

GIESCHE SHOE STORE
400 N. Main Street
Glen Ellyn
DuPage County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1246

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Midwest Region
601 Riverfront Drive
Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

GIESCHE SHOE STORE

HABS No. IL-1246

Location: The Giesche Shoe Store is located at 400 N. Main St., Glen Ellyn, Milton Township, DuPage County, Illinois.

The Giesche Shoe Store is located at latitude: 41.874391, longitude: -88.067095. This coordinate was taken from entering the physical address in Google Maps on April 22, 2019.

Present Owner/

Occupant: Present owners: 400 N. Main LLC
The building is currently vacant. It has been empty for several years.

Present Use: The building served as Giesche Shoe Store since it was completed in 1962 until the store's closure in 2014.

Significance: The Giesche Shoe Store is an outstanding example of modernist retail architecture designed by a local architect, and served as an anchor for downtown Glen Ellyn's shopping district for over five decades. The Giesche Shoe Store represents an important shift in architectural style from the prevailing Tudor style which dominated the shopping district to the modernist style.

Historian: Andrew J. Elders, Architectural Historian. Independent contractor.
The completion date of this report is January 18, 2021.

Project

Information: Those involved in preparing the documentation for this report include Andrew J. Elders and Susan S. Benjamin, of Benjamin Historic Certifications, LLC.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. **Date of erection:** 1961-62, with a significant addition to the north in 1971. The dates are derived from original blueprints and building permits, as well as store advertisements indicating that the original portion of the building was complete in the summer of 1962.
2. **Architect:** Both sections of Giesche Shoe Store were designed by Glen Ellyn architect Francis W. Allegretti. Francis William Allegretti was born March 27, 1918 in Chicago, Illinois.¹ His father Aldo Allegretti was born in Italy and worked as an electrical engineer for Western Electric Co., and Francis' American-born mother Mary was of Irish descent.² Francis Allegretti grew up in the western Chicago suburbs of Lombard and Villa Park,³ and graduated from Elmhurst's York High School around 1936.⁴ From 1935 to 1939, he served in the United States Naval Reserve.⁵ Aged 22 in 1940, he was living with his parents in Villa Park and working as a sales clerk for a retail electrical firm.⁶ Allegretti enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces on May 21, 1942 and served until October 4, 1945.⁷

It is unknown where Allegretti received his architectural training, but in 1951 he organized his own architectural practice, Francis W. Allegretti and Associates in the western Chicago suburb of Glen Ellyn, and joined the American Institute of Architects in 1964.⁸ He was very active in the Glen Ellyn community, serving as a member and president of the Glen Ellyn Park Commission from 1959 to 1965 and as a member of Glen Ellyn's planning commission from 1960 to 1964.⁹ He worked steadily throughout the western suburbs, designing residences in Glen Ellyn at 256 Grandview Dr. (a Chicago Tribune Home of the Week, now demolished),¹⁰ Medinah at 5N570 Sycamore Dr. (also a

¹ "Cook County, Illinois Birth Index, 1916-1935" s.v. "Francis Allegretti", *ancestry.com*.

² 1930 United States Federal Census, York, DuPage County, Illinois, digital image s.v. "Francis Allegretti", *Ancestry.com*.

³ 1940 United States Federal Census, Villa Park, DuPage County, Illinois, digital image s.v. "Frances W. Allegrette", *Ancestry.com*.

⁴ "U.S., School Yearbooks, 1900-1990" s.v. "Francis Allegretti", *Ancestry.com*.

⁵ John F. Gane and George S. Koyl, *American Architects Directory*, 3rd ed. (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1970), 12, http://content.aia.org/sites/default/files/2018-09/Bowker_1970_A.pdf

⁶ 1940 United States Federal Census.

⁷ "U.S., Department of Veterans Affairs BIRLS Death File, 1850-2010" s.v. "Francis Allegretti", *Ancestry.com*.

⁸ *American Architects Directory*.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ Anne Douglas, "House on Hill Has More Than Meets the Eye," *Chicago Tribune*, September 26, 1953, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/370737355>.

Chicago Tribune Home of the Week),¹¹ and Westchester at 2560 Stratford Ave. (also featured in the Chicago Tribune);¹² the Bloomingdale Township Building;¹³ and a large-scale luxury apartment complex called “Oakbrook Towers” at Meyers and Butterfield roads in Oakbrook (designed in collaboration with Schiff & Freides, Inc.).¹⁴

Francis W. Allegretti eventually retired to Sarasota, Florida where he died on December 24, 1992.¹⁵

- 3. Original and Subsequent Owners:** The Legal Description for the property at 400 N. Main St. is Lot 2 and Lot 3 (except the west 40.0' thereof) in Block 13 in County Clerk's Fifth Assessment Division in the Southwest ¼ of Section 11, Township 39 North, Range 10, East of the Third Principal Meridian, according to the plat thereof recorded July 5, 1906 as Document 88055, in DuPage County, Illinois.

The original owner of the building was Giesche Shoes. Giesche Shoes commissioned the subject building in 1961 and retained ownership of the property until its sale to the current owners after the store's closure in 2014.

Giesche Shoes was a multi-generational family business founded in the 1890s in Chicago's Austin neighborhood by German immigrant Herman Giesche. Herman was a shoemaker, and branched out into selling shoes as the footwear trade moved away from tailor-made shoes to ready-to-wear.¹⁶ Herman's son, Herman Jr. joined the family trade and eventually opened a branch of Giesche Shoes in suburban Downers Grove in the mid-1930s.¹⁷ Other family members eventually opened branches in LaGrange, Naperville, and Libertyville.

Herman Jr.'s son, Thorman Wacker Giesche was the third generation of the Giesche family to sell shoes. He was born July 2, 1923 in Chicago, the son of Herman Giesche, Jr. and Anna Wacker Giesche.¹⁸ After graduating from Austin High School, Thorman

¹¹ George Westling, “A Home from Early American Days,” *Chicago Tribune*, May 31, 1958, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/372334987>.

¹² Nikki Hollwager, “Fireplaces in Profusion,” *Chicago Tribune*, September 4, 1965, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376485163>.

¹³ “Completion by Summer Expected,” *Roselle (Illinois) Register*, February 6, 1964, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/44512501>.

¹⁴ “Luxury Project Started,” *Chicago Tribune*, January 21, 1968, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/376579253>.

¹⁵ “U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007” digital image s.v. “Francis William Allegretti”, *Ancestry.com*.

¹⁶ Joan Giangrassie Kates, “Owner of shoe stores in Geneva and Glen Ellyn,” *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 2005, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/235960666/> (accessed April 20, 2020).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ “U.S. Social Security Applications and Claims Index, 1936-2007” digital image s.v. “Thorman Giesche”, *Ancestry.com*.

Giesche joined the Army Air Forces as a bomber pilot, fighting in World War II's European theater.¹⁹ During the war, he married Phyllis Olsen on November 20, 1944.²⁰ Returning to the family business after the war, Thorman and Phyllis Giesche opened the Glen Ellyn branch of Giesche Shoes in 1949, a location in Lombard's Yorktown Mall, and another freestanding store in Geneva in 1975.²¹ Having operated in older storefronts on the east side of Main Street since its opening, the new Glen Ellyn store was built in 1962, replacing a single-family residence which had stood at the northwest corner of Main and Hillside.²² In 1967, Giesche purchased the single-family residence to the north of the store and demolished it for a parking lot.²³ This became the site of the 1971 addition to the store. Thorman Giesche remained active in the family business with his three sons until his death on July 23, 2005, and Phyllis Giesche continued working in the store until 2006.²⁴ Phyllis Giesche died on October 21, 2010.²⁵ The Giesches passed their business on to sons Gary, Brian, and Gregory, who sold the Geneva and Glen Ellyn stores in 2014 and retired, bringing the 122-year history of Giesche Shoes to a close.²⁶

- 4. Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:** Nothing is known of the builder, contractor, or suppliers of the original 1962 portion of the Giesche building, except that the sign was installed by Suburban Signs, Inc. of Lisle in spring 1962.

Contractors for the 1971 addition were as follows:

General Contractor: E.P. Doyle and Son, Inc. of Glen Ellyn

Masonry Contractor: R.W. Butendorf of Oak Brook

Carpentry Contractor: E.P. Doyle & Son, Inc.

Plumbing, Sewer and Drain Contractor: Hanks Plumbing of Glen Ellyn

Foundation Contractor: Elliot Construction of Glen Ellyn

Electrical Contractor: Hinsdale Electric of Addison

- 5. Original Plans and construction:** The original 1962 building for the Giesche Shoe Store is an exercise in post-war retail construction. Breaking from the traditional downtown commercial mold of a party-wall building with ground-floor retail space and one or two floors of housing above, the Giesche Shoe Store stood alone on its corner lot as a

¹⁹ Joan Giangrassie Kates, "Owner of shoe stores in Geneva and Glen Ellyn," *Chicago Tribune*, July 29, 2005, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/235960666/>.

²⁰ "Florida, County Marriages, 1823-1982" digital image s.v. "Thorman Giesche", *Ancestry.com*.

²¹ Bob Goldsborough, "The smiling, friendly face of Giesche Shoes," *Chicago Tribune*, November 8, 2010, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/233008863/>.

²² Blythe P. Kaiser and Dorothy I. Vandercook, *Glen Ellyn's Story, and her neighbors in Du Page*, (Itasca, IL: Graphic Arts Production, 1976), 276.

²³ *Ibid.*, 290.

²⁴ Goldsborough.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Brenda Schory, "Shoe store owner retiring," *Kane County Chronicle*, December 19, 2013, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/181898035/>.

building boldly designed for the singular purpose of selling shoes. The building proclaimed its modernity also through the provision of off-street parking spaces which served only the Giesche establishment. The low, horizontal emphasis of the building stands in stark contrast to the ornamental Tudor and Victorian buildings facing it across Main Street. Eschewing the stonework and red and brown brick so prevalent in the rest of downtown Glen Ellyn, the Giesche building was adorned with modern materials like gray glazed brick and exposed steel elements. When expanded in 1971, the Giesche Shoe Store presented a new, up-to-date yet harmonious face to downtown: a soaring Neo-Formalist façade composed of rich materials such as natural stone terrazzo which allowed views to the dramatic interior through a two-story expanse of glass. A formal yet welcoming plaza invited shoppers to linger when entering or exiting the store. The design and quality of the exterior of the Giesche Shoe Store was a testament to the design and quality of the merchandise within.

- 6. Alterations and Additions:** A large addition was added to the structure in 1971-72, also by architect Francis W. Allegretti and in a style compatible with, but not identical to the 1962 building. For the purposes of this documentation, the entire structure is being treated as a single unit.

B. Historical Context:

Modernist Commercial Architecture

The two distinct sections of the Giesche Shoe Store reflect two different but related styles of architecture: Miesian, represented by the original 1962 building, and New Formalism, represented by the 1971 addition. As befits its situation as a traditional retail operation in a conservative suburb and designed by a local architect, each section was simply rendered toward the end of each architectural trend.

Commercial architecture shifted along with retail trends of the first half of the twentieth century. Prior to this time, goods were purchased out of necessity rather than desire, thus the requirements of display and advertising were small.²⁷ With the rise of ready-made consumer goods came a greater need for differentiation of products and service along with an emphasis on marketing and display. America became the epicenter of a retail aesthetic known as “Department Store Modern,” which was predicated on the concept of making fashionable consumables irresistibly modernistic.²⁸ Beginning in the 1920s, architecture, consumer goods, and retailing became streamlined in their aesthetics as futuristic and aerodynamic designs came to the forefront.²⁹ Glass storefronts took on greater importance

²⁷ Steven Heller, *Shop America: Midcentury Storefront Design, 1938-1950*, ed. Jim Heimann (Cologne: Taschen, 2007), 8.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

in modernist retail design as electric lighting shifted the primary use of window expanse from a method of transmitting light to a means to draw the customer to a merchant's wares. In his essay in *Shop America: Midcentury Storefront Design, 1938-1950*, author Steven Heller notes that "the modern storefront was meant to be an environment where consumers felt both emotionally and viscerally pampered, even if they were subconsciously commanded to spend their hard-earned money."³⁰ These storefronts and their expanses of glass drew looks from passers-by, enticing them into the store to inspect items for sale. Shoe stores were among those at the forefront of modern design. As reflected in the evolution of the Giesche family's trade, the shift from custom-ordered shoes to ready-to-wear options meant it was easier than ever for the consumer to indulge in new footwear. The modern method of shoe-buying was reflected in notable modernist shoe stores by prominent architects such as Ketchum, Gina & Sharp's Florsheim flagship store in New York City of 1946,³¹ Morris Lapidus' London Character Shoes in Brooklyn, NY from 1948,³² another Lapidus design from 1945 for the Ansonia Shoe Store in New York,³³ and most closely to Glen Ellyn, Holabird, Root & Burgee's 1948 Chandler's Shoe Store at 133 South State St. in Chicago.³⁴ The designs of stores employed eye-catching glass storefronts, interiors with expanses of display space, and ample seating which allowed a customer to try on many pairs of shoes and consider them in a way that previous methods of selling custom-made shoes did not.

The original 1962 building is an engaging example of Miesian modernist architecture adapted for a small building. The Miesian style was derived from the works of architect Mies van der Rohe, as an outgrowth of the International Style. Van der Rohe's evolving style came to prominence with his arrival in the United States in 1938, when he joined the faculty of the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) and set about designing a new campus for the school.³⁵ Miesian design features structural expression employed as decorative elements: exposed I-beams, flat roofs, exposed concrete and brick surfaces, and cantilevers.³⁶ Designed by Francis Allegretti near the end of the flourish of Miesian style, the original 1962 section of the Giesche Shoe Store employs all of these motifs with exterior walls of exposed glazed brick separated by channels of exposed steel beams and a flat roof with prominent cantilevers which serve to shelter pedestrians, all arranged on a mathematically rectangular grid. The usage of geometric grids and industrial materials is particularly suited to and perhaps inspired by American technology and reflects the

³⁰ Heller, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³² *Ibid.*, 24.

³³ Alice T. Friedman, *American Glamour and the Evolution of Modern Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 163.

³⁴ "Third Chandler Shoe Store in Chicago To Be Opened Tomorrow," *Chicago Tribune*, November 25, 1948, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/370149373/>.

³⁵ Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1981), 251.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

country's fascination with all things modern after World War II.³⁷ On varying scales, the Miesian aesthetic was explored by Mies himself in his designs for the Farnsworth house (Plano IL, 1951) and the Seagram Building (New York City, 1958), and by other prominent firms such as Skidmore, Owings and Merrill in their Inland Steel Building (Chicago, 1957) and Lever House (New York City, 1952). To this day, the Miesian style is seen by many as the quintessential high-design aesthetic of the mid-twentieth century.

Toward the end of the 1950s and throughout 1960s, architects began to explore new design aesthetics, looking back past modernism to more classical precedents, filtered through the lens of modern materials and craftsmanship. This was the genesis of New Formalist design. New Formalism is characterized as being typically self-contained, free-standing blocks with strictly symmetrical elevations, containing smooth and glassy wall surfaces and cast stone or concrete ornamentation.³⁸ These structures further constrained the tautness of Miesian design into temple-like forms, "suggesting that old forms need only be restyled to fit them for new needs."³⁹ Notable examples of New Formalist design include Edward Durrell Stone's National Geographic Society (Washington DC, 1964), Philip Johnson's Amon Carter Museum (Fort Worth TX, 1961), and Minoru Yamasaki's Northwestern National Life Insurance Company (Minneapolis MN, 1962).⁴⁰ Francis Allegretti's 1971 addition to the Giesche Shoe Store adapts New Formalist motifs to a smaller building. Most notable in the design is the scale shift from his original 1962 building. The 1972 building is two stories tall compared to the single story of the original, allowing the mass to read almost as a separate building. The loftier proportions allow for a greater expanse of glass wall, rising through both stories. The glass is framed by a simple band of cast stone panels which read as large-aggregate terrazzo, and the upper right corner of the façade displays a carved "cornerstone" announcing the Giesche Shoes name and its incorporation date of 1949. This frame is itself framed with a trim of simply coved limestone. Instead of the cool gray of the original building, the 1971 addition is clad in shades of soft cream. The landscaping of the addition further enhances the monumentality of the structure by forming a forecourt which slopes upward from sidewalk level and passes by two broad planters, one of which was originally a fountain, culminating in a central pair of entrance doors. Even the paving reflects New Formalist design, composed of dark gray cast bricks laid in a herringbone pattern, a nod to historicism which turns away from the modernism of the random slate flooring in the entrance to the 1962 building. While designed toward the end of the New Formalism movement, the 1971 addition to Giesche Shoes embodies the style while still comfortably tying to the Miesian aesthetic of the original building.

³⁷ Whiffen, 252.

³⁸ Ibid., 257.

³⁹ Ibid., 260.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 262.

The Village of Glen Ellyn

Glen Ellyn is a village in DuPage County, located approximately 24 miles due west of Chicago. In 1883, the Babcock brothers, Ralph, Anson, and Morgan, laid claim to lands near the intersection of today's Main Street Glen Ellyn, St. Charles Road, and Geneva Road, and named the settlement Babcock's Grove.⁴¹ In 1834, the Deacon Winslow Churchill family arrived from New York and joined the Babcocks in Babcock's Grove.⁴² DuPage County was carved out of Cook County in 1839, and the county seat was determined to be Naperville.⁴³ More settlers soon established a tavern and schoolhouse at the intersection of Indigenous trails known as Stacy's Corners, and the nucleus of what is now Glen Ellyn shifted to the south when the now-Chicago and North Western Railroad came through the village en route to Elgin in 1849.⁴⁴ Dr. Lewey Q. Newton deeded a right-of-way to the railroad and offered to build a depot and water tank at his own expense if it would permit a stop there.⁴⁵ This stop became known as Newton Station but was soon changed to Danby to avoid confusion with the already existing Newton, Illinois.⁴⁶

In the 1860s, the village of Danby grew to include several churches and its own schoolhouse.⁴⁷ In 1869, the area known as Babcock's Corners was platted as present-day Lombard, with the neighboring Stacy's Corners area becoming the seed of present-day Glen Ellyn.⁴⁸ In the 1870s, fine homes began to be built in Danby and the village continued to expand, with the name of the village being changed to Prospect Park in 1874.⁴⁹

The 1880s saw another railroad coming through town, with the Chicago Great Western Railroad laying tracks north of Stacy's Corners.⁵⁰ In 1889 Thomas E. Hill and Philo Stacy arranged to dam the stream near town to form Lake Glen Ellyn, named for the glen in which it rests and a Welsh spelling of Hill's wife's name, Ellen.⁵¹ A park was created and a dancing pavilion built, cementing the village's reputation as a pleasurable rural retreat.⁵²

⁴¹ Helen W. Ward and Robert W. Chambers, *Glen Ellyn: A Village Remembered* (Glen Ellyn, IL: Glen Ellyn Historical Society, 1999), 3.

⁴² Janice L. Reiff, Ann Durkin Keating, and James R. Grossman, *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), 337.

⁴³ Ward and Chambers, 8.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ Reiff, Keating, and Grossman, 338.

⁴⁶ Ward and Chambers, 19.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 42.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 49.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 68.

⁵¹ Reiff, Keating, and Grossman, 338.

⁵² Ward and Chambers, 70.

In 1891, Glen Ellyn, advertised as Chicago's newest suburb and health resort, became the town's official name.⁵³ Population that year stood at 600 inhabitants.⁵⁴ Much of the downtown of Glen Ellyn was destroyed in a large fire in November of that year, prompting large-scale rebuilding of the town.⁵⁵ The large Lake Glen Ellyn Hotel opened in 1893 and met with financial hardship and seasonal closures, but was struck by lightning and burned to the ground in 1906.⁵⁶ In this period, the village continued to grow as more fine homes were built and civic organizations and country clubs founded. Glen Ellyn's reputation as a summer resort continued to flourish.⁵⁷

In 1907, Glen Ellyn's first fire department was organized, and by the end of the twentieth century it was the last all-volunteer fire organization in DuPage County.⁵⁸ After World War I, Glenbard High School was built and development in the downtown such as the Glen Theatre and the new Chicago Aurora & Elgin railroad station lent a more sophisticated air to the Victorian village.⁵⁹

The years after World War II saw the greatest growth of Glen Ellyn: while population was 8,055 in 1940, it had grown to 15,972 by 1960, and to 21,909 by 1970.⁶⁰ Density was increasing in the village, as it was largely landlocked by this time. To control growth and maintain character, ordinances and zoning laws were enacted which restricted modern growth tools such as the construction of prefabricated houses.⁶¹ The College of DuPage campus was opened in Glen Ellyn in 1967, serving the community college needs of the surrounding area.⁶²

Growth slowed after 1970 as the village filled in its boundaries, with population increasing mainly through the construction of condominiums and apartments while smaller, older homes were replaced by larger models which maximized lot lines.⁶³ In the late 1990s, Glen Ellyn was home to an Illinois state center for the deaf and blind.⁶⁴ The 2020 population of Glen Ellyn is estimated at 27,550 inhabitants.⁶⁵

⁵³ Reiff, Keating, and Grossman, 338.

⁵⁴ Ward and Chambers, 70.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁵⁸ Reiff, Keating, and Grossman, 338.

⁵⁹ Ward and Chambers, 182.

⁶⁰ "Glen Ellyn, Illinois Population 2020," Glen Ellyn, Illinois Population 2020 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs), <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/glen-ellyn-il-population> (accessed January 18, 2021).

⁶¹ Ward and Chambers, 279.

⁶² Reiff, Keating, and Grossman, 338.

⁶³ Ward and Chambers, 391.

⁶⁴ Reiff, Keating, and Grossman, 338.

⁶⁵ Glen Ellyn, Illinois Population 2020.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural Character:** The Giesche Shoe Store is an excellent example of two styles of modernist retail architecture in a non-urban setting. The original 1962 portion of the building is a crisp, low-slung Miesian-style building which utilizes structural elements as a decorative scheme, and the coordinating-yet-contrasting 1971 addition belies the success of the business in the years between the two sections by presenting a far larger and monumental Formalist façade set back from the street by a landscaped plaza. The two different styles are unified by the architect's incorporation of materials like those utilized in the older section of the building into the later addition.
- 2. Condition of Fabric:** While the Giesche Shoe Store has been vacant since 2014, the overall condition of the fabric is fair. Original materials are intact and evident throughout all sections of the building, inside and out, but does reflect nearly a half-century of use and subsequent vacancy. At the time of this report, the roof is actively leaking where the two sections of the building connect, damaging the ceiling, walls, and floor.

B. Description of Exterior

- 1. Overall Dimensions:** The Giesche Shoe Store is arranged in two blocks, with a clear distinction between the two sections of the building. The 1962 structure is a single-story, east-west axis rectangle measuring 110'-0" x 50'-0". The 1971 addition is a two-story, irregular rectangle also aligned on an east-west axis, set 25'-0" behind the front building line of the 1962 portion. The 1971 addition measures 85'-0" x 49'-8", with a wing to the west side continuing the north wall of the building which measures 49'-0" x 26'-0".
- 2. Foundations:** The foundations of the 1962 building are of poured concrete, 1'-0" thick and 9'-0" deep and terminating at grade level. These foundations rest on 2'-0" wide concrete footers, with a 4" concrete slab between forming the basement floor. The 1971 addition is supported by a foundation of poured concrete, 1'-1" thick, 9'0" deep and terminating at grade level. The foundation walls rest on 2'-0" wide concrete footers, with a 4" concrete slab resting atop a 4-mm thickness of plastic sheeting forming the basement floor.
- 3. Walls:** The wall finishes are treated differently in the two separate sections of the building. The primary facades of the original 1962 structure are clad in stacked bond, 2-1/4" x 8" glazed brick, with the glaze being gray with black iron spots. The walls are

divided into sections separated by 4"-wide gray-painted steel channels, aligned with the cantilevered beams supporting the sidewalk canopy into four sections on the east façade and into seven sections along the eaves along the south façade. The secondary walls facing the service areaway are composed of 2-1/4" x 7-1/2" light gray concrete brick laid in a running bond.

The east front of the 1971 addition is faced in panels of a stone composite material similar to terrazzo, made of chunks of off-white stone set into a concrete matrix and polished. The composite panels of the east façade are framed with a band of Indiana limestone, and a carved limestone plaque is placed at the upper right corner of the façade which reads: "Giesche Shoes Est 1949". The north wall of the 1971 addition is faced in a cream colored, pocked-face brick laid in a running bond and divided horizontally into nine sections by pulling 1/2" forward every twelfth course, and vertically into seven sections, separated approximately every 20' by gray-painted steel channels identical to those used on the 1962 section of the building. The rear facades of the 1971 addition are faced in brick similar to that of the corresponding areas of the 1962 building.

The two different façade treatments were integrated together at the north corner of the 1962 portion, by the addition of two north-facing display windows which wrap around the 1962 building and terminate in the front façade of the 1971 addition. At the joint of the 1962 windows and the 1971 display windows, a thin strip of the composite stone cladding was inserted, and the gray glazed brick of the 1962 building was continued beneath the 1971 display windows to visually bridge the two sections of the building.

- 4. Structural System:** The 1962 building is of masonry construction, with exterior load-bearing walls built of 8" concrete block resting on the poured concrete foundation. The first floor consists of 8" precast concrete sections resting atop steel beams spaced 16' apart, with a poured 1-1/2" thick concrete floor surface on top. The steel beams run along the long axis of the building and rest on 3-1/2" steel lally columns spaced every 12'-0" along the beam. The roof is built of precast double tee beams, 1'-6" deep running along the short axis of the building. The 1971 addition is also of masonry construction, with first-story load-bearing walls built of 8" concrete block resting on the poured foundation. The second-story walls are 4" concrete block resting atop the first-floor wall structure. The first and second floors are formed of 8" thick flexicore running along the short axis of the building and inserted into steel I-beams running the long axis of the building, resting on steel lally columns in the basement. The roof is made of 12" flexicore sections running along the short axis of the building.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads:** The southern half of the east façade of the building features a cantilevered canopy extending nearly to the curb of the sidewalk which shades the display windows and protects pedestrians from the

elements. This canopy wraps around the southeast corner of the building to shelter shoppers entering from the store's parking lot. The original sign for the business was displayed at the southern end of the canopy, on four slender, square metal posts. A second, smaller sign indicating the business name was suspended from the northern edge of the canopy over the sidewalk. The roof structure of the porch is unique in that the roof surface alternates between resting atop the cantilevered supports immediately over the entrance, to being affixed to the bottom of the cantilever over the store windows. All structural elements and trim are painted in the same shade of gunmetal gray as the rest of the building's trim, and the face material of the underside of the canopy is of white, ribbed aluminum panels concealing a ribbed, reinforced steel decking system.

6. **Chimneys:** There is a 2+ story tall chimney at the northwest corner of the original 1962 structure executed in the same secondary brick as the rest of the service sides of the 1962 store, serving as exhaust for mechanical systems in the interior.

7. Openings

- a. **Doorways:** The principal entry door for Giesche Shoes is the original entrance at the southeast corner of the 1962 structure. The replacement doors are currently bronze colored aluminum double doors with full glass lights, with a vertical mullion placed dividing the glass to support the outside edge of the door handles. In the 1971 addition, a set of double doors is placed in the center of the façade. These doors are full-light, double-pane glass set into bronze-colored aluminum frames. All doors in the rear of the two sections are of flat steel construction, with no inset windows, and served as service doors for deliveries to the store.
- b. **Windows and shutters:** Windows in the front of the 1962 structure are all display windows extending the width of the east façade and from nearly floor-to-ceiling of the interior. The glass is single pane, encased in black aluminum. The window sections are divided by 4" wide steel supports painted gunmetal gray. Most of the 1971 façade is glass as well, continually extending up into the second story to light the two-story atrium inside. These windows are single pane, set into a rectangular grid separated by 2" wide sturdy steel dividers with rounded edges painted the same gray color of the rest of the building's trim.

The windows in the rear of the buildings are not decorative, they are merely to allow light to reach inner workspaces. There is one window opening present in the rear of the 1962 section, measuring 5'-0" wide x 2'-6" tall. There is no window left in the void; the rear of the building is open to the elements but is kept secure by a metal grille over the opening. There are three windows present on the second floor of the

1971 section, each measuring 4'-0" wide x 8'-0" tall. Two face south over the service alley, and one faces west.

8. Roofs

- a. **Shape, covering:** The roof structure of both sections of the Giesche Shoe Store is flat, built of precast concrete elements as described in Structural System with 2" rigid insulation atop the concrete. Original plans called for tar and gravel roofing. Masonry parapets are present on all exterior walls except those facing the service alley.
- b. **Cornice, eaves:** There are no cornices present in the design. The eave structure along the south façade of the 1962 section forms a shallow canopy much like that on the street front of the building, which serves to shelter shoppers from the elements when entering or exiting the building. Each section between the cantilevered beam supports of this eave contains a canister light illuminating both the sidewalk and the glazed brick wall surface of the building.
- c. **Dormers, cupolas and towers:** Not present.

C. Description of Interior

1. **Floor Plans:** The main floor of the original 1962 Giesche Shoe Store building is dominated primarily by a large sales floor. Stock rooms are present along the north and south walls of the sales floor, and the entire rear of the building functions as service area. This service area contains a private office, men's and women's restrooms, and a storage and receiving area. The floor is served by two staircases to the basement, one at the front of the building and one in the rear.

The main floor of the 1971 addition is also dominated by a large sales floor, with a large stock room taking up the entire rear of the building. Half of the sales floor is open to the second floor and lit by double-height windows, and the dominant feature of the space is an angled, floating staircase to the second floor. There is a flight of stairs to the basement present along the north wall of the building.

The second floor of the 1971 addition is bounded on the east by a double-curve balcony rail, open to the two-story atrium in the east portion of the building. The section of the second floor abutting the balcony was additional sales space. The entire western half of the building holds a large, open stock room with no separation from the adjacent sales floor. The second floor is also served by a staircase in the rear of the building, leading to the lower floors.

- 2. Stairways:** The public stairway in the 1971 addition is the primary design statement of that section of the building. It connects the sales floor on the main level with auxiliary sale space on the second floor, which is open on the east end of the building, forming a two-story atrium at the entrance of the 1971 addition. The public stairway is a floating staircase composed of white-painted steel stringers supporting white terrazzo treads which measure 7'-0" wide x 1'-2" deep, and 3" thick. The staircase ascends at a 45-degree angle to the east-west axis of the building for the first ten steps, where it joins a five-sided polygonal landing. The stairs then continue up another eight steps to join the second floor aligned with the east-west axis of the building. The 4" wide, white-painted wood handrails are supported by $\frac{3}{4}$ " square, brushed aluminum balusters arranged one per side, per step.

There are three other secondary stairways in the building, reserved for employee use and are therefore utilitarian. They are composed of a steel tread and riser system, with a concrete surface on the treads for traction. Railings are of cylindrical steel pipe.

- 3. Flooring:** The flooring of the 1962 building was originally a combination of slate paving stones and carpeting. The carpeting has been removed due to water infiltration of the building, exposing the concrete surface beneath. The slate portion of the floor runs the depth of the 1962 sales showroom, along the southern side of the space and connecting seamlessly with the slate entry floor of the exterior. The transition of slate to carpet is a smoothly undulating line which matches the original blueprints. This slate is blue-green in color, with gray veins and a smoothed but natural surface. It is laid in a random pattern of squares and rectangles, with $\frac{1}{2}$ " white grout joints aligned along the axis of the building. The rear service areas of the 1962 section are floored in a 12" square asbestos-type floor tile in speckled gray, laid on a diagonal to the rest of the building.

Flooring present in the first floor of the 1971 addition is entirely commercial grade gray carpet, except for a polygonal section of 3-3/4" x 7-3/4" brown-gray pavers identical to those of the exterior plaza and laid in a herringbone pattern inside the double entry doors. The front section of the second-floor area at the top of the staircase is carpeted in a bright red commercial grade carpet, terminating where blueprints called for a modular divider. To the rear of where the divider would have stood, there is dark gray commercial carpet present.

- 4. Wall and ceiling finishes:** The current wall finishes in both sections of the Giesche Shoe Store appear to date from sometime after 1990. In the 1962 section, walls are covered almost entirely by a light gray wooden shelving system consisting of slats where modular hanging shelves of shoes would be displayed. The sections of slats are separated by wood uprights stained a light gray, which has aged to take on a pale sage green tint. One section of the north wall near the front is covered in burlap, painted light gray. The rear (west) wall is smooth-painted in the same light gray.

There are indications that the 1962 section was more colorful at an earlier stage in its history. In a storage passage area along the south wall of the building, there is a section of decorative masonry consisting of stacked courses of Roman bricks which measure 1-½" x 11-½", separated by mortar joints measuring ½" for the vertical lines and 3/8" for the horizontal lines. The bricks themselves are a warm light brown color with a wire-cut face. It is probable that these bricks lined at least the south wall of the store and are concealed by the later slat system. In the section of the north wall not covered by slats the baseboard has been removed, revealing beneath the burlap surface a metallic foil wallpaper with a geometric "Y"-motif design in turquoise and copper. Along the painted rear wall, a section of the painted surface has torn away revealing a strip of a boldly patterned wallpaper in red-orange, green, and yellow. These decorative elements would have interplayed with the original blue-green slate floor to create a colorful interior space in the 1962 section.

The ceiling finish of the 1962 showroom section is a rough-textured plaster, into which recessed fluorescent lights are set.

The interior of the 1971 section carries the same gray and grayish-green motif as the later decoration of the 1962 section. Vinyl wallpaper was used for wall surfaces, in a light gray color. Soffits above shelving and concealing HVAC are smooth-finished drywall painted light gray. The first floor of the north wall of the 1971 section is lined entirely with 8' tall display shelving, divided into approximately 3' sections and stained the same green-faded gray as the shelving in the 1962 portion. The second story atrium walls above the shelving is finished in light gray painted drywall. In the front portion of the second story sales area, the drywall is covered in light gray painted wooden shakes, laid in a 12" reveal. The walls of the rear service area of the second floor are painted concrete block. There is no indication of what the interior finishes of the 1971 portion may have been originally.

The ceiling of the first floor of the 1971 section is composed of 12" square acoustic tiles, white with a rough surface and affixed to a concealed metal grid. The second-floor ceiling is of 2'-0" square acoustic tiles, in white with a rough texture and set into a black metal grid. The rear areas of the 1971 section are unfinished concrete structural panels.

5. Openings

- a. **Doorways and doors:** Interior doors in both sections of the building are of flat metal construction, with commercial metal jamb. All doors and jambs are painted light gray.
- b. **Windows:** The interiors of the windows in both sections are finished identically to their exteriors.

6. **Decorative features and trim:** Being a modernist building, there is very little in the way of decorative features or trim. In the Giesche Shoe Store, visual impact is carried by simple, unadorned surfaces. Trim, where present, is of a typical ranch profile or commercial steel units.
7. **Hardware:** Hardware throughout the Giesche Shoe Store is simple commercial-grade hardware, some of which has been replaced over time.

8. Mechanical equipment

- a. **Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:** HVAC is provided through metal ductwork, concealed in soffits and dropped ceilings.
- b. **Lighting:** Lighting is a significant decorative element in both sections of the Giesche Shoe Store. In the original 1962 building, the sales floor is lit from above by four inset fluorescent light fixtures, installed diagonal to the axis of the building and each measuring 8'-0" square. Each pair of diagonal fixtures is separated by two runs of similar inset fluorescent lighting laid on the east-west axis and measuring 12'-0" x 4'-0". These inset fluorescent fixtures are covered by a square grid of silver reflective plastic. Other lighting in the sales floor is provided by recessed can lights inset into the soffit which lines the exterior walls.

The sales floor in the 1971 section repeats this diagonal and axial arrangements of recessed fluorescent lighting with silver plastic grids, with one large diagonal light placed in the center of the space measuring 8' square. Two other lights measuring 4'-0" square are placed diagonally to the southeast of the large central fixture. Five 4'-0" square lights are placed to the north and southeast of the central fixture, and two 4'-0" square lights are placed to follow the curve of the balcony above. Other recessed fluorescent fixtures are placed to fill in dark areas between these larger fixtures. The balcony itself is edged with thirteen downward-pointed white cylinder can lights. On the second floor of the 1971 addition, 2'-0" square flush recessed fluorescent lights are placed into the ceiling grid following the curve of the balcony and randomly elsewhere to light the two-story atrium, and behind the balcony rail there is a line of six larger, 4'-0" square recessed fixtures behind slightly protruding white plastic shades to light the sales area of the second floor.

- c. **Plumbing:** Plumbing and fixtures in the Giesche Shoe Store bathrooms date to 1962, and are simple and unexceptional in design or function.
- d. **Original furnishings:** None present.

D. Site

- 1. Historic landscape design:** Being a fully modern retail building, the plan for the original 1962 structure included on-site customer parking. Six parking spaces were arranged along the south wall of the building, set at a 45-degree angle. The spaces are delineated by a sawtooth sidewalk which led patrons to the entrance of the building. The entrance niche is paved in blue-green slate identical to that inside the sales floor of the 1962 building. Original plans called for the city sidewalk on the east side of the building to be laid in black concrete, which if built is no longer extant. The original entrance in the southeast corner of the 1962 section includes a triangular planter integrated into the structural members of the canopy and signage. They are built of 8" thick cast concrete with a decorative vertical ribbing 3/4" wide, spaced every 4" and topped with black slate slabs 2" thick x 12" wide. Under the canopy, the slate measures 1'-5" deep to allow for a sheltered seating space for shoppers. This planter is filled with overgrown evergreen shrubs. This planter was likely constructed in the 1971 addition as it appears differently in the original 1961 blueprints.

The 1971 addition is set back from the sidewalk by a 25'-0" deep plaza which rises gently to the floor level of the entrance to this section of the building. The plaza features two planters built of the same cast concrete and slate of the planter at the southeast corner. The southern planter is a rectangle on the east-west axis, measuring 14'-6" x 9'-0", dug to a depth of 4'-0". The northern planter measuring 14'-6" square, and originally contained an 8'-0" diameter circular fountain. This fountain has since been filled in and the fountain now contains the same overgrown evergreen shrubbery as the other planters. The 1971 plaza is paved with brown-gray concrete pavers measuring 3-3/4" x 7-3/4", laid in a herringbone pattern which continues through the entrance doors into the floor of the 1971 addition.

- 2. Outbuildings:** There are no outbuildings.

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Giesche Shoe Store
1971 Addition
Second Floor Plan



Appendix II – Supporting Images (all photographs taken by Andrew Elders, April 2019)

Glazed brick and steel channels in south wall of 1962 building



Slate-paved entrance to 1962 building



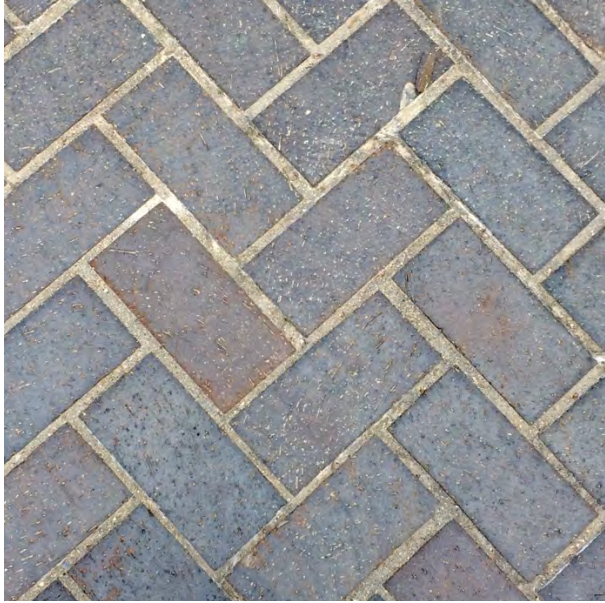
Terrazzo cladding and cornerstone on front of 1971 addition



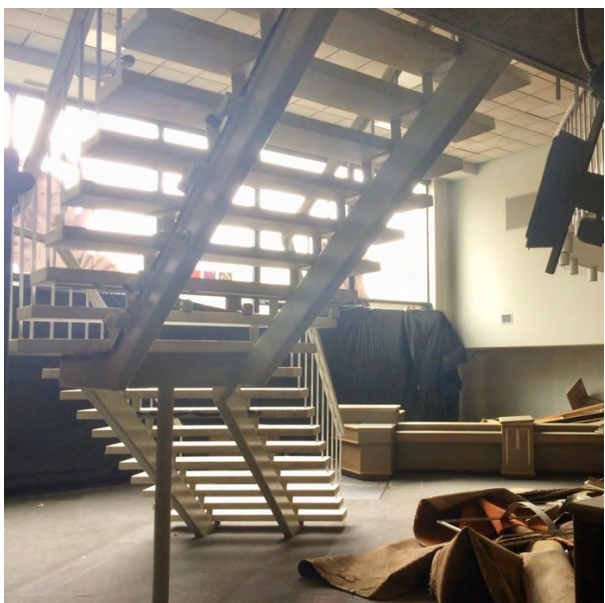
North wall molded brick and bridge of materials between 1962 and 1971 sections



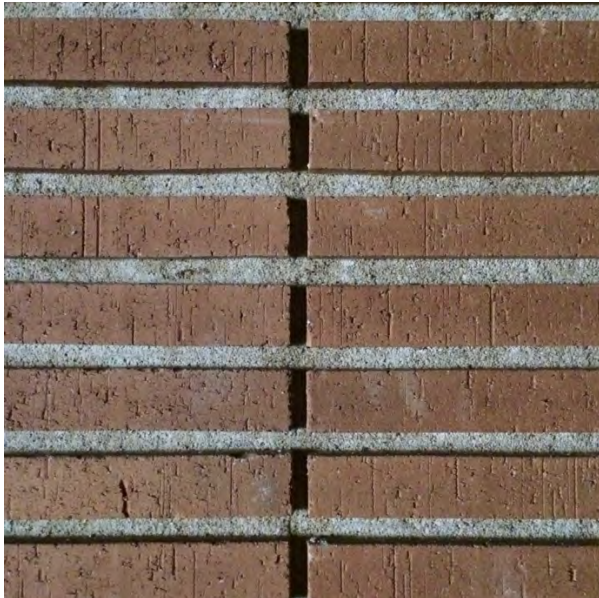
Detail of 1962 entrance showing canopy and planter, and plaza paving from 1971



Detail of floating terrazzo staircase



Detail of decorative roman brick and slate floor from 1962 sales floor area



Detail of old wallpapers found in 1962 sales floor area



Lighting scheme in 1971 first floor sales area



Lighting scheme in 1971 second floor sales area



HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

GIESCHE SHOE STORE
400 N. Main Street
Glen Ellyn
DuPage County
Illinois

HABS No. IL-1246

INDEX TO BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Leslie Schwartz, Photographer, April 2019

- IL-1246-1 General view of north façade from north northeast.
- IL-1246-2 General view of front (east) façade from northeast.
- IL-1246-3 General view of front (east) façade showing north (1971) addition from east.
- IL-1246-4 General view of front (east) façade showing original south (1962) wing with main entrance from east.
- IL-1246-5 General view of south façade from south southeast showing east (main) entrance at southeast corner.
- IL-1246-6 Detail view of entrance plaza from northeast, showing north (1971) entrance at center.
- IL-1246-7 Detail view of entrance canopy from southeast, showing south (1962) entrance at center.
- IL-1246-8 Interior view of south (1962) salesroom from west, showing original sales floor and main entrance.
- IL-1246-9 Interior view from south (1962) salesroom to north (1971) salesroom from south, showing connection between spaces.
- IL-1246-10 Interior view of north (1971) salesroom from southeast, showing double-height atrium and stairs to second floor.
- IL-1246-11 Interior view of north (1971) salesroom from northeast, showing double-height atrium, balustrade, and stairs to second floor.

IL-1246-12 Interior view of second floor of north (1971) addition from northwest, showing double-height atrium and stairs to main floor.























