

Capsule Summary

840 N. Chester St.
Baltimore, Maryland
B-5162-2
1889; c. 1917
Private access

The property at 840 N. Chester St. in Baltimore, Maryland is one of a pair of two-story, two-bay-wide brick houses built in 1889 on the southwest corner of Ashland Ave. and N. Chester St., only a few blocks east of Johns Hopkins Hospital, opened the same year. The building, covered in formstone, extends west along Ashland Ave. a total of ten bays, almost to Castle St. Although the cornice of the building is hidden under the formstone, its rootline shape is evident and corresponds to the 1913-1920 period of time that German-born Meyer Greenebaum bought the property and opened a jewelry store on the first floor, remodeling the building for this purpose.

The building at 840 N. Chester Street is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. The houses are representative of the many blocks of two-and-three-story brick Italianate-style rowhouses built between c. 1868 and the early 1890s by various, often German, builders in this area of East Baltimore. The houses are also located in Baltimore's historic Bohemian neighborhood, centered around St. Wenceslaus Church, a block to the east, which thrived between the mid-1870s into the 1960s.

Maryland Historical Trust Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties Form

Inventory No. B-5162-2

1. Name of Property (indicate preferred name)

historic 840 N. Chester St.
other

2. Location

street and number 840 N. Chester St. __ not for publication
city, town Baltimore __ vicinity
county Baltimore City 21213

3. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name
street and number telephone
city, town state zip code

4. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Land Records Office liber JB 1259 folio 62
city, town tax map tax parcel tax ID number

5. Primary Location of Additional Data

- Contributing Resource in National Register District
- Contributing Resource in Local Historic District
- Determined Eligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Determined Ineligible for the National Register/Maryland Register
- Recorded by HABS/HAER
- Historic Structure Report or Research Report at MHT
- Other: _____

6. Classification

Category	Ownership	Current Function		Resource Count	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce/trade	<input type="checkbox"/> recreation/culture	1	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> defense	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> domestic	<input type="checkbox"/> social		structures
<input type="checkbox"/> object		<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		objects
		<input type="checkbox"/> funerary	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress		Total
		<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> unknown		
		<input type="checkbox"/> health care	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> vacant/not in use	Number of Contributing Resources previously listed in the Inventory	
		<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> other:	_____	

7. Description

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Condition

excellent deteriorated
 good ruins
 fair altered

Prepare both a one paragraph summary and a comprehensive description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Description Summary:

The property at 840 N. Chester St. in Baltimore, Maryland is one of a pair of two-story, two-bay-wide brick houses built in 1889 on the southwest corner of Ashland Ave. and N. Chester St., only a few blocks east of Johns Hopkins Hospital, opened in the same year. Both houses are now covered with formstone.

General Description:

The house at 840 N. Chester St. is two stories tall, two-bays-wide, and extends west along Ashland Ave. a total of ten bays, almost to Castle St., the narrow-mid-block street bisecting this city block. Although the cornice of the building is hidden under the formstone, its roofline shape is evident and corresponds to the 1913-1920 period of time that German-born Meyer Greenebaum bought the property and opened a jewelry store on the first floor, remodeling the building for this purpose.

Built in 1889, the building would originally have had a wooden, bracketed cornice, like so many other rowhouses in this East Baltimore neighborhood—the kind of cornice seen in the surviving building facing Ashland Ave. at the west end of the property. But at some point in the late 1910s Meyer Greenebaum remodeled the former rowhouse into a Colonial Revival-style corner storefront, creating a wide, recessed full-height arch on the Chester St. façade and two narrower full-height recessed arches in the first two bays of the Ashland Ave. side of the first floor of the property. He also created recessed flat-linteled windows on the two bays of the second floor, facing both Chester St. and Ashland Ave., with some kind of decorative element probably placed on the center plinth between these pairs of recessed windows. The roofline of the house was remodeled on the façade and around the corner on the first two bays of the Ashland St. façade, with center and end parapets placed above a slightly projecting deep cornice, finished off with a deep molding strip. At some point in the past all three arched, first-floor openings were filled with plate glass windows. The wide arch on the front of the building now has a replacement door, flanked by two rectangular sidelights, and topped with a round glass arch. Two vertical strips of stamped sheet metal molding frame the front door and extend to the top of the arch. A horizontal strip of the same egg-and-dart molding sets off the top glass arch. This same molding may have been used on the plinth between second-floor windows on the façade and around the corner.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance	Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> health/medicine	<input type="checkbox"/> performing arts
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-1999	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment/ recreation	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 2000-	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> ethnic heritage	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/ settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> social history
	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning		<input type="checkbox"/> maritime history	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation		<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other: _____

Specific dates	1889	Architect/Builder
Construction dates	1889; c. 1917	

Evaluation for:

National Register Maryland Register not evaluated

Prepare a one-paragraph summary statement of significance addressing applicable criteria, followed by a narrative discussion of the history of the resource and its context. (For compliance projects, complete evaluation on a DOE Form – see manual.)

The building at 840 N. Chester Street is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. Built in 1889, the pair of houses are representative of the many blocks of two-and-three-story brick Italianate-style rowhouses built between c. 1868 and the early 1890s by various, often German, builders in this area of East Baltimore. Initially, as N. Broadway was being extended to North Avenue in the 1870s, and omnibus transportation made it possible for affluent families to relocate away from the old downtown, several enterprising landowners and developers created new residential areas centered on this stylish boulevard to house prosperous Baltimoreans. Unfortunately, many of the houses built in this period have been demolished to make way for the expansion of Johns Hopkins Hospital facilities, but some rows and houses survive as evidence of the neighborhood’s once stylish appearance. The houses are also located in Baltimore’s historic Bohemian neighborhood, centered around St. Wenceslaus Church, a block east at Ashland and Collington Avenues. When Bohemian immigrants first came to this area of East Baltimore in the mid-1870s, they made their homes in the modest two-story houses built on the narrow, mid-block streets east of Broadway—Shuter, Durham, Chapel, and Castle. But as the community grew and prospered, many members moved into the two- and three-story houses on the main streets, where they remained into the 1950s and 1960s, before moving northeast into Baltimore County.

Resource History and Historic Context:

The land along upper Broadway began to be developed by Archibald Stirling, an early nineteenth century successful commission merchant and banker. Stirling’s country house was located some distance west of Broadway and north of Eager Street, but his property extended far to the east of present-day Broadway, which was not opened to North Avenue until 1876.

As the city grew northward in the 1840s and omnibus transportation made it possible for affluent families to relocate away from the old downtown, several enterprising landowners and developers created new residential areas centered around park squares. First came Franklin Square and Union Square in west Baltimore, but soon after the Donnell family gave the land for Union Square to the city in 1846, Stirling began negotiating with the City Council to have them purchase land from his estate to create a public square in East Baltimore. This they did in 1853, for the immense sum of \$30,000. Stirling not only profited from the sale of the parkland, but also played a very active role in developing the building lots facing the square, which would become known as Madison Square. Following the example at Franklin Square, Stirling tried to insure that his development would be fashionable and thus command high prices by erecting a group of large, elegant houses facing the square. These went up in 1854 on

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the north side of Chase Street and appear to have been distinctly modeled on the first group of houses built at Franklin Square. The three-story units were built as pairs, set back from the street so they would have front yards, with each house also having one side yard. The same year Stirling sold land facing the square to an Episcopal Church, the most socially-advantaged denomination in the city.

Stirling was only able to sell a few other parcels to builders in the late 1850s, before the Civil War put a stop to all building activity. Once peace had returned Stirling arranged for groups of stylish houses to be built along the west side of Eden Street and the east side of Caroline Street in 1866 and 1867 before his own death in the latter year. By this time Madison Square had been laid out with luxuriously planted curving walks and a fountain, and had claimed its place as one of Baltimore's more elegant residential districts.

The same year that Stirling died, his daughter sold a large parcel of his land east of Broadway to a man named Nicholas Ogier, listed in the census and city directories as a gardener, for \$25,000.¹ Six months later Ogier sold the land to eight men, who soon after incorporated themselves as the McDonogh Place Company. The land purchased from Stirling's daughter began at the corner of Chew (Ashland) and the east side of Broadway and ran 926' east (to N. Wolfe Street), north to Gay Street, southwest to Broadway, and south on Broadway 1134' to Chew. The McDonogh Place Co. lost no time in erecting large three-story, three-bay-wide (16') houses on the east side of the 900 block of N. Broadway, beginning in 1868, followed a similar row of ten houses at 1003-21 N. Broadway in 1869, and narrower, two-bay-wide houses (13'4" wide) on the west side of Register Street in 1870-71, the company erected three-story, two-bay-wide houses that were only 13'4" wide. Construction began in late 1870 and was completed by June 1871. In December 1872 the company leased a 38-foot-wide lot on E. Eager Street, east of the alley behind the Broadway houses to a Baptist congregation who built the Bethany Baptist Chapel, which became Grace Baptist Church in 1885.² By 1890 the church served the Deutsche Emmanuel Lutheran congregation as St. Peter's Church. (It has since been demolished.)

The three-bay-wide houses on Broadway sold for \$2,600, with \$48 ground rents and the narrower houses on Register Ave. (now called McDonogh St.) sold for prices ranging from \$1,325 to \$1,350, with \$40 ground rents. A variety of mainly German-born builders began to fill the main streets east of N. Broadway with three-story houses in the later 1870s into the 1880s, while building much smaller, two-story, two-bay-wide houses on the narrow, mid-block streets. German householders bought the three-story houses in the neighborhood, but recent immigrants from Bohemia (now Czechoslovakia) both purchased or rented the two-story houses on the mid-block streets. With the opening of the Johns Hopkins Hospital on North Broadway, in May 1889, the surrounding neighborhood quickly filled with houses, with more and more two-story rowhouses being built east of the hospital in the late 1880s and early 1900s.

The houses at 838-840 N. Chester Street were built in 1889 by Conrad Ritz, Sr., a local butcher who lived around the corner on Castle St.³ In January 1891 Ritz sold the corner house to his son Conrad Ritz, Jr. for \$1,000, who, in turn, sold it to a Frank Vierengel in January, 1893 for \$1600.⁴ Vierengel apparently rented the house to a man named Israel Walstrom, who appears in the 1900 Baltimore City as the driver of an ice wagon, living at 840 N.

¹ Baltimore City Land Records, Liber AM 345, folio 277.

² Baltimore City Land Records, Liber GR 691, folio 260.

³ Baltimore City Land Records, Liber JB 1259, folio 62; U.S. Federal Census, 1880.

⁴ Baltimore City Land Records, Liber JB 1327, folio 485; Liber JB 1427, folio 103.

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Chester St. Vierengel finally sold the house to Walstrom in 1906 and in 1913 Walstrom sold it to a German immigrant notions dealer named Meyer Greenebaum.⁵ By the time of the 1920 U.S. Census, Greenebaum was listed as owning a jewelry store at 840 N. Chester St. and having four children living in the house. By 1922 the Greenebaums had moved to 2200 E. Monument St., corner of Collington Ave., where he operated a jewelry store that advertised in that year's city directory as carrying "Diamonds, Watches, Jewelry, Silverware, and Ivory goods."⁶

Although the first residents of the houses on N. Broadway and McDonogh Streets in the Historic District were Maryland-born or German, by the early 1870s this area of upper Broadway was becoming the center of Baltimore's Bohemian immigrant community. Beginning in the 1870s, new Bohemian arrivals began to move into the blocks of two-story, two-bay-wide, gable-rooted houses built in 1850-51 along narrow Barnes and Abbott Streets, just west of Broadway and south of Eager. German immigrants were the first residents, but by the 1870s were being replaced by just-arrived Bohemians. One of the significant landmarks in the Old East Baltimore Historic District (west of N. Broadway) is still standing at the northwest corner of Barnes and Broadway, where Wenceslaus Shimek opened an organ factory in the early 1880s, employing many local Bohemians. Soon afterwards Shimek added a social meeting hall, gymnastics parlor, and saloon and the place came to be known as Shimek's Bohemian Hall.⁷

As the McDonogh Place Co. and other builders filled the narrow, mid-block streets north of E. Monument Street with reasonably priced, small two-story houses in the 1870s and 1880s, many of the first home-buyers were Bohemians, who obtained mortgage loans from a number of ethnically-sponsored savings and loan associations. The community continued to expand and prosper into the early 1900s and beyond, with every corner the location of a Bohemian grocery, bakery, tailor shop, meat market, clothing store, drug store, jewelry shop, or savings and loan association, all of which conducted business in Czech as well as English. Shimek's Hall remained an important center of community life.

By 1870 Baltimore was already home to about a thousand Roman Catholic Bohemians but by the 1880s this number had increased to over five thousand. The leaders of the Czech community asked the Archbishop of Baltimore to secure the services of a Bohemian-born priest to minister to the growing Bohemian community and even collected the money to pay for his passage. In 1871 the Reverend Wendel in Vacula arrived from Bohemia and began organizing the congregation and a parish school, which later became St. Wenceslaus. Originally located in two different former German Catholic churches in Fells Point, the congregation eventually secured land for a new church and school in the 800 block of N. Collington Avenue, south of Ashland, in the heart of their community north of Johns Hopkins Hospital. The St. Wenceslaus School opened first in 1903, housing a temporary church, and by 1905 had some 840 students in eight grades. The present church was built in 1914-15 at the southeast corner of Ashland and N. Collington Avenues for a congregation numbering some 7,000. Its magnificent interior boasts three

⁵ Baltimore City Land Records, Liber RO 2263, folio 477; Liber RO 2810, folio 267;

⁶ Baltimore City Directory, 1922.

⁷ For a fuller account of the development of East Baltimore and Baltimore's Bohemian community, see Chapter 4 in Mary Ellen Hayward, *Baltimore's Alley Houses: Homes for Working People Since the 1780s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

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white marble altars, hand-painted ceiling decorations, wall panels, and exquisite metalwork completed by local Bohemian craftsmen and artisans.

By 1920, St. Wenceslaus was the fourth largest parish in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Community life centered around the church and its various social and benevolent societies like the Men's, Women's and Children's Sokols, Blahoslavene Aneiky Ceske, and the Czech Dramatic Society, not to mention the powerful Sixth Ward Bohemian Democratic Club. In 1925 the parish built the Lyceum, facing Madison Street, which housed a basketball court, bowling alleys, meeting rooms and a roof-top dance floor. St. Wenceslaus School closed in 1986, with the building converted into apartments providing low-cost housing to the needy. The convent has been converted to a hospice staffed by Mother Teresa's Missionary Sisters of Charity who care for AIDS victims. Most recently the Maryland Institute College of Art has opened a branch in part of the complex. The church remains open but many of the original parishioners have moved away.

Under National Register of Historic Places Criterion C, the pair of houses at 838-840 N. Chester St. achieve architectural importance as examples of the kind of two-story, late Italianate-style brick rowhouses built east of the Johns Hopkins Hospital in this area of East Baltimore in the late 1880s. Under Criterion A, the houses are typical of the type erected in this neighborhood for the large influx of Bohemian immigrants who began arriving in the city in the 1870s, and made their homes in the area until the 1950s and 1960s.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See attached continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of surveyed property 1/4
Acreage of historical setting 1/4
Quadrangle name Baltimore East

Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at the southwest corner of N. Chester St. and Ashland Ave. and running south 15' to the partition wall between 840 and 838 N. Chester; then running west 80' to a 10'-wide alley, then north 15' to the south side of Ashland Ave., and then east 80' to the beginning.

11. Form Prepared by

name/title	Mary Ellen Hayward		
organization		date	8/5/2019
street & number	6684 Fair School Rd.	telephone	410-252-3662
city or town	Glen Rock	state	PA 17327

The Maryland Inventory of Historic Properties was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Maryland Department of Planning
100 Community Place
Crownsville, MD 21032-2023
410-697-9591

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Major Bibliographical References:

Secondary Sources

Mary Ellen Hayward, *Baltimore's Alley Houses: Homes for Working People Since the 1780s* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008)

Mary Ellen Hayward and Charles Belfoure, *The Baltimore Rowhouse* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

Mary Ellen Hayward and Frank R. Shivers, Jr., editors, *The Architecture of Baltimore, An Illustrated History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

Henry Russell Hitchcock, *Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Penguin Books, 1958).

.J. Thomas Scharf, *History of Baltimore City and County, Parts I and II* (Baltimore: Regional Publishing Co., 1971).

Primary Sources

The Land Records of Baltimore City, housed in the Clarence Mitchell, Jr. Courthouse, Baltimore, Maryland, available online at the Maryland State Archives

The *Baltimore Sun*, available on microfilm at the Enoch Pratt Free Library and at Goucher College Library, 1880-1940, and online through Genealogy Bank.com

U.S. Federal Censuses, 1870, 1880, 1900, 1910, and 1920, available on microfilm at the Enoch Pratt Free Library or through Ancestry.com

Baltimore City Directories, on microfilm at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and online through Ancestry.com



LAUREL 20 MI
56621 SW
(BALTIMORE WE)

4352

FREDERICK 45 MI
PINE ORCHARD 14 MI

1730'

4350

WASHINGTON 10.31 MI

434

BALTIMORE CITY DIST
B-5162-2

840 N. CHESTER ST.

30 FEET NOV 1941

NORTH WEST

BALTIMORE

Basin

Feils Point

South Baltimore



B-5152-2

840 N. CHESTER St.

Baltimore, MD 21213

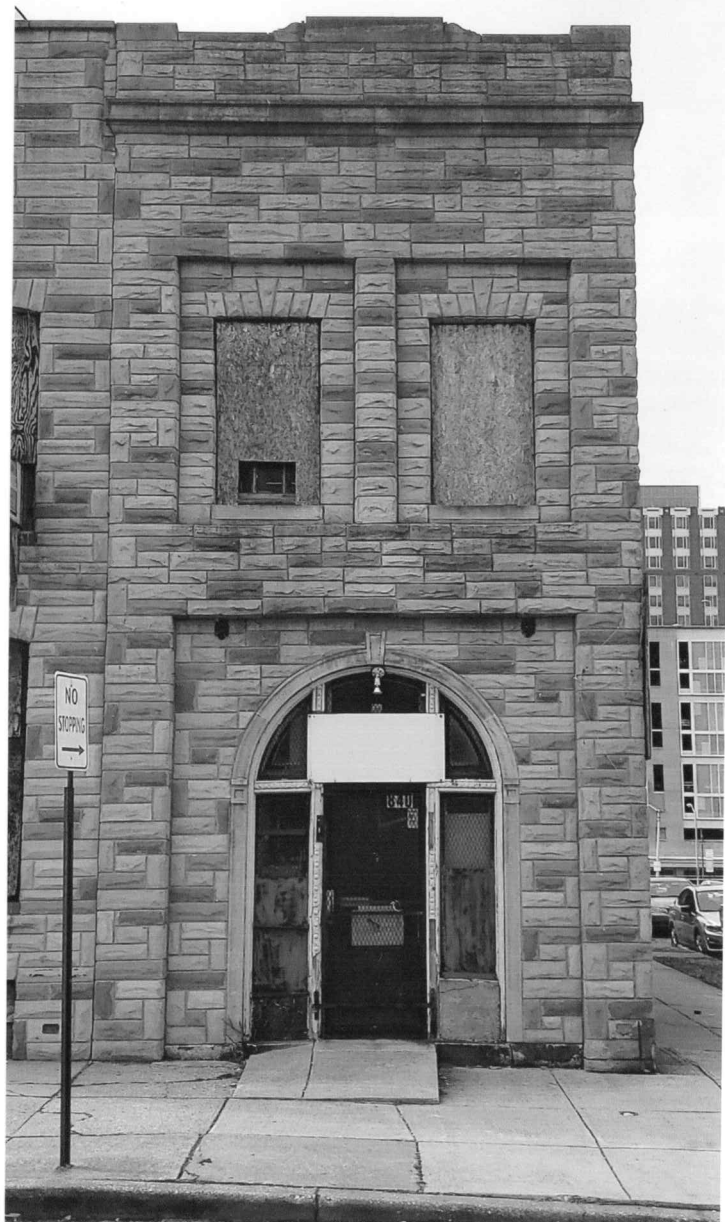
Al. Barney

5119

East & North facades

115

MD J470



B-5162-2

840 N. Chester St.

Baltimore, MD 21213

Al Barney

5/19

East facade

3/5

MJ SHPO



B-5162-2

838-840 N. CHESTER ST.

Baltimore, MD 21218

Al Barney

5/19

East + North facades

3/5

MD SHPO



B-5102-2

840 N. CHESTER ST.

BALTIMORE, MD 21283

Al Barney

5/19

East-North facades

4/3

MD SHPO



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840 N. Chester St.

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Al Barry

5/19

North Joade

515

MD SHPD