

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

VILLA UHRIG (Written Fall, 1997)

I. NAME

Historic Name: Villa Uhrig

Common: Same

II. LOCATION

1727 North 34th Street
(Located on North 34th Street south of West Lisbon Avenue between Lisbon and West Walnut Street)

Tax Key Number: 349-1405-000

Legal Property Description: LADEMANN'S SUBD IN NE ¼ SEC 24-7-21 BLOCK 1 LOTS 6-7 & S 35' LOT 5

Aldermanic District: 17th – Alderman Willie J. Hines, Jr.

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

David N. Boucher, Jr.
1727 North 34th Street
Milwaukee, WI 53208

V. YEAR BUILT

c. 1853-54

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Villa Uhrig is sited on a 105-foot by 115-foot landscaped lot on the city's west side that is located just of 1-½ miles from the central business district. The house is located on the west side of North 34th Street between West Lisbon Avenue and West Walnut Street and, unlike its neighbors, is set diagonally on its lot facing northwest, a reminder that the structure was once part of the multi-acre summer estate that fronted the Lisbon Plank Road.

Villa Uhrig is an example of early Italianate design and, if the construction date of 1853-1854 is correct, this would be one of the earliest known and still extant examples of Italianate architecture in Milwaukee. The two-story structure is rectangular in shape with a single story 18 by 20 foot wing on the northwest side and a single story wing approximately 8 feet by 20 feet in dimension on the southeast. The building is crowned with a hip roof and surmounted by an 8 foot by 12 foot

bracketed, rectangular cupola. Chimneys extend up from the southeast and northwest roof sloops. The load bearing cream brick walls sits atop a cut limestone foundation with a stone water table. The front façade features a center entrance flanked by a French door to either side. Three similar but shorter windows are located on the second story. Like all of the other windows in the house, these windows are framed by segmentally arched castings with rich moldings. The unusual sash are original and feature a two light fixed upper sash above a four light casement sash. One oval window is located on the northwest wing. The southeast wing features seven nine-over-one sashes, which were installed when the wing was shortened for the cutting through of North 34th Street in 1913.

The restrained, but rich ornamentation is characteristic of this early Italianate style. Corners at the front façade are detailed with pilasters and paneled corner boards while the rear corners have quoins. A wooden cornice is located at the eaves and features modillion-like brackets with a paneled frieze board. Eight wooden columns arranged in pairs grace the front façade. At the rear are shed-like enclosures for various entrances to the house and basement.

Some alterations have been made to the house over time. The side wings were added around 1871 and are said to be designed by Milwaukee architect Leonard Schmidtner. The southeast wing, as mentioned above, was shortened by about two-thirds of its width when North 34th Street was cut through and was subsequently re-clad in stucco and had new windows installed. Historic photos indicate that the wave-like cresting at the roofline has been removed, as have the ornamented capitals and bases of the columns. The columns have been reduced in size and now sit atop rusticated concrete block piers. Balustrades with shaped balusters were once located atop the front portico and each of the side wings. Drop finials have been removed from the brackets. Ornamental flourishes above the window casings have also disappeared. Dormers have been added to the roof, as well. Other than these changes, the house retains most of its original character.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

Villa Uhrig is architecturally significant as one of the city's finest and earliest examples of an Italianate style residence. It is also significant as one of Milwaukee's few extant examples of a summer villa and, as such, in an important historical document from the days when the Lisbon Plank Road served not only as a thoroughfare for the transfer of agricultural products, but as a setting for gracious summer estates.

VIII. HISTORY

This property in the northeast quarter of Section 24, Township 7 North, Range 21 East had not changed hands too many times before Johann (John) Peter Weber purchased 55 acres in the west half of this quarter section in 1846 for \$1,000. The land had previously been owned by Henry and Caroline Williams and R. Hoppins, Jr., and deeds refer to crops standing on the premises at the time of Weber's purchase. Once the Lisbon Plank Road had been built through this area in 1850, Weber quickly began to sell off sites, mostly 1 and 2-acre parcels, to a variety of families, most with German surnames. Among the larger parcels was a 9-acre tract sold to St. Louis, Missouri brewer Franz Joseph Uhrig in 1853 and located at the very southwest corner of the quarter section on land with frontage on the new plank road.

Uhrig (? – July 2, 1874) was said to have been a river raftsman in his native Bavaria and continued in this occupation on the Susquehanna River when he settled in Baltimore, Maryland in 1836. Uhrig eventually operated a packet board "Pearl" on the Ohio River between St. Louis and Louisville. When a debt of \$1,500 was repaid to him with a brewery instead of cash, Uhrig took on

this new challenge and began producing beer in St. Louis. He began making trips to Milwaukee Allegedly to buy barley, but may have had relatives here as well. Another Uhrig family was settled in Milwaukee by the 1850's and may have been related. Uhrig's wife, Walburga, was related to the Uihlein family and may have also been related to August Krug, who founded in the late 1940's what would become Schlitz Brewery. We know that Krug was the Uihleins' maternal uncle and we know that as the various Uihlein brothers began emigrating to the United States in the 1850's and 1860's they spent time working at Uhrig's brewery before joining the Jos. Schlitz Brewery in 1971, which they later acquired. Franz Joseph Uhrig purchased his 9-acre tract in what was then the Town of Wauwatosa for \$1,550 in 1853. He subsequently added a strip of land approximately 377 by 275 feet in dimension to the east of his estate purchased from Frederica and Charles J. Kern for \$1,225 in 1863.

While the Uhrigs would continue to operate their brewery in St. Louis and have their primary residence there, they would summer at the Villa Uhrig here each year. It is thought that the present brick house was constructed shortly after the purchase of the land in 1853 although perhaps this residence replaced an earlier temporary structure on the site. Uhrig is said to have patterned the house after his residence in St. Louis while the grounds were patterned after a villa he had seen in Germany.

While today only the main residence survives, the estate once contained a stable-barn, garden pavilion, brick gardener's residence, and "eagle house" outhouse, along with a chicken house, a pheasant house, and a 3-story pump house with a windmill on top. A gravel road led from Lisbon Plank Road to a circular drive in front of the house and there was a brick footpath as well as a 20-foot tall iron fountain. Apple orchards, lilac bushes, an allee of poplars, and other gardens studded the bountiful grounds.

Living on the premises were Franz Joseph and his wife, Walburga, and their daughter, Josephine, and her husband Otto C. Lademann, a Civil War veteran, along with various grandchildren. It is not certain whether or not the Uhrig's son, August (1850-1878) and his wife and family also summered at the Lisbon Avenue estate.

Franz Joseph Uhrig died while summering here on July 2, 1878, and his body was shipped back to St. Louis for burial. That he associated with other Milwaukee brewers and prominent families is indicated by the procession that accompanied Uhrig's remains from the Best family burial vault to the railroad depot, which included Judge Mallory, Col. Jacobs, Sheriff McDonald and Messrs. Ehlers, Schoeffler, Deuster, Brand, Pritzlaff, Auer and other. Uhrig's will left Walburga the Milwaukee estate, the proceeds from the insurance policies, all household and kitchen furnishings, and an annual stipend of \$6,000 to be paid out in four installments each year. She was also given rights to occupy the family homestead in St. Louis until her death although real estate was conveyed to Uhrig's daughter, Josephine Lademann and son, August. The children were likewise given joint ownership of all the brewery malt houses, the ice house, the Beer Cave (a public beer garden constructed atop storage caves), the brewery manufacturing equipment, the malt and hops in storage, as well as the horses, wagons, and beer on the premises. The only condition set was that they would pay the quarterly installments of the stipend. One interesting result of the probate proceedings was the discovery that her son, August, was actually an adopted child, surreptitiously substituted for her natural child, who died shortly after birth after Walburga herself hovered near death. The family physician had recommended to Franz Joseph that a newborn infant would be the only way to save his wife's life, and Franz Joseph complied out of deep love for his wife, choosing a newborn boy at a foundling home. Although a child of Irish parents, the *Evening Wisconsin* newspaper marveled at how August's Irish "social traits" had been obliterated by his German upbringing and how he learned to speak German and even married a German woman. Walburga found the news hard to

accept, and it was reported she never quite got over the shock. August's early death at the age of 28 in 1878 probably accounts for the absence of his name in relation to Villa Uhrig.

The Lademanns and Walburga Uhrig continued to use Villa Uhrig as their summer home until around 1890 when the Lademanns made Milwaukee their permanent home. Josephine's son, Joseph U., became employed the Second Ward Savings Bank, a financial institution nicknamed the "Brewers' Bank" since many of the directors including the Uihleins were involved in the brewing industry. Joseph U. eventually became a vice president and was in charge of the bank's Ninth Ward branch. Son Otto T., shown now and then in the directories, worked for the Wisconsin National Bank. Oscar E. Lademann (b. 1876) was a physician who trained at Washington University in St. Louis. He graduated in 1897 and then worked for the Milwaukee County Insane Asylum for two years before taking postgraduate courses in Berlin and Vienna for four years. He returned to Milwaukee and served as an instructor at the Wisconsin College of Physicians and Surgeons, edited the Medical Fortnightly, retained memberships in the St. Louis Medical Association, the Milwaukee Medical Society, and the Wisconsin State and American Medical Associations as well as membership in the American Association of Medical Editors. Oscar lived at Villa Uhrig and sometimes had his practice out of the west wing of the house and sometimes downtown, with offices on East Wisconsin Avenue. William F. Lademann (sometimes F. William) lived at Villa Uhrig also and worked for his relatives at the Schlitz Brewery. An Arnold Lademann, presumably another son, was a dentist; he is shown briefly living on the premises. Matriarch Walburga Uhrig retired permanently to Villa Uhrig in 1892.

The family by this time had sold off their holdings and business in St. Louis. The old homestead at 18th and Market Street in St. Louis became the site of the Union Depot built in 1894. Walburga died on March 26, 1897 at the age of 77 of bronchitis. Her remains were interred at the family plot in Bellefontaine in the St. Louis area. Her Milwaukee estate was appraised at \$50,000 and, besides the villa, included household goods valued at \$250, two horses valued at \$25, on cow valued at \$35, one carriage valued at \$25, and one buggy valued at \$50. The land now consisted of a 7 38/100 acre tract, two parcels having been sold off to Frederick Loenig, one in 1881 consisting of a 377 foot by 275 foot parcel and a 10-rod-wide strip in 1882, both at the east end of the Uhrig estate. Interestingly, the property here went entirely to Josephine Lademann, Walburga's sole surviving child. Walburga's son's family in St. Louis must have been provided for out of the family's holdings there.

As Josephine and her husband grew older and development pressures began encroaching around the old estate, they decided to subdivide their property. The first parcel, Uhrig's Subdivision, was platted in 1903 with 31 lots and extended along the east side of North 35th Street and around to West Lisbon Avenue to a point midway between North 32nd and North 33rd Streets. Uhrig's Subdivision No. 2 was platted in 1905 and consisted of 12 lots on either side of North 33rd Street in mid-block. The family then incorporated the Villa Realty and Investment Company to which Josephine was assigned the remaining 2-023/1000 acres of the estate, which made up the land surrounding the house. This small plot was finally subdivided in September of 1910 into the 14 lot Lademann's Subdivision, and land was deeded to the City of Milwaukee for the cutting through of North 34th Street. Josephine's husband, Otto c. Lademann, died at the age of 72 on March 21, 1914, and Josephine herself passed away in 1921 or 1922.

Two Lademann sons, Oscar F. and Joseph U., became the officers of the Villa Realty and Investment Company and transferred lots 5, 6 and 7 and the south 35 feet of lot 4 in Lademann's Subdivision to their own ownership in 1924 and continued living on the premises. They eventually sold their homestead to the Universal Spiritual Alliance Church in June of 1943 and moved to 1961 North Summit Avenue. The house went through a succession of owners in the intervening

decades and has been divided into apartments although the major interior spaces remain intact. The new owner, Mr. David Boucher, Jr., is interested in restoring Villa Uhrig.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Villa Uhrig be designated as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1 and e-5 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e), of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

Criterion e-1. Its exemplification of the development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin or of the United States.

Criterion 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 original roof shape. Skylights may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape, which would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the appearances of the original wood shingle or later metal standing seam 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 were decided to remove the paint 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. 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 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 where they will be visible from the street.
3. Steer 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. Porches, Trim and Ornamentation

There should 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 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.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed so as to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of Villa Uhrig.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of Villa Uhrig. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of Villa Uhrig from 34th Street as a freestanding structure in a landscaped setting.

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 the historic building must be compatible with the design of Villa Uhrig.

3. Form

The massing of new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of Villa Uhrig as a distinct freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and recede from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic structure if they are in close proximity to Villa Uhrig.

4. Materials

The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to Villa Uhrig should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic structure. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.