

Lincoln Warehouse – A hive for creatives and entrepreneurs



Originally built in 1928 to house baking operations for then-supermarket giant A&P, today Lincoln Warehouse bustles with the activity of its 130 tenants. PHOTO KATHERINE KELLER

The aging warehouses and factory buildings dotted throughout America's cityscapes remind us of this country's manufacturing heyday, before corporations fled overseas for cheap labor, and before corporate mergers and downsizing. Buildings left behind by once-prominent corporations have sat vacant and neglected. Others have been transformed by creative property owners into vibrant mixed-use commercial hubs, accommodating a growing number of people who choose to work for themselves as artisans and or in small business start-ups.

In Bay View, one finds buildings that formerly housed industrial giants Louis Allis, Rexnord, Chrysler, and smaller ones like J. Greenebaum Tannery (now the Hide House). One of the lesser known is Lincoln Warehouse, 2018 S. First St. (northeast corner of Becher and First), on the border of Bay View and Walker's Point. Originally built in 1928 to house baking operations for then-supermarket giant A&P, today the structure bustles with activity. Among its 130 tenants are small-batch food and beverage manufacturers, artists, photographers, web designers, hair stylists, tattoo artists, musicians, and others that occupy the five-story, 170,000-square-foot building.

"We're just about full," said Lincoln Warehouse general manager Andrew Bandy, whose property management firm, ARRAND Real Estate, took over in 2011. "We have a vast array of tenants, and together they create a unique synergy in this building," He said 5,500 square feet is available for studio build-outs, and there is heavy interest among individuals and businesses who want to call Lincoln Warehouse home.

The custom-built suites are situated around the perimeter of the building to maximize the benefits of the vast factory windows that flood spaces with natural light and frame impressive views of the city. Bandy said units start at approximately 500 square feet and go up to 7,000 square feet, and that the average suite is 700 square feet. Rents range from \$395 to \$850 per month, and for most, utilities are included.

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The inner space on each floor is used for storage, in lockers or open space that allows for pallets and forklifts. Country Maid is a retail deli and caterer specializing in salads and dips, located a few doors north of Lincoln Warehouse on the

west side of First Street. It stores pallets of plastic trays and carryout containers in an open storage area. Bandy said Oakland Gyros also stores product at the warehouse.

An open communal space on the fifth floor is the site of gallery nights, artist events, and nonprofit fundraisers. In August, a Milwaukee Dinner Lab pop-up event featuring creations by chef Daniel Espinoza drew 60 guests to the warehouse. Bandy said event hosts are responsible for abiding by city ordinances such as providing a licensed bartender to serve alcohol on premises.

Bandy pointed out recent exterior facelifts that include paint and concrete work. Inside, the concrete floors have been stripped and refinished to preserve the industrial warehouse feel. Plumbing has been upgraded, and Bandy said the building has sprinkler systems and it meets city codes. Some artists in the building have painted colorful murals.

Do not expect polished bamboo floors or remodeled exposed beam lofts. "We're a warehouse. We don't apologize for that, nor do we pretend to be a Third Ward building," Bandy said. Praising the cleanliness and safety of Lincoln Warehouse, he added, "The building is cleaned regularly, and there is a security system, since tenants have 24/7 access. We've had no problems here."

Long History On South Side

Local historian Anna Passante researched the building's history. Built in 1928, the structure originally housed the bakery operations of the A&P supermarket chain. While A&P closed its last Milwaukee store under the A&P name in 1979, she said bakery operations apparently ceased around 1961, when it last appeared in Milwaukee directories.

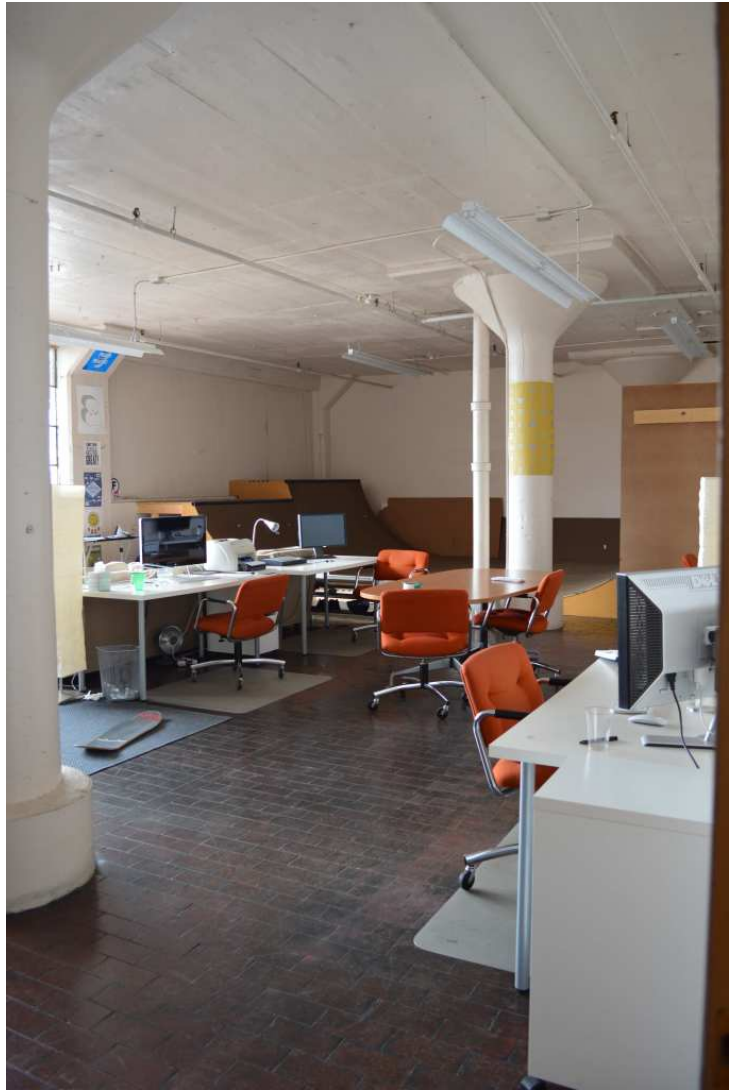
Frabill Manufacturing Company, a producer of fishing equipment, occupied the building during the 1960s and 1970s. Huffy Corporation, known for its bikes and sporting goods,

next took over the building and operated there throughout the 1980s. The building was renamed Lincoln Warehouse in 1987, Passante said.

Richard Gold, a Boston-area attorney, bought Lincoln Warehouse in 1988. Gold grew up in Milwaukee and served in the United States Army before relocating to the East Coast. He kept his strong ties to Milwaukee and still visits the city frequently. Prior to purchasing Lincoln Warehouse, he said he had also owned a warehouse downtown, kitty-corner from Mader's Restaurant on Old World Third Street.

Gold said that during his ownership, tenants have included NECCO, the candy company best known for Necco wafers and Sweetheart conversation hearts. He also rented to Airgas, a distributor of industrial, metal, and specialty gasses.

Gold credits Bandy with the current success of Lincoln Warehouse today. "He came up with the idea of building to suit in an attempt to attract many diverse tenants, instead of just relying on a couple of larger ones that may leave at any time," Gold said.



Design/marketing group OCUPOP is located in Lincoln Warehouse. PHOTO JENNIFER KRESSE

Eat, Drink, Be Creative

Web designers, established and aspiring musicians, a city of Milwaukee clothing bank, Elegant Times event planning service, makeup artist Michael Weiss, piano tuning and restoration specialist Charles Turner, as well as inventors, screen printers, an exercise video producer, an organic produce distributor, crafters, and individuals who simply need a retreat for their creative endeavors are just some of the tenants that make up the creative hub of Lincoln Warehouse.

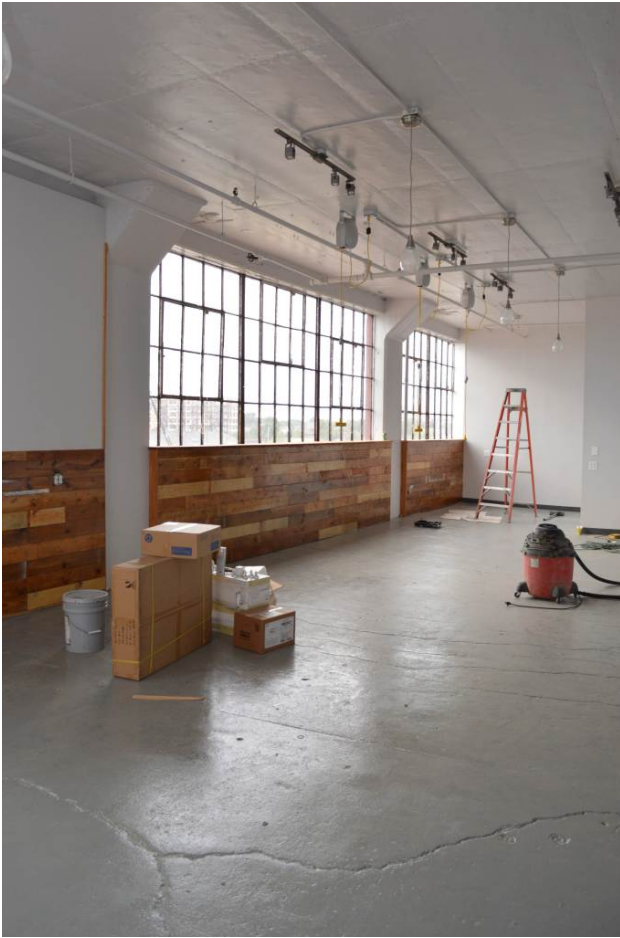
Most tenants moved in within the last three years under Bandy's management. Bandy said that while Lincoln Warehouse

handles about 90 percent of the build-outs, food and beverage businesses that use a lot of water or have other special concerns are responsible for getting their spaces up to code and obtaining requisite operating permits for their businesses.

Nikki's Cookies makes classic shortbread and holiday-themed cookies with natural and GMO-free ingredients. Bandy said Nikki's is Lincoln Warehouse's longest-term tenant, leasing space for more than 25 years. Clover Distribution Inc., a spice company, has been at Lincoln Warehouse for 20 years. "We have longevity here," Bandy said, which provides a nice mix of a few older tenants and many recent ones. Among the newest tenants is Madison-based Bittercube, LLC, who is moving in this fall. Bittercube makes high-end bitters for cocktails.

Sculptor Matt Connell creates large-scale custom models of trees, tiki totems, guitars – anything his clients request. He appreciates the energetic ambiance within the building. "The option of a custom build-out was a draw," he said, and is why he chose workspace in the warehouse.

The Green Glass Company, founded by Oscar Wientjes, could be considered the ultimate recycler of glass bottles. His business occupies a suite on the fourth floor and specializes in upcycling beverage bottles into drinking glasses, vases, and its patented wine goblet design. Walls with metal shelving display glass products crafted from clear, frosted, blue, topaz, and green bottles. Some of the glasses still retain the bottle's original, vintage painted labels like Rolling Rock beer or Boylan soda. Green Glass also applies company names or logos, via sandblasting, for custom orders and offers its own designs and patterns.



This suite is the future home of Follicle Engineerz and Cream City Coiffure. PHOTO JENNIFER KRESSE

Hair designer David Romo, who is in the process of gathering reclaimed furniture and decor for his new salon Follicle Engineerz, has been styling locks at south side salons for 15 years. When he decided to strike out on his own, a friend who rents space in Lincoln Warehouse recommended the building. "I like the idea of a salon in a warehouse," Romo said. He has an established client base and does not rely on walk-ins. Fellow stylist Katie Mrotek will share the space with him for her new venture, Cream City Coiffure.

Romo praised the natural light shining through the immense factory windows. "That's important when you're working with coloring," he noted. Bandy is working with Romo to install power garage-style doors to separate the workstations in the

salon.

Howl Street Recordings has been an established recording studio in Bay View since 2007. Owner Shane Hochstetler originally set up shop at 2505 S. Howell Ave., but at the beginning of the year, the building was sold and he was forced to vacate. He moved into the 1,200-square-foot space inside Lincoln Warehouse in April.

“It was a blessing in disguise,” Hochstetler said of the move, “I liked the old space, but here the rooms are nicer and more spacious.”

Leslie Davis moved her art restoration and framing business, Leslie Davis Preservation Framing, to Lincoln Warehouse in February. She was previously located in the Third Ward, but she cited good building management and reasonable rent as primary reasons for her move.

The beverage businesses that occupy Lincoln Warehouse have gotten much attention lately. Enlightened Brewing Company joined the ranks of both established and up-and-coming craft brewers in Milwaukee, carrying on the brewing tradition here in the nation’s beer capital. Another adult beverage business, Twisted Path Distillery, moved to Lincoln Warehouse March 1. Founder and Bay View resident Brian Sammons said the company will offer vodka, gin, light and dark rum, and rye whiskey. “I’ll have a tasting room here in this space and sell directly to people,” Sammons said. He hopes to eventually also sell through distributors.

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