

HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDY REPORT

GRAHAM ROW

(Written Summer 1982)

I. NAME

Historic: Graham Row

Common: Same

II. LOCATION

1501-07 North Marshall Street

Legal Property Description: Partition of the East half of SW ¼ SEC 21-7-22, Block 60 S 60'
Exc. W 36'

III. CLASSIFICATION

Building

IV. OWNER

Robert L. and Molly Kealy
1501 North Marshall Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

VI. DESCRIPTION

Graham Row is an oblong row house with the main block measuring approximately 40 feet wide by 80 feet long. It is 2 ½ stories in height and contains three separate residences. Attached to the main block at the rear is a two-story gabled wing along the south elevation and another two-story wing with a shed roof along the north elevation. Its facades are asymmetrically designed and reflect the detailing of the Victorian Romanesque Revival. It is located on the city's lower east side adjacent to the cleared Park East Freeway corridor. As part of a neighborhood that was to be adversely impacted by the proposed freeway, Graham Row was determined eligible to the National Register of Historic Places on November 30, 1977.

The structure rests on a raised cream brick foundation and is constructed of the same brick with twelve-inch thick, load-bearing walls. Ochre, rock-faced sandstone is used extensively as trim in the form of water tables, arch surrounds, lintels, sills, banding, coping and as caps on the colonnettes. Dark red terra-cotta tiles, framed with sandstone, are inset on the east and south elevations. Additional tiles also ornament the east elevation. The main block is topped with a steeply pitched hipped roof with numerous intersecting gables covered with black roofing. The corners are capped with wrought-iron finials. Above the roofline rise five corbelled chimneys.

The façade facing Marshall Street is divided into three similar two-bay townhouse fronts consisting of a recessed entry set within an arched porch flanked by a large fixed-glass cottage window with a stained-glass transom surmounted by a broad wooden oriel. Above the second floor oriel of each unit is a brick gable, flanked by projecting brick and stone pinnacles, that is pierced by a large, three-quarter round window glazed with a double hung central unit surrounded by colored glass lights. Rockfaced sandstone is liberally used for belt courses, sills, copings, and corbels.

VI. SIGNIFICANCE

Date Built: 1887

Builder/Architect: John Graham, builder

National Register of Historic Places: Listed 1979

Written Statement of Significance

Graham Row is architecturally significant as a well-preserved late nineteenth century row house block of exceptionally fine design. It is historically significant for its association with prominent nineteenth century contractor, John Graham.

Graham Row is one of the finest and least altered late Victorian row house blocks in Milwaukee. The rowhouse was never a popular housing type in Milwaukee, where the detached frame house has always dominated residential construction. Graham Row is exceptional as one of the few such blocks built to house prosperous middle class residents. Its location on the edge of the affluent Yankee Hill and Prospect Avenue residential precincts probably accounts for this fashionable experiment in urban housing. Although a few other row house blocks were constructed in Milwaukee at about the same time, this house type never achieved popularity and there are few other examples of comparable quality.

Graham row was built as an investment by John Graham, a prominent Milwaukee mason and contractor. Graham was born in Belfast, Ireland in 1831 and emigrated to Milwaukee in 1847. By 1851 he had settled on East Lyon Street near the site where he would later build Graham Row. In 1875 his four sons joined his company, which subsequently grew into a major contracting firm. The recently demolished Chapman's Department Store, St. Paul's Episcopal Church, and the Pabst Theater are among the better-known structures built by the Graham Construction Company. John Graham died in 1887 just after building Graham Row. The houses remained in the Graham family until the 1920's when the Soltilla family, who maintained ownership until 1977 when the present owners acquired them, acquired them.

VIII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends Graham Row for designation as a Historic Structure chiefly for its architectural significance.

VIII. 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 not be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

The existing building height, rooflines, pitch, dormers, gables, and cresting shall not be changed or modified. Subject to approval of the Commission, dormers or skylights may be added to roof surfaces facing west if they do not visually intrude upon the east or south street elevations.

B. Openings

The location, style and material of window and door openings, and the number and configuration of panes, shall be retained on the south and east elevations. Additional openings, or changes the size or configuration existing openings shall not be permitted, unless approved by the Historic Preservation Commission, except that restoration to the documented original condition shall be permitted. Approval for changes shall be based on the compatibility of the proposed changes with the style and period of the building.

C. Additions

No additions may be made to the east or south street elevations of the building. Additions to the west elevation shall 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 existing east and south elevations.

D. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

There shall be no changes to the existing porches, 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 or material.

E. Materials

Unpainted brick, terra cotta or stone shall not be painted or covered. Any repairs, including repointing of defective mortar, shall match the original in color, style, texture and strength characteristics. Masonry shall be cleaned only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible approved by the Commission.