



TYJESKI TILE CO. MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN



NEWSLETTER, JANUARY - MARCH 2021

UPCOMING EVENTS

No tours for summer planned yet... but there will be!

Wait for updates in May.

STUDIO SNAPSHOT



The studio is pretty much finished now. Just a few odds & ends are left. That means I've been able to get going on tile installations for the Shorewood Historical Society and the newly renovated fire station.

FEATURED BUILDING



Planning camping trips up north for this year? Considering visits to small towns like Merrill, Wisconsin. Amazing terra-cotta wonders like the historic American State Bank can be seen and admired.

BLOG POSTS

“The Beer-Making Process in Terra Cotta”

Missing architecture tours? For this blog I write the post as if we are all on a bike or walking tour through Milwaukee. Relax in your chair as you enjoy the representations of brewing beer in clay. When you're done, I bet you'll want to get out and see the sites for yourself!



TILE & TERRA COTTA NEWS: THE BEER-MAKING PROCESS IN TERRA COTTA

There is little left to the imagination when it comes to observing the beer-manufacturing process in Milwaukee's architecture. This town has a splendid display of the brewing beer in architectural terra cotta. Best part of it is that you can experience the entire "exhibition" on the street. If capable, hop on a bicycle and explore the former breweries of Schlitz, Pabst, Miller, and a few other related sites and you will be amazed. Depending on your route, you could be lucky enough to take in the aroma of boiling hops in the fresh air.

Despite this being a blog, let's pretend we are together... on a tour! Bring your own beverage. Wear good shoes so you're comfortable. We're traveling about a total of 8 miles!

Let's begin at the Miller Brewery on State Street.

What better place to start than at a site with a symbol that stands for the process of brewing beer? Pictured above is a terra-cotta lunette on the Fred Miller Brewhouse built in 1886. Ever notice the six-pointed star near the top of cream-brick façade? It's hard to miss when painted gold and positioned above the name of the company owner, Fred



Miller. If you are a fan of geometry, you can call it a hexagram. If you speak German or want to impress a German, call it a "Bierstern" (beer star) or "Brauerstern" (brewers' star). In European history this star has roots in ancient alchemy representing a balance of fire and water energies. It was adapted in the Middle Ages to be a symbol for brewers' guilds. In Modern times and likely in the case of the Miller brewhouse, the star stands for the beer-making process.



One triangle represents fire, air, and water, and the other represents grain, hops, and yeast.

Fascinating, eh? You can read more about this star at the [Beer Museum](#) and the [Beer Connoisseur](#).

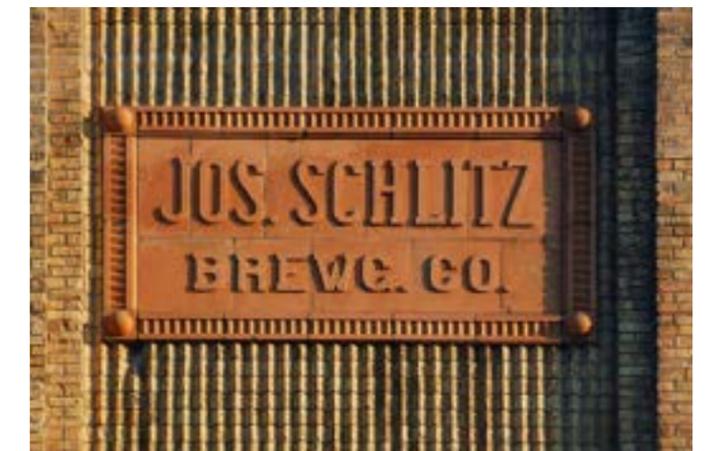
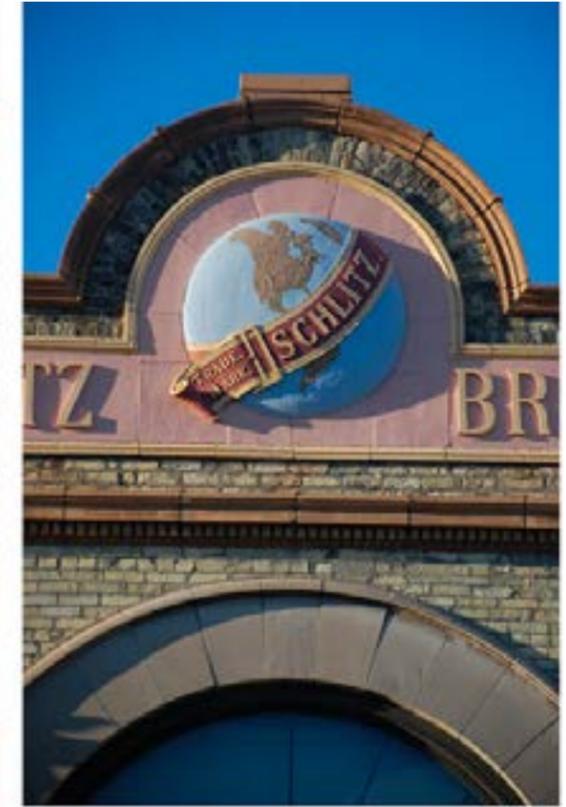
Have you ever been to Cincinnati? They have a very similar design at an abandoned brewery in the Over-the-Rhine neighborhood, built in 1887. [Read about it here!](#) The terra cotta from both sites were likely from the Northwestern Terra Cotta Works of Chicago. [Click here for Google Maps Link.](#)

Also at the Fred Miller Brewing Co. Brewhouse above the main door is a more literal representation of the tools and ingredients need to make their celebrated beers.

Recognize that belted globe? Chicagoans do for sure since there are loads of them, modeled in terra cotta, on many [old tied houses](#). Milwaukee has its fair share of these too - but only at the Schlitz Brewery Complex will you see them in clay.

Decorative plaques and trimmings in terra cotta were installed on nearly all the buildings at this site. You will observe that they are in numerous colors: red, orange, and polychromatic designs. Any decoration that shows an array of colors is not the original surface and was painted.

"Schlitz," also known as the "Beer that Made Milwaukee Famous," had an enormous site on the Milwaukee River and housed many buildings. The ones with terra cotta were built in the 1890s and early 1900s. Most of the terra cotta was manufactured by the Northwestern Terra Cotta



Company name in terra cotta as it originally appeared in the early 1900s.

Co., but with some orders completed by the American Terra Cotta & Ceramic Co. of Crystal Lake, Illinois.

In its prime, anybody walking by this brewery can tell what was happening in each structure because the plaques indicated the operations of what each building carried out. Plaques stating Malt House, Brew House, Bottle House, and Stables, among others, were installed on the exterior, usually near the parapets.

The site is no longer an operating brewery but is proudly preserved and maintained as a business park.

Even with a few demolitions, the decorative terra cotta units were saved and neatly arranged into the park that replaced them. They rest as artifacts of the past as well



as documentation for the manufacturing of beer. Passerby today can still get a “taste” of how beer was made by reading what function each building carried out and connecting these units to their original locations (provided with the signage of the park). Plus, these units provide a close-up opportunity to examine their craft!

Save a sip for the last, and very important step in the manufacturing of beer: its delivery. The Stables on the north side of the site commemorates beer distribution with beautiful sculptures of horses. They can be seen on the south and east elevations of the building. They too were originally earthy, terra-cotta orange in color like the rest of the decorations on the parapet. However, today they are neatly painted and make lovely statements on the street.

Here we go again! Less than a mile southwest we move to the Pabst Brewing Company on the hill. Oh wait... we are going another mile further. Hold on!

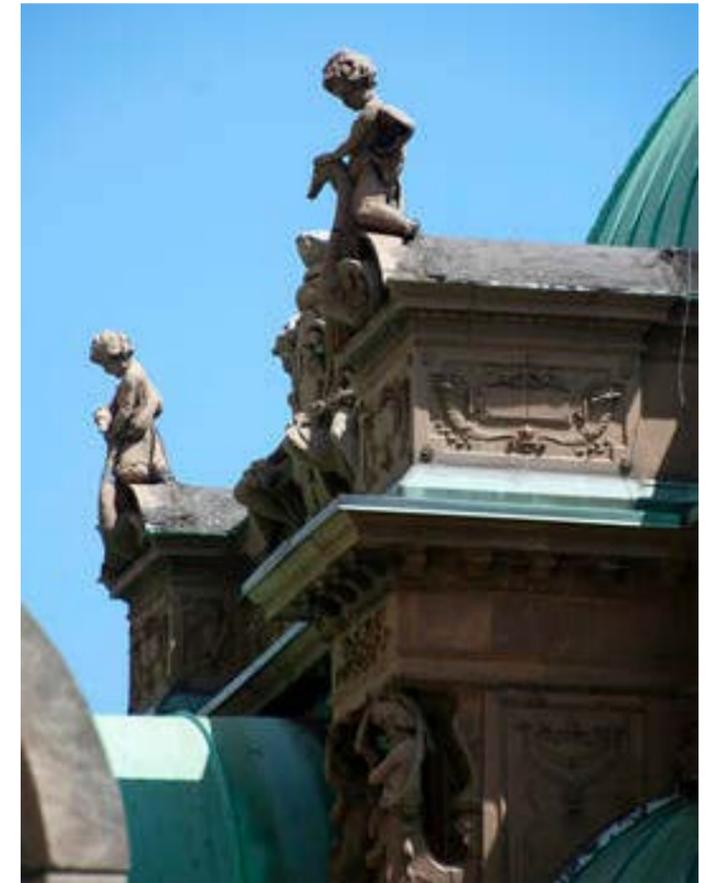


The king of beer welcomes you to his paradise.

The finest pleasures of enjoying beer may be the craft for some expert brewers, but for most of us it is the nourishment. The activities surrounding the consumption of beer may, arguably, have a craft of its own. No place does such an elegant job at creating a paradise for the indulgence of beer than the pavilion at the Pabst Mansion.

Otto Strack, the company architect for the Pabst Brewing Co., designed the fancy structure on the eastern section of the mansion for company owner Captain Frederick Pabst. The domed building was originally on display for the Chicago World Fair of 1893 as the part of the exhibit for the Pabst Brewing Company. Amazingly this structure was transported and positioned at the residence of Pabst.

Taking a first glance at this sculptural grandeur, it's quite breathtaking. Its intricate detail lures you in and rewards you with decorative motifs that celebrate the drinking of beer. Barley, hop vines, steins, and bands of cherubs can be marveled at from any view of the structure. Atlantes are sculpted into a clay as if they were riding in carriages navigating through a sea of beer. Full-round statues of puttos playfully wrestle swans into a headlock. What else do children do in a beer garden? Commemorating the Captain is a grandiose cartouche with his monogram. They appear on each of the four sides of the pavilion and are flanked with two figures. The female figure holds a bundle of barley and



the male figure has a bundle of hop vines. A crown placed at the crest marks Pabst as the king of beer.

The late nineteenth century was a glorious era for terra-cotta sculptors. Not only did they have plenty of work to complete, but they were able to execute inspiring and fulfilling designs such as these at these sites for Miller, Schlitz, and Pabst. Fortunately, this tradition did not cease in the 1890s. One of the last installations of architectural terra cotta in Wisconsin continues this narrative of the beer-making process in clay. Art Deco lovers, hold on real tight as we are heading down the bluff and southward 3.5 miles to the office for the Froedtert Grain & Malting Company.

In 1952, the [Froedtert Grain & Malting Co.](#) contracted American Terra Cotta & Ceramic Company to create three medallions for their artsy, Art Deco office building. This contract would have been common in the 1890s, or even in the 1920s, but this was significant for the 1950s.

All three medallions were modeled by sculptor Edward Schiller. We know this because there is a photograph of him with his pipe modeling one of the medallions in wet clay inside of a plaster frame. The picture is printed on page 113 of the *Common Clay* book by George Berry III and Sharon Darling.

On the office building, you will see two medallions of the same design. They are reminiscent of the tympanum at the Fred Miller Brewhouse from 1886 with the representation of a brewing rig, a scuppet, a mash paddle, and a bailer. Hop vines and bundles of barley also embellish this design.

Next to the office is the Chemistry Lab Annex with a third medallion. This is the one that is pictured with Edward Schiller in the *Common Clay* book. The design is a remarkable documentation of a chemistry set. An intricately rendered microscope appears on the left. In the front center is an Erlenmeyer flask with a stopper. And on the right is a distillation device known as a retort. Also in the design is a logo for the company. It reads, Froedtert Grain & Malting Company, Inc. with a monogram in the center and a scale behind it.

And there you have it! How fascinating it is to see the process of manufacturing exhibited on the buildings that represent those industries? Hopefully we can admire the craft they represent for generations. Though before we finish our refreshments, it is important that we acknowledge the significance of the terra-cotta material. We can appreciate these examples for providing insight on the art of beer-making, but we must also appreciate that they are made of ceramic.

Why does it matter that they are made of clay? Well, I've got two words for you: processing and kilns. Both terra cotta and beer are manufacturing industries and use similar, and at times, identical chemistry equipment. From the mixing, smashing, paddling, sifting, measuring, weighing, and exposure to heat, there are many processes in ceramics and beer that resemble one another. Clay is like grain in that both need to be processed before they can be worked with to create a product. Both materials are exposed to heat through kilning. And both products can be used

with one another in the end, i.e., steins!

It would be absolutely different if these bas-relief sculptures were made of precast stone or carved stone. The very nature of these ceramic installations is that they too went through a process that involved chemistry, firing, and calculated time, effort, and skill. Both were transformations of earthly materials turned it into a modern product. With that, I encourage you to find a well-crafted stein and a delectable brew, and enjoy the rewards of labor, art, and craft.



South elevation of the office for Froedtert Grain & Malting Co.



Medallions sculpted by Edward Schiller of the American Ceramic & Terra Cotta Co. in Crystal Lake, Ill.

