

BEFORE



AFTER

2007 Cream of the Cream City Award Winner



**HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
JAMES S. BROWN DOUBLE HOUSE
1122-1124 N. ASTOR STREET
SEPTEMBER 2005**

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

I. NAME

Historic: James S. Brown Double House

Common Name: Zita of Milwaukee

II. LOCATION 1122 –1124 N. Astor Street

Legal Description - Tax Key No.: 393-0111-000-X
SUBD of BLOCK 105 in NW ¼ SEC 28-7-22
BLOCK 105 LOT 16 & E 33' of N 30' LOT 15

III. CLASSIFICATION

Building

IV. OWNER

Astor Street Partners LLC, A Wisconsin Limited Liability Company

ALDERMAN

Ald. Robert Bauman 4th Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR

Donna Schlieman

V. YEAR BUILT

1852 (Tax Rolls)

ARCHITECT:

Not Known

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The James S. Brown Double House is located at the southeast corner of N. Astor Street and E. Juneau Avenue in the Yankee Hill Neighborhood, approximately one half mile from the Central Business District. The property measures 127.6-feet by 103.5-feet by 127-feet by 92.5 feet, and comprises all of Lot 16 in Block 105. There is also a small rectangular parcel, 30 feet by 33 feet, from the northeast corner of Lot 15 that is part of the subject property as well. The solid masonry, Federal Style double house occupies most of its lot and fronts Astor Street, set back behind lawn, trees and a raised brick planting bed. It consists of a central rectangular block on a raised basement and has a shallow pitched roof. At the rear are accessory wings with a variety of roof types. The house is set back from Juneau Avenue on the north behind a small lawn and bushes. There is an asphalt drive at the rear (east) and a driveway along the south edge of the property. The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of churches including Immanuel Presbyterian Church (1873-1875, NR listed 1974)

directly to the south, 1920s apartment buildings such as the Knickerbocker Hotel (1929, NR listed 1988) and the Studio Apartments (1925) as well as some post World War structures. The glory of the neighborhood is the surviving mansions and residences in what had been Milwaukee's first prestigious residential neighborhood. Examples include: the Button House (1875), the Thomas Mason Double House at 1226-1228 N. Astor (1864), the F. G. Gaenslen House at 1031 N. Astor (1911), the James K. Isley House at 1037 N. Astor (1897), the Jason Downer House at 1201 N. Prospect (1874, NR and Locally Designated), the George P. Miller House at 1060 E. Juneau (1887 NR and Locally Designated), the William Metcalf House at 1219 N. Cass (1854, 1870, 1876, NR listed) as well as others. The high style of the houses in the area and their associations with the pioneer movers and shakers of early Milwaukee make this an exceptional part of the city on the basis of both history and architecture. It is also a part of the city now challenged with pressures for development. The scale, density and form of new projects being inserted onto various parcels in Yankee Hill are threatening the fragile fabric of this exceptional neighborhood.

The James S. Brown Double House as its name implies, was built as two distinct dwelling units but today serves as commercial space with one main center entrance fronting Astor Street. In keeping with the Federal Style, the front features a symmetrical arrangement of rectangular windows, taller on the first story and shorter on the second. Decorative stone lintels cap the first story windows and plain stone lintels cap the upper story windows. The front windows feature one-over-one sash today but historic photos show that multi-paned sash survived into the twentieth century, on the north unit of the double house. A wood cornice with carved brackets delineates the roofline. The shallow pitched roof appears to be clad in asphalt shingles. Fire insurance maps and a historic photo of the building indicate that the roof once had a standing seam metal roof. The roof is accentuated by dormers, in two different styles, and reflects the fact that each half was under separate ownership for most of its history. On the north half, the dormer is horizontally oriented and built into the slope of the roof. It is ornamented with scrollwork. On the south a wall dormer with two windows and a gabled roof extends from the face of the building. It is ornamented with a sunburst motif in the gable end. A matching wall dormer is located at the rear slope of the roof, but lacks the pediment and sunburst gable. The front portico, with its classically inspired curved entablature and four Doric columns, sets off a six-light entry door that is framed by sidelights and an elliptical fanlight. An ornamental metal hanging lantern is centered at this entrance. The portico and center entrance were the result of a 1992 remodeling for Zita, Inc. There were originally two separate entries, one for each unit, located side-by-side at the center of the façade. The two entries were eliminated in a 1955 remodeling and replaced with a single entrance.

On the north elevation, facing Juneau Avenue, the main block of the house features an end wall with a parapet, another characteristic of the Federal Style. The parapet here has been fashioned into a gable. The attic story is illuminated with a center one-over-one sash window flanked by two oval windows. The pedimented parapet and oval windows may indicate a remodeling dating from the 1870s. In Milwaukee, extensive research has shown that oval windows were used almost exclusively in the 1870s. The first and second story windows of this north elevation feature one-over-one sash windows with decorative stone pediments. The basement story windows are located below a corbelled brick belt course and are exposed above grade. The windows on

the east or back end of the main block of the house differ slightly from those fronting Juneau Avenue and the attic window is here rectangular instead of oval and framed by a brick surround. The first story window is tall and features an eight-light casement topped by a two-light transom. This window style would be characteristic of the Federal Style and matches the windows seen in two historic photos of the Brown Double House.

Two accessory wings sit behind the main block of the north half of the house and are stepped back from it. The first wing is a tall, mansard roofed structure with windows arranged symmetrically across the elevation. The three basement story windows are above grade. Two of the first story windows match the tall, casement window seen on the main block of the house. The third is shorter, with six-over-six sash. The three second story windows feature six-over-six sash. Stone sills and lintels frame the windows. The mansard roof is clad with decorative slates, now painted. Two pedimented dormers face Juneau Avenue and a third faces the rear, or east. The dormers are framed with scrolled boards and the slightly segmental shaped windows have one-over-one sash. The second rear wing likewise has a mansard roof but is smaller in scale. It features an entrance door partially below grade, sheltered by a small metal canopy. Above the canopy is a small oval window. It is flanked to the left or east by a small basement window. On the first story is a rectangular window with stone sill and lintel, filled with six-over-six sash. A dormer window, matching those on the larger wing, graces the mansard roof. The cornice here is terminated with a decorative scrolled block. Around the back or east end of this small wing can be seen a small, above grade basement window with one-over-one sash and one window on each of the first and second story. These windows feature six-over-six sash. A tall brick chimney rises from the rear or east wall.

The south elevation, facing Immanuel Presbyterian Church, differs from the north elevation and has been most altered in recent years. At the roofline, it retains the parapet end wall characteristic of the Federal Style. This south end has been boxed out with a shallow two-story addition that steps back to a three-story tower at its center. This tower is given a parapet end wall to match the original house and features a shallow gabled roof. Simple rectangular windows with one-over-one sash are located at each story. To either side of the tower are rectangular windows on the second story and oval windows on the first. This addition replaced an assortment of windows on the south elevation and a boxy oriel that probably dated to the 1880s. An access door is located at the east end of the tower. Photos taken by H. Russell Zimmermann for his 1974 article on the house show that the south elevation once had two rear accessory wings that were stepped back from the main body of the house, as they did on the north side. They did not feature the mansard roof however. Today the rear wing shows a boxy addition rising to the height of the first story windows, behind which is a two story wing interrupted by a three-and-a half story tower. Windows are placed to correspond to interior layout and feature simple, rectangular one-over-one sash. In the one story addition, a six-light entry door is flanked by pilasters and boldly scrolled brackets that hold up a pedimented roof. A sunburst motif in the pediment copies the front wall dormer detail. An oval window is positioned above this entry. The three-story tower is capped with a gable end also done up in a sunburst pattern that matches the wall dormer at the front of the building. The east or rear end of this wing is utilitarian in character and features windows at grade and at the second story. A chimney corbelled out from the wall remains visible but no longer extends above the roofline.

Given its ownership record and its 153-year existence, the James S. Brown Double House has seen alterations over the years. The first alterations were made when the house was still young. When James S. Brown sold the north half of the house to Charles Wendt on May 11, 1855, the deeds refer to the “wood house” connected to both sides the building, probably indicating the rear service wings. (Deeds Vol. 46, Page 579) The Rascher Fire Insurance Map of 1888 shows that the wings were clearly solid brick masonry, like the rest of the house, by that date. (Rascher, 1888, Vol. 3 Page 158) The style of the wings at the rear of the north half, with their mansard roofs and the use of oval windows, seem to indicate that they were built in the 1870s, probably during the ownership of the Schley family. The wall dormer on the south half, with its Queen Anne style sunburst motif, probably dates to the 1880s. The now-removed oriel window was most likely added to the south elevation during the 1880s as well. By 1888 a full-length porch also once extended across the facade according to the Rascher fire insurance atlas. It shaded the first story windows and extended out at the center where the two side-by-side entry doors were located. It had Gothic Revival Style pierced posts and saw tooth drip moulding originally. In the 1880s, turned balusters and posts along with decorative spindle work stretchers replaced the originals at the south unit. A photo shown in Zimmermann’s chapter on the house in Magnificent Milwaukee, probably dating between 1900 and 1903, shows the two differing porches. A 1909 permit indicates that the Schleys spent \$275 to remodel their front porch on the north half and this work probably consisted of the stucco clad, Arts and Crafts looking porch deck and balustrade shown in the historic photo. (Permit dated November 6, 1909) This photo also shows shutters on the windows of the north half along with decorative lintels and a color scheme with trim a darker color from the body of the house. Fire insurance maps indicate that the full front porch was removed by 1926, replaced by small stoops at each of the front doors. (Sanborn 1910-1926, Vol. 1, Page 44)

The house also once had a two-story, brick veneered coach house, located to the south, near Immanuel Presbyterian Church. There was reference to a frame barn when Brown lived in the south half of the house and Albert Conro added a one-story addition to its brick veneered replacement in 1889. A steel garage was squeezed in by the Schleys between the coach house and the main house in 1922. The coach house was considered an “eyesore” in later years and demolished in 1955. (Zimmermann p.7; Permits dated February 26, 1889 and October 5, 1922, and correspondence related to occupancy by Zita)

The most significant changes have occurred to the building since it became used for commercial/retail purposes in the 1920s. A basement room in the rear wing of the north half was used for various purposes and probably explains the entrance located on Juneau Avenue. In the mid-1950s, the south front entrance had been converted into a window and the new main entrance was centered on the facade. An entrance to the basement was located in the north half, below where the north front entrance had been positioned. Also in the mid-1950s, when the Bradley Foundation acquired the building, there was extensive work done to upgrade the plumbing and heating and ventilating systems as well as install a passenger elevator. Under the direction of local architect David Uihlein in 1992 various additions were constructed including the alterations to the south side of the building and the new front porch and entry. A small valet shelter was also constructed at the same time. The alteration to the front is in

keeping within the general Federal Style of the house, but it is a more high style and east coast rendition than what was characteristic of the Federal Style in Milwaukee.

None of the alterations diminishes the significance of the building. Rather they show the evolution of the house as it passed from owner to owner and then became a commercial building. It still retains its Federal Style form, one of the early styles to be built in the city following its vernacular pioneer period. It is one of only four examples of the style left in Milwaukee.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The James S. Brown Double House is significant for both its history and architecture. The Brown House is our oldest documented surviving house in the Yankee Hill Neighborhood, dating to 1852. The house set the tone for the neighborhood that developed around it. The area became attractive to Milwaukee's elite and was the center of Milwaukee society for decades even after the well to do began building up along Prospect Avenue. In the twentieth century as the elite moved up to the north shore, the neighborhood and building still had the necessary cache to attract the exclusive dress shop known as Zita's, an institution now almost 70 years old.

Original owner James s. Brown was a significant resident of the city, serving as district attorney, the first state attorney general, congressman and the city's 11th mayor. Brown was widely recognized as one of the brilliant legal minds of his day. Brown served as mayor while living in the south half of this building. There are very few residences that survive from our long list of former mayors.

The Brown Double House is also significant as one of only four surviving examples of the Federal Style left in Milwaukee. Historic photographs show that the Federal Style was once popular throughout the downtown and Walkers Point neighborhood, built most commonly as double houses, row houses or commercial blocks. Redevelopment has erased all but a handful of examples. The style was brought here by the settlers from New England and the New York and had a brief heyday in the 1850s, supplanted by the Italianate Style which swept the country in the 1860s. The Newhall Row, at 607-609 W. Virginia Street was built in 1850. Two of its four units have disappeared long ago and the building has suffered insensitive remodeling by its conversion as an accessory building to an adjacent bar/restaurant. The Gipfel Brewery at 423-427 W. Juneau Avenue dates from 1853 and is locally designated on the basis of its architectural style and for brewing history. It is in need of extensive restoration/rehabilitation. The Abel Decker Double House at 408-410 S. Third Street was built 1857-1858 and survives amid industrial redevelopment. It has no historic designation.

VIII. HISTORY

The James S. Brown Double House was the first structure to be built on its block and remained the sole building there until the latter 1860s. In many respects, this house set the tone for fashionable residences in the developing Yankee Hill neighborhood. A scan of the 1852 city directory shows relatively few well to do living in the immediate area, with many professionals living further south around E. Wells Street and Kilbourn Avenue while trades people lived further north around Pleasant and Ogden Streets. This remarkable

153-year-old survivor has adapted with the times, having had a succession of good stewards and it stands as a tribute to its builder, James S. Brown, one of early Milwaukee's most remarkable, if now almost forgotten, individuals. H. Russell Zimmermann recounts the history of the building, both in his article, "That Old Home on 'Yankee Hill'" (Milwaukee Journal, January 13, 1974) and in Magnificent Milwaukee, Architectural Treasures 1850-1920, published by the Milwaukee Public Museum in 1987.

Early day settlers did not value proximity to Lake Michigan for their residences and it took some decades before the elite and well to do began to appreciate properties east of Van Buren Avenue. The particular block in which the nominated building sits, bounded by N. Astor Street, E. Juneau Avenue, E. State Street and Waverly Place, was once part of larger land holdings owned by out-of-state speculator, Parker Charles Cole of New York. Cole once had visions of creating a bluff top park on Milwaukee's east side, to surpass the famous Bay of Naples, but could not attract other investors so the project fell through. (H. Russell Zimmermann article "A Gem of a House Survives with Little Notice" about the James Peck House, Milwaukee Journal August 21, 1983) Paintings of the Bay of Naples were widely copied and collected among the art connoisseurs back east so it is not surprising that someone like Cole would want to capitalize on our region's natural beauty. With his dreams of a park laid to rest, Cole must have determined that the area was ripe for development when he had this block (Block 105) laid out into 16 lots on November 4, 1850. Fourteen of the lots were 60 feet by 127 feet in dimension. Lot 1 at the southeast corner of Waverly Place and Juneau Avenue measured 127 feet on the north and south and 81.5 feet on the east and 92.5 feet on the west. It backed up to Lot 16, the largest, measuring 127.6 feet on the north, 103.5 feet on the west, 127 feet on the south and 92.5 feet on the east. It was this largest lot, Lot 16 that was acquired by James S. Brown. While no deed could be found to record Brown's acquisition of the parcel, there is a mortgage dated October 13, 1850 between Brown and Cole, predating, slightly, the official recording of the plat. (Mortgages Vol. N Page 481) Milwaukee city tax rolls show that the first improvement was made to Lot 16 in 1852, an improvement valued at \$1400. Since the land was only valued at \$275, this improvement represents the solid masonry double house now on the property. This is corroborated by the mortgage Brown subsequently took out in 1853, in which the document describes an existing "first class brick dwelling" with outhouses. (Mortgages Vol. 23 Page 468)

James S. Brown lived in the south half of the double house and would retain ownership through early 1863. Brown was highly renowned in his day, for his brilliant legal mind and his political accomplishments. No fewer than 180 articles or references were made to him in the Milwaukee Sentinel and he was written up in Flower's 1881 History of Milwaukee, Parker McCobb Reed's The Bench and Bar of Wisconsin (1882), John R. Berryman's History of the Bench and Bar of Wisconsin (Vol. 1 1898), Gregory's History of Milwaukee (1931) and Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography (1960).

Brown was one of hundreds of New Englanders who established themselves in Milwaukee, then a burgeoning town full of possibilities. James Sproat Brown was born in Hampton, Maine in February 1824. He relocated to Cincinnati, Ohio at the age of sixteen in 1840 where he began the study of the law and was admitted to the bar in 1843 "before he attained his majority." It is at Cincinnati that he is said to have picked up a helpful knowledge of the German language. (Berryman, p. 399; Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography p. 52; Gregory, Vol. 2 Page 924) Brown then moved to Milwaukee in 1844 and set up a law office with James Halliday and Thomas L. Ogden. In January of 1846 he was elected town attorney for the, as yet, unincorporated Milwaukee and then became county

district attorney later that same year. (Sentinel Index January 10, 1846 3/1 and September 16, 1846 2/2) Brown served as the new State of Wisconsin's first Attorney General from 1848 through 1850. In 1852 he built his new double house and apparently rented out the north half for the first several years.

Legal historian John Berryman indicated some twenty years after Brown's death that

It was the opinion of the late Moses M. Strong that "Mr. Brown was far more than an ordinary lawyer," and that it was "within the truth to say that so long as he continued in active practice he had few equals in his profession within the limits of Wisconsin. His education, scholastic and legal, was excellent. He possessed bright intellect and sparkling genius, and had great versatility of powers. As an advocate before a jury he was logical and persuasive. He convinced by his argument and persuaded by his eloquence, which oftentimes was of a high order. His cases were always well prepared, and he was always careful and painstaking in all his professional business. In the supreme court, in which he had an extensive practice, his briefs were always clear and comprehensive, and presented the points of the case and the arguments in support of them in a forcible and logical manner." (Berryman, p. 400)

Brown, however, suffered from health problems from early in his career. Flower's 1881 History of Milwaukee cites Brown as the "living illustration of a precociously active brain, embodied in a constitution which was unequal to the task imposed upon it." (Flower, p. 664) Brown went abroad from June through November of 1854, most likely due to health concerns. (Sentinel Index, June 16, 1854 2/1, November 23 2/1 and November 25 3/1) On May 11, 1855 Brown sold the north half of the double house to Charles Wendt and married Elizabeth Shepard, daughter of Clarence Shepard on May 29 th. (Milwaukee Sentinel May 31, 1855 2/6; Deeds Vol. 46 Page 579) In the following years Brown and his wife had two sons, Clarence Shepard Brown and James P. Brown. Clarence would eventually study at Harvard Law School and serve as alderman on Milwaukee's Common Council. He had a law practice with William A. Walker and was partner in the contracting firm of Hathaway & Brown with John E. Hathaway. James studied at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, Michigan. (Gregory, vol.2 p. 1103; Milwaukee Sentinel April 17, 1878 3/1 "Gone to Rest"; City Directory) In 1858 the Brown was in the press frequently, with an arsonist attempting to burn down his house and successfully burning his woodshed and barn in August while newspapers debated his nomination for mayor and then his Democratic Party candidacy for congress. That same year he was one of nine members of the Milwaukee Bar Association to incorporate the Milwaukee Law Institute, an attempt to establish a law library and law school. Their efforts failed to produce a school but the Bar Association continued, mostly as a social organization. (Sentinel Index, numerous references 1858; Gregory, Vol. 2 Page 944))

In 1861 Brown was elected Milwaukee's eleventh mayor and his thirteen page inaugural address is filled with references to city debt, the needs of the firemen, cutting city workers salaries and issues related to the growing railroad companies. He is credited "with helping to restore the city's credit, which was seriously shaken by the outbreak of the Civil War" and under his administration the first steam fire engine was purchased and the first half-pay engine company was organized. Before this time firemen were members of volunteer companies. Democrat Brown was roundly criticized by the Republican Sentinel for cuts in the police department and his handling of the bank riot in June of 1861. In early 1862 he declined running for a second mayoral term. He was subsequently elected to congress at

the end of that year as a "War Democrat." (Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, p. 52; Gregory, Vol. 2 Page 1103; Sentinel Index, numerous references 1861)

It was while he was in congress that Brown sold his half of the Milwaukee double house to Theophilus Baker on March 14, 1863. His wife Elizabeth died several days later. (Deed research by H. Russell Zimmermann; Sentinel Index March 17, 1863 1/5 and March 20 1/4) Brown's service in congress was not without controversy. Once again the Sentinel was on the attack and criticized him for his anti-war stance and his votes against military appropriations. He was even denounced as disloyal to the Union cause. Brown served out his term through March of 1865 then withdrew his name for re-election. He remarried, in June 1865, to Emily J. Stitson from Bangor, Maine. (Sentinel Index numerous references 1863 and 1864 and June 16, 1865 1/7)

In the fall of 1866, while he was back living in Milwaukee on Lake Street, in the vicinity of his former home, Brown was nominated to run again for Congress on the Democratic ticket. The Sentinel let out all the stops, writing editorials almost daily, criticizing his evasion of issues and opposing his election. Maybe Brown's defeat by Halbert C. Paine, a Republican, can be attributed to the heated rhetoric.

Subsequent references indicate that Brown was continually battling health problems by this time and had to forego his public career and law practice. He is said to have spent his final years in the management of his real estate in which he made judicious investments. He traveled to the west coast then settled in Dresden, Germany for a while (Sentinel Index October 6, 1869 1/5; February 8, 1872 4/2; February 12 4/2; October 4, 1872 2/3; December 14, 1872 4/1) Later accounts show him touring Europe for his health then back in the states touring New England. Brown died in Chicago on April 16, 1878 and left an estate valued at some \$75,000. The funeral service took place out of Brown's Lake Street home on April 19th and was attended by former mayors, members of the Milwaukee Bar and other leading citizens of the city. Pallbearers included J.H. Tweedy, Alexander Mitchell, J.H. Van Dyke, Hans Crocker, Asahel Finch, and Ephraim Mariner, all of whom were major players in the city's politics and economic development. Services were conducted by Unitarian minister Rev. Gordon, and burial took place at Forest Home Cemetery. (Milwaukee Sentinel April 20, 1878 8/1)

Brown's double house was in good company by the time of his death. Waverly Place, on the east side of the block, was eventually built up with fine residences, including that of architect Edward Townsend Mix (1868, razed) and James Peck (1870-71, Locally Designated). Henry Harrison Button built his lavish Italianate on the south end of the block at State Street (1875). Immanuel Presbyterian Church (1873) was located right next door to the south. Other neighbors included the B. K. Millers, the IIsleys, the Allises, the Goodrichs the J. H. Tweedys and others. Fortunately for the double house, it had a succession of prominent owners, all of whom took good care of the property.

Charles Wendt was the first person to which Brown sold part of the building. Wendt's ownership of the north half was brief, from 1855 to 1856. He was a general commission merchant who, with his partner Jacob Mahler, imported various wines, brandies, liquors, and cigars and whose add in the 1854-1855 city directory emphasized that they had a superior brand of rectified whiskey constantly on hand. Wendt sold his north half to Gertrude C. and Ellis Worthington on May 12, 1856 for \$10,500. (Deed research H. Russell Zimmermann) Worthington was an attorney with John L. Marshall and lived in the house into the 1860s. A sheriff sale on July 13, 1861 conveyed the deed to a Mr. Alvin

Fisher and indicated that the rear addition was still a wood frame structure. Fisher does not show up in the Milwaukee city directories. It appears that Fisher may have conveyed the premises back to the Worthington's or else made arrangements for them to lease the north half because city directories show them still living here after 1861. Gertrude Worthington died in February 1866. (Milwaukee City Directory; Deed research H. Russell Zimmermann; Sentinel Index February 17, 1866 1/2) Edwin and Elizabeth Pridham were the next owners from 1866 through about 1870. Pridham was a commission and freight agent with offices at today's E. Water St. Around 1872 they conveyed the north half to Charles and Harriet Schley. Members of the Schley family would occupy the premises for 55 years through 1926. (Milwaukee Journal September 18, 1927)

Charles Schley was a real estate agent, in partnership with Edwin Townsend in the early years, and was socially well connected. To quote from Magnificent Milwaukee:

The Schleys had come from a plantation near Baltimore and brought with them the refinement and gentility which would become synonymous with the house for fifty-five years. Mrs. Schley, whose great uncle was the first governor of the State of Maryland, once enjoyed the reputation of being the most beautiful woman in Maryland. According to her obituary, "her home was the abode of free-hearted hospitality. Never affecting great entertainments, she kept her parlor and her dining room open to her friends and presided with cordiality, grace and withal, simplicity."

[Charles] Schley was the first cousin of Admiral Winfield Scott Schley U.S.N., and was the oldest stock and bond broker in Milwaukee. Never forgetting their home state, the Schleys had Maryland hams shipped to the house along with fresh Atlantic oysters, which they kept alive in saltwater "flats" in the basement. (Magnificent Milwaukee p. 8)

The Schleys had five children, Bradley, Eleanor, Lucy, Jessie and Sybil. The Schley children were known for their unusual choice of pets and old timers remembered the pet fawn that grazed on the lawn and the pet fox which lived in the cellar but escaped. The wedding of daughter Lucy Schley to Thomas Mercein took place here. Lucy's daughter Eleanor Mercein Kelly became a noted author. It is likely that the Schleys were responsible for replacing the rear frame wing with the mansard roofed, solid masonry structure that survives today. Their portion of the full-length front porch shows it to have been of Gothic Revival style and likely predated their ownership. The Schleys rebuilt the porch deck and balustrade in 1909. They also added a steel garage to the premises in 1922. Siblings Sybil and Eleanor Schley lived in the north half of the double house through 1927 then moved to an apartment at 1503 N. Humboldt Avenue. They continued to own the premises until their deaths. Eleanor died on March 11, 1940 and Eleanor died on January 25, 1942. (Permits November 6, 1909 and October 5, 1922; Deeds Vol. 1839 Page 253; "Sale of Homes Recalls an Earlier Social Life" Milwaukee Journal September 18, 1928)

Brown's own south half, 1122 N. Astor Street, was originally sold to Theophilus L. Baker on March 14, 1863 for \$7,500. Baker was a teller for the State Bank of Wisconsin then cashier for the Milwaukee National Bank. Baker sold the premises to Samuel S. Sherman for \$8,000 on March 1, 1866. Sherman was a vigorous entrepreneur, associated with West & Company booksellers, with Milo Jewett in Jewett & Sherman, coffee, spices and food processing (their Merchant Mills Building from 1875 still stands at 343 N. Broadway),

and manufactured agricultural equipment through the Northwestern Seed Sower & Cultivator. City directories show Sherman living in the south half in 1866. He in turn sold the south half to Riverius P. Elmore on May 1, 1868. Elmore ran the R.P. Elmore & Co. firm, dealers in coal and pig iron, wood and building materials. Elmore is said to have sold his premises to Albert Conro in 1882. Conro, the president of the Manufacturers Bank and vice-president of various mining companies never lived at 1122 N. Astor but had his own house around the block at 1115 N. Waverly Place (razed). Conro was responsible for constructing a 16-foot by 16-foot addition to the carriage barn in 1889. (Permits February 26, 1889) A barn had been part of the premises since Brown's time but we know that Brown's frame barn was burned down in 1858. There are no records to show when the two-story brick veneered barn that shows up in later fire insurance maps was constructed. It was addressed on Astor Street and part of the double house property. Since the barn was immediately behind Conro's residence, and fire insurance maps show that his residence did not have its own barn, it is plausible to conclude that Conro made use of the barn for his own purposes. The barn survived into the 20th century but was demolished in 1955 as part of a beautification project to eliminate "an eyesore." (H. Russell Zimmermann Deed research; Permit Records, Affidavit dated June 22, 1966)

At this time we do not know who the tenants were that occupied the premises during Conro's ownership. Winfield H. Cameron and his wife Julia came to own the south half sometime in the early 20th century. Cameron was the president of the Brown Deer Lumber Company, which had offices in the Berlin Arcade building on North Third Street at North Avenue. They occupied the premises through 1927. (H. Russell Zimmermann research; Milwaukee City Directories)

Owner-occupants last lived in the Brown double house in 1927. At that time the neighborhood was beginning to change with the construction of the University Club (1926), the Astor Apartment Hotel (1918-1920) and the Knickerbocker Hotel (1929) in the vicinity. Upscale tearooms, restaurants, and interior designers were tenanting residences on nearby Prospect Avenue. There was still a certain cache in the neighborhood, however, that made the area attractive to businesses that catered to the old "carriage trade" clientele. The James S. Brown Double House building was converted into commercial use at that time although the upper floors had rental apartments for a while. The Milwaukee Journal article, "Sale of Homes Recalls an Earlier Social Life" dated September 18, 1927 indicates that the Cameron's and Schleys were turning over their units to a firm who would turn the property into "business places." The Cameron's, however, were remodeling an upper floor into a modern apartment and they would continue to live on the premises for a while.

The first business at 1122 N. Astor was Zita's Inc., an exclusive ladies wear shop that incorporated that year and moved onto the premises on August 27, 1927. Mrs. Gertrude Lee is listed as president of the corporation and she was part of the Zohrlaut family, living with the family at 1243 N. Van Buren (razed). The Zohrlauts were in the tannery business and had built the complex on N. Water Street later acquired by the Pfister & Vogel Company, soon to be demolished for new development. The Bright Shawl Tea room and gift shop occupied 1124 N. Astor. The tearoom's owner was Mrs. Tillie Neyman who lived with Mrs. Margaret Falk at 2242 N. Terrace Avenue (razed). It is an interesting commentary on the time that women from socially prominent families were beginning to be engaged in business enterprises and that it was socially acceptable to do so. (Milwaukee City Directories)

The north side of the double house or 1124 N. Astor Street had a variety of tenants over the years. John B. Gottschalk operated a teashop, antique shop and large tailor shop but left town due to unpaid taxes. Other occupants included an infants' apparel shop, William Quigley, Inc. of Chicago, a decorating and antique furniture business, Globe Trotter Travel Bureau and another interior decorator. The basement shop, with its entrance on Juneau Avenue, had a shoeshine parlor, flower shop, and dry cleaning business. Building inspectors also indicate that the upper living areas were being run as a rooming house. (Permit Records various years)

The north side of the double house or 1124 N. Astor St. remained under the ownership of the two Schley sisters, Sybil and Eleanor, and their trust for some time after they moved to an apartment on Humboldt Avenue. Sybil died on March 11, 1940 and Eleanor died on January 25, 1942. Their trust sold the property to Florence Gute on December 10, 1945. Florence Gute retained the property in a divorce settlement the following year. She lived on the premises and rented out part of the building to some of the tenants listed above. She sold 1124 N. Astor Street to the Lynde Bradley foundation on March 31, 1958. It was later transferred to the Bradley Family Foundation, Inc. on April 22, 1968. (Deeds Vol. 1839 Page 253; Vol. 2186 Page 433; Vol. 2322 Page 160; Vol. 3413 Page 101; Vol. 3800 Page 153, Reel 417 Image 36)

Zita's occupied the south half of the building for many years and eventually took over the entire premises. As an outlet for clothing and accessories by famous designers like Dior, Zita's maintained its exclusive appeal. City directories show that one-time building owner Julia Cameron ran the business in 1929 and 1930. Perhaps she and her husband were investors at that time. Mrs. Gertrude Z. Lee is thereafter shown as company president with Casper Rische, Ida Friedman, Gerald Hayes, Mrs. Ethel C. Litow and Anita D. Vaillancourt listed as officers over the years. Margaret (Peg) M. Bradley became associated with the business as general manager around 1947 then acquired the business. Peg Bradley, wife of Allen-Bradley co-founder Harry Bradley, was a vivacious and indomitable woman who shared Harry's zest for the good life. To quote from John Gurda's The Bradley Legacy. Lynde and Harry Bradley, Their Company, and Their Foundation "she had an intensely personal sense of style and a passion for high fashion so pronounced that she and Harry bought Zita's, a center of haute couture in Milwaukee. That shop, and three others, are still in the family." (Gurda, p. 50) By the mid-1950s a "suburban" branch of Zita's called Peg Bradley had opened up on E. Silver Spring Drive in Whitefish Bay. Zita has now vacated the old Brown Double House on Astor Street and consolidated at its Whitefish Bay location.

The Lynde Bradley Foundation began consolidating the double house under one ownership in 1954. They acquired the south half of the property, 1122 N. Astor Street, Zita's headquarters, on June 15, 1954 from the Edwin B. Elson Co., Inc. of New York City for \$28,000. On March 25, 1955 an agreement to purchase the north half of the property was drafted between Florence Gute, her son Daniel B. Gute and the Foundation. The sale was completed in 1958. The foundation transferred the premises to the Bradley Family Foundation in 1968. (Deeds Vol. 3315 Page 397; Vol. 3413 Page 101; Vol. 3800 Page 153; Reel 417 Image 36; Reel 417 Image 37)

It was under the ownership of Zita, Inc. beginning in 1955 that some alterations were made to the building but nothing that materially changed the structure of the building. In an affidavit contained in the city's permit records for the building Anita D. Vaillancourt (longtime employee and officer of the corporation) states that "in and/or about 1955 there

were repairs and improvements made for the purpose of beautification of the premises so as to continue the residential appearance necessary to the exclusive nature of the corporation's business". It was during this beautification effort that the north front stairs and rear stairs were removed and the entrance relocated to the center of the front facade. As cited elsewhere, it was also the year that the rear coach house was demolished. Other interior work consisted of plumbing upgrades, heating and ventilating upgrades as well as the installation of a passenger elevator. A major remodeling in 1992 resulted in the repairs to the elevator and various additions to the south side of the building as well as plumbing and electrical upgrades and the construction of an 8 foot by 10 foot 8 inch valet shelter for an attendant, located on the south side of the property. The new front portico was added at the same time. Uihlein Architects was in charge of this project, totaling over \$500,000. (Permit Records)

At some point, the property was transferred from the Bradley Family Foundation to Zita, Inc. On July 11, 2005 the property was transferred from Zita Inc. to the Astor Street Partners LLC, a Wisconsin Limited Liability Company comprised of members of Jane Bradley Petit's family. (Document # 09047693; Conversation with Karl Dickson, Registered Agent for Astor Street Partners LLC on September 13, 2005)

This nomination was submitted over concern at the sale of the property and the fact that the building, while long recognized as an important historic structure, had not received any form of historic designation.

The Federal Style

The Federal Style was popular after the Revolutionary War, from about 1770 through 1820. It was an outgrowth of the earlier Georgian Revival Style but represented a shift toward a uniquely American style of architecture. Characteristics of the style include a rigid formality that featured a center entrance and symmetrical arrangement of window openings. Architectural ornament was flatter and more delicate, reflecting the work of Scottish architects Robert and James Adam who were immensely popular at the time. There was a flattening of the façade to eliminate the muscular projecting center pavilions and bold string courses that had characterized the Georgian Revival. Parapet end walls can be found as well and most all examples were built of brick. The Federal Style houses sat on raised basements that were partially below grade.

Milwaukee's urban environment resulted in a form of the Federal Style that appears relatively consistent when checking historic photographs. Few examples show the curving, semi-circular or octagonal bays found in examples from the east coast or the Mid Atlantic states. Few had the room for the flanking pavilions or dependencies connected with hyphens. Few had the delicate cartouche or panels with swags that characterize their eastern cousins. The Milwaukee examples show simple, unadorned entrances with doors merely flanked by sidelights and rectangular transoms rather than elliptical fanlights, although a few of these do show up. Windows were rectangular in shape, with six over-six sash or tall multi-paned casements with fixed transoms being common. The window openings were accented with stone lintels and sills. Roofs were of shallow pitch between the parapet end walls. Attic spaces were illuminated with small eyebrow windows at the front plane of the wall set right below the cornice line or there were shallow dormers with shed roofs built into the plane of the roof. This consistency in form shows up from commercial building to row house to double house and may be the result of the skills of

local builders rather than the desires of the clients. The period of popularity for the Federal Style in Milwaukee was very brief. Examples that have been documented seem to date from only the 1850s, far after the style had peaked on the East Coast and Mid Atlantic states. By the 1850s, Milwaukee had moved away from its basic vernacular pioneer structures. Enough wealth had accumulated for houses, commercial buildings, schools and churches to be decked out in the latest architectural styles which at the time included not only the Federal Style but also the Greek Revival and Gothic Revival. All three had relatively short heydays. By 1857-58, a new style, the Italianate, was ushered into the city through the Bank of Milwaukee/State Bank of Wisconsin Building (still extant at 210 E. Michigan Street, NR listed, Locally Designated). The Iron Block followed soon after in 1860. The Italianate, with its seemingly endless variations, would dominate the local architectural scene until the 1880s.

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IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the James S. Brown Double House at 1122-1124 N. Astor Street be given interim historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

- e-3. Is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Milwaukee.

Rationale: James Sproat Brown (1824-1878) was considered to be the best legal mind of his generation in the State of Wisconsin. He served not only as prosecuting attorney for Milwaukee County but also became the first State Attorney General when the State of Wisconsin was created in 1848. He served as Milwaukee Mayor in 1861 at a time when mayors served one-year terms and went on to a seat in Congress from 1863 to 1865. In his term as mayor, Brown helped to restore the city's credit during the turbulence surrounding the outbreak of the Civil War and bought the city's first municipally owned steam fire engine as well as create a paid, half-time fire department. All other buildings associated with his life and career have long since been demolished.

While Mrs. Harry (Peg) Bradley will always be remembered for the art collection and her donations to the Milwaukee Art Museum, her sculpture gallery and other philanthropic activities, the Brown Double House served as the setting for her exclusive women's wear shop known as Zita's. From 1927 through 2005, the neighborhood benefited from the cache of the shop while the shop benefited from the lingering gentility offered by the surrounding surviving mansions.

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

Rationale: the James S. Brown Double House is a significant example of the Federal Style as manifested in Milwaukee. The structured symmetry of the front facade, the parapet end walls, raised basement and solid masonry construction are hallmarks of the style. To use an ecological analogy, the Federal Style is an endangered species in Milwaukee, and close to extinction. Only three other examples of this style remain in Milwaukee, the Abel Decker Double House at 408-410 S. Third Street (1857-58), Newhall Row at 607-609 W. Virginia Street (1850) and the Gipfel Brewery at 423-427 W. Juneau Avenue (1853). Of these three, only the Abel Decker Double House is in near original condition and well maintained. The Federal Style is an important artifact from Milwaukee's early history. It illustrates how architectural forms were carried over from older well-established communities to the burgeoning pioneer centers. It also illustrates the continuation of building solid masonry structures before the practice of brick veneered construction took precedence.

- e-9. Its unique location as a singular physical characteristic which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city of Milwaukee.

Rationale: Sited at a prominent corner at the intersection of N. Astor Street and E. Juneau Avenue for 153 years, the James S, Brown Double House is a prominent visual reminder of the time when it was the only residence on its block and the one that set the tone for the prestigious Yankee Hill neighborhood that grew up around it.

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. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. Skylights or dormers are discouraged but may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. Solar panels may be allowed if they are not visible from the primary rights of way. Avoid making changes to the roof shape which would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the appearance of the original roofing as closely as possible. The present roofing material appears to be asphalt shingle. Fire insurance maps and an existing historic photo indicate that there was a standing seam metal roof over the building for most of its history. Whenever a new roof would have to be installed, a return to this form of roof would be encouraged but not required. Locate mechanical

systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. Retain existing original chimneys.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural terra cotta or stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. A historic photo of the double house shows that the brick on the south half appears to be unpainted into the early 20th century. The north half appeared to have been painted or perhaps parged. Consultation with historic preservation staff can determine a course of action if restoration is anticipated.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. 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. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed.
- 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 on limestone, terra cotta, or cream 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.
- d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed. Retain the parapet end walls as they are a character-defining feature of the style.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance such as the cornice, brackets and end blocks.

- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood with aluminum or vinyl is not permitted. Given the age of the building it is recommended that existing wood features that are deteriorated be repaired with epoxy or with wood that matches the species of the original rather than be removed and replaced in their entirety.

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. Avoid making 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. Avoid changing the size or configuration of 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. Historic photographs can serve as a guide for restoring the placement and style of doors and windows.
2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design and material of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Avoid using 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. Any original windows should be retained and repaired if at all possible since few such features survive from the 1850s in Milwaukee. Vinyl or metal clad prime window units are not permitted. Glass block are not permitted.
3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. If permitted, the doors or grates shall be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing 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. It is recommended that existing trim be repaired with epoxies or consolidants or by inserting matching species of wood rather than entirely removed and replicated.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the west (front) or north elevations, 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 house and not obscure the historic house.

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. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building if visible from the public right of way.

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. Accessory structures 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.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the 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 building should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

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. NOTE: The valet station constructed on the property in 1992 is not historic and may be removed.

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.

