



Heritage Research, Ltd.

MEMORANDUM

TO: Joseph Stanton, Beach House, LLC
FROM: John N. Vogel, Ph.D., Heritage Research, LTD.
SUBJECT: 1245 N. Milwaukee Street
DATE: 11 November 2019

I offer to you my credentials which include a Ph.D. in American History. I have also taught in both the Department of History and Department of Civil Engineering at Marquette University. Additionally have I been actively involved in the field of Cultural Resource Management/Historic Preservation for almost forty years. It is in this latter capacity that I was asked to review the captioned property in the context of the ten criteria that guide and direct the identification of historically significant properties to be recognized by the City of Milwaukee. I have completed that review, the results of which are reported in this document.

Specifically to be considered is the house at 1245 N. Milwaukee Street. When starting this review, I had the opportunity to study the Temporary Historic Designation Petition prepared for the property and submitted on 29 October 2019. It appears to me that the case suggested in the Petition is based largely on criteria e-5 (significance of the architectural style and characteristics) and e-6 (significance of an associated architect in the City of Milwaukee).

The petition recognizes that the architect of the original building is unknown, as is the date of construction though the latter is thought to have been in the immediate post-Civil War period. Also compiled for the Petition was a list of residents who had occupied the property from circa 1865 to 1943. The house was apparently listed for sale from 1943 to 1949. My review found no basis to specifically contest this information at present.

Regarding Criterion e-5, the Wisconsin Historical Society database identifies the architectural style of the building as Victorian Gothic, a point noted in the Petition. Common features of the style include steeply pitched roofs, vergeboards, and roof brackets as stylistic starting points, though more ornamental examples might also employ, for example, a variety of colors and textures, pointed arched windows, terra cotta tile, and geometric patterns in various surfaces, among other features. There is also typically a seamless passing as wall surfaces extend into the gables.¹

¹ Virginia & Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993): 196-207; John G. Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture: A Pictorial Guide to Styles and Terms, 1600-1945* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State and Local History): 30-33.

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This house was constructed of brick and is clearly influenced by the Gothic style by virtue of its steeply pitched roof, vergeboards and brackets (see Figures 1 and 2, Page 4). That cannot be questioned. Beyond that, however, the house is very plain, indeed, in my opinion, it is stylistically lacking. And that is compounded by some integrity problems, not the least of which is the vertical board that now covers the brick on the northeast side of the first floor and significant parts of the second floor. Additionally the rear (west) wall does not extend seamlessly into the gable, from which it is actually separated. The house is stylistically simple as well as impaired.

It was noted previously that the architect of the house when originally constructed is unknown, a fact that has a bearing on Criterion e-6. Indeed, the structure was not acknowledged in the City's building permit system until 1892 when architect Theodore Schutz, who was then identified as the owner, acquired Permit 411 "to build an addition to the present house..."², the specific purpose for which was uncertain. Nevertheless, the permit establishes Schutz's interest in the property.

Theodore F. Schutz was a native of Germany, born in 1851. His family arrived in Baltimore in 1860 and by 1866 he was a resident of Milwaukee. Schutz originally worked as a carpenter in the city before becoming "...an assistant to Architect Douglas."³ It is presumed that the Douglas referenced was James Douglas, a prominent nineteenth century Milwaukee architect who enjoyed working in the High Victorian Gothic style. Douglas was one of eight architects singled out for acknowledgement and discussion in *Built in Milwaukee: An Architectural View of the City*, along with, among others, Edward Townsend Mix, Henry Koch, Alexander Eschweiler and Russell Barr Williamson.⁴ How long Schutz worked for Douglas is uncertain. It is known that he partnered and practiced with Augustin Wiskocil in the 1890s. It is further known that for much of the 1890s Schutz was also the City of Milwaukee Building Inspector, a position he yielded in 1897.⁵

² City of Milwaukee Building Permits – 1245 N. Milwaukee Street, 05 August 1892 (Permit #411), City of Milwaukee, 809 N. Broadway, Milwaukee, WI.

³ "Bate Left Out," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 04 May 1891, Page 1.

⁴ Landscape Research, *Built in Milwaukee: An Architectural View of the City* (Milwaukee: The City of Milwaukee, 1980): 139-143.

⁵ "Bate," *Journal*; "Historic Designation Study Report: Hrobsky/Berg Building," City of Milwaukee HPC, April 2006, viewed at <https://city.milwaukee.gov/ImageLibrary/Groups/cityHPC/DesignatedReports/vtictnf/HrobskyBerg.pdf> on 10 November 2019; "Theodore Schutz Dies: Public Official in 1891," *The Milwaukee Journal* 17 November 1923, Page 6; "Pioneer Building Inspector Passes," *The Milwaukee Sentinel* (City Home Edition), 17 November 1923, Page 1.

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As the decade of the 1890s ended, Schutz worked independently. His commissions, at least those identified, were mostly modest residential or small commercial ventures. Examples today that retain both a sense of integrity and design include a house (1915) at 2483-85 N. Frederick and a store, the Hambach & Hellmann Meat Store (1910) at 1024 E. Brady Street (see Figures 3 and 4, Page 0). The former meat store is a contributing structure in the National Register-listed East Brady Street Historic District. Interestingly, when Schutz died in 1923, the obituary headline in *The Milwaukee Journal* referred to him as a “Public Official” while that in *The Milwaukee Sentinel* identified him as a “Pioneer Building Inspector.” Neither headline referred to him as an architect though that fact was mentioned briefly in each short article.⁶

City permits indicate that Schutz had a relationship with 1245 N. Milwaukee Street from 1892 to his death. There appears some ambiguity as to exactly when the subject house was converted to a duplex. Nevertheless, the Historic Designation Petition suggests it occurred in 1918 and accommodated Schutz’s daughter, newly married to John Schlehlein Jr., the Registrar of Probate Court, who remained in the property, according to the Petition, until 1937.

All this said, the question remains.... Does Schutz’s association with the property, and his profession as an architect, qualify it for designation under Criterion e-6? He did not design the building and the exact nature and extent of his modifications are uncertain. It is also unknown if the house was originally a Victorian Gothic building, or if that was a stylistic change made by Schutz. It is apparent that Schutz was an experienced and reliable architect, though an unspectacular one. Nevertheless, there is a question worth asking, and in this case *hypothetically*. The question assumes that Schutz meets the threshold and was “an individual [whose] works have influenced the development of the city.” Are there better examples of his work that should be considered today? Better than 1245 N. Milwaukee Street? Yes! At the very least those include 2483-85 N. Frederick Street and 1024 E. Brady Street.

In summary, I do not believe that the architectural character of 1245 N. Milwaukee Street, nor its association with Theodore Schutz, should qualify it under either criterion e5 or e6 for temporary designation by the Historic Preservation Commission.

JNV

⁶ “Schutz Dies,” *Journal*; “Inspector Passes,” *Sentinel*.

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Figure 1: 1245 N. Milwaukee Street. View to southwest.



Figure 2: 1245 N. Milwaukee Street. View to southeast.

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Figure 3: 2483-85 N. Frederick. View to west.



Figure 4: Hamback & Hellman Meat Store, 1024 E. Brady Street. View to northwest (the subject building is that in the center of the picture).

