



# WISCONSIN CLUB

Heart of the City | A Fairway Away

## A HISTORY OF THE WISCONSIN CLUB & MITCHELL MANSION



REVISED | 2022

## WELCOME TO THE WISCONSIN CLUB...

While the Wisconsin Club (formerly the Deutscher Club) has been in existence since 1891, the mansion where the Club resides got its start in 1848, and has long been considered an architectural treasure. Both the mansion and the Club have a rich heritage and have been an important part of Milwaukee's history.

In the fall of 2009, the Wisconsin Club purchased a country club located about 15 minutes north of downtown Milwaukee. While both locations are named the Wisconsin Club, our downtown location is often referred to as the City Club, and our second location is referred to as the Country Club.

The Wisconsin Club owes much of its success to its leadership and member involvement. We would like to acknowledge our past presidents and their dedication to making the Wisconsin Club one of the most successful clubs in the nation.

## Past Presidents

George Koeppen 1891-1895  
F.C. Winkler 1895-1896  
George Koeppen 1896-1897  
F.C. Winkler 1897-1898  
John E. Hansen 1898-1899  
Charles L. Kiewert 1899-1900  
Louis F. Schecker 1900-1901  
Henry Baetz 1901-1902  
G.A. Keitzsch 1902-1903  
Charles J. Kasten 1903-1904  
Adolph Finkler 1904-1905  
Herman A. Wagner 1905-1906  
Adolph Finkler 1906-1907  
William Von Baumbach 1907-1909  
Edward A. Uhrig 1909-1911  
Adolph Schmitz 1911-1913  
A. Lindemann 1913-1914  
Paul J. Stern 1914-1915  
Walter Kasten 1915-1917  
Charles H. John 1917-1919  
Charles Paeschke, Jr. 1919-1921  
S.J. Casper, Sr. 1921-1923  
John Wollaeger 1923-1925  
George Uihlein 1925-1926  
A.L. Lindemann 1926-1928  
Frank Frey, Jr. 1928-1930  
Frank J. Edwards 1930-1932  
William G. Koch 1932-1934  
William J. Kieckhefer 1934-1936

G.G. Blatz 1936-1938  
Fred Oeflein 1938-1940  
Phil Orth 1940-1941  
Fred Kasten 1941-1943  
E.A. Lindemann 1943-1944  
Armin F. Jaeger 1944-1945  
Jean LaBoule 1946-1947  
C.A. Gutenkunst, Jr. 1947-1948  
R.C. Zimmerman 1948-1950  
George Tiernan 1950-1951  
E. Brumder 1951-1953  
A. Pflugradt 1953-1955  
K. Wollaeger, Jr. 1955-1957  
Paul E. Riebs 1957-1957  
T.A. Rogers 1957-1959  
Jack Haessler 1959-1961  
S.J. Casper, Jr. 1961-1963  
T.H. Bentley, Jr. 1963-1964  
H.C. Woehr 1964-1965  
C. Ray Cook 1965-1966  
R.W. Maercklein 1966-1968  
R.H. Weaver 1968-1970  
R.C. Pittelkow 1970-1972  
Dr. Daniel Gehl 1972-1974  
Curt E. Hoerig 1974-1976  
Robert F. Schomann 1976-1978  
Willard J. Reik 1978-1980  
B. Carl Froemming 1980-1982  
George H. Baumann 1982-1984

Richard E. Bayerlein 1984-1986  
Charles R. Pittelkow 1986-1988  
Lee A. Delaney 1988-1990  
Irv Hansen 1990-1992  
G.A.D. Schuett 1992-1994  
John A. Fiorenza 1994-1996  
Glenn E. Langer 1996-1998  
Thomas H. Bentley, III 1998-2000  
John G. Persa 2000-2002  
Michael M. Berzowski 2002-2004  
S. R. (Sandy) Cicero 2004-2006  
Donald L. Schroeder 2006-2008  
Roger C. Sherman 2008-2010  
Gerald E. Zitzer 2010-2012  
Thomas G. Wieland 2012-2014  
Mike Jones 2014-2016  
John G. Persa 2016-2018  
David Christianson 2018-2020  
Jeffrey Sherman 2020-2021  
Fred Joachim 2021-present



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## BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CLUB

In 1891, three Milwaukee businessmen - General E.C. Winkler, George Koeppen and Henry Gugler - held several meetings with sixty other men in the old Plankinton House Hotel to organize the founding of a new social club. The purpose of the club was to promote and provide a venue for German-American understanding and fellowship, a reflection of the large German immigration to Milwaukee at the end of the nineteenth century.

The first home of the new club, called the "Deutscher" or "German" Club, was in the Stadt Theater, the site of the present Pabst Theatre. In early 1895, a fire broke out and severely damaged the clubrooms and a new home had to be found. Several alternatives were considered, including disbanding the club which was in a poor financial state. When the vacant Mitchell Mansion on Grand Avenue (now Wisconsin Avenue) was brought to the attention of the club members shortly after the death of Alexander Mitchell, all thoughts of dissolution vanished.

The Deutscher Club began renting its new quarters in early 1895, and on May 1st, the Club held its opening night party in the Mitchell home with over 450 attendees. In 1898, an offer to purchase the mansion for \$165,000 was made and accepted and the Deutscher Club began to settle in for a long stay.

## MITCHELL MANSION



The Alexander Mitchell residence grew with the fortune of its owner. In 1848, he built a modest brick house between 9th & 10th Streets and Spring Street. He gradually bought up the remaining properties on his block and expanded the home. In 1858, it was remodeled in the fashionable Italianate style.

In 1872, Alexander Mitchell hired noted Milwaukee architect Edward Townsend Mix and over the next five years, the home was transformed into the French Second Empire mansion it is today. Wings were added to both sides, the porch enlarged and bay windows were installed.

Many rooms were added, including 3rd floor ballroom (MacArthur Room), a library (Card Room) and a conservatory. The conservatory (removed after the Club purchased the property) featured a small stream, palm trees and many exotic plants.





Artists from Europe were commissioned to adorn the interior of the home with elaborate hand carved mahogany woodwork, stained glass, plaster and inlaid tile. The Grand Staircase in the East Hall of the home has 24 lions' heads carved into it and took one craftsman seven years to build. In the Oriental Room (South Lounge) there are over 1,600 hand carved pansies on the ceiling. The walls of the Moorish Room (North Lounge) are covered in embossed panels poly-chromed in red, blue and gold arabesques. The Belvedere (an enclosed gazebo) was designed and built by an Italian woodcarver and is said to be the finest structure of its kind in the country.

By 1876, Alexander Mitchell controlled the banking and insurance industry in Milwaukee as well as owning the Milwaukee Railroad and serving as a member of Congress. His fortune was said to have been in excess of \$20,000,000. Spring Street was renamed Grand Avenue and Alexander Mitchell had already reoriented the front entrance of the home from the East side to the South side so that it would bear a Grand Avenue address, like other prominent Milwaukee families.

From the late 1900's until 1950, a porch and terrace on the East side of the mansion were used as an outdoor dining room. Polly Prospect of The Daily Wisconsin News wrote, "...the East Porch at the Club is a popular spot these days, especially with women members. Enlarged by means of screens covered with stunning blue and tan striped awnings and surrounded by window boxes fitted with bright flowers, it makes an ideal place for bridge parties. Pierrot lanterns hang from the ceiling and the chairs are covered with white linen decorated with designs symbolizing the carnival spirit."

Over the years, many famous and noteworthy guests have been entertained in the mansion including Julia Ward Howe, Grand Duck Alexis of Russia, Prince Henry of Prussia, General Grant and Presidents Cleveland and Roosevelt.

The Alexander Mitchell Mansion was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on August 28, 2012.



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## BELVEDERE

On the southeast corner of the Wisconsin Club grounds stands what is likely the most unique garden structures in the city, if not the state. Alexander Mitchell had the large, one and a half story wooden structure built for the purpose of viewing his extensive gardens and greenhouses from a rich and idyllic setting.

The first contemporary records showing the Belvedere occur in two separate documents. The first is a lithograph commissioned by Alexander Mitchell for publication in the 1873 proceedings of the state historical society. The other is a bird's eye view map entitled "Map of Milwaukee, 1872-1873" published by the Milwaukee Lithographic and Engraving Co. The map shows a large octagonal structure on the Mitchell grounds. It resembles more of a sketch of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre than it does the Belvedere.

The Belvedere foundation was constructed with the same stone as the foundation of the wrought iron fence built around the same time. This fence, having a large formal gate on the Grand Avenue side bearing the initials A.M., cost \$20,000 when it was built.



## EXTERIOR

In 2008, the Club widened the Wisconsin Avenue entrance and installed new wrought iron gates. The front entrance to the mansion was updated and a beautiful fountain and turnaround were added. The Club also added a new outdoor dining venue named the Veranda which became a popular setting during the warmer months.

In 2016, awnings were added to recreate the look of the mansion as it was in the early 1900's.

In 2017, the Club renovated the North side parking lot and added new landscaping, re-positioned the small fountain and added lighting around the perimeter. In addition to these renovations, a small building designed to replicate the mansion's tower was built on the northwest corner of the property and automatic gates were installed at each of the 10th Street driveways.



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## LIBRARY

Originally the Mitchell family dining room, the library was designed by Edward Townseand Mix as a part of his remodeling during 1872-1877. All of the woodwork is carved from oak. With the exception of the removal of a large arched window that once opened the south wall to the conservatory, the room has not been structurally altered. The three doors on the west wall were used for various household purposes by the Mitchell family. The leftmost door concealed a large steel cabinet in which the family secured their silver cutlery, tete-a-tete silver service and valuables. The doors flanking the fireplace led to the kitchens and servant's quarters. When the Deutscher Club purchased the house in 1895, they utilized the expansive kitchen to service their member's dining room until other rooms could be renovated.

Today, members and their guests are greeted at the Front Desk.



## NORTH LOUNGE [PERSIAN ROOM]



Alexander Mitchell's smoking room was known as the Persian or Moorish Room. The ceiling is uniquely decorated with plaster molds reminiscent of the near eastern style of a Moslem Palace. The walls are covered with large embossed panels, polychrome in red, blue, gold and burgundy arabesques, which were imported from England. This room is similar to the smoking room from the John C. Rockefeller home. Large, folding stained glass doors open from the Moorish Room onto the north- south corridor, the east entry hall and Mr. Mitchell's private library study (Governor's Room).

## GOVERNORS ROOM [ROOSEVELT ROOM]

This room was the private library study of Alexander Mitchell. In the mid-1870's it housed more than 2,000 volumes of books from his personal collection. The decoration of the room survived Mix's renovations in the late 1870's. When Alexander Mitchell died suddenly in New York City in 1887 he was bought to Milwaukee by train and lay in state in this room in a red cedar casket.

In early April 1903, the Deutscher Club welcomed President Theodore Roosevelt and served him lunch in this room.



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## SOUTH LOUNGE [PANSY ROOM]



The entire east end of the first floor of the Mitchell home was renovated during the late 1870's in a style known as "Oriental." This style was an eclectic mixture of Japanese, Chinese, middle-eastern and Persian motifs. In the Pansy (or Oriental) Room, the predominant motif is the pansy, which was thought to be Martha Mitchell's favorite flower. Hundreds of poly chromed, gilt edged, hand carved flowers cover the ceiling and smaller pansies on the wainscoting. The pocket doors on the west end of the room led to the south entrance as well as an entrance to the 500 foot long conservatory.

## DEUTSCHER ROOM

The Deutscher Room was the original first floor formal dining room of the Deutscher Club. At that time, it was used for both a la carte dining and private parties. Since 2005, the Deutscher Room has been reserved for private functions and dining has moved to the Mitchell Room.



## MITCHELL ROOM [CONSERVATORY]

In 1895 when the Deutscher Club purchased the mansion, they removed the Conservatory and built a bowling alley for the members. In 1950, the room was remodeled to become the main first floor dining room. Since then, the room has been redecorated a number of times, a dance floor was installed and removed, and bars have been added. Once a "jacket required" dining room, the Mitchell Room is currently the Club's "upscale casual" dining facility - no jacket or ties required.



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## THE VERANDA

In 2008, the Club opened the Veranda. Adjacent to the Mitchell Room, the open gallery outdoor dining facility offers members and their guests a unique experience.



## GRAND BALLROOM

For well over a century, the elegant ballroom has been used for Club Member Events and thousands of Wisconsin Club family member weddings, parties and private events. The woodwork, plaster work and stunning arched ceiling have been meticulously updated, keeping the same original character and charm.



## MILWAUKEE ROOM [GOLD ROOM]

The Milwaukee Room is part of the original Mitchell mansion and was used as the formal second floor dining room. While no one knows the exact date, the Milwaukee Room became a meeting and banquet room used by its members.



## WISCONSIN ROOM [RED ROOM]

The Wisconsin Room was part of the Mitchell mansion but was extensively remodeled after the Deutscher Club built the Grand Ballroom and the Banquet Hall (known as the Milwaukee Room.) The north, west and east walls of the room correspond to the original walls. The south wall was added later. The room once extended south to where the elevator is located now. In the Mitchell mansion, this room was known as the Marie Antoinette Room and appears to have served as a music room or a tea room.



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## DIRECTORS ROOM

The Directors Room was Alexander Mitchell's bedroom. The view to the east, now obscured by the Milwaukee Public Library, looked out over Milwaukee, and a southern window overlooked the south grounds. The fireplace is the best complete fireplace on the second floor. It has a gold-veined sienna marble face and tiled fire skirt. Above the door is a bearded tin gargoyle.

## PRESIDENTS ROOM

The President's Room has been greatly changed throughout the years and retains only two original features: a white marble fireplace on the north wall and the east windows facing 9th Street. The room was most likely a guest bedroom. Although the view to the east was excellent, the view from the western window, now covered, would have looked onto the kitchen and servant's quarters. From the 1940's to the 1960's, the room was known as the Silver Room. The name changed after a renovation removed the silvery wallpaper.

## GARDENVIEW ROOM

The Gardenview Room was originally the bedroom of Martha Mitchell. Photographs of the room show there was a fireplace in the northeast corner of the room (now removed). Martha's bed stood against the north wall between the two doors opening to the second floor hallway.

A unique feature of the room was a balcony leading out onto the second level of the Conservatory on the east side of the home. From this balcony, Martha could observe her plants and flowers at any time. From the large bay windows on the south side of the room, she could look out over the extensive gardens complete with a summerhouse and fountain.

In 1978, the room was divided in half to accommodate a lounge for the ladies room. Presently, the room holds small private functions and also serves as the Club's bridal suite for weddings.



## MACARTHUR ROOM [WALNUT ROOM]

The entire third floor of the Mitchell mansion was added during the late 1870's when architect Edward Townsend Mix significantly altered and renovated the home. Hidden behind bracketed mansard roof and dormer windows were several rooms including this room which was used as an art gallery for the Mitchell's art collection and a ballroom for parties.



Once known as the Walnut Room, the room was renamed in honor of General Douglas MacArthur, a Milwaukee native and five star general. He was the first person to be granted an honorary membership at the Wisconsin Club.

## CATERING OFFICE [COLONIAL ROOM]

Not much is known about the Colonial Room historically, though it may be surmised that this was part of the art gallery and ballroom of the Mitchells. The high ceilings and extensive wall space make this a plausible suggestion. In late Victorian homes, paintings would fill the walls from top to bottom. During balls and other receptions, the Colonial Room may also have been used as a room for ladies to meet away from the gentlemen.

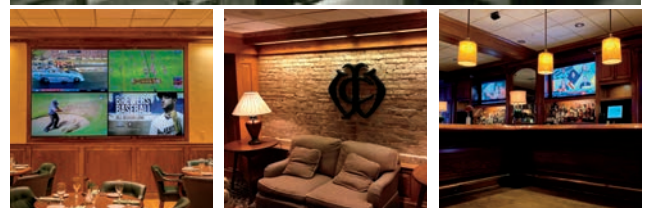
## ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE [HUNT ROOM]

Like the MacArthur Room and Catering Office, this room was part of the addition. The room offers a view of the south grounds and originally had an access door to the MacArthur Room. It was used as a small gallery and parlor adjunct to the larger MacArthur Room. It may have also served as a smoking room for gentlemen during balls and receptions. Until 1978, this room was used by Club members as a card room. At that time, it was remade into a banquet room and renamed the Hunt Room.

## ALEXANDER'S [BOWLING ALLEY]

In 1994, Alexander's opened as the Club's casual sports bar. Previously, the room contained eight automatic Brunswick bowling alleys. In its time, the Bowling Alley was a hub of activity to member leagues with team names such as the Lucky Strikes (men's team) and the Penny-Antes (ladies team).

Alexander's continues to be a popular member dining room and place to meet before and after the theater, sporting events, and more. It was renovated in 2007 with new lighting, stained glass and flat screen TVs. In 2017, the Club installed a 120" video wall and made other improvements.



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*Thank You for your interest!*