

Remarks to the Historic Preservation Commission (Final Draft)

Good afternoon, and thank you, commissioners, I must say, for this historic opportunity to speak.

My name is Pat Small. I grew up on a New Berlin farm and have been mostly a Milwaukee resident since 1968. I also own and rehab real estate.

My comments are unbiased. I don't know any Gettelman descendants, but, like many others, I am connected to their family and the brewing business indirectly.

For starters, and it's an easy one, I fondly recall my father enjoying Gettelman beer.

And secondly, my late aunt, Grace Barbian, left her family's Racine County farm in the 1920s to work in the Gettelman Family home. I often heard how lucky and honored she was to have experienced this (and my mother—Grace's sister--was even a bit envious). Aunt Grace's position also enabled her to socialize in Old Milwaukee's German dancehalls, where she met her husband, Joe Bauer.

From the mid-19th century until 1961, what become known as A. Gettelman Brewing Company shared in Milwaukee's prosperity and progress. They focused on serving the local and regional market. By all accounts, they were a civic-minded and respected business.

The Gettelmans were also innovators. For example, Fritz Gettelman developed a better-rolling beer barrel. How important was that?!

Fritz's office was upstairs in the smaller of the two building that MillerCoors intends to demolish. That office was once HIS CHILDHOOD BEDROOM--when the building previously functioned as the family home.

The Gettelman legacy remains embodied in those two buildings. Preserving them will enable future generations to tangibly connect with the earliest history of one of Milwaukee's modestly scaled breweries.

My father's farm also had a connection to Milwaukee beer. Before Prohibition started in 1919, my father and grandfather would travel from New Berlin to sell the hops they grew to Milwaukee breweries—they were a direct link in the brewing supply chain.

Fortunately, I'm able to retell these details of local and family history. Partly, that's how heritage is passed on. But even better, historic designation can help ensure—literally speaking—that “structural memory” continues from generation to generation.

The Gettelman and Miller brewing families worked together for their--and Milwaukee's--greater good. MillerCoors can now honor that cooperation.

Ask yourself: Wouldn't visitors AND MillerCoors both benefit from these 19th-century Gettelmen buildings being added to the Miller Brewery Tour?

And I'll even suggest a couple of tour promotional pointers:

“See the rooms where Fritz Gettelman first played—and then worked!”

Or “Chill out in Gettelman's 1856 lagering cellar!—the coolest in town!”

Remember, some historic buildings are truly gems. And, like diamonds, they can be treasured FOREVER.

Let's drink a Miller High Life, or Milwaukee's Best, to that!

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