

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT KONRAD & BAUMANN BUILDING

(Written February 1998)

I. NAME

Historic: Konrad & Baumann Building

Common: None

II. LOCATION

3225-3227 West Lisbon Ave.

17th Aldermanic District

Tax Key Number: 349-2329-000

Legal Description: UHRIG's SUBD IN NE 1/4 SEC 24-7-21 BLOCK 3 LOT 2 & E 3' LOT 1

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

City of Milwaukee
Attn.: Mr. Gregory Shelko
Real Estate Division
Dept. of City Development
P.O. Box 324
Milwaukee, WI 53201-0324

V. YEAR BUILT

1905

ARCHITECT: Charles J. Keller

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Konrad and Baumann Building is located on Milwaukee's west side near the southeast corner of 33rd St and Lisbon Ave. The neighborhood consists primarily of small commercial buildings with second story apartments along Lisbon Ave. and a mix of duplexes and single-family residences to the north and south. The Konrad and Baumann building is built up to the north lot line, fronting on Lisbon Ave., with setbacks from the east and west lot lines. At the rear is a yard and along the alley is located a concrete block garage built in 1924.

The Konrad and Baumann Building is a rectangular, brick, 2-1/2 story, German Renaissance Revival structure that is topped with a scrolled front gable. The front elevation is veneered with red pressed brick and the side and rear elevations are clad with Milwaukee common cream brick. With only a few relatively minor exceptions, the exterior of the building retains most of its original character.

The first story of the principal elevation, which faces W. Lisbon Ave., is composed of a storefront and an entry to the upper flat. The street level storefront is traditionally arranged with two display windows flanking a recessed center entrance. A projecting, sheet metal box cornice separates the first and second stories. The most outstanding feature of the second story is a large, projecting box bay window that is flanked on the west by a double-hung landscape sash window. A pair of double-hung attic windows are centered in the front gable. The facade is crowned with a finely crafted, German Renaissance style shaped gable the hallmarks of which are cusped forms and a rounded top. Other German influences include the polychrome brick and limestone lintels above the landscape sash and attic windows.

A projecting, wooden box bay window is the major architectural feature of the side elevation facing east, but this elevation is otherwise utilitarian in character with windows placed to respond to the needs of the interior. The west elevation is also simple in character and fenestrated with randomly placed double hung windows. The rear elevation features a pair of double hung windows in the gable and sash in a variety of sizes on the first and second stories. A small, wooden, two story enclosed porch is also located on this elevation.

Alterations to the building consist of the closing off of some of the widows on the side elevations and reducing the size of the storefront windows in 1969 and 1984. An additional story was added to the original one story rear porch sometime after 1926. The rear garage was built in 1924. In the past year while the building has sat vacant there has been some vandalism to the interior and several windows have been broken. Tax delinquent and abandoned, the property was acquired by the City of Milwaukee in November of 1997.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Konrad and Baumann Building is architecturally significant as a fine, intact example of Milwaukee's rapidly vanishing stock of German Renaissance Revival style ethnic commercial buildings. Historic photographs show that this style was once common in the downtown area and in the commercial districts of the west and north sides (North Ave., Center St., Lisbon Ave., Burleigh St.) and contributed to the city's distinct Old World character. The decline in these commercial districts with the accompanying abandonment and demolition has reduced the numbers to a few dozen examples including brewery-built taverns and such masterpieces as Milwaukee's City Hall. The preservation of ethnic architecture is a top priority according to the State of Wisconsin's Cultural Resource Management Plan, and German ethnic architecture is pivotal to Milwaukee's ethnic and commercial history. Today, only a handful of small, German ethnic style commercial buildings remain in the city and the continued preservation of these structures, especially those of the quality of the Konrad and Baumann Building, is very important.

VIII. HISTORY

Architectural History

Ethnic style structures, such as the Konrad and Baumann Building, are characterized by a specific architectural style or a prominent feature that is strongly associated with the homeland of a particular ethnic group. Traditional merchants' buildings in Europe featured a gable-fronted facade with the gables taking on a variety of shapes and architectural details. These shapes and details from the "old country" often found their way onto local commercial buildings as a way to personalize them for the owners and the immigrant community they were originally intended to serve.

For reasons that are still not precisely known, Milwaukee's German-American community seemed to build more structures that reflected the indigenous architecture of their European homeland than German ethnic communities on other American cities. The large number of German immigrants and European-trained architects present in Milwaukee from 1890 to World War I may help to explain the surge in ethnic pride as reflected in these unique structures. Ethnic style structures in Milwaukee are unquestionably some of the city's most outstanding and unique architectural resources and the preservation of these structures tell us much about the people who helped to settle and build the city.

There are many different styles of shaped gables adorning the city's small ethnic commercial buildings, but the shape of the gable on the Konrad and Baumann Building is rather unusual in Milwaukee and two other known similar examples exist. One of those examples, the Hambach and Hellmann Meat Store (1910) located at 1024 E. Brady St., is a pivotal structure in the East Brady Street Historic District. The other structure, the Perske Building (1909), is located on the city's south side at 1629-31 W. Becher St.

For more information on the city's ethnic architecture you may wish to consult a series of booklets published by the Dept. of City Development, *Ethnic Commercial and Public Buildings Tour*, *Ethnic Church Tour*, and *Ethnic Houses Tour*.

Background History

Emil Baumann was one of ten children of John and Wilhelmine Baumann and, like many members of his family, was involved in the shoe making business. The extended family lived at today's 2471 North 4th St. Around 1902 William Konrad, also a shoemaker, married into the family, taking Emil's sister Augusta as his wife. The newlyweds lived at the Baumann family home. On June 6, 1905 the two brothers-in-law purchased the lot on Lisbon Ave. from Josephine Lademann. Lademann was the daughter of Franz Joseph Uhrig and the lot on Lisbon Ave., part of a new subdivision platted in 1903, was once part of the Uhrig family estate.

Baumann and Konrad subsequently commissioned architect Charles J. Keller to design a store-and-flat building for them and the permit was taken out on July 28, 1905. The \$6,000 structure featured the distinctive shaped gable then in vogue among Milwaukee's German-American merchants and was one of a number of such German style buildings along Lisbon Ave., most of which have since been demolished. Konrad and Baumann then formed a partnership (1906) and opened a shoe store that is believed to have operated on the

premises. Discrepancies between the address of the business and the fire insurance atlases do raise some questions about their occupancy of the building. The partnership ended in 1909 and the men transferred their property to Baumann's father John on August 20, 1909. The building passed to John Baumann's estate in 1921.

Emil Baumann subsequently worked as a shoe cutter then foreman at the Mayer Boot and Shoe Company in Brewers Hill. In 1915 Baumann started the Milwaukee Rex Shoe Company that operated out of premises at Teutonia Ave. and had this company for three years. Baumann is subsequently listed as a shoe manufacturer (although the Milwaukee Rex name was no longer used) and then as the proprietor of the E.F. Baumann Shoe Company that operated out of his residence at 981 Booth St. (today's 2601 N. Booth). From 1924 through 1947 Baumann ran his business, which now included the manufacture of arch supports, out of 3412 W. Rohr Ave. where he lived. Baumann retired to the Town of Granville and died on September 10, 1954.

William Konrad, meanwhile, was listed in the directories as a shoemaker/machine operator/shoemaker and periodically moved in with his in-laws, then out on his own. He opened his own shoe repair shop at 1440 W. Atkinson in 1929 and had this business through 1942. He apparently retired outside of Milwaukee after 1942.

Occupancy in the Lisbon Ave. building from 1910 through 1920 is unclear. Neither Konrad nor Baumann lived in the upstairs flat at any time. Both men were working elsewhere during this period. A scan of the business listings during this period has failed to turn up any occupants at the store. It may be that the Lisbon Ave. store served as an outlet for Emil Baumann's shoe company or for the shoemaking activities of Baumann's siblings. We do know that Emil's brother Charles (a.k.a. Carl) lived in the upstairs flat in 1920, as did John H. F. Baumann. The next documented occupant at Lisbon Ave. is Joseph Flander beginning in 1921. Flander had operated a saloon in the 1300 block of N. 3rd St. (today's King Dr.) and then a soft drink parlor at 311 W. Juneau Ave. after Prohibition went into effect. He purchased the Lisbon Ave. property, appraised at that time at \$10,000, on April 4, 1921 from the Baumann family and with his old soft drink parlor partner, Frank J. Dorndorfer, operated a shoe store on the premises in 1921 and 1922 and lived in the upstairs flat. He subsequently went back to work at the Juneau Ave. soft drink parlor and rented out the Lisbon Ave. store to the Wimer Store Fixture Exchange, a furniture store (1925-1927) then to the McCormack Bird Store (1928-1930) and later Sattler Pet Shop (1931). Following three years of vacancy Flander opened up a tavern on the premises in 1935 once Prohibition ended.

The Lisbon Ave. building remained a tavern thereafter under a succession of owners: Lillian (nee Anderson) Stephan/Rades (1947-1968); Olive Gordon Plotkin (1968-1970); Virgil V. and Ruth Viscuso (1970-1975); Clarvi Realty (1975-1990's). Land Contracts show that Victor Audi and Kenneth Edwards and Lee Holloway also had interest in the property in the 1970's. The taverns that operated here were known as Lillian's Tap, Virgil's Paradise, the Square Hare, Smittie's Tavern, Cleve's Tavern, and Walker's Max Place Tavern. Many of the owners continued in the tradition of Joseph Flander and lived in the upstairs flat. Following a period of vacancy and tax delinquency in the 1990's, the City of Milwaukee acquired the property in November, 1997.

The Architect

The designer of the structure, Charles J. Keller (1871-1966) was born in Ft. Wayne, Indiana

and came to Milwaukee in 1877 with his parents. He began his architectural career in 1887 as an apprentice draftsman for Milwaukee architect James Douglas. Around 1890 he briefly worked with his father in a flour and grain business but returned to architecture in 1892 and worked as a draftsman for Milwaukee architect Fred Graf until at least 1904. During the late 1890's Graf and Keller reportedly collaborated on the design of the Ozaukee County courthouse in West Bend which is a massive, towered Queen Anne style structure that ranks as one of the most outstanding buildings of its kind in the state.

In 1905 Keller established his own architectural practice in the Germania Building in downtown Milwaukee, and made a specialty of residential and light commercial commissions. The Konrad and Baumann Building might have been one of the first structures he designed after establishing his own office and it is presently the only known German Renaissance Revival style building he designed. Many of his other projects are of Arts and Crafts or period revival style.

Keller brought his son Clarence into the business as a partner and renamed the firm, Charles J. Keller & Son in 1919. Their office at that time was in the Majestic Building in the 200 block of W. Wisconsin Ave. In 1931 Harry Schramek was brought into the firm which was then renamed Keller, Schramek & Keller. The Great Depression of the 1930's apparently took its toll on Keller's firm and he folded up the business by the mid-1930's and kept a modest practice going from his house.

During World War II, when building construction nearly came to a halt in America, Keller worked as a clerk. After the war in 1947 he briefly resumed his professional career as an architect and worked for the Brubach Insulating Co. before retiring in 1950 when he was in his late 70's.

Over the years Keller lived at several locations on the city's west and east sides. According to the city directory his last Milwaukee address was 6114 N. 38th St. After retiring in 1950, Keller apparently went to live in suburban Glendale with his granddaughter Bernice. He died on Wednesday, January 5, 1966 at the age of 95.

Some of Keller's known design work includes:

Peter Mischler House (1908)	2839-41 W. Juneau Ave.
Dr. Ralph Elmergreen House (1907)	2813 W. Kilbourn Ave.
M.L. Mattoon House (1912)	3028-30 W. McKinley Blvd.
North Point Apartments (1916)	2564 N. Lake Dr.
John Cudahy House (1921)	2450 N. Terrace Ave.
Apartments (1925)	2912 W. Wells St.
Apartments (1926)	2436 W. Kilbourn Ave.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

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

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

type or specimen.

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 or public right of way. 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 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 which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. Reopening the storefront windows to their original dimension would be approvable.
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. 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. Removal of any portion of the ornamental gable is not allowed. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color and appearance.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the north, east, or west 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. 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.

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 commercial 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.

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.