

A Look Back in Time

The Danish Brotherhood Hall, located at 2206 63rd Street, is a fraternal/commercial building that sits on a large corner lot in the middle of Kenosha's historic uptown commercial district. The building takes up its entire lot and there is no landscaping.

*Section 15.04 of the City's Zoning Ordinance establishes standards for designating structures and sites as historic and the site or structure must meet at least one of these standards. It was determined that **The Danish Brotherhood Hall** is architecturally and historically significant under Standard 1; "exemplifies or reflects the City's cultural, social...history. The Danish Brotherhood Hall is historically significant because it was the location of a fraternal group that reflected the city's historically important and diverse ethnic and cultural heritage. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many different ethnic groups settled in Kenosha, and most established ethnic institutions to serve their needs. These ethnic institutions are historically significant, and the Danish Brotherhood Hall is a fine example of a building constructed for such an institution.*



The Danish Brotherhood Hall is two-stories in height with a flat roof decorated by a shallow parapet. Originally, the parapet rose at the center of the east elevation and formed an arched reveal over the central second story openings. The arch in the parapet and the reveal were removed at a later date and the stone cornice that decorated much of the parapet was extended across the front of the building. The red brick walls of the building are decorated with plain brick pilasters along the south and east elevations and are punctuated on the second story with segmentally arched openings. Originally, these openings were filled with single-light, double-hung sashes, but they are filled with glass blocks today. Some small single lights along the south elevation have been enclosed, and arched openings in the west elevation are also enclosed with glass blocks. Two entrances are in the first story of the south elevation. One is a plain, modern exit door, while the other consists of an arched opening filled with double doors and an arched transom decorated with an awning. The east elevation contains the storefronts for the building which have been modernized with large metal and glass show windows and a modern metal and glass door. The old storefront transom has also been enclosed. The Danish Brotherhood hall was originally designated in 1983 and re-designated on January 9, 1997.

The Danish Brotherhood Lodge was originally formed in 1884, and was rechartered in 1892. In 1899, the group purchased a lot in downtown Kenosha for a lodge building, but never constructed one that site. Instead, the lodge members purchased another lot on 63rd Street in 1910 and constructed this building. Designed by local architect Joseph Lindle, the new lodge building was opened in December of that year. It had space for club rooms, a library, ladies parlor, pool room, meeting rooms, a bowling alley, dance hall, and commercial space.

In 1864, low membership caused the lodge to consider selling this building. Several members took over the management of the facility, offering it for weddings and other public parties and the group engaged in a membership drive. In the 1970s, the lodge grew during this era. In 1992 the lodge celebrated its 100 anniversary, at that time it was noted that the group was the largest Danish Brotherhood lodge in the United States.

Although the Danish Brotherhood Hall is a fairly intact early twentieth century commercial building, it has suffered from some alterations that have lowered its architectural integrity. It is, therefore, not significant for architecture. It is, though historically significant for its association with the Danish ethnic community in Kenosha. Ethnic fraternal lodges were frequently organized in communities with ethnic enclaves, like Kenosha or Milwaukee during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Ethnic fraternal groups provided social services to members of their group and often kept ethnic traditions alive. In some cases, the buildings where ethnic organizations were located are the only historic resources associated with a particular ethnic group. Kenosha's ethnic institutions are historically significant because they represent the variety of immigrant settlement in the city, and because they reflect important ethnic heritage of Kenosha. Because the Danish Brotherhood Hall is one of the most significant resources associated with this group in Kenosha, it is an important landmark in the city.