

# Martschink Grocery

843 Rutledge

c. 1921

The two-story, frame building at 843 Rutledge is the sort of corner store that once dotted the peninsula. Although Wagener Terrace had others, corner stores were much rarer in Wagener Terrace than on the lower peninsula. Many new Uptown neighborhoods had deed restrictions forbidding commercial purposes to ensure their residential character. A special provision was made to allow a corner store in the new Riverside Park development, and after 100 years, the building still serves its original purpose.

Jointly owned since 1972, the corner store and its adjacent parking lot are technically different parcels with different histories.

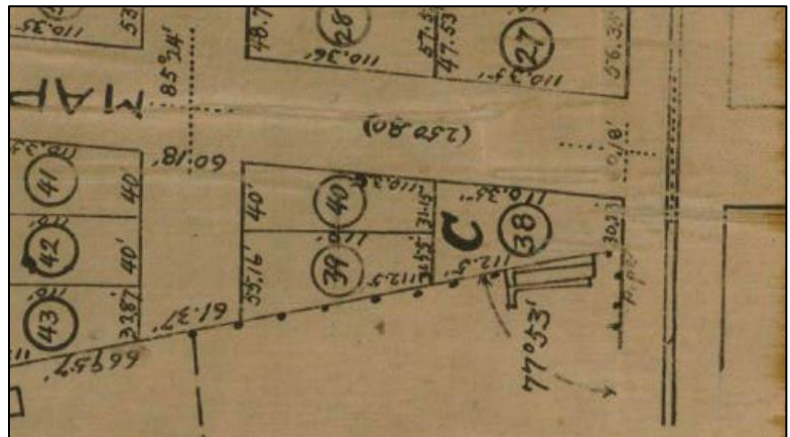


## The Corner Store

Riverside Development Co. filed its articles of incorporation in December 1916.<sup>1</sup> On February 1, 1917, bachelor **F.C. Peters** sold 47 acres of highland and 16 acres of marsh to the **Riverside Development Co.** for \$160,000.<sup>2</sup> The area was platted into 262 lots and today makes up most of the uppermost part of Wagener Terrace.

The parcel was laid out as Lot 38 at the extreme southeastern part of Riverside Park.<sup>3</sup> Riverside Development Co. sold Lot for Lot 38 to **Edmund B. Burke** on October 11, 1921.<sup>4</sup>

The development company included in its deeds a series of reciprocal covenants that would run



<sup>1</sup> Deed book L26, page 427 (filed Dec. 21, 1916)

<sup>2</sup> Deed book F28, page 87

<sup>3</sup> Plat book C, page 155 (Riverside Park development plat)

<sup>4</sup> Deed book G31, page 97

with the land and be enforceable by and against all future owners. Those covenants were that:

- “Said property is not to be sold, rented, or otherwise conveyed or disposed of to persons of African descent.”
- “No use shall be made . . . which would constitute a nuisance or injure to value of any of the neighboring lots.”
- The layout of the lots had to be maintained.
- No factory or workshop could be built on the site.
- Any building had to cost at least \$5000.

The racial limitation was invalidated decades later by the United States Supreme Court, and the minimum construction cost is, as a practical matter, moot. The balance of the terms continue to bind the owners.

Mr. Burke must have already had plans to use Lot 28 as a corner store. His deed included a special term, unique to his purchase: “[P]ermission is hereby given to use the ground floor of the building to be erected on the said lot as a store, but the business to be conducted therein must not be inconsistent with the nature of a strictly residential section.”

The earliest reference to the building was when the short-lived Suburban Pharmacy operated there even before Mr. Burke had recorded his deed. (It is unlikely that the development company itself had already built the store before its sale to Mr. Burke.) The business was chartered by Mr. A. Enston Butler (who also lived upstairs with his wife, Eugenia, in 1922-23) and Edmund B. Burke in September 1921,<sup>5</sup> and the pharmacy (and post office<sup>6</sup>) was in operation later that same month.<sup>7</sup> That first businesses did not last long. By 1924, a business run by Gus Ginsburg had replaced it,<sup>8</sup> and by 1926, the store was run by George Pauls, Jr. Meanwhile, the second floor was a residence for renters with no apparent connection to the first-floor business.<sup>9</sup>

For whatever reason, the corner business (and then renting of the building to other shops) must not have been as successful as expected. Following a lawsuit, the property was ordered sold, and the highest bidder at the judicial sale was a creditor, widower **Joseph W. Barnwell**. On May 8, 1928, Mr. Barnwell bid \$4550 for the store.<sup>10</sup>

On June 8, 1928, **Mr. Barnwell** flipped the corner store to **Gustave Knobloch for \$5000**.<sup>11</sup> A few weeks later, on August 3, 1928, Mr. Knobloch acquired the neighboring Lot 1 with a cottage on it from Theresa Hart Stokien, who had inherited the Noisette farmhouse to the south.<sup>12</sup>

Lot 38 was slightly modified into its current form in 1928 when Mr. Knobloch adjusted the property line between the corner store lot and the cottage lot<sup>13</sup> before selling the corner store (with the

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<sup>5</sup> “New Corporation,” Sep. 10, 1921, at 9

<sup>6</sup> “New Sub-Station,” Evening Post, Nov. 30, 1921, at 2

<sup>7</sup> Evening Post, Sep. 16, 1921, at 9

<sup>8</sup> Gus and Mollie Ginsburg occupied the building too (1924).

<sup>9</sup> Renters included George D. (Laura) Duncanson (1927).

<sup>10</sup> Deed book W33, page 170 (recorded May 17, 1928)

<sup>11</sup> Deed book X33, page 183

<sup>12</sup> Deed book X33, page 231

<sup>13</sup> The lot was 36’6” on the front, 102’4” on the south, 56’6” on back, and 101’3” on north.



slight enlargement) to **Gustave C. Martschink** on August 3, 1928.<sup>14</sup> Mr. Martschink not only owned the building, but he also operated his own grocery out of the space. Mr. Martschink's store was in place by 1927, and he pulled a \$200 permit to renovate the storefront in March 1934.<sup>15</sup> (The photo above shows the first floor of the front of the store c. 1940 after Mr. Martschink remodeled the front.)

At first, bachelor Mr. Martschink lived on New Street with his grandfather, Henry Martschink, while the residence on the second floor of the store seems to have been used as a rental.<sup>16</sup> Mr. Martschink married Karen Larisey in October 1930,<sup>17</sup> and the newlyweds relocated to the residence on the second floor of the store by 1930.

Mr. Martschink got his start in business as a grocer, but his real success was as a beer distributor; he formed Martschink Beer Distributors, Inc. in 1939. Perhaps because his attention was refocused, in June 1940, Morris Feldman bought all the inventory and equipment of the corner store from Mr. Martschink.<sup>18</sup>

Mr. Martschink kept the building and stayed active in its maintenance both as its owner and as a continuing resident. In October 1942, Mr. Martschink pulled a permit for \$500 to do work to the building which was a dwelling and store.<sup>19</sup> He did another \$200 of repairs in 1950.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Deed book X33, page 232

<sup>15</sup> "Building Permits," News and Courier, Mar. 6, 1934, at 8

<sup>16</sup> Apparent renters included Harry M. and Margaret Hutson (1928) and Robert S. James (1929).

<sup>17</sup> "Bride Shower for Miss Larisey," News and Courier, Sep. 21, 1930, at 4B

<sup>18</sup> News and Courier, June 6, 1941, at 8-ii

<sup>19</sup> "Building Permits," Oct. 3, 1942, at 11

<sup>20</sup> "Building Permits," Sept. 19, 1950, at 5B

## The Parking Lot

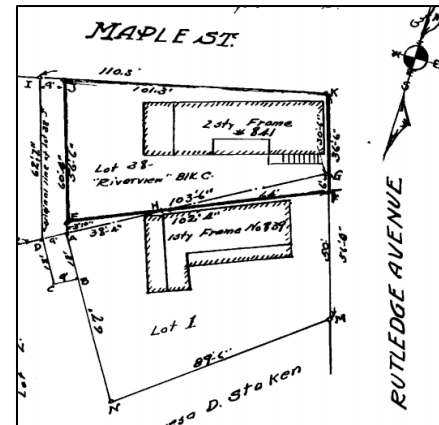
Dorothy A. Moore foreclosed on Mr. Knobloch's property in March 1932<sup>24</sup> and bought it at the judicial auction on August 11, 1932, for \$3000. When she loaned money to Mr. Knobloch, the rear driveway was omitted from the collateral by accident. Although Mr. Knobloch would have otherwise remained indebted to her for whatever part of the debt was not satisfied with the auction proceeds, Ms. Moore took title to the rear entrance in satisfaction of that deficiency.<sup>25</sup>

Ms. Moore sold the cottage and rear entrance to **Marie A. Sweat** for \$2300 on September 4, 1942.<sup>26</sup> Ms. Sweat soon sold the same property to **Sam Geyer** on January 28, 1944, for \$5750.<sup>27</sup> Mr. Geyer gifted the same property to Leo Geyer (an unknown relation) on September 23, 1947.<sup>28</sup> Leo Geyer sold the cottage<sup>29</sup> and rear entrance to **Emerson W. and Agnes E. Rabon** on October 1, 1948, for \$4000 and the assumption of a mortgage.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Deed book X49, page 463

The Rabons were living in the Noisette Farmhouse (839 ½ Rutledge Ave.) until they built 30 Darlington Ave. and relocated there. A request was heard at the July 29, 1957 Board of Adjustment meeting to demolish the cottage at 841 Rutledge Ave. and use the space as parking.<sup>31</sup> The reference to “demolish” seems to have been used to describe the removal of the house; it was jacked up and moved to about 100’ to the south to another portion of the Rabons’ lot. The land has been a parking lot since the cottage was relocated.

On August 31, 1971, the Rabons sold the parking lot (but not the rear entrance) to **Urban Development Corp.** for \$5000.<sup>32</sup>



## The Combination

Urban Development Corp. sold the parking lot for \$8000 to **Gus Martschink, Sr.** on January 4, 1972.<sup>33</sup> Since then, the parking lot and the corner store and been sold together, but the two parcels have retained their separate identities.

Mr. Martschink died on January 28, 1972, while living at Secessionville Manor<sup>34</sup> and left his real estate to his wife. When Mrs. Martschink died on October 11, 1980, she left both 841 and 843 to their daughters, **Jean M. Buyer and Barbara M. Mobley**. Throughout the family’s ownership, even after Mr. and Mrs. Martschink had died, the building continued being used as a corner grocery: Cone’s Supermarket (1973-82), Cone’s Grocery Store (1984-85), Maple Street Grocery (1986-87).

The daughters sold lot and store to **John H. and Anne J. Weston** in on April 24, 1987, for \$82,250.<sup>35</sup> From 1988-90, the corner grocery was known as the Family Supermarket.

In 1990, the Westons sold the store and parking lot to **Miguel and Edilia Urena** for \$27,000 and the assumption of a mortgage with a balance of \$65,036.81.<sup>36</sup> The Urenas sold the parcels in 1994 for \$67,621.80 and assumption of mortgage with a balance of \$61,878.20 to **Mohamed O. and Dalila F.H. Bellil**.<sup>37</sup>

Oddly, the Urena Family Grocery remained at least until 2001 even after the sale to the Bellils in 1994. Equally odd is that the Urena Family Grocery had been replaced by the Torres Superette by 2006, nine years before the Bellils sold the lots for \$500,000 to **Torres Superettes, Inc.** on February 25, 2015.<sup>38</sup>

In 2021, as the building celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, the corner building is a popular neighborhood convenience store and Mexican eatery.

<sup>31</sup> News and Courier, July 26, 1957, at 13B

<sup>32</sup> Deed book K97, page 385

<sup>33</sup> Deed book G98, page 80

<sup>34</sup> “Gus C. Martschink Dies; Services Held,” Evening Post, Jan. 31, 1972, at 17A

<sup>35</sup> Deed book H164, page 814 (recorded Apr. 24, 1987)

<sup>36</sup> Deed book D190, page 671 (recorded Jan. 19, 1990)

<sup>37</sup> Deed book A242, page 757 (recorded Apr. 26, 1994)

<sup>38</sup> Deed book 459, page 336 (recorded Feb. 25, 2015)