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Baltimore Heritage in partnership with the National Trust for Historic Preservation

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DRAFT Report on 3000 block of North Avenue DRAFT

The Dr. Zepp Mansion is a late 19th century suburban Victorian dwelling located at the northeast corner of West North Avenue and Rosedale Street. Built in the 1880s with the substantial addition of a commercial storefront in the 1930s, the building has been vacant since 2002 and is the site is currently subject to a RFP awarded to the Woda Group, LCC and Kevin Bell for the 3000 block of West North Avenue. The transformation of this 19th century mansion with the addition of a commercial storefront reflects the broader growth of Walbrook and the North Avenue corridor as a commercial main street. Baltimore Heritage is interested in supporting preservation based redevelopment in the North Avenue corridor and has prepared this report to help encourage the consideration for the retention and adaptive reuse for the existing buildings on the site, particularly the Dr. Zepp mansion.

The neighborhood of Walbrook to the north of the 3000 block of North Avenue originally developed as Highland Park, an elite residential suburb at the far end of North Avenue. Approximately four miles from the city, the neighborhood developed along the same pattern of streets in the central city. By 1876 the area included thirteen cottages, many in the Second Empire Style and the neighborhood continued to grow over the course of the 1880s, adding dozens of Queen Anne, Stick and Shingle Style houses, and many Baltimore's wealthiest suburbs. The imposing dwelling at the corner was built during the 1880s by Abraham S. Adler, who served as the as the treasurer for the Hebrew Hospital and Asylum and maintained an office downtown at 627 West Lombard. By 1889, North Avenue was extended to its current terminus. Shortly thereafter, on Saturday May 17, 1890, an electric street car ran from Highland Park to Division Street along North Avenue.

In February 1892, "A.S. Adler, &c. sold the property at the northeast corner of North Avenue and 9th Street to "J.L. Zepp" for \$2,900.¹ Born in 1856 to Solomon Zepp (August 6, 1810-October 12, 1894) and Rebecca Bennett (September 30, 1816-ca1874) in Westminster, Maryland, James A. Zepp remained in Carroll County through at least 1880. Zepp moved to Baltimore County in the early 1880s where he taught at School 7, District 2 in Powhatan from 1881 through at least 1885. Dr. Zepp began his participation within the local medical community soon after his purchase of the property, as Dr. C. Urban Smith offered proposed to offer membership to the Baltimore Medical Association to Dr. James A. Zepp at a meeting on April 12, 1897. He continued to serve the broader community, particularly as the frequent collisions along North Avenue, first involving carriages and later streetcars, automobiles, and trucks, often resulted in broken bones or worse.

The property was subdivided in the early 20th century as a April 1910 advertisement describes a "Complete Second-Story Apartment in corner cottage conveniently located at Walbrook. Apply 3050 W. North Avenue." The increasing development in the area is also evident from the decision by the

¹ "Real Estate Transaction 1 -- No Title," *The Sun (1837-1985)*, February 8, 1892, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1733088062&Fmt=7&clientId=2039&RQT=309&VName=HNP>.

household to sell their horse drawn buggy, listing it for sale in an advertisement, "Buggy, good as new, cheap; reason, have an automobile. 3050 W. North Ave." By 1914, the property expanded with a two-story brick addition at the rear and frame porches wrapping the building at the southwest corner facing North Avenue. While the small frame outbuilding previously located near Rosedale had been demolished a new brick outbuilding had been constructed at the northeast corner of the lot. In November 1920, the building was listed for sale by agent Chas. H. Steffey for \$23,000 described as "3050 W. North Avenue corner, Rosedale Street, Lot 93x97ft. 17 room brick mansion; 4 baths, hot-water heating system, electric lights, large porches front and rear, light on all sides; ideal site for large apartment house."

Commercial development flourished in Walbrook during the early 20th century through the 1950s. A recollection from an early resident recall the character of the neighborhood,

"We thought of Walbrook then as the whole area up to Liberty Heights Avenue on the north, Liberty road (now Baker street) on the south, Twelfth (now Denison) on the west, and around to First street, which became Warwick avenue, on the east...When we could scrape up a nickel we went on Saturdays to the Suburban Theater, at North avenue and Rosedale street where the price of admission bought you several flickery movies and also a live variety show. The movie went out of business around 1910, I believe, but the building is still there."²

This period of commercial development was supported by the designation of North Avenue as a major truck route and the significant traffic that brought to the corridor. Many of the residential properties facing North Avenue have been converted to commercial use, including the Dr. Zepp Mansion. The commercial storefront was added in the 1930s and by 1947 the building served as one of five locations for Roland Park Cleaners.

² Edwin M Gosnell, "I Remember... Walbrook as a Semi-Rural Community," *The Sun (1837-1985)*, October 28, 1962, <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1709916532&Fmt=7&clientId=2039&RQT=309&VName=HNP>.

Images

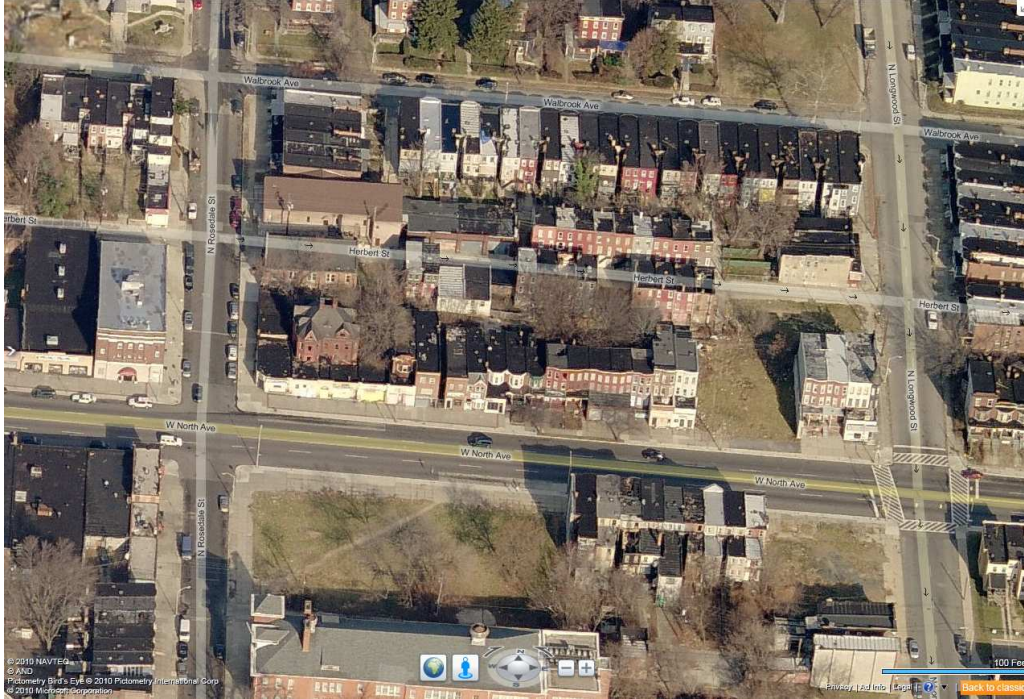


Figure 1 3000 block of West North Avenue facing north

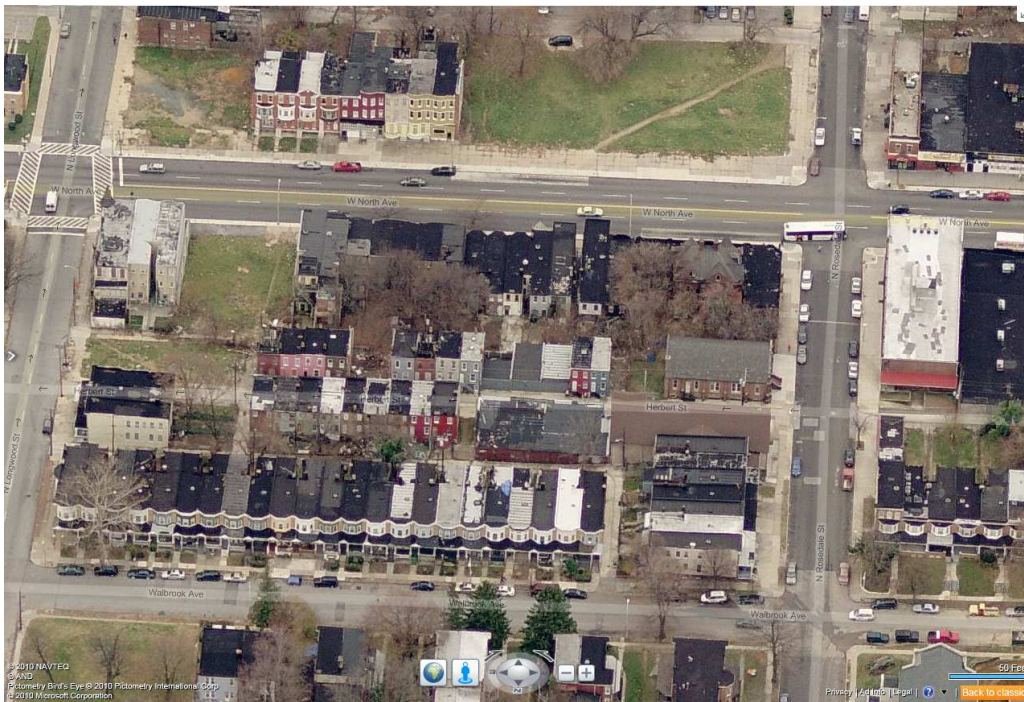


Figure 2 3000 block of West North Avenue facing south



Figure 3 3044 West North Avenue facing northeast



Figure 4 Excerpt of 1876 Map with area of 3044 West North Avenue marked



Figure 5 Excerpt of 1896 Map with 3044 West North Avenue marked

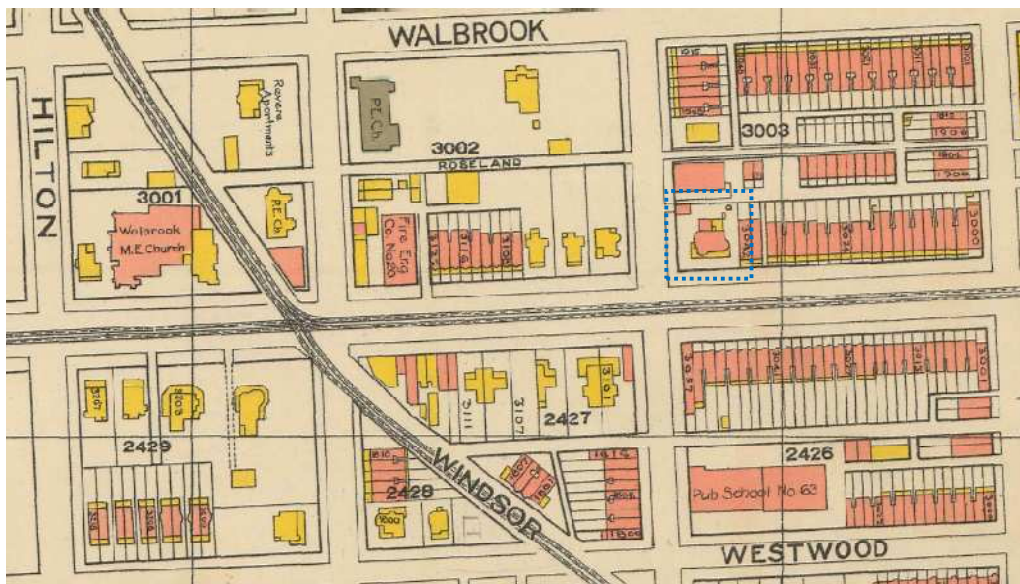


Figure 6 Excerpt of 1914 Map with 3044 West North Avenue marked