

# HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

## HENRY MESSMER RESIDENCE

(Written Summer, 1985)

### I. NAME

Historic: Henry Messmer Residence

Common: None

### II. LOCATION

2302 North Booth Street

Legal Property Description: The west 88 feet of Lot 13, Block 27 in J.L Pierce's Subdivision of Lots 47-55 in Section 16, Twp 7 North, Range 22 East, in the City of Milwaukee.

### III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

### IV. OWNER

Michael Pazdan & Alan Karbel  
2302 North Booth Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53212

### V. YEAR BUILT

1882

### VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Henry Messmer Residence is a 2-story, L-shaped, cross-gable roofed, brick house. It is sited on a large corner lot in a late nineteenth century neighborhood of middle class, Victorian houses. The house is of late Italianate design with arched, one-over-one, wooden windows accented with lattice-patterned, brick spandrel panels. Saw-tooth brick, soldier courses gird the building at the eaves. A simple Italianate porch shelters the entrance vestibule with its oval window ornamented with keystones. The south facing rear porch has been enclosed as a sun porch. The brick has been painted.

### VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Henry Messmer House is a good example of a middle class, cream brick, Victorian residence. It is historically interesting as the one time home of a prolific, nineteenth century residential and commercial architect.

### VIII. HISTORY

This house was built in 1882 by Charles H. Busse, a mason, who lived here until 1884. Henry Messmer succeeded Busse in 1884 or early 1885 and subsequently made it his home until his death in 1899. It is likely that Messmer designed the house for Busse. The house is very similar in design and detailing to the somewhat grander Phillip Hartig House at 1663 North Astor Street, designed by Messmer in 1882. During the time Messmer lived in the Booth Street House, his career as an architect was at its height.

Messmer had been born in Switzerland in 1839 where he had worked as an architect before coming to Milwaukee in 1866. After working in the architectural offices of Leonard Schmidtner of Milwaukee and Col. Shipman of Madison, he established his own firm in 1873. He designed a number of large brewery buildings, warehouses, and malting plants in addition to a few churches and literally hundreds of residences and commercial buildings. His sons, Robert A. (1870-?) and John (1884-1971) eventually entered this firm. Messmer died in 1899, after which the firm continued as Henry Messmer & Son.

## **IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

The Messmer House satisfies criteria of significance five and six 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. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. These guidelines shall be applicable only to the exterior of the Henry Messmer Residence. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

### **A. Roofs**

Retain the original 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 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 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 existing window and door openings on the south and west elevations. 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.
2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If replacement window sash or doors are necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements such as unpainted aluminum combination storm and screen units. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or the installation of plastic or metal strip awnings or shutters. 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 are not recommended and 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 and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principle elevation.

F. Signs

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 material, fencing, paving and lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the architectural character of the building.