it is

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 7 Page 7.4

---

determined by the location of the landings of the main staircase inside. The side entrance door is made of oak and to its right is a small pair of four light windows.<sup>4</sup> Located above this door is a triple window group placed immediately above the beltcourse at the mezzanine level between the first and second floors. This group is placed under a single Tudor arch which determined the shape of the upper portion of each of the three six-over-one-light windows in the group. Above this group, in the mezzanine level between the second and third floors, is a group of small paired six-light windows which is identical in design to the group in the middle bay of the second floor of the main facade. A small triple window group is then placed between the first and second bays in the apex of the gable end above. This group has three nine light windows that are shaded by a shed-roofed canopy which is covered in asphalt shingles and is supported by brackets. An identical window group is placed to the right in the twin gable end which terminates the third bay from the left and both groups serve to light the third floor level. Below this group in the second floor of the third bay from the left is a pair of six-over-one-light windows and below them is a large triple window group of similar windows. Unlike the second floor windows, however, the first floor group is placed under a single large Tudor arch that determines the shape of the upper portion of these windows. The first floor of the fourth bay from the left contains a single small four-over-one-light double-hung window while the second floor contains a single six-over-one-light window placed just above the beltcourse at the mezzanine level between the first and second floors of this bay.

The remainder of the north-facing elevation consists of the side elevation of the two-story-tall service wing that is attached to the rear of the main block of the house. This elevation is symmetrical and is two-bays-wide and features two one-over-one light double-hung windows on the first floor which light the kitchen and two six-over-one light double-hung windows on the second floor which light a bedroom. Each of these two pairs of windows is divided by the stack of a large, projecting limestone-covered chimney mass which bisects this elevation vertically before piercing the roof of the wing. After piercing the roof, the chimney continues to rise until it tops the ridgeline of the roof at which point the chimney is terminated by a flared limestone chimney cap topped by two large concrete chimney pots.

The rear or west-facing elevation of the Nelson house is also complex and consists of the rear elevations of the service wing, the main block not covered by the service wing, and a one-story-tall attached two car garage addition added by Nelson in 1926.<sup>5</sup> The rear of the service wing of the house is asymmetrical in composition,

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<sup>4</sup> Originally there was a large canopy placed over this door and its adjacent paired window group. This canopy was supported from above by two large metal tie rods attached to the main wall of the house but both the canopy and its tie rods were removed at a later date and only the circular metal anchors for the rods remain.

<sup>5</sup> City of Waukesha Building Permit. City of Waukesha Inspection Unit, City Hall, 201 Delafield Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.5

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is two-an-a-half stories tall, and is two-bays-wide. As with the other elevations the first floor is sided in limestone and the upper floors in stucco. The first floor's left-hand bay contains a pair of one-over-one light flat-arched windows which help light the kitchen space inside. These windows are separated by a heavy limestone mullion and are both topped by a single massive limestone lintel. The right-hand bay contains a heavy oak entrance door that opens into the kitchen and to its left is a single one-over-one light flat-arched window identical in size and design to the pair located in the bay to the left. Both door and window are sheltered by a shed-roofed slate-covered canopy that is supported by massive wooden brackets and equally massive knee braces. The left-hand bay of the second floor above contains a pair of six-over-one light double-hung windows and the right-hand bay contains a single small six-light window which, like all the upper floor windows regardless of size, has a massive wooden lintel above it and a wooden sill supported by small brackets below. A small triple window group is then placed in the apex of the gable end above. This group has three nine-light windows that are shaded by a shed-roofed canopy which is covered in asphalt shingles and is supported by brackets.

Only the second floor of the rear elevation of the main block of the house is now visible, the first floor having been covered by the later attached garage. The visible portion contains an open sleeping porch which is inset into the southwest corner of the main block and whose roof is formed by the west-facing slope of the rearmost of the two parallel gable roofs that cover the main block. The porch roof is upheld by two massive wood piers that support the corner of the porch and also by two engaged piers at either end and each pier has heavy solid corner brackets above it. The porch extends across the full width of this portion of the rear elevation and it has a solid stucco-covered balustrade. The interior walls of this porch are sided in painted vertical boards and entrance to the porch is gained via a door placed on the south-facing wall of the second floor of the service wing.

The juncture of the main block and the service wing created a void in the southwest corner of the house which was filled in 1926 by a one-story-tall 22 foot wide by 20 foot deep attached two-car garage addition that was designed to harmonize with the existing house. The garage is of frame construction, has a concrete pad floor, and has a flat roof which is hidden by a raised parapet. On the building permit, Nelson stated that the materials used in the garage's construction would be "Mostly second hand, torn out of the house."<sup>6</sup> This accounts for the excellent stonework found on the garage which appears to have been removed from the exteriors of the west and south-facing walls covered up by the new construction and was then recycled a second time. The west-facing elevation of this addition originally contained garage doors set between limestone-sided piers and these doors were sheltered by a pent roof covered in slate and supported by massive wooden brackets and knee braces identical

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<sup>6</sup> City of Waukesha Building Permit. City of Waukesha Inspection Unit, Waukesha City Hall, 201 Delafield Street.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 7 Page 7.6

---

to those that supported the canopy over the rear door. These doors were removed and the opening was filled with vertical wooden board and batten siding after 1967 when the garage was winterized and reused as additional living space. Even with these changes, however, this garage is so successful in complementing the already existing house that it is considered to be a contributing addition to it.

The south-facing elevation of the Nelson house, like that of the north-facing elevation, is comprised of the side elevations of both the main block of the house and the service wing behind it, as well as the side elevation of the garage addition. The surface materials on this elevation are the same as those used on the other elevations and consist of limestone veneer on the first floor and stucco on the floors. These materials are combined on the south-facing elevation of the garage addition which is sided in stucco. This stucco panel is then enframed by limestone-faced quoins at both ends and a limestone cornice above which visually terminates the stepped parapet that conceals the roof on this side of the garage. Limestone is also used to form the tabbed surround of the paired window group that is placed in the center of this elevation. This window group is placed under a single Tudor arch which originally determined the shape of the upper portions of the windows. Both of these windows were replaced with more conventional one-over-one light units when the garage was remodeled in the late 1960s. The size of the garage causes it to project some eight feet further to the south than the main wall of the south-facing elevation of the main block of the house. This resulted in an eight-foot-wide east-facing elevation facing the street which has another Tudor-arched window placed on it and the whole of this elevation was then sided in limestone.

The first story of the south-facing elevation of the two-story-tall service wing has is hidden by the garage addition. The second story is asymmetrical in composition and its stucco-sided wall is pierced by a single six-over-one light window.

The south-facing elevation of the main block of the house is also asymmetrical in design and is four-bays-wide and two-and-a-half-stories-tall with the uppermost floor consisting of the twin gable ends of the parallel gable main roof. The left-hand portion of the first floor of this elevation contains a large, asymmetrically-placed flat-roofed bow window which lights the dining room of the house. This semi-circular plan eighteen-foot-wide salient consists of two floor-to-ceiling height eight-over-sixteen light windows that flank a fourteen-light fixed transom window. The entire bow window is terminated vertically by a wide cove molding fashioned of dressed limestone and rests on a raised limestone foundation. A small rectangular window opening pierces this foundation wall below each of the three main windows above. The composition of the second floor above is also asymmetrical and is two bays wide. The left-hand bay consist of the south end of the inset sleeping porch described previously. The right-hand bay contains a triple window group composed of six-over-one-light windows. A small triple window group is then placed in the apex of the gable end above. This group has three nine-light windows that are shaded by a shed-roofed canopy which is covered in asphalt shingles and is supported by brackets.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin

Section number 7 Page 7.7

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The third and fourth bays from the left on the first floor of this elevation each contain a single six-over-one light window. These bays are separated by a massive tapered limestone-faced chimney mass which projects outward from the main wall of the house. This mass has a buttress motive facing to the east at the first floor level and it is stepped just below the point where it breaks the cornice line of the main roof to the right of the apex of the gable. It then continues upward above the ridgeline of the main roof until it is terminated by a flared limestone cap surmounted by three concrete chimney pots. The third bay from the left on the second floor of this elevation contains a pair of small six-light windows while the fourth bay contains a single six-over-one light window which is similar in design but narrower than the ones on the first floor below.

The interior of the Nelson house was designed to compliment the Tudor-influenced architecture of the exterior and to provide the family with a comfortable, well-appointed, up-to-date, and conveniently laid out residence. Entrance to the interior is gained by passing through the heavy oak and glass entrance door which has a Tudor-arched head and is centrally positioned on the main facade. This door opens into a small tile-floored entrance vestibule. The inner vestibule door is also made of oak and glass and opens into the long, rectangular entrance hall which forms the principal axis of the first floor. The hall has an oak floor as do all the other principal rooms on the first floor and the lower portions of the walls are panelled in excellent fumed oak wainscoting. The upper portion of the walls and the ceiling in the entrance hall and most of the other rooms in the house consist of painted plaster. All the remaining interior woodwork in the principal rooms on this floor is made of fumed oak as well and this includes the baseboards and crown moldings and all the doors and the door and window casings.

The principal public rooms of the Nelson house are placed on the north (right-hand) and the south (left-hand) sides of the centrally placed entrance hall and consist of a living room and dining room on the south-facing side and a music room, the main staircase, and a den on the north-facing side. All the main entrances to these rooms, except for the dining room, open off of the entrance hall. The first room to the left of the entrance hall is the 15-foot-wide by 21-foot-long main living room which occupies the southeast corner of the floor. This fine room has a flat, massively beamed ceiling whose individual beams are made of fumed oak and have flattened, pointed-arch soffits suggestive of the Tudor arch motif which occurs both on the exterior and elsewhere in the interior of the house. Entrance to the room is through a flat-arched opening which is closed by a pair of heavy oak and glass pocket doors. Immediately opposite these doors on the south wall of the room is a large eight-foot-wide fireplace which has an elaborate mantelpiece fashioned of a pinkish-tan Bedford stone. This fireplace has a segmental-arched opening which is protected by its original metal fire screen and the spandrels above and to the sides of the opening are faced in a tan-colored Roman brick and are enframed by the various stone elements that compose the mantelpiece. The twin pedestal-like stone elements which comprise the outer edges of this mantelpiece both feature identical

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.8

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low relief decoration resembling the strapwork ornamentation that is frequently found on the original Elizabethan examples that provided the inspiration for this design. The stone portion of the mantelpiece was executed by the J. H. Johnson Marble Works located in Waukesha.<sup>7</sup> The original hammered brass and opaline glass wall sconces are still in place at various points around the room although the similar light that originally hung from the ceiling has been removed and placed in storage by the Nelson House Board and has been replaced by a modern combination ceiling fan/light fixture. The west end of the room contains a second flat-arched opening which is closed by a pair of heavy oak and glass eighteen-light french-style doors, each of whose three upper lights was shaped by being placed under a single segmental arch. These doors are flanked by built-in oak bookcase units, each of whose contents is protected by three oak and glass doors having segmental-arched upper portions, and there is a sizeable segmental-arched niche placed in the wall above each bookcase unit.

The french-style doors just described open into the dining room of the house which is essentially rectangular in plan and has a simple vaulted ceiling whose axis runs north-south. Two other doors also open into this room and they are both placed on the north-facing wall and are separated by a large oak sideboard. The right-hand door opens into the entrance hall while that on the left opens into the serving pantry. The dining room is extended to the south by an eighteen-foot-wide bow window and to the west by a ten-foot-wide full-height flower nook opposite the french doors on the room's east-facing wall. Both the floor of this nook and the large flower box it contains are covered in gray tiles and the flower box is lined with copper and is lit by a row of diamond-paned casement windows placed above the box on the upper portion of the west-facing wall in the rear of the nook. The side walls of the nook are sided in fumed oak panelling in the form of a line of tall, thin arches having segmental heads which are applied to the walls as a blind arcade. The recessed openings of these arches were originally covered in an aluminum leaf paper overpainted with a light coat of blue paint and this paper is still intact. Similar panelling having slightly wider arches is placed on the other walls and the room is lit by the original wall sconces and chandelier. The dining room also contains its original suite of heavy oak furniture of Elizabethan-inspired design including the dining room table, chairs, sideboard and a serving table.

The room to the right of the main entrance door is the former music room of the house and it occupies the northeast corner of the first floor. Entrance to this room is through a single heavy eighteen-light oak and glass door whose three upper lights were shaped by being placed under a single segmental arch. Originally this room had rose-colored walls and oriental rugs and contained a baby grand piano. Today it is used as a lounge for the residents. A slightly larger room once served as the den and sewing room of the house and it is located on the same side of the hall on the other side of the main staircase which separates the two rooms. This

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<sup>7</sup> Waukesha Freeman. December 1, 1910, Pg. 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.9

massive staircase is also made of fumed oak and runs from the basement of the house to the third floor ballroom. This staircase is typical in plan, having straight runs with returns between flights and the entrance to the stair well which opens off the entrance hall is framed by a large Tudor arch. The first tread of the run which begins the ascent from the entrance hall to the second floor is placed flush with the main walls of the hall and a second run descends beside it to a small landing onto which a side entrance door set into the north-facing facade opens. The lower portion of the stairwell walls is sided in the same panelled wainscoting that is used in the entrance hall and the balustrade of the staircase itself is formed of short, heavy turned oak balusters that rest on equally tall square pedestals.

At the rear of the entrance hall are doors leading to the kitchen and to the butler's pantry. The present occupants of the house have had to replace the major appliances in the kitchen such as the stove and refrigerator with more modern units but have otherwise preserved these rooms in close to their original state. In a local newspaper account written when the Nelsons had just occupied their new house the wonders of these rooms were fully described for the education of the reader. "The kitchen and butler's pantry are marvels of convenience, being equipped with every possible contrivance for making pleasant and easy the work of the house. In fact the housekeeper viewing the house is perhaps more pleased with the large lighted clothes closets and broom closets, and linen closets, and the clothes chute, and the pantries and the ice box and the numberless drawers and shelves and cupboards, and the numerous water faucets, than with the more conspicuous beauties of the house."<sup>8</sup>

The second floor of the house contains five bedrooms, a dressing room and a large bathroom. The same newspaper article quoted above described each of these rooms in detail and made special note of the bathroom. "The bath room has blue walls and white tiling on floors and wainscot. The fixtures are of the finest, and include the large tub, foot tub, shower and shampoo spray. A "mixer", by which the water is mixed to the desired temperature before being drawn, is among the newest improvements."<sup>9</sup> This floor has maple floors throughout. Maple flooring is also used on the third floor which was originally fitted up as a single large space that served as a ballroom. This room was built around a piano which could not be removed after construction was completed and the piano has thus survived intact. The full basement has a concrete floor and originally contained a work-room, vegetable cellar, laundry, coal cellars, and heating room.

The present occupants of the Nelson house have been meticulous in maintaining it and as a result it is now the most intact residence that still exists in the 400-600 blocks of North Grand Avenue and it looks remarkably as it did when occupied by the Nelsons, both inside and out. The only visible changes to the exterior have been

<sup>8</sup> Waukesha Freeman. December 1, 1910, Pg. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 7 Page 7.10

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the modifications made to the window groups having Tudor-arched heads, the addition of modern aluminum combination storm and screen windows on most windows, the removal of the side entrance canopy, and the alteration of the position of the steps leading up to the front porch. Otherwise, the house is in excellent original condition and is a tribute both to those who designed and constructed it and to those who have lived in it.

The most important changes which have affected this property have impacted the site itself. The property was bought from the Nelson Estate by the City of Waukesha in 1967 for the expressed intent of widening North Grand Avenue. As a result, a 20-30 foot wide strip was taken from the eastern portion of the lot for this purpose, bringing the sidewalk directly adjacent to the front porch. More recently, most of the rear of the lot and a narrow strip along the northern edge were taken for parking lot expansion projects related to the adjacent Waukesha Public Library.

The extent of such archeological remains as may still exist on this site is unknown at the present time. An earlier two-story-tall brick-veneered Italianate style house is known to have occupied approximately the same place on this site as the Nelson house and an earlier one-and-a-half-story-tall rectilinear plan hip-roofed frame carriage house was also placed at the rear of the original lot. The earlier house (known as 310 North Grand Avenue before the street numbering system was changed) was later demolished to make way for the Nelson house and its carriage house was also demolished at about the same time that the new attached garage was built in 1926.<sup>10</sup> It is unlikely, therefore, that any trace of the earlier buildings that once occupied this site would have survived the excavation of the foundation of the present house or the later site alterations which have reduced the original size of the lot. No information about the existence of possible prehistoric remains on this specific site was found in the course of this research even though the site of the adjacent Cutler Park contains several mounds associated with the Mound Building culture and the city of Waukesha once contained at least 55 examples of such mounds.<sup>11</sup> In addition, Waukesha is known to have been a favored site of the Potawatomi Indian tribe. It is likely, though, that any remains of these pre-European cultures would have been greatly disturbed by the building activities associated with the subsequent changes to the site mentioned above.

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<sup>10</sup> Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps of Waukesha, Wisconsin. Sanborn-Perris Map Company, New York, New York, 1901 and 1911 (Sheet No. 15) and 1929 (Sheet No. 16).

<sup>11</sup> 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, Pg. 5.

B. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria   A     B     X     C     D  

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>  Architecture  </u>	<u>  1909-1926  </u>	<u>  1909-1910<sup>12</sup>  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>	<u>  1926<sup>13</sup>  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>
<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>	<u>                  </u>

Cultural Affiliation  
                                  N/A                                  

Significant Person	Architect/Builder
<u>                  N/A                  </u>	<u>  Fernekas and Cramer<sup>14</sup>/architects  </u>
	<u>  Austin, Asa<sup>15</sup>/builder                  </u>

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

Significance

The Charles E. Nelson Sr. house is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) for its local significance under National Register (NR) criterion C. More specifically, the Nelson house is being nominated because of its association with the area of Architecture; a theme which is also identified in the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP). This house is located in a three-block-long stretch of North Grand Avenue which, before WWI., formed the heart of Waukesha's most elite residential neighborhood. Several of the other houses along this stretch were placed on the NRHP in 1983 as a result of research activities stemming from the City of Waukesha Intensive Survey in 1982 (See Footnote No. 20). Further research was then undertaken to assess the NRHP potential of the Nelson house utilizing the Arts and Crafts and the Tudor and Elizabethan Revival subsections of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP. The results of this research is detailed below and confirms that the Nelson house is locally significant under NR criterion C as an excellent, architecturally distinguished example of a residence designed in the Tudor Revival style whose design in this instance was strongly influenced by the Arts and Crafts style. The City of Waukesha Intensive Survey found that houses designed in the Tudor Revival style are rare in Waukesha; the Nelson house and the Frank Putney house located a few blocks away at 223 Wisconsin Avenue (NRHP) being that city's two best pre-WWI. examples. The Nelson house is also much the most intact of these houses and contains a significant and largely unaltered interior. The first owner of the house was Charles E. Nelson, Sr., one of Waukesha's more prominent businessmen in the first half of this century. He entrusted the design of his house to the prominent Milwaukee

<sup>12</sup> Waukesha Freeman. December 1, 1910, Pg. 1.  
<sup>13</sup> City of Waukesha Building Permit. City of Waukesha Inspection Unit, Waukesha City Hall, 201 Delatfield Street.  
<sup>14</sup> Waukesha Freeman. op. cit.  
<sup>15</sup> Waukesha Freeman. op. cit.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.1

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architectural firm of Fernekes and Cramer and its construction was undertaken by a group of predominantly Waukesha-area contractors led by carpentry contractor Asa Austin and masonry contractor George Ward. Together, the client, architects, and contractors created a building which was both an instant source of civic pride in Waukesha and served the needs of the Nelson family continuously until 1967 when it was sold to the City of Waukesha which now leases the building to the Halfway House of Waukesha, Inc.

Historic Context

A general history of the city of Waukesha is contained in both the final report of the Waukesha Intensive Survey<sup>15</sup> and in the text of the Historic Resources of Waukesha Multiple Resource Nomination form.<sup>17</sup> Consequently, the following historical background deals mostly with the North Grand Avenue neighborhood and with Charles E. Nelson Sr.

Grand Avenue is one of the three principal Waukesha streets laid out in 1840 by a committee of four prominent village citizens and the alignment of these streets was determined the shape of the downtown section of nineteenth century Waukesha. These three streets (West Broadway, Main Street, and Grand Avenue) meet at a five-way intersection that became the commercial center of historic downtown Waukesha as a result. The five corners that form this intersection have traditionally been known as the Five Points and many of the nineteenth century commercial buildings which surround this arterial hub are now part of Waukesha's Downtown Historic District (NRHP-1983). A number of the original owners of these commercial buildings lived just a few blocks to the south in the residential neighborhood which developed adjacent to the commercial district. This neighborhood formed around the private park belonging to Waukesha's first settler, Morris D. Cutler (1810-1897), who settled here with his brother, Alonzo Cutler, in 1834.<sup>16</sup> Cutler was able to acquire considerable land in the village by virtue of his timely arrival on the scene and he later platted much of it as Cutler's Second Addition to the Village of Waukesha. This addition is bounded by Wisconsin Avenue on the north, College Avenue on the south, and West and East Avenues (formerly Dodge Street and High Street) on the west and east and is bisected north-to-south by Grand Avenue (which was originally named West Division Street). Cutler reserved a block of this land for his own use which is bounded by Wisconsin Avenue on the north, Grand Avenue on the east, Carroll

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<sup>15</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> Howard, Needles, Tammen, and Bergendoff. Historic Resources of Waukesha Multiple Resource Nomination form. September, 1982. On file at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin Historic Preservation Division in Madison, Wisconsin.

<sup>16</sup> 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, Pgs. 124-125.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.2

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Street on the south, and Maple Avenue (formerly Church Street) on the west and he built a Greek Revival style house (extant-NRHP) for himself and his new wife on the northern part of this block in 1845 which he was to occupy until his death in 1897.<sup>19</sup>

Most of the earliest residential buildings constructed in the vicinity of Cutler's Addition were built immediately to the north, in the two-block-deep by four-block-long area between Wisconsin Avenue and South Street. As the Village of Waukesha's population grew, however, and as the commercial center of the village coalesced around the Five Points hub, the need for more attractive, less congested home sites near the downtown increased and created a demand which gradually transformed Cutler's holdings. Cutler helped this transformation along by donating a site to the village for a much-needed public school in 1853 that was located almost exactly in the center of his holdings on three acres of land fronting on North Grand Avenue that consisted of the east-facing end of the city block immediately to the south of the one that contained his own residence. The village accepted Cutler's donation and completed a new school building (non-extant) on the site named the Union School in 1855. The new institution induced a number of Waukesha's business and social leaders who were looking for suitable home sites for themselves and their families to build houses in the vicinity. These houses represented some of Waukesha's finest nineteenth century residential buildings and helped make this section of Waukesha the village's most prestigious neighborhood.<sup>20</sup>

By 1873 virtually all of the lots surrounding what had become known as Cutler's Block had been developed as had most of the nearby lots on North Grand and Wisconsin Avenues. The subsequent development of the rest of the lots in Cutler's Addition was due in large part to the substantial increase in population that accompanied Waukesha's rapid rise to prominence as a resort community in the second half of the nineteenth century. This prominence was due to Waukesha's numerous natural springs and had its origin in Colonel Richard Dunbar's 1868 claim that the local spring waters contained restorative healing powers. The period of exploitation and development that followed spanned the years 1868-1910 and is now known as Waukesha's "Springs Era", a period whose history is treated in detail in the Waukesha

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<sup>19</sup> The Morris D. Cutler house is still extant but was moved to 401 Central Avenue in 1902 and its place in the Park was taken by the Waukesha Public Library. During his lifetime Cutler continually improved the grounds surrounding his house and by the time of his death they were one of Waukesha's recognized beauty spots.

<sup>20</sup> Several other residences on North Grand Avenue near the Nelson house were placed on the NRHP in 1983 as part of the Multiple Resources of Waukesha NRHP nomination. These include: the late Gothic Revival style John Howitt House, 407 North Grand Avenue (1874-1880); the Italianate style Andrew Frame House, 507 North Grand Avenue (ca.1879); and the Greek Revival style Totten-Butterfield House, 515 North Grand Avenue (ca.1850).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.3

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Intensive Survey Report.<sup>21</sup> Nature distributed these springs randomly throughout the village and their subsequent development for the tourist trade caused houses and hotels to spring up around them, creating clusters of buildings in widely scattered parts of the village. The creation of these randomly placed clusters took place within the larger developmental framework of the village which followed the more usual centric urban growth pattern characterized by rings or belts of ever more modern buildings spreading out from an historic core. Thus, as the Village of Waukesha grew, these clusters of older buildings were slowly enveloped by newer ones, creating islands of buildings throughout the city whose existence appears at first glance to be inconsistent stylistically with the newer buildings surrounding them.

Both centric and clustered growth patterns are evident in the subsequent development of Cutler's Addition and of Grand Avenue. Among the factors which was most responsible for this development was the growth of Waukesha's resort industry which succeeded in bringing large numbers of tourists to the village and created an enormous demand for hotel rooms of every category. This demand led to a boom in the construction of new hotels and boarding houses and also resulted in the expansion of several of Waukesha's existing downtown hotels, one of which was a converted residence on the northeast corner of Wisconsin and North Grand Avenues. This building "started life as a small residence in the early 1850s. It was enlarged by Jacob L. 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 foot four-story addition which made it the largest hotel in the city until 1874." The new building was renamed the Mansion House and "was destroyed by fire in December 1882 but rebuilt as the Spring City Hotel five years later by George R. Jones and had over two hundred rooms. This new hotel was partially destroyed by fire in 1901, rebuilt, and completely burned out in 1911."<sup>22</sup>

The hotel that supplanted the Mansion House as the village's largest was the Fountain Spring House which was built four blocks to the south at the opposite end of Grand Avenue in 1874. This frame construction hotel fronted on Grand Avenue and occupied most of the block between College Avenue and Newhall Avenue, a location on the opposite side of College Avenue from the southern boundary of Cutler's property. The construction of the hotel followed the discovery of the Fountain Spring on this property in 1872 and the subsequent history of its development is an excellent illustration of the clustered growth pattern mentioned above. "In the early 1870's, Chicago millionaire Matthew Laflin came to Waukesha to drink the water for his failing health. Delighted with the result, but not with the accommodations,

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<sup>21</sup> 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, Pgs. 20-26.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid, Pg. 24.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.4

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he saw an opportunity (sic) and seized it. In partnership with another Chicago millionaire, Thomas B. Bryan, Laflin 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 Mountain Spring House. This building, on Grand Avenue near Laflin 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, Laflin had not only rebuilt the original section but doubled it to accommodate 800 guests. This made the Mountain 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."<sup>23</sup>

The establishment of two of Waukesha's largest nineteenth century hotels at opposite ends of North Grand Avenue greatly enhanced the Avenue's already high local visibility. Tacit recognition of the Avenue's elevated status came some six years later when the Village Board (reputedly at Mathew Laflin's suggestion) changed the name of the thoroughfare from West Division Street to North (and South) Grand Avenue shortly after the reopening of the fire-damaged Mountain Springs House.<sup>24</sup> In the following decade Waukesha's population grew from approximately 3000 to 6300, "largely through the influence of its profitable summer business and manufacturing. Grand Avenue figured prominently in such progress and became the elite street, with N. Grand Avenue (meaning that portion of N. Grand Avenue lying north of Wisconsin Avenue) its business anchor. ... From the corner of Grand and Wisconsin avenues south was an attractive mix of residential and business construction."<sup>25</sup>

The prestige of Grand Avenue as a residential address continued to lure the city's elite to the area throughout the nineteenth century and on into the twentieth. Among these persons was Dr. Albert Kendrick (1813-1884), one of the most successful of Waukesha's pioneer physicians and the owner of a large Italianate style brick house that was located at 514 (aka 306) North Grand Avenue until it was finally torn down to make way for the present St. Luke's English Lutheran Church at 500 North Grand Avenue. Dr. Kendrick was born in Poultney, Vermont in 1813, graduated from the Woodstock (Vermont) Medical School in 1832, and practiced medicine in Vermont and New York state before coming to the Town of Waukesha in 1853 where he lived on a farm for six years before moving into the village. Kendrick had been twice widowed

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<sup>23</sup> 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, Pg. 24.

<sup>24</sup> Grand Avenue is divided into North and South segments by the east-west running College Avenue.

<sup>25</sup> Koenig, G. H.. "The Grandeur of Grand Avenue, Waukesha," The Waukesha Freeman, September 14, 1981.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.5

and had two children from each of his previous marriages prior to meeting and marrying his third wife, Mary Ann Tyler, around 1871.<sup>26</sup> Mary Tyler was christened Mary Ann Jackson when she was born in New Berlin, New York and she had also been twice widowed by the time she met Dr. Kendrick. Her first marriage was to a native of South New Berlin, New York named William Ketchum. After Ketchum's early death Mary Jackson Ketchum came to Waukesha to visit her sister-in-law, Mrs. Alonzo Tyler (formerly Esther Ketchum) and was married not long afterwards to Alonzo Tyler's brother, Waukesha banker John Tyler (?-1869). The Tylers had a daughter named Maud who was born in the same year (1869) that John Tyler died. Several years later, Mary Jackson Tyler married Dr. Kendrick who subsequently adopted Maud as his own daughter. For many years the Kendrick family and the Alonzo Tyler family lived next door to each other in adjoining brick houses (both non-extant) known as 306 and 310 (later 514 and 520) North Grand Avenue. Dr. Kendrick died in 1884 and when Alonzo Tyler died between 1892-1895 the two widows (who were now twice sisters-in-law) continued to live in their adjoining houses until the Tyler house was finally demolished to make way for the Charles E. Nelson, Sr. house in 1909.

Maud Tyler Kendrick (1869-1967) graduated first from Waukesha High School (located a block to the south of the Kendrick family's North Grand Avenue home) and then from Carroll College (located four blocks to the south) before finally graduating from the Chicago Musical College in 1888.<sup>27</sup> After graduation she taught piano in Waukesha until January 12, 1892 when she married Waukesha resident Charles E. Nelson, Sr.

Maud Kendrick Nelson's new husband was the only child of well-known Waukesha grocer James C. Nelson (1839-1900) who had come to America from England in 1851 with his parents, Samuel and Hannah Nelson, and his two brothers and settled with them on a farm in Genesee, Wisconsin. James C. Nelson married Elizabeth Meahl (1842-1923) of Genesee in 1864 and five years later they moved to Waukesha where Nelson founded a grocery business with his brother, Thomas, which soon became one of the leading firms in the city. James C. Nelson and his wife resided in a frame house at 214 Maple Avenue two blocks away from the Kendrick family. Their son, Charles E. Nelson, Sr. (1866-1945), was born in Genesee, Wisconsin and moved to Waukesha with his parents in 1869. In 1880, at the age of 14, Nelson began working as a clerk for local druggist I. M. White and ten years later, in 1891, White made him his partner in the firm of White and Nelson. Nelson's new position made it possible for him to marry Maud Kendrick in the following year and by 1893 the couple had had their first child, Marie E. Nelson (1893-?). Nelson quickly expanded his firm by offering such items as books and crockery and in 1896 his success enabled him to purchase his partner's share of the business. Nelson's recently retired father, James C. Nelson, then joined him in managing the new firm and he worked for his son as a bookkeeper until a few months before his death on August 18, 1900.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The Waukesha Freeman. October 16, 1884. Obituary of Alexander Kendrick.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid, March 5, 1967. Obituary of Maud T. Nelson.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid, August 25, 1900. Obituary of James C. Nelson.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.6

On November 8, 1901, little more than a year after his father's death, Nelson surprised all of Waukesha by selling his thriving concern to another man and announcing that "I am too young (35) to retire and I have been contemplating engaging a suite of rooms in the new bank and engaging in the real estate business. It was with that end in view that I made a number of purchases recently."<sup>29</sup> These purchases included a large number of parcels of land bought from the Hadfield Estate sale and Nelson's successful development and resale of these properties helped make him a wealthy man at a comparatively young age and launched a career that he would be associated with for the rest of his life. In 1904 Nelson and his wife had their second child, Charles E. Nelson, Jr. (1904-) who was born in the Kendrick family house on North Grand Avenue where the Nelsons had lived with Mrs. Nelson's mother since the beginning of their marriage. By 1909 Nelson had decided to build a modern house of his own, a decision that may have been prompted by the sudden availability of the large amounts of excellent building materials that he was able to salvage from the fire-damaged Waukesha First Methodist Church for \$1.<sup>30</sup> Nelson then purchased the old Tyler house next door to the Kendrick house, razed it, and began the construction of his own house on the site which was ready for occupancy at the end of 1910. He moved into his new house (520 North Grand Avenue) on Thanksgiving Day with his wife and children and his mother-in-law, Mrs. Kendrick, and lived there until his death in 1945.

During the remaining thirty-five years of his life Nelson was well-known in Waukesha for his abilities as a businessman and he played an active role as an executive in several of the city's most important manufacturing concerns besides conducting his own real estate firm. Many of Nelson's managerial roles were of short duration and came about because his reputation as an astute businessman caused him to be named trustee for a number of local estates. These appointments resulted in his being offered senior managerial positions in firms as various as the Dr. David Roberts Veterinary Co. (secretary-manager from 1913-1914); the Federal Bridge and Structural Steel Co. (treasurer in 1917); Thompson's Malted Foods Co. (secretary from 1919-1923); and the R. L. Kenyon Co. (subsequently known as the Luxfibre Furniture Co.) of which he was general manager from 1919-1931.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Nelson "Later operated the Pleasant Valley farms and Morey Condensary co. [sic] at North Prairie for seven years for the creditors. He also was treasurer of the Hoardes [sic] Creamery at Whitewater and Fort Atkinson for a number of years as well as being a director of the Waukesha National bank for 25 years."<sup>32</sup> Nelson died in 1945 at the age of 79 and Mrs. Nelson continued to reside in their home until her own death in 1967 at the age of 97 at which time the building was acquired by the City of Waukesha.

<sup>29</sup> The Waukesha Freeman. November 8, 1901, Pg. 1.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, July 20, 1968.

<sup>31</sup> Waukesha City Directories. Wright Publishing Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1890-1931.

<sup>32</sup> Waukesha Freeman. April 9, 1945, Pg. 1. Obituary of Charles E. Nelson, Sr.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.7

Architecture

The architectural significance of the Charles E. Nelson, Sr. house lies in its being an excellent example of a large, early twentieth century Tudor Revival style urban dwelling and this significance is considerably enhanced by the house's exceptionally intact interior and exterior. The house was built to a design furnished by the then well-known Milwaukee architectural firm of Fernekes and Cramer who managed to incorporate a substantial amount of recycled materials in the new building which Nelson had salvaged from the recently burned Waukesha First Methodist Church. The resulting residence took excellent advantage of its prominent Grand Avenue site and quickly became a source of local pride after it was finished late in 1910. The first floor of the exterior of the house is sided in recycled Waukesha limestone while the upper floors are sided in stucco and the house has the "Elaborate decorative chimneys, multi-gabled rooflines, and large window expanses subdivided by a multitude of mullions" which are all characteristics of the Tudor Revival style that are specifically cited in the Tudor and Elizabethan Revival style subsection of the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP.<sup>33</sup> The Nelson house, however, has a somewhat narrower, deeper and more old-fashioned downtown lot than other houses in Waukesha of the same size and style. Thus, in order to get the square footage necessary to fulfill the owner's needs, the architects had to design a building which is more rectilinear in plan and is both longer and taller than other buildings in Waukesha which share the same design vocabulary. This increased depth-to-width ratio, combined with a greater vertical emphasis, gives the Nelson house a markedly urban, town house-like appearance which is especially noticeable on the north-facing facade and it is the only Tudor Revival style house in Waukesha to be so treated.

The Waukesha Intensive Survey report mentions only a very few Waukesha residences designed in the Tudor Revival style and most of these are suburban houses with irregular or L shaped plans built in the 1920s and the early 1930s.<sup>34</sup> Only two examples (including the Nelson house) appear to have been built in the city before WWI and the earliest of these is the excellent Frank H. Putney house located two-and-a-half blocks away from the Nelson house at 223 Wisconsin Avenue (NRHP-1983).<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Wyatt, Barbara (Ed.). Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin. Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, 1986. Vol. 2, 2-30 (Architecture).

<sup>34</sup> Other Waukesha houses identified in the survey report as being designed in the Tudor Revival style are: the Hattie James house, 216 W. College Ave., built in 1931 (College Avenue Historic District-NRHP 1983); the Chauncy Ross house, 210 W. College Ave., built in 1929 (College Avenue Historic District-NRHP 1983); the three houses located at 209, 301, and 412 Windsor Drive; 211 Wright Street; and 419 and 1100 E. Broadway. Other excellent Tudor Revival style houses located along E. Broadway include 1307, 1400 and 1439 E. Broadway.

<sup>35</sup> 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, Pgs. 108-109.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.8

The Putney house was designed by a Philadelphia architect and was built in 1901 and it is typical of Waukesha's other examples of the Tudor Revival style in having a pronounced horizontal emphasis and an irregular floor plan. Another example mentioned in the survey report and one which was included in the College Avenue Historic District (NRHP-1983) is the Chauncy Ross house at 210 W. College Avenue, a smaller and more conventional example of the Tudor Revival style that was designed by Milwaukee architect William Keller in 1929.

That both Putney and Ross chose to hire an outside architect to design their residences was consistent with a long-established pattern in Waukesha that had its origins in the proximity of that city to other much larger population centers.<sup>36</sup> This pattern was observed during the Waukesha Intensive Survey whose report noted that "The majority of architect-designed buildings in Waukesha were produced by Milwaukee architects, or in a number of cases, Chicago architects."<sup>37</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Charles Nelson turned to a Milwaukee firm when the time came to build his house. Why Nelson chose the firm of Fernekes and Cramer is not known and no other Waukesha buildings are known to have been designed by them but it is possible that Nelson became familiar with their work during the period between 1900 and 1910 when he acted as a loan officer for the First Wisconsin National Bank of Milwaukee. The principals of the firm, Max Fernekes and Edwin C. Cramer (1872-1943) had been partners since 1900 and had offices in the Pabst building in Milwaukee. Little biographical information was found on Fernekes even though he appears to have been the senior partner in the firm. Fernekes began his architectural practice in

<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately for any nineteenth century architect wishing to locate in Waukesha, the city is situated only 20 miles from Milwaukee and about 95 miles from Chicago. This meant that the few early Waukesha clients needing building designs beyond the capabilities of the very few local builder-architects of the day were just a short train ride away from much more sophisticated designers. Another factor that worked against the establishment of Waukesha-based architectural firms in the nineteenth century was the unusual growth pattern of the city itself. The steady but unspectacular growth of the village until 1868 was not sufficiently attractive to lure architects there who could practice in the much more lucrative Milwaukee market nearby. Thus, when the beginning of the Springs Era created a demand for large new buildings, there were no local designers who could undertake the work and these commissions passed to outsiders. This created a tradition of going outside Waukesha for architectural services which continued even as Waukesha grew in size. The growth of neighboring cities also created an increasingly competitive market for architectural services and led many Milwaukee and Chicago firms to actively pursue commissions in the surrounding area. As a result, it was not until Charles C. Anderson (1852-1935) began his practice in the city in 1894 that Waukesha could boast of having an architect of its own.

<sup>37</sup> 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, Pg. 118.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.9

Milwaukee in 1895 as a partner in the firm of Fernekes and Dolliver and this firm was in existence until 1900 when Fernekes and Cramer began their own practice together.<sup>38</sup> Edwin C. Cramer was born in Milwaukee and was a son of A. J. Cramer, the founder of the Milwaukee Mechanics Insurance Company. Cramer attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduated from that institution in 1900 after which he returned to Milwaukee and joined in practice with Fernekes the same year. The two men remained partners until 1918 when Cramer left both the firm and active architectural practice in order to engage in work related to the war effort. After the war Cramer continued to live in Milwaukee with his wife and two children in their house at 733 N. Prospect Avenue until his death in 1943.<sup>39</sup> Fernekes, meanwhile, continued in practice alone after the dissolution of the partnership until 1919 at which time he was listed as having an office in the Railway Exchange building in Milwaukee.

No overview of the buildings designed by Fernekes and Cramer is currently known to exist and the best published source of information regarding their work contains the only individual histories of the buildings the firm is known to have designed in and adjacent to the North Point South Historic District (NRHP-1979) in Milwaukee.<sup>40</sup> Knowledge of these buildings is important, however, are they are all large residential commissions placed on relatively small urban lots, and are designed in a variety of late nineteenth and twentieth century revivals styles or late nineteenth and early twentieth century American Movement styles. Collectively, then, these houses are useful in demonstrating that the firm of Fernekes and Cramer was totally familiar with the type of commission given them by Nelson and they help explain why the design of the Nelson house has an urban rather than a suburban feel to it and perhaps why Nelson chose this firm in the first place.

<sup>38</sup> State of Wisconsin Architects and Engineers Licensing and Examining Board. Active and Inactive Files, Series 1591, Boxes 6 (Cramer) and 9 (Fernekes), Archives Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

<sup>39</sup> The Milwaukee Journal. October 11, 1943. Obituary of Edwin C. Cramer.

<sup>40</sup> McArthur, Shirley du Fresne. North Point Historic Districts-Milwaukee. North Point Historical Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 1981, Pgs. 67-68, 108-109, 119, 130, 190, and 192. These buildings include: the Tallmadge Hamilton House, 2245 North Lake Drive (1904); the Frances E. Durand and Alice Durand White house, 2242 North Lake Drive (1905); the Andrew M. Joys house, 2251 North Lake Drive (1904); the John M. Lindsay house, 2539 North Terrace Avenue (1914); the Nathan Glicksman house, 2411 North Terrace Avenue (1906); the Edward Freschl house, 2405 North Terrace Avenue (1906); and the Emil J. Gerich house, 2642 North Summit Avenue (1915). Of special interest are the Avery-Andrae house, 2640 North Terrace Avenue (1908) and the Herrmann-Boesel house, 2664 North Summit Avenue (1909); two Tudor Revival style houses done by the firm just prior to the Nelson house whose general designs and stylistic detailing clearly served as inspiration for the later building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.10

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Although Nelson went outside Waukesha to find an architect, his building contractors were drawn almost exclusively from that city. The carpentry contractor was Asa A. Austin, a native of Waukesha County and one of the six children of Hiram Austin (1827-?) who had come to that county with his own parents in 1846.<sup>41</sup> The masonry contractor was George Ward (1867-1947) who was born in England and emigrated to this country at the age of 19. He and his wife finally settled in Waukesha in 1892 and Ward began his contracting business there in 1901. During the next forty years, Ward's firm became a noted one in the city and built many buildings in and around the Waukesha area including the Methodist Church, parts of the Waukesha Motors manufacturing complex, the Labor Temple, the YMCA, and the Daily Freeman newspaper building.<sup>42</sup>

The design that Fernekes and Cramer created for Nelson was a distinct critical success in Waukesha. Just after the house had been completed and the Nelson family had moved, in the local newspaper featured the house in an illustrated front page article which extolled the virtues of the house and lavished several column lengths on a complete description of the building. The article also made it clear that the house was a good advertisement for the city. "The house has been in the process of erection more than a year and because of its unusually handsome character and because it stands on a much frequented street, has been a subject of general interest to passers-by. Now that it is completed only words of admiration are heard for it coupled with words of appreciation for Mr. Nelson, who has built not only for the happiness and comfort of his family but for the beauty and prosperity of his city."<sup>43</sup> The author of this article was equally enthusiastic about the modern conveniences incorporated into the house (which are described in detail on Continuation Sheet 7.9 of this form) and then went on to describe the architectural style of the Nelson house as being "English Gothic" in design.<sup>44</sup> It is a tribute to the architects that a building whose exterior was clearly meant to invoke strength and the continuity of the past could also be considered a paradigm of modernity and convenience in its day. Fortunately, this duality can still be appreciated thanks to the almost totally intact survival of the exterior and interior of the house. It is also fortunate that a number of the adjoining houses designed in styles popular in the nineteenth century still survive and that they still exhibit a fair degree of integrity. As a result, these houses provide a context in which one can more fully appreciate the Nelson house's status as one of the most modern as well as one of the last of the architecturally significant single family houses built in this area between 1900 and 1917.

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<sup>41</sup> Butterfield, Consul W.. The History of Waukesha County, Wisconsin. Western Publishing Company, Chicago, Illinois, 1880, Pg. 991.

<sup>42</sup> The Waukesha Freeman. March 29, 1947. Obituary of George Ward.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. December 1, 1910, Pg. 1.

<sup>44</sup> In the first years of the period between 1900 and 1940, which the Architectural Styles study unit of the CRMP calls the "Period Revival" period, considerable latitude existed in creating stylistic labels. Today, convention, supported by

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 8 Page 8.11

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Footnote No. 44 Continued

modern scholarship, has created more specific and historically valid labels and designations such as "English Gothic" are now used to describe only very specific buildings and are not used generically as this designation is used here. One problem that arises in using very specific labels, however, is that they are most successfully applied to the purest examples of a style and problems occur when dealing with the many early examples of the various period revival styles which do not reflect the historical accuracy that later examples achieved. The Nelson house is a case in point. While it shares some characteristically Tudor Revival style elements with more historically accurate representative examples of the style such as the already mentioned Putney house, the overall appearance of the Nelson house is really more a simplification--even an abstraction--of the Tudor Revival style and has much in common with designs which appear to have been influenced by houses of the same period done in the allied Arts and Crafts style. Both styles were inspired by the same historic sources and the more frequently observed examples of both styles often feature Tudor-arched motifs, partially stuccoed wall surfaces, and multi-paned window groups. The Nelson house has all these features plus such Arts and Crafts style features as a massive but simple main chimney mass on its south-facing facade which has battered sides; a stylistic motif that is repeated in the engaged, battered buttresses that flank the opening on the front porch and identify the placement of the entrance door behind. In addition, the house has a generally unornamented appearance that is more typical of the Arts and Crafts tradition than the Tudor Revival style.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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  
   Local government  
   University  
   Other  
Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property    Less than 1.00 acre

UTM References

A	<u>  1/6  </u>	<u>  3/9/9/6/2/0  </u>	<u>  4/1/6/2/2/8/0  </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>

   See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Sec. SE3 T6N R19E Cutler's 2nd Add. Part of Cutler's Block: Com W line Grand Avenue 200' N of SE corner of block; W 150'; N parallel to Grand Avenue 100'; E 150' to W line of Grand Avenue; S on W line of Grand Avenue 100' to beginning.

   See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries enclose the remainder of the lot that has been historically associated with the Nelson House and omits those portions taken by the City of Waukesha for street widening and library purposes.

   See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title   Timothy F. Heggland/Consultant    
City Plan Commission, City of Waukesha  
organization   201 Delafield St. Waukesha, WI   date   February 24, 1989    
street & number   212 Highland Avenue   telephone   (608)238-3010    
city or town   Madison   state   Wisconsin   zip code   53705

NPS Form 10-900a  
(Rev. 8-86)  
Wisconsin Word Processor Format  
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

Charles E. Nelson Sr. House, Waukesha, Waukesha County, Wisconsin  
Section number 9 Page 9.1

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