

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

FRIEDMANN ROW (Written Spring, 1995)

I. NAME

Historic: Friedmann Row

Common: Patrician Row Condominiums

II. LOCATION

1537-39-41-43 North Cass Street and 731 East Pleasant Street

Tax Key No. 360-1291-100

Legal Description: PATRICIAN ROW CONDOMINIUM IN SW ¼ SEC 21-7-22 UNITS 1
THR 5 AND UND. INT. IN COMMON AREAS & FACILITIES

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

Steven Elkind
2506 East Locust Street
Milwaukee, WI 53211

V. YEAR BUILT

1891

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Friedmann Row is located at the southwest corner of North Cass and East Pleasant Streets on Milwaukee's Lower East Side. The neighborhood is densely built up with a mixture of mid-to-late nineteenth century, brick and frame, single and two-family detached houses interspersed with a smattering of twentieth century apartment buildings. Friedmann Row sits behind a narrow band of lawn with minimal landscaping.

Friedmann Row is a 2 1/2 –story, rectangular, cream brick building 90 feet long by 61 feet deep, designed in the Queen Anne style with some Romanesque details. Four of the building's five townhouse living units face Cass Street, while the fifth fronts on East Pleasant Street. Only the north and east elevations are architecturally developed. The corner of the building at Cass and Pleasant is articulated with a polygonal corner bay that continues through the roof as a polygonal, shingled turret with a faceted conical roof. Large rectangular windows with transoms are located on the first story and paired double-hung windows are located on the second and attic stories. All of the windows have limestone sills, and limestone is also used for lintels for the first story windows. The most distinctive features of the building are the

arched portals that shelter the recessed entrances. The arches are of a shallow horseshoe configuration on four of the units while a semicircular opening frames the southernmost unit on Cass Street. Terra cotta is used to accent the impostes, to frame the arched portals, and for the five foliated ornamental plaques that decorate the second story level. The dramatic roof is punctuated by three large, singled gables. Beside each gable is a large shingled double dormer with a hipped roof.

The south elevation, which falls on the lot line, abuts the adjacent property and is windowless. The rear elevation is utilitarian in character with two shallow light courts and window openings of various sizes placed to respond to floor plan requirements.

Alterations to the rowhouse include the removal of the rear ground floor porches and the subsequent bricking-up of the rear doorways; the boarding over of the transoms on the first story front; and the removal of nine chimneys. The shingling on the gables and dormers was replaced in 1991 and replicates the original, while the brick was chemically cleaned in 1993-94 to restore the original cream color.

The interior of Friedmann Row remains remarkably intact with repeating floor plans in Nos. 1539 and 1543 and Nos. 1537 and 1541. A different layout is found at 731 East Pleasant Street. Each unit features an open front stair, some with intact spindlework balustrades, and an enclosed rear stair leading from the kitchen to the second story. The first story features a parlor, dining room butler's pantry and kitchen, while three bedrooms and a bath are located on the second story. Three additional bedrooms are located in the attic and each unit also has an outdoor roof deck surrounded by a parapet wall. Fireplaces with Queen Anne style mantels are located in the parlors and master bedrooms. Most of the woodwork, including doors, casings and baseboards and some spindlework overdoor grilles survive. The kitchens and bathrooms are modern.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

Friedmann Row is architecturally significant as a fine and intact example of a Victorian era rowhouse block, a building type once common in densely populated residential districts in Milwaukee, but now extremely rare. It is also significant as a fine example of a multi-family building designed in the transitional Queen Anne-Romanesque Revival style. Friedmann Row is also notable as a late residential work of local architect Walter A. Holbrook. Although Holbrook worked on some of the city's most significant architectural projects during his partnership with Edward Townsend Mix, his own health declined after Mix's death in 1980, and his known architectural commissions are few in number.

VIII. HISTORY

Rowhouse blocks were built in Milwaukee from the 1850s until about 1900 in the city's most densely developed neighborhoods. This building type was familiar to the city's settlers who came from the eastern part of the United States where blocks of uniform attached houses filled entire districts in such cities as Boston, Philadelphia and New York. In many eastern cities, the row house was the standard housing type of the urban middle class. Multi-family housing, such as rowhouses, was never as common in Milwaukee as in other cities, due to the abundance and affordability of detached houses. Land values, even in the central city, were low enough to permit the construction of single-family houses, both for sale and for rent, on individual lots. Rowhouse blocks first appeared in the 1850s interspersed with detached houses and were built intermittently thereafter.

By the 1880s, the Greek Revival, Federal and Italianate styles of the earliest rowhouses gave way to the Queen Anne style. Their asymmetrical facades were embellished with towers, turrets, bay windows and dormers that disguised the often identical floor plans of the multi-unit buildings, as at Friedmann Row.

Many of the city's fine Victorian row houses were later subdivided for use as rooming houses and allowed to deteriorate. The majorities were razed in the 1950 and 1960s, many as a result of urban renewal activities, since building inspectors and city planners believed that they promoted crowded, unhealthy living conditions.

Friedmann Row is one of only a few intact row house blocks to survive on the city's Lower East Side. Two other examples nearby are Abbot Row (1889), designed by Howland Russel for Edwin Hale Abbot at 1019-1043 East Ogden Avenue, and Graham Row (1887), built by mason contractor John Graham at 1501-1507 North Marshall Street. The latter is thought to have been designed by the architectural firm of E.T. Mix and Company with which Walter A. Holbrook was associated. Both are locally designated as historic properties.

Friedmann Row was built as an investment property for Ignatius Friedmann (1820-1894), a Jewish immigrant from Austria-Hungary who distinguished himself as a successful and prominent businessman. Friedmann left Hungary in 1859 and came to Milwaukee the following year, becoming a partner with H. H. Rice in a manufacturing and wholesale business. Shortly afterwards, the firm of J. H. Rice and Friedmann was organized, with Friedmann as vice-president. As manufacturers and wholesale dealers in men's clothing and accessories, Rice and Friedmann extended their trade over most of the western and northwestern states. Friedmann added considerably to his fortune through extensive purchases of Chicago and Milwaukee real estate. In 1894, he was listed as one of only ten Milwaukee Jews worth more than \$800,000, while his partner, J. H. Rice, was one of only four with a fortune of more than \$1,500,000. Friedmann was an influential member of the Milwaukee Musical Society and an active supporter of the German-English Academy. Later in life, he traveled extensively, spending long periods of time in Europe. Reserved by nature, he spent a great deal of his time reading and studying a variety of subjects. He spoke German, French, English and Italian, and he was considered by his fellow Milwaukeeans to be exceptionally learned. He died on October 19, 1894.

The rowhouse on Cass Street that Friedmann built as income property was located in a comfortable middle class neighborhood of Italianate, Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne style, mostly frame, houses. Friedmann Row is one of the more substantial buildings in this area and attracted tenants who were business executives, professionals and small merchants. In the southernmost unit, No. 1537, occupants included Halbert A. Coleman (1894-1897), an officer in and advertising manager for the German *Herold*, a paper founded by his father; he was succeeded by Henry N. Wilson (1900-1908), a salesman and manager with various grain companies. At No. 1539 the tenants included John W. Du Four (1893-1894), cashier at the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co.; Fred W. Rogers (1895-1897), the "Father of North Milwaukee", and platter of South Milwaukee, known for his extensive real estate holdings; Walter I. Schiff (1900-1902), a bookkeeper; a widow, Elise Worms (1907-1913). At No. 1541 lived William A. Weinstock (1892-1894), a bookkeeper and insurance salesman; Frank Tibbits (1895-1903), president of Tibbits Cameron Lumber Co.; E. Edwin Frank (1907-1909), the general manager of L. Frank & Son Sausage Company; and George H. Ackerman (1910-1915) whose store was nearby on Ogden Avenue. The tenants at No. 1543 included Frank C. Lewis (1893-1897), a bank teller, secretary of the Paul Bechter Co., and merchandise broker;

various members of the Lederer family (1901-1905), who were in the cigar business; and Rev. Mathew J. Trenergy (1908-1910), a pastor of Summerfield Methodist Church. The earliest known occupant of the unit at 731 East Pleasant Street was Henry L. O'Neil (1892-1894), associated with his brother's oil company, Green and Button, and later with the O'Neil Oil and Paint Company.

Friedmann Row remained a five-family rental property until the Great Depression. After a year or two in which a number of the units were vacant, the building was converted into a rooming house around 1933. It was operated as a rooming house until the early 1990s when the current owner restored the shingling on the attic story, cleaned the brick, and removed interior partitions to restore each unit to its original configuration. They are now being rented as single-family townhouses.

The Architect

Friedmann Row was designed by a prominent local architect, W. A. Holbrook (1849-1910). Born in New York, Holbrook studied architecture with an Oshkosh architect named Mr. Ball. Then, in 1871, Holbrook opened an architectural office in Milwaukee. Shortly afterward he became associated with the prominent architectural firm of Edward Townsend Mix. He played a leading role in the firm, becoming a partner in 1880. Upon Mix's death in 1890, Holbrook took over the business with another Mix associate, H. W. Guthrie, under the name of W. A. Holbrook & Co. Holbrook subsequently ceased practicing architecture and went into the real estate business. At the time of his death in 1910, he owned eight large apartment houses.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Friedmann Row be studied for possible designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its possible fulfillment of criteria e-5 and e-6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e), of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

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 and dormers. Skylights may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the appearance of the original cedar shingle roofing as closely as possible.

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.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. 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 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.
- 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.

2. Wood/Metal

- a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing 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. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood trim with aluminum or vinyl is not permitted.

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 that have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and that obscure the prime windows as little as possible.
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 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. Vinyl or metal clad prime window units are not permitted. Glass block basement windows are not permitted, except on the rear elevation, where they will not be visible from the street.
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.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the north or east elevations. Any other addition requires the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, 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.

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.

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.