

HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDY REPORT

GIPFEL UNION BREWERY

(Written Spring, 1985)

I. NAME

Historic: Gipfel Union Brewery

Common: Same

II. LOCATION

Street Address: 423-27 West Juneau Avenue

Legal Property Description: Original Plat of the Town of Milwaukee West of the River, in Section (20 & 29)-7-22, Block 43, the North 102' of Lot 4

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

David A. Berther
1549 South 76th Street
West Allis, WI 53214

V. YEAR BUILT

1853 et seq.

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Gipfel Union Brewery is a three-story, flank-gable-roofed, brick Federal style rectangular block with latter additions. The simple, symmetrical, center-entrance, five-bay façade is devoid of ornament except for the corbelled and denticulated brick cornice. The tall windows with stone lintels are the only other features of note on the façade. The storefronts have been modernized. The most distinctive features of the building are the stepped, parapet gables on the end walls.

There have been numerous additions made to the building. A brick 2-story, wing added to the rear of the structure in 1892 adjoins a c.1870's wooden building to the rear of the lot. A small, one-story structure on the west has been unified with the main building on the interior. This former retail space has two non-descript, one-story additions to the rear.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Gipfel Union Brewery is architecturally significant as one of the oldest commercial buildings in the city and as a rare surviving example of the simple, late Federal style structures common in Milwaukee from the 1830's to 1860.

It is historically significant as the home of the Gipfel Union Brewery, one of the oldest and longest lived in the many small independent breweries that flourished in Milwaukee until the 1890's when competition from the industry giants drove them out of business. The Gipfel Union Brewery is the oldest known brewery building in Milwaukee.

VIII. HISTORY

The building was constructed either for David Gipfel or for his older son Carl Wilhelm (Charles). Family ownership of the property dates back to June 30, 1843 when David Gipfel purchased the lot from Daniel and Cordelia Brown for \$400.00. He added adjoining property to his holdings with a purchase from Harvey Brichard on November 25, 1845. It is documented that the Giffels operated a small brewery on this site during the 1840's. By 1851, at the latest, Charles Gipfel had assumed control of the firm, which he called the Union Brewery, and he remained in business here through the later 19th century as a brewer, saloon keeper and wine and liquor dealer. A 19th century historian states that the first Gipfel brewery building on this site was erected in 1843, but that the present structure was not constructed until ten years later. In the nineteenth century, the stretch of Juneau Avenue between the Pabst Brewery on the west and the Blatz Brewery on the east was known as "brewery row" for the many small and large breweries located there. Gipfel operated his brewery making Weissbier (white beer) until the early 1890's.

In the twentieth century, the upper floors of the old brewery were converted into residential use while numerous businesses occupied the rest of the structure including the Marman Soap Company and the Elsner harness and leather goods firm. Since at least the 1960's the building has housed Berther Brothers, a restaurant supply company.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommended that the Gipfel Union Brewery be designated a historic structure as a result of its historical and architectural significance.

X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principle 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. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the 1853 and 1892 brick portions of the Gipfel Union Brewery. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the original roof shape. Dormers, skylights and solar collector panels 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.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. 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.
- b. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting brick or stone 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 or marble.
- c. 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. Repair 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 are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings on the north, east and west elevations. 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 openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes.
3. Respect the building's stylistic period. If replacement window sash or doors are necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door.. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted aluminum combination storm and screen units. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or shutters. Avoid using modern style window units such as horizontal sliding sash in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There shall 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 and appearance.

E. Additions

The north, east and west elevations are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions are not recommended and require 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 and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principle elevations.

F. Signs

The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the building.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the architectural character of the building.