Permanent Historic Designation

Study Report

Former Schlitz Tavern / Coventry Inn

2501 West Greenfield Avenue

December 2009

PERMANENT HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. NAME

Historic: **Schlitz Tavern / Coventry Inn**

Common Name: **Benjamin Brigg's Pub / Club Fiesta Restaurant & Bar**

II. LOCATION **2501 West Greenfield Avenue**

Legal Description - Tax Key No. 459-1214-000
Mark Tyson's Subd of a part of LOT 1 etc in NW ¼ SEC 6-6-22
Block 2 LOT 10

III. CLASSIFICATION Site

IV. OWNER Raul Varela Rodriguez
3524 West Greenfield Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53215

ALDERMAN Ald. Robert Donovan, 8th Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR Patricia K. Doherty

V. YEAR BUILT 1904 (permit number 442 dated March 9, 1904)
1935 (alterations, permit dated April 4, 1935)

ARCHITECT: Charles L. Lesser (permit number 442 dated March 9, 1904)
Mark Pfaller (permit dated April 4, 1935)

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Schlitz Tavern / Coventry Inn is located at the southwest corner of W. Greenfield Avenue and S. 25th Street approximately 2 ¼ miles from the Central Business District. The neighborhood features two and two and one-half story commercial buildings on Greenfield Avenue and frame residential buildings on the side streets. The neighborhood developed mostly in the 1890s and early 20th century with some buildings dating to the 1880s. The subject building is one of the few constructed of brick in the neighborhood.

The Schlitz Tavern / Coventry Inn is a two story, solid masonry, rectangular building constructed in 1904. The present English revival style of the building dates to a 1935 remodeling. The building has two principal elevations, one on Greenfield Avenue and one on S. 25th Street. The front elevation is built up to the sidewalk. The east elevation is set back from the sidewalk and has grass and shrubs. A wood fence encloses the rear yard and at the alley is a garage. The pent roof wraps the north and east elevations and is clad in slate with a Boston laid slate shingled ridge. Behind the pent roof the roof is flat and surrounded by a parapet with tile coping. The body of the building is red brick but common brick is visible on the west elevation where a ghost sign reads "Drink Schlitz". The entrance is at the canted corner and is currently sheltered by an awning.

The fenestration is a significant part of the building. On the first story of the Greenfield Avenue elevation, there is a grouping of five casement windows with diamond paned leaded glass of amber color. The grouping is surrounded by stone trim, which has recently been painted. Above the grouping of casement windows are two window openings with casement windows having clear, rectangular leaded glass. Above the corner entrance is a rectangular sash window with leaded glass. All windows feature stone sills. The main entrance door is obscured by a storm door.

The east elevation features a gable at the roofline and has nine windows set within segmental arches. There is also another entrance. The two windows on the first floor closest to the corner feature the same diamond paned leaded glass as the front windows. The remainder of the windows feature clear leaded glass. The side entrance is located toward the back of the building and has an awning matching the main entrance.

Attached to the main building is a one story addition built in 1935 that has a pent slate roof and three pairs of small, leaded glass casement windows. Its S. 25th Street face is clad with the same red brick as the main portion of the building.

The west elevation, featuring common brick, has an off set at its north end while the remainder of the building extends almost to the property line. Plans show a door was located in this area but it is not visible at present. This offset is screened at Greenfield Avenue by gateway of wood with an arched entry. This gateway extends to the adjacent building to the west. The gateway has a slate pent roof and a gate made of wood slats.

The south or rear elevation features common brick and has few openings.

Permit records show that there has been virtually no changes to the exterior of the building since its remodeling in 1935. The rear garage was built in 1924. The cedar fence was installed in 1996. The building is in a remarkable state of preservation.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Schlitz Tavern / Coventry Inn is significant as an example of a brewery built corner tavern that has been in continual use as a tavern, except during Prohibition, since its construction in 1904. Brewery built taverns are an important legacy of the significance of breweries to the economy of Milwaukee in the late 19th and early 20th century. They also served as neighborhood social centers where residents could gather. This Schlitz tavern was reinvented into more of a destination tavern/restaurant after the repeal of Prohibition by way of extensive remodeling that gave it its English revival character. Later known as the Coventry Inn, the building is a fine example of period revival style applied to tavern building, something uncommon in Milwaukee. It expresses the importance given to Old World character in the decades of the 1920s and 1930s before modernism began to make inroads in design.

VIII. HISTORY

The immediate area in which the Schlitz / Coventry Inn was built was platted for development in October 1881 and consisted of blocks between Orchard and Greenfield from today's South 24th Street to Layton Boulevard. The lots were generally 50 feet wide by 140 feet deep except for three large parcels set aside on Layton Boulevard. This platting coincided with efforts to extend horse drawn street car lines along Greenfield Avenue but resident opposition and business competition kept the line from being realized until around 1888 when it was completed to the city limits at today's Layton Boulevard. This west end of Greenfield Avenue saw some residential development

and commercial development beginning in the 1880s and construction continued slowly into the early 20th century. In the 2500 block, where the subject property is located, only three buildings were constructed in the nineteenth century, in the 1890s, while seven were built after the turn of the twentieth century.

Schlitz / Coventry Inn

The subject property (Lot 10) changed hands a number of times in its early years. It was coupled with the adjacent lot to the west, Lot 9, and the two parcels were sold in 1882 and 1888 to investors then in 1889 to members of the Ellenbecker family, most of whom lived in Mequon. The value of the two lots had risen from $675 to $1,975 by the time the Ellenbecker's purchased the land on contract. Nicholas Ellenbecker and his wife Lizzie, living in Milwaukee, sold the lots to Schlitz Brewing Company on September 22, 1891 for $2400. (Deeds 182:82; 239:440; 243:99; 216:271 – 276; 253:465; 247:419; 287:321)

The Schlitz Brewing Company, like its competitors Pabst, Blatz and Miller, began the practice of buying up corner lots in the 1880s and a Milwaukee Sentinel article from April 26, 1885 indicated that the three major breweries (Schlitz, Best later known as Pabst, and Blatz) had purchased around 200 corner lots in the past year alone. The article went on to say that the fact "that there should be room for a saloon for every 130 inhabitants (including men, women and children) has given the city the name of being the saloonkeeper's paradise." The article continued it "is hardly possible, however, that all of these saloons could be profitably continued were it not for the backing of the brewers. The brewers have invested an enormous aggregate of capital in the business of brewing beer, and have a vital interest in having the demand for beer kept up. Within the past two years the export trade has been affected by a more active competition, and in order to utilize the full strength of their productive facilities, local brewers have seen the need of maintaining the home trade."

Rather than merely supplying stock and fixtures to saloonkeepers who might otherwise prove untrustworthy or unbusinesslike, the breweries took it upon themselves to erect their own tavern buildings with the result that "[I]t secures the erection of better buildings in place of the wretched structures occupied by the proprietors of low grogeries, and better order will be maintained." All this development was viewed with skepticism by the paper which commented that saloons sites were being acquired even in the better residence portions of the city and "every property owner knows that they do not enhance the value of his adjoining property, and although he may be a good patron of the saloon, he does not care to have it for his next door neighbor."

As the Milwaukee Sentinel article forecast, the various breweries began construction of corner saloons in the 1880s. To their credit, the breweries contracted with some of the best architects of the day. In some instances, a brewery would contract with one particular architect. In other instances, a brewery would have several designers under contract, each of whom had a specialty or part of the city where he was well established. The buildings erected were sometimes the focal points of their neighborhoods and made drinking more respectable. Many of the buildings were constructed of masonry materials, more expensive and longer lasting, although some were frame buildings. Schlitz contracted with Charles Kirchhoff Jr. to design some of the most famous buildings of the city including the Schlitz Palm Garden downtown. Kirchhoff with his later partner Thomas Rose became the architects of choice for the personal residences and investment buildings erected by members of the Uihlein family. Schlitz Brewing Company also contracted with Charles L. Lesser to design a host of taverns for locations on the city's south side.

As this end of Greenfield Avenue developed slowly, with buildings gradually moving west along the corridor, Schlitz saw no need to immediately build a tavern on the two lots they purchased in 1891. In fact, this block saw only three buildings constructed in the 1890s. Schlitz took out the permit to build the present building on March 9, 1904 and it was the first building constructed on this block after the turn of the 20th century. The building was a modest two-story solid structure masonry structure with the entrance at the canted corner. It might have resembled today's Club Garibaldi in

Bay View, at 2501 S. Superior Street, built several years later in 1907. Since the tavern only occupied one of the two lots the company purchased, Schlitz sold the adjacent lot (Lot 9) to Dietrich and Kattie Burck for $16,000 the following year on August 12, 1905. (Deeds 527:7)

The proprietors who ran the tavern under Schlitz's ownership included

Henry Raasch (1905-1906)
Joseph Zdroyk (1907-1908)
Louis Mikulecky (1909)
Joseph and Helen Zdroyk, later a widow (1910-1911)
William Schaefer (1912-1920) listing in 1920 is for a soft drink parlor

The surnames of the proprietors show the mix of German and Polish ethnicity in the neighborhood. As was typical for the day, the saloonkeepers lived in the apartment upstairs from the tavern.

With the coming of Prohibition the breweries were forced to divest themselves of their real estate. Many of the Schlitz taverns were transferred to Robert A. Uihlein before sale to other owners. In this instance, the title was transferred to Robert A. Uihlein on April 15, 1920. (Deeds 855:162) On February 27, 1922 Uihlein sold the building to Frank and Mary Patock. The deeds reflect that the building came with the bar and saloon fixtures but that they were not included in the sale price and could be removed by Schlitz at any time. Since alcohol was illegal, Frank and Mary Patock operated a soft drink parlor on the premises although oral history indicates there was still alcohol to be had. They lived in the upstairs apartment. Frank Patock died on March 14, 1923 and Mary had other individuals run the business: Leo Bilot (1923-1924); Clara New (Nee Warras) (1925-1930). Mary had a 20 foot by 30 foot concrete block garage built at the rear of the property in 1924. (City Directories; Permit Records; Deeds 934:238, 1221:45)

Mary Patock retained ownership and after the repeal of Prohibition she obtained an occupancy permit to operate as a tavern on October 23, 1934. She is shown as the proprietor on the permit. She subsequently contracted with local architect Mark Pfaller to remodel the building. How she chose Pfaller is unknown, however, Pfaller's father was living a block away at the time and had once operated a tavern at the corner of Greenfield and Layton Boulevard so there may have been social connections. The permit for the remodeling was taken out on April 4, 1935 and was estimated to cost $3,600. The remodeling gave an entirely new look to the building. New leaded glass windows were installed. Square panes were used on the upper floor and toward the rear on the first floor. The Greenfield Avenue first floor windows feature diamond paned leaded glass of amber color and the window opening was surrounded by stone trim. A pent roof was added along the Greenfield Avenue and S. 25th Street elevations and it was clad with slate shingles. A decorative iron balconet was installed below the corner window and a stone surround with modified Tudor arch was created at the canted corner. The new main entrance door was designed to have a vertical plank door with a small square window, very much in keeping with Tudor Revival residential architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. A gable was added to the east elevation. A Tudor arched doorway was created at the east elevation. A new one story addition was constructed at the rear intended for a dining room. Plans show that a one story gate with slate pent roof and Tudor arch was to be located at the west end of the building. It would close the gap between the tavern and the adjacent building next door and lead to another entrance into the building. Today's wall is built of wood and has a different appearance from what is shown on the plans. The new English look to the tavern was in keeping with the stylistic trends of the mid-1930s. The new look also gave a distinct character to the building and distinguished it from the traditional brewery taverns that populated Milwaukee's neighborhoods. Interestingly, on the sign shown on the building plans, the name of the business is not distinguishable but the word "INN" reads clearly. It is apparent that Mary Patock was remodeling to reflect a change in the character of the business to include dining and perhaps she had remodeled for a tenant who would be leasing the premises. One historic tie to the building's origins was kept for posterity, the old Schlitz mosaic on the east wall of the building. There is one other such mosaic known, on the former Schlitz tavern on Brady Street. (Permit Records; Plans on microfilm City Records Center)

It may have been around this time that the tavern was leased to John Preiss. He is cited in oral history but does not show up in the city directories. It is said that Preiss's son-in-law was from England and the remodeled tavern reminded him of those he had seen in Coventry England. The name Coventry Inn resulted. The name Coventry Inn first appears associated with this building in the 1942 city directory.

Mary Patock sold her building to Frank and Sylvia Wiskowski on January 23, 1947 and the Wiskowski's turned around and sold it to Walter and Rose Orlowski on June 12, 1947. The Orlowski's would live in the upstairs apartment and run the Coventry Inn for eight years. The Orlowski's sold the premises to George R. and Phyllis A. Schauer on August 15, 1955 and they maintained the name Coventry Inn. While they were the proprietors, the building was featured on the annual Spaces and Traces tour by Historic Milwaukee in 1987. There were many items of brewery memorabilia remaining in the building in 1987 including some original tables, a card table given by Fred Gettleman of the Gettleman Brewery, a stein collection, the bell from the building currently occupied by the West Allis Historical Society and other brewing items. (Deeds 2333:274; 2378:149; 2764:389; 3471:285; Historic Milwaukee, Inc. Tour Script Coventry Inn 1987)

The Schauer's sold the building to Paul Westin and his wife Cynthia Hein on June 11, 1990. They ran the business as Benjamin Briggs Pub for approximately twelve years. He operated a summer beer garden in the back yard. Westin sold the building to MPC Investments on April 9, 2002. MPC sold the building to Neuberg Real Estate Holdings on April 5, 2005. The property subsequently went into foreclosure in 2008. Mortgage holder Tri City National Bank acquired the property in a sheriff's sale on December 15, 2008. The current owner, Raul Varela Rodriguez purchased the building on March 26, 2009. He operates the business as Club Fiesta.

NOTE: Ald. Donovan nominated the building, through his legislative assistant Patricia Doherty, in concern over the preservation of the building's exterior. The owner has contemplated ways of attracting business and had discussed painting the exterior of the red brick building.

THE ARCHITECTS

Charles L. Lesser (1864-1941)

Charles L. Lesser was born in Milwaukee in 1864 and began his architectural career in the spring of 1881 as an apprentice of the society architect Howland Russel, and went on to work for firms in Omaha and St. Louis. Lesser later worked as a draftsman for architect T. N. Philpot at the latter's South Side office through 1887 and then formed a one-year partnership with Gustave H. Leipold in 1888 when the two apparently took over Philpot's practice. Lesser joined Henry J. Van Ryn in 1889 and in 1891 became a partner in the firm under the name Van Ryn, Andree & Lesser. By 1901 Lesser had his own practice on South 9th Street and then South 5th Street, and later the Tivoli Building in Walker's Point. Lesser moved his office to the Majestic Building around 1911 and rejoined his old partner, Frank W. Andree, for a year in 1917. In 1919, Albert J. Schutte joined Lesser as a partner, and Joseph Lindl was added in 1923 when the firm became Lindl Lesser & Schutte. Lindl and Schutte retained the offices in the Camp Building and stayed partners when Lesser went off on his own in 1925. Charles L. Lesser apparently practiced alone for the rest of his career.

Lesser's architectural practice encompassed a wide variety of projects from schools and churches to municipal buildings, manufacturing plants and foundries, offices, stores, grain elevators, and

residences. Among his commissions are many small taverns for Schlitz Brewing Company: 1801 South 3rd Street (1901); 101-109 West Mitchell Street (1905); 501 South 6th Street (1907); 601-605 South 6th Street (1907); 2501 South Superior Street (1907, Club Garibaldi); and 3527 West National Avenue. Also for Schlitz was built the commercial block at 2079 South 15th Street in 1905 occupied by pharmacist Stanislaus A. Rakowski from 1906 to 1929. The multi-talented Lesser designed the natatorium-branch library building at North 16th Street and West North Avenue and the Riviera Theater at 1001 West Lincoln Avenue. Lesser was a good draftsman who managed to rise above many of his peers by his attention to detail and use of unorthodox forms. He had a good number of commercial clients for whom he designed eye-catching, one-of-a-kind ethnic buildings with Renaissance Revival-inspired gables. Included in his known commissions in this style are 901 South 16th Street, 2400 South Logan Avenue; 2527 West National Avenue; and 823 West national Avenue, the latter featuring a dramatic broken pediment.

Lesser lived for many years on the city's South Side and in West Allis, but in 1924, at the age of 60, he moved to the Washington Heights neighborhood and took up residence at 1822 North 51st Street where he continued his architectural practice out of his home until his death in 1941.

Lesser's broad range of styles is in evidence on Layton Boulevard. He designed the Foursquare style house for William G. Schuerman at 2115 in 1908, the Craftsman style house at 2143 for Herman Lindemann in 1910, the expansive bungalow with beautiful leaded glass windows at 1977 for Joseph Kuczynski in 1922 (with Schutte) and the Dutch Colonial at 1742 for Arthur H. Schneider in 1924 (Lindl Lesser & Schutte).

It is interesting to speculate how Lesser was able to have so many commissions from the Schlitz Brewing Company. Many of the known taverns and buildings he designed for the brewery were located on the south side and perhaps the company wanted someone with knowledge of the local community. A number of the projects were embellished with arched windows and bold corbelling. Some were modest. The higher line projects built by Schlitz or members of the Uihlein family, such as the Globe Hotel, the Schlitz Palm Garden downtown, the Alhambra Theater and the tavern/hall building at Humboldt and North were designed by Charles Kirchhoff. Kirchhoff with his partner Thomas L. Rose later went on to design other projects in which the Uihleins were involved as well as mansions for the various family members.

We do not know the original appearance of the Schlitz tavern as designed by Lesser. It is likely that is resembled the building known as Club Garibaldi in Bay View. The 1910 Sanborn map shows a simple rectangular building with canted corner. The general placement of the windows appears to be what they are today.

Mark F. Pfaller (June 3, 1892 – May 16, 1982)

Mark Frank Pfaller was born in Jefferson, Wisconsin, the son of Frank and Mary Pfaller. The family first appears in the Milwaukee city directories in 1907 where Frank Pfaller is listed as running a grocery store at 1025 West Walnut Street (today's address). In 1908 the family relocated to Eleventh Street, and young Mark F. Pfaller, having recently completed a mathematics course at the University of Wisconsin, is shown with the occupation of candy maker. The following year Mark worked as a clerk at Steinmeyer's Grocery, and in 1910 he began employment as a draftsman for local architect Henry C. Hensel. Published biographical information about Mark Pfaller's early career differs somewhat from information found in the city directories although both sources agree that he worked for Hensel for a period of time. Biographical information indicates that Pfaller worked for Hensel from 1909 to about 1911and then for Charles Tharinger and A.C. Clas in 1912. Family history likewise states that Pfaller also worked for Herman Buemming. City directories list Hensel as Pfaller's employer from 1910 through 1913 after which time Pfaller worked as a window trimmer from 1914 through 1915. Pfaller's biographical entry in the American Architects Directory shows him as having worked for the City of Milwaukee Engineering Department in 1913 and 1914

and city directories show him as a draftsman for the Department of Public Works in 1916 and 1917. He was in charge of the field office drafting room for construction of the Linnwood Avenue intake tunnel when with the city. It was about this time that the Pfaller family moved to the corner of South Layton Boulevard and W. Greenfield Avenue where father Frank operated a tavern until prohibition. (Milwaukee City Directory; Koyl American Architects Directory p. 549; Mark A. Pfaller interview by Sharon Bates, April 12, 1987; Associated Compilers, Sketch Book of Milwaukee p. 84)

Mark F. Pfaller subsequently formed a partnership with Nicholas P. Backes who had previously worked for architect Otto C. Uehling. The two established offices at 738 N. Plankinton Avenue and maintained the partnership from 1918 through 1924. During their partnership, Backes and Pfaller are known to have designed the Stephen Italiano Building (1920) at 700 E. Lyon Street, the John S. Jung residence at 1516 S. Layton Boulevard (1922), the Lyon Building Apartments at 702-712 E. Lyon Street (1922), and the Catholic Knights Building, later the American Legion Headquarters at 812 E. State Street (1923). Like many architects of the day, Backes and Pfaller designed in a variety of period revival styles that were popular after World War I. Pfaller also designed a Prairie style residence at 1510 S. Layton Boulevard that was occupied by his parents for several years.

In 1925 the partnership was dissolved, and Backes formed a new business with Bruce Uthus. Pfaller became the president of Eastern Manufacturing Company and, along with secretary Eugene Held and treasurer S. R. Deakin, retained the same offices that Pfaller had shared with Backes. The dye stuffs company apparently folded after one year and in 1926 and 1927 Pfaller is listed in the directories without an occupation although he apparently continued to receive architectural commissions. He designed the Studio Apartments at 1111 N. Astor Street in 1925, the Del-Ray (later Waterford) Apartments at 1924 N. Prospect Avenue in 1925 and the Sydney Hotel at 770 N. Marshall Street in 1927 (razed). From 1927 through 1929 Pfaller worked as an architect out of his apartment in the Catholic Knights/American Legion building on East State Street. After a three year absence in the Milwaukee city directories, Pfaller reappeared as the vice-president of Residence Park Building and Loan Association at 3418 W. Fond du Lac Avenue, a position he held from 1933 through at least 1939.

Pfaller's subsequent listings in the Milwaukee city directories are sporadic and show him residing on Ravenswood Circle in Wauwatosa in 1944-1945 and on N. 76th Street in 1949. His son Mark Arthur Pfaller (b. September 23, 1921) worked for his father as a draftsman in 1940 and 1941 and graduated from the University of Notre Dame in 1942. Following service in World War II, Mark Arthur Pfaller returned to work for his father. (Koyl, American Architects Directory, p. 549)

During the 1950s and 1960s the Pfallers, under the name Mark F. Pfaller Associates, Architects, were quartered at offices at 7613-7617 W. State Street in Wauwatosa. Among the firm's later projects were: Pius XI High School (1950, 1955); Little Flower Church and School; Milwaukee County Hospital Food Service Buildings (1955-1956); Mercyville Sanitarium in Aurora, Illinois (1955); St. Joseph High School in Kenosha; Our Lady of Sorrows School, Church and Convent (1957-1961); the Pan American Hotel (1960); the former Jaeger Olds Auto Dealership on National Avenue (1952-1955), and the Catholic Knights Tower at 1100 W. State Street (1970). (Koyl, American Architects Directory)

About 1971 the firm moved to the former Fred Pabst Jr. Residence at 3112 W. Highland Boulevard and Pfaller's son Mark A. served as president. His grandson, Mark F. Pfaller II served as the vice-president in the late 1970's. The elder Mark F. Pfaller retired to Ft. Lauderdale, Florida in 1976 but remained chairman of the board. The firm merged with Herbst Jacoby & Jacoby in 1980 and became Pfaller Herbst Associates Inc. The retired Mark F. Pfaller served as the board chairman emeritus.

Mark F. Pfaller was active in various Catholic organizations, leading to numerous commissions from Catholic parishes. He served on the Wauwatosa Building Board (1945-1955) and served as president of what is now the Wisconsin Chapter of the American Institute of architects in 1947 and

1948. Pfaller died at the age of 90 of complications of age on May 16, 1982 while visiting his daughter in Augusta, Georgia.

His firm later became Pfaller Herbst & Eppstein Inc and is now Eppstein Uhen. Mark F. Pfaller II is still a practicing architect.

The fact that Mary Patock contracted to remodel the former Schlitz tavern probably indicates that the original building was simple in form, and may have resembled today's Club Garibaldi. Pfaller's ties to the south side, it appears his father was living in the 2600 block of W. Greenfield at the time, might have lead to this commission. No other tavern/restaurant commission has been documented to date among his projects. The English design given to the building, with its diamond paned leaded glass windows, stone window surrounds, Tudor arches and slate roof was quite distinctive for the neighborhood. The idea of giving a theme to a tavern was not much practiced at the time although it became common for ethnic bars and restaurants by the 1950s. Kegel's Inn in West Allis, with its murals of German elves and German décor, is the closest equivalent.

SOURCES

Associated Compliers. Sketch Book of Milwaukee. Milwaukee: Wetzel Bros., 1931-1933.

Historic Milwaukee, Inc. Tour Script for the Coventry Inn, 1987.

Koyl, George S. American Architects Directory. 2nd ed. New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1962.

Milwaukee City Building Permits, 2501 W. Greenfield Avenue

Milwaukee City Directories.

Milwaukee County Register of Deeds.

Milwaukee Sentinel

Pfaller, Mark A. Interview by Sharon Bates, April 12, 1987.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1888, 1894, 1910.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Schlitz / Coventry Inn be given permanent historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-l and e-5 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

e-1 Its exemplification of the development of the cultural, economic, social, or historic heritage of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin, or of the United States

Rationale: Tavern or saloon culture has been an integral part of the social and cultural scene of Milwaukee since the 19th century. In the 1880s there was said to be one saloon for every 130 residents. After World War II state guidelines for licensing indicated that a community should have no more than one tavern for every 500 residents. Milwaukee continued to exceed that number. Milwaukee's breweries built hundreds of tavern buildings across the city, county and other communities in the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a way to distribute the every increasing production from their plants. It was also a way to control the quality of the buildings and create an environment that had more respectability than the early notorious dens of iniquity. Saloons or taverns became the places where neighbors and workers came to socialize over drinks and where they could play cards, bowl and enjoy food. The Schlitz tavern / Coventry Inn shows the development of one such tavern as it evolved from a small local drinking establishment into a more destination business that also served food.

e-5. Its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

Rationale: All that remains of the original Schlitz tavern is the basic form of the building and the distinctive Schlitz mosaic logo at the east side of the building along with the ghost sign "Drink Schlitz" on the west wall of the building. The extensive remodeling in 1935 transformed what was likely one of the more modest Schlitz taverns into an elegant English revival style building complete with Tudor arched entrances, slate roof, diamond paned leaded glass and rectangular paned leaded glass. While Milwaukee has or had its German themed taverns built by Pabst, the city really does not have another example of an English pub. Architect Mark F. Pfaller gave the owner Mary Patock something that was quite distinctive for the south side as well as the city.

X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. Given the level of detail on this building, review of maintenance projects with historic preservation staff is required.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. Skylights are discouraged and not allowed on the slate pent roof but may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. No major changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. The slate roof must be preserved and maintained and not replaced with substitute material. Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible at all from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. If the flat portion gets re-roofed, consultation with historic preservation staff is required to review and approve the new material and flashing. Any custom gutters should be maintained and repaired if needed. The placement and size of any satellite dishes or solar panels are subject to review by staff and the commission. No rooftop construction is allowed, as this would interfere with the

viewing of the building and its profile. The construction of other rooftop features, addition of skylights and satellite dishes, and re-roofing require review by Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, or stone must not be painted or covered. The red brick of the building is an important feature of the English style of the building. The stone framing of the front windows and sills has been painted. Removal of this paint would be approved in the future. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, aluminum siding cement fiber material, etc.) is not allowed.

b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width. See the masonry chapters in the books, As Good As New or Good For Business for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Do not use mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any repointing.

c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (soda, nut shells, etc.) on limestone, terra cotta, pressed brick, cream brick or other styles of brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone. Work should be done by experienced individuals. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before any cleaning would begin.

d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Do not use new material that is inappropriate for the time period when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry.

2. Wood/Metal

a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Do not remove architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.

b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Do not cover architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance, size, dimension and material type of the original materials. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or fiber cement or other substitute material is not permitted. Ornamental wood details, such as the gate and its surround at the west side of the building, may not be removed or altered except to restore their appearance. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated wood elements is encouraged rather than complete removal and replication. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and wood species of the original. Repair work requires consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Do not make additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Do not change the size or configuration of the original windowpanes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. The leaded glass windows throughout the building are essential features of the building's design. Repairs can be made if there is damage to any of the windows. The current storm windows are appropriate to the building.

2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash becomes necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design and material of the original window sash or door. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

   Vinyl, vinyl clad, metal, and metal-clad or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted. If new windows are required, replacements will be of wood and match the style of the leaded glass originals. If the original doors are still extant, every effort should be made to preserve them. If that is not possible, then replacement doors should be appropriate to the historic 1935 English style of the building, and fit into the original opening. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. In this instance they would obscure the important leaded glass windows. Storm windows with special glass can serve security purposes if that becomes necessary. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for this type of installation.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing historic trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and appearance. Existing historic trim in wood and stone, found at the windows and sills shall not be removed unless it is for the purpose of repair. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the north (front) or east (right side) elevation as this would destroy the character defining features of the building. Any other addition requires the approval of the Commission. Ideally an addition should either compliment or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of window size and placement, building height, roof configuration, scale, design, color, and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations or is visible from the public right of way. Additions must be smaller than the building and not obscure or engulf the historic building.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to assist in the selection of exterior fixtures. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted. The building currently has two banners, two wooden signs and a hanging metal sign that is a carry over from previous owner.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures (garden sheds, storage sheds, and gazebos) shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building and requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. Any rear deck or patio installation requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. The current fence may remain. If replacement is considered, new fencing will follow the examples in Living With History and As Good As New. The garage at the rear of the property was built in 1924 and is considered part of this nomination. Work on the garage, such as roofing, new garage doors, masonry repair and so on will require a Certificate of Appropriateness. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before starting any work that would involve the landscape features, the addition of parking pads and service walks and new construction.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. No principal dwelling or structure shall be constructed in the rear yard. Small-scale accessory structures, like a gazebo or fountain, may be permitted depending on their size, scale and form and the property's ability to accommodate such a structure.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the building. New construction is to be smaller in size and shorter in height than the historic building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the historic building as a freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and receded from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic building if they are in close proximity to it.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic building should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained and materials not available when the house was constructed should be avoided.

I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

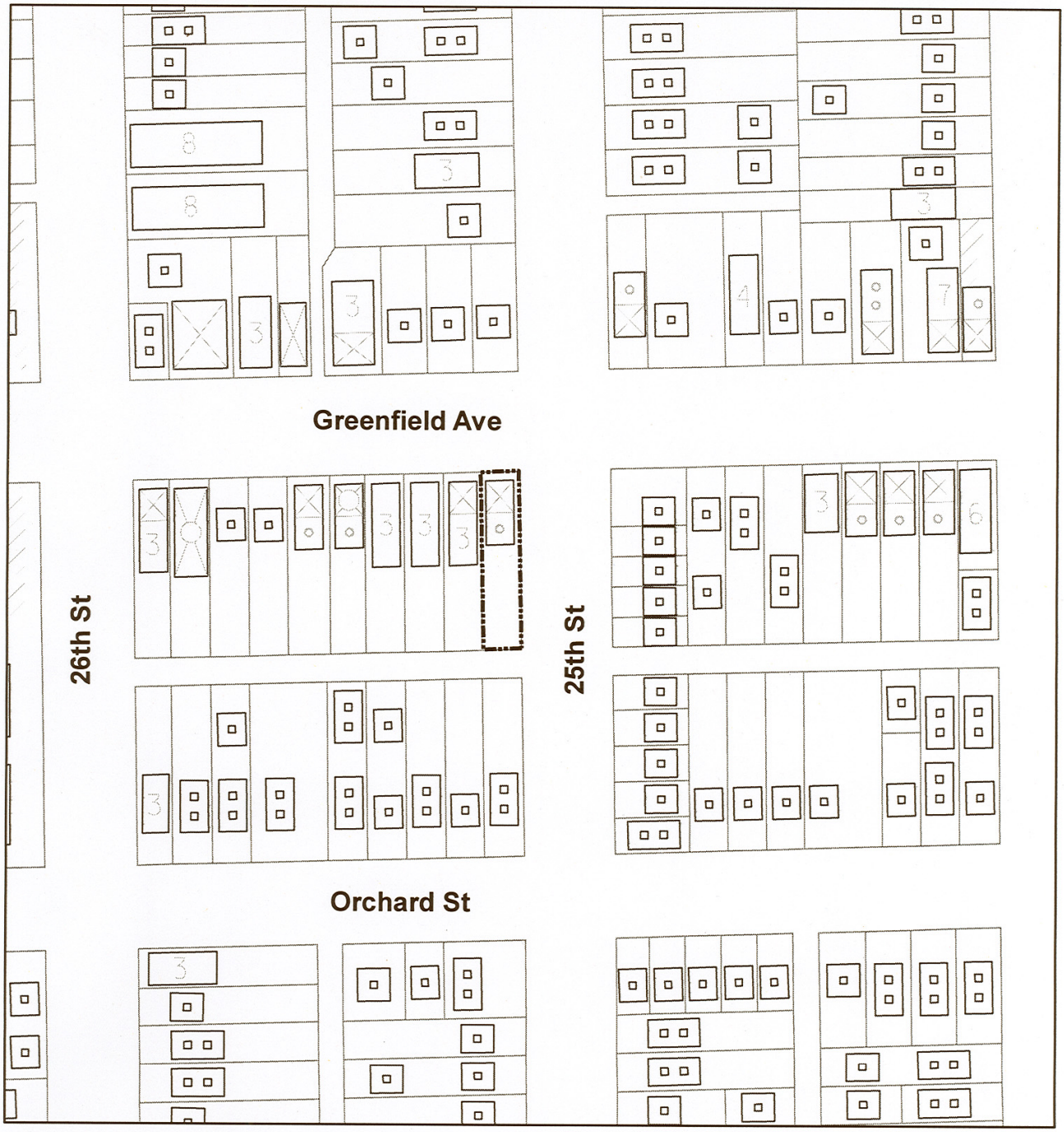
Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.



Schlitz Tavern / Coventry Inn / Benjamin Briggs Pub

2051 W. Greenfield Avenue

Parcel Boundary

Data Source: Department of City Development

N

0 50 100 200 Feet