



Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission Staff Report

LIVING WITH HISTORY

HPC meeting date: 7/10/2017

Ald. Nik Kovac District: 3

Staff reviewer: Tim Askin

PTS #114308

CCF #170386

Property	2446 N. LAKE DR.	North Lake Drive Estates Historic District
Owner/Applicant	JOHN ANDREW KLEMEN CHILD'S TRUST D12-16-2004 312 E BUFFALO ST STE 300 MILWAUKEE WI 53202	Rick Langdon 2415 S Logan Ave Milwaukee, WI 53207 Phone: (920) 559-6151
Proposal	Retain and continue applying cultured stone to south wall of house as a replacement masonry veneer on the south wall.	

Staff comments The subject property is an elaborate brick duplex, part of a series of eight duplexes developed and designed by Richard E. Oberst on this stretch of Lake Drive. Oberst was a builder, architect, real estate investor, and banker who was highly active in the 1920s. The majority of his buildings were masonry.

Applicant began replacing failing masonry on the south wall of this house. Rather than salvage the bricks that were removed, they were mostly discarded and replaced with cultured stone. Two windows have also been covered up, one of which had partial stone trim. It is unclear if the original stone trim has been retained; however, it is our understanding the boarding is a protective measure during construction and the window framing remains. A citizen complaint was received and a stop work order was issued by DNS for performing the work without a COA. Construction has been on hold since early June.

There are additional preservation violations at the rear of the property. No application for approval of the work has been submitted as of the writing of this report. These violations do not concern this brick replacement and their remediation can be handled at the staff level.

The work was conducted without a COA and materials were not replaced in kind. This does not meet the requirements of the ordinance (320-21-11-g-1: "the proposed work would destroy or adversely affect any exterior architectural feature of the improvement upon which the work is to be done"). It also does not meet the masonry guidelines for the district 2.a.iv: "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, such as artificial cast stone or fake brick veneer." Discarding and failing to reinstall the bricks constitutes destruction of an exterior feature. Staff recommends denial of the proposal to continue replacing the bricks with cultured stone, stone, or any stone-like product.

The bricks in this case are exceptionally unusual. They are paver sized and have a unique patented texture. The bricks are known as the Acme PersianTex, for their purported resemblance to the texture of Persian rugs. The brick has not been manufactured in decades and the factory where it was produced has been closed for several years, although Acme Brick Company is still in existence.

(over)

Staff comments (cont.)

Despite the best efforts of both the contractor and HPC staff, no good match to the original brick could be found. The closest find is a color and size match found on the grounds of the brick factory with a different texture. A textured brick in the right size and color is the best that can be achieved. At the time of writing this report, it is unclear if there is sufficient inventory of the brick to complete the repairs on the building.

There is a further complexity with this property in that the brick is extremely dirty, complicating the color match. Cleaning the brick is likely unwise due to the texture, which the contractor noted has sloughed off over time on several of the bricks. Therefore, the usual preservation consideration of matching original color rather than weathered color is not necessarily a factor in this case.

Staff recommends that the stone be ordered removed from the building and that a natural clay brick product be used to complete the repairs. Staff would recommend that the Acme brickyard partial match be used. As a last resort that may be used only if there is insufficient supply of the Acme brick, staff would accept the use of the dark toned paver size brick that the contractor has proposed. However, the Commission may choose another option or direct the applicant to present more options.

Recommendation

Recommend Approval with Conditions

Conditions

Repair the wall only with the specific brick selected by the Commission and restore the two boarded windows to their original condition and trim.

Previous HPC action

Previous Council action