

HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDY REPORT

HERMAN MAYER AND GEORGE DURNER BUILDINGS

(Written Winter 1987)

I. NAME

Historic: The Herman Mayer (#2006) and George Durner (#2002) Buildings

Common: Amin's Supermarket

II. LOCATION

2002 and 2006 North Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

Tax Key Number: 353-0577-000

Legal Property Description: Sherman's Add'n in NE ¼ Sec 20-7-22 Block 21 Lot 16 Exc E
25'

III. CLASSIFICATION

Buildings

IV. OWNER

John Roby
3701 North 54th Boulevard
Milwaukee, WI 53216

V. YEAR BUILT

1883 (#2002)
1891 (#2006)

Architect: Henry Messmer (#2006)

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

These adjacent buildings are located on the northeast corner of King Drive and West Brown Street midway along the historically important North Third Street (now Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive) commercial strip on the near north side. The two buildings are sited at the edge of the sidewalk and occupy most of the lot they share.

No. 2202 North King Drive is a rectangular, two-story, cream brick, gable-roofed, Victorian Italianate commercial building. It has architecturally treated elevations facing King Drive and West Brown Street. The rear elevation (east) facing the alley is of functional design and is devoid of ornamental features. The north side abuts the building to the north (No. 2206) and is not visible.

The King Drive elevation is the building's façade. It consists of a wood, stamped sheet metal and plate glass Victorian storefront with a side door openings from the street to the stairs to the second floor. Above the sheet metal storefront cornice with its massive corner corbels, three evenly spaced one-over-one double hung, wooden, segmentally arched, sash windows with projecting brick hood moulds with stone keystones pierce the brick upper façade. The central window hood mould is wider than those on the flanking windows. A soldier course of saw tooth brickwork unifies the window heads, while another similar course fills the space between the tops of the hood moulds and the elaborate parapet cornice. The cornice is constructed of wood and sheet metal. It basically consists of a freestanding, raised central pedimented element flanked by deeply molded cornices that step down on either side. Massive, heavily ornamented corbels at the end walls and smaller central brackets flanking a pointed attic window support the massive entablature. A simple frieze ornamented with regularly spaced rosettes completes the cornice treatment.

The Brown Street elevation is of simple design with large expanses of blank brick walls and simple rectangular one-over-one windows at the second story level shaded by the wide overhanging eaves. At the rear is a flat roofed, two-story section with three bays of segmentally arched, one-over-one windows on the first and second floors.

No. 2006 is a rectangular, two-story, flat roofed, cream brick, Queen Anne style commercial building. It has only one architecturally treated elevation facing King Drive. The north (side) and east (upper) sides are of common brick and are utilitarian in character. The south side directly abuts No. 2002 and is not visible.

The King Drive façade consists of a stamped sheet metal, wood-and-plate glass storefront with a side entrance from King Drive to the stairs leading to the second floor. Above the sheet metal storefront cornice with its massive corbels at the corners, is the elaborately ornamented and asymmetrical brick upper facade. It is divided into two equal bays by brick pilaster strips that terminate above the parapet in pyramidal pinnacles. The south bay contains a tri-partite "picture window" consisting of a wide, fixed-glass, arched, central element flanked by narrow, one-over-one, arched, side windows, all unified under a brick, segmental arch with a terra-cotta keystone in the form of a mustachioed male visage. Below the window is a shallow spandrel of patterned terra cotta, while the spaces between the arched lights of the window sash contain foliated relief decoration. At the eaves is a paneled brick parapet.

The north bay contains a sheet metal clad, canted bay window with a semi-domical roof. Above the bay window roof the parapet rises into a steeply pitched, fanciful, pierced, sheet metal, false pediment flanked by ogee sheet metal pinnacles. The cut out in the false pediment shelters a vase shaped urn silhouetted against the sky. Dential moldings enrich the pediment, which is buttressed by the terra cotta consoles that cap the parapet.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Herman Mayer and George Durner Buildings are architecturally significant as excellent examples of the exuberant Victorian commercial architecture of the late nineteenth century. These adjoining buildings constitute one of the city's more striking commercial assemblages of the rigorously picturesque Victorian architecture of the late 1880s and early 1890s. The buildings are historically important as reminders of the Victorian era heyday of North Third Street (now King Drive) as a major center of German retailing.

VIII. HISTORY

The subject structures were built during the period when King Drive (then known as North Third Street) was becoming an important German retailing center. Later it would grow into a citywide shopping district, but in the 1880s and 1890s it was basically a neighborhood-oriented retail strip serving the densely populated Germantown section of Milwaukee that it bisected. These buildings are representative of the basic shop-with-proprietor's-flat-upstairs type of structure that housed most of Milwaukee's small merchants until the early twentieth century. In their degree of façade elaboration, these structures are exemplary of the highest architectural evolution of this type of building during the Gilded Age.

The George Durner Building (#2002) was built or remodeled to its present appearance in 1883. Durner lived in the upstairs flat and operated his jewelry business out of the first floor shop from 1883 until about 1905. Later it housed a drug store and other businesses.

The Herman Mayer Building (#2004) was built in 1891 to house Mayer's residence and crockery shop. It was designed by Henry Messmer, a prolific Milwaukee architect of the period. Mayer lived in the building until his death in 1932, although he had abandoned the crockery business in the early twentieth century to concentrate on his real estate activities.

The buildings have been combined into a single structure and have most recently housed a grocery store.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Herman Mayer and George Durner Buildings be designated as City of Milwaukee Historic Structures as a result of their fulfillment of criteria one (1) and five (5) of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 2-335(2)(e).

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. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the Mayer and Durner Buildings. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the 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's 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.
- 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 original window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds, sills, doors and hardware, except as necessary to restore the building to its 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.
- 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 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 south and west elevations are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions 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, color and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

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 historic architectural character of the building.