

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



84

1. Name

historic Rieman Block

and/or common Rieman Block

2. Location

street & number 617-631 West Lexington Street n/a not for publication

city, town Baltimore n/a vicinity of Seventh congressional district

state Maryland code 24 county independent city code 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name see Continuation Sheet No. 1

street & number

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Courthouse

street & number North Holliday Street

city, town Baltimore state Maryland 21202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Maryland Historical Trust
Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state Maryland 21401

7. Description

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Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>n/a</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Number of Resources		Number of previously listed
Contributing	Noncontributing	National Register properties
<u>8</u>	<u>0</u> buildings	included in this nomination: <u>0</u>
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures	Original and historic functions
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects	and uses: commercial, residential
<u>8</u>	<u>0</u> Total	

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY:

Located on West Lexington Street at Pearl Street, southwest corner, the Rieman Block is a nineteenth century terraced brick commercial and residential block of three stories plus a mansard roof in height. The principal elevation (north), divided into four sections of two units each, has shop fronts on the first floor. The present appearance with Queen Anne influenced decorative detailing is the result of an 1880 building project that included construction of the two eastern sections and renovation of the western sections, which probably date from mid-century. The mansard roof, covered with slate shingles, is pierced by brick-faced-gable-roofed dormers and supported by a modillioned cornice above brick corbeling. The principal facades of the 1880 sections are three bays wide per unit with stone lintels and sills. The elevations of the older Lexington Street facades are two bays wide per unit with wooden sills and brick flat arches. The shop fronts date from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The interior space of each unit is arranged generally with a large and small room on the first floor, three rooms each on the second and third floors, and two under the roof. Access to the upper levels is gained through the interiors of the shops. The interior decorative detailing is generally simple with flat beaded boards with corner blocks as surrounds in the 1880 sections and architrave in the other parts. Slate mantels adorn the 1880 units and wood Greek Revival influenced ones in the earlier sections.

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Continuation sheet Rieman Block Baltimore City, Maryland Item number 4 Page 1

OWNER OF PROPERTY

Current Owners: Messrs. Harry Merowitz, Morton L. Silberman and Philip Needle
505 Alex Brown Building
102 West Pennsylvania Avenue
Towson, Maryland 21204

Contract Buyers: Mr. and Mrs. Paul F. McKean (Margaret F.)
2919 Caves Road
Owings Mills, Maryland 21117

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Rieman Block
Continuation sheet Baltimore City, Maryland Item number 7 Page 2

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The Rieman Block stands on the south side of West Lexington Street between Pearl Street on the east and Arch Street on the west in the Lexington Market area. The campus of the University of Maryland, mostly mid and late twentieth century buildings, stretches to the south and west and the Retail District to the east and north. The building consists of four terraced sections with two units each. The present Queen Anne influenced appearance is the result of an 1880 building program that included construction of the eastern sections, 617-619-621-623 West Lexington Street, and renovation of the western sections, 625-627-629-631 West Lexington Street, which appear to date from the mid-nineteenth century. The block is tied visually into one unit by a dormered mansard roof with a modillioned cornice above brick corbelling and late nineteenth to early twentieth century shop fronts along Lexington Street.

The upper levels of the Lexington Street facades of the eastern two sections, built in 1880, have three rectangular windows (all sashes appear to be missing) per floor with stone lintels and sills, stone belt courses defining the window space, and brick corbelling above and below the third floor windows. A rectangular tower rises out of the corner of the third floor of the end unit, number 617, at Lexington and Pearl. Old photographs indicate the windows had two-over-two sashes.

Along Pearl Street (east elevation) the upper levels have fine rectangular windows (all sashes appear to be missing) with brick flat arches and brick belt courses. The first floor has a shop front that continues around from Lexington Street, a double-doored entrance with a rectangular transom below a decorative brick panelled segmental arch. A rectangular window with panelled shutters is located to the south of the entrance. The bricks are laid in stretcher bond. The name "Rieman Block" is inscribed on a stone in the beltcourse above the third story windows.

The upper facades of the western sections are two bays wide per unit. The windows, originally with four-over-four sashes, have brick flat arches and wood sills. The west end unit has a low tower in the roof. A stone inscribed "1880/Rieman Block" is located at the northwest corner between the second and third floors.

The west end of the block along Arch Street, which is essentially an alley, is devoid of decoration except for the remains of a painted advertisement for a druggist. The bricks are laid in common bond.

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Continuation sheet Rieman Block Baltimore City, Maryland Item number 7 Page 3

GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

The south or back elevation is a full four stories with two and three story els for the units except the easternmost unit which has the mansard roof effect and decoration that denote the street elevations. This elevation has a fairly regular placement of windows and doors. The openings in the 1880 sections have segmental arches. The window and door openings in the earlier sections are varied. On the first and second floors, the openings have segmental arches. The top two floors have rectangular openings with brick lintels on the third and wood lintels on the fourth. The fenestration arrangement of the fourth floor has one window per unit and the third floor has two windows per unit. A seam in the brick work separates 625-627 from 629-631 but only on the first, second and third stories.

The mansard roof which ties the units into one block is covered with slate shingles with decorative bands of decorative shingles.

The first floor shop interiors are an open plan from front to rear, all have stairways to the living units above with the exception of #627 and the east corner shop, #617. Each shop also has its own basement with stairway; again, with the exception of the previously mentioned corner shop has access to the basement from the outside on Pearl Street side of the block, or east side.

The interiors of the living areas on the second, third and fourth floors in both the 3 bay units (617-623) and 2 bay units (625-631) are of the classic row house plan; first floor of living unit has a living room extended across the entire front of the building with the dining room in the center and the kitchen in the rear. Stairways to floors above and from shop below are placed in the center of the plan between rooms depending on the style of the plan.

The third floor sleeping rooms have the same configuration as the floor below.

The fourth floor layout steps in from the rear to the rear wall of the center room of the floor below, thus giving the top floor 2 sleeping rooms per unit, with the exception of the most eastern unit, #617, which follows the configuration of the floor below with a full three room configuration.

The interior architectural details on the second, third and fourth floors of the Rieman Block are modest in character but are all fairly intact and appear to be remarkably unaltered over the years. The first floor area, however, of all the units, 617-631 have been substantially altered as their particular commercial uses have changed. With the exception of the storefronts, little of the original fabric remains on the first floor. The following is a listing of the significant interior features as they now exist.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

1) The storefronts: In the northeast corner of 617, the outline still remains of the original corner entrance. Most of the entrance vestibule tile is still evident. In units 619-623, the original storefronts are clearly visible from the interiors. In each case, the raised platform portions of the store window is still present. In unit 623, the original interior glass doors from the store window into the shop behind are still in working condition. The storefronts in the smaller 2-bay buildings, 625-631 have undergone more adjustments over the years. The storefront to 627 is, in fact, all but gone. The supporting column for it and the adjacent structure, 629, have been removed and replaced with a different structural system.

2) Fireplaces: On the upper floors of the buildings there are several existing fireplaces. In the larger units, 617-623, the fireplaces in the main front room (or living room) on the second floor all have existing stone hearths. Although several of the mantels and surrounds are missing, those that remain are typical of the period, i.e., black slate mantel with marbelized slate surround. The slate surround forms an arch over the fireplace masonry opening. On the third and fourth floor of the building there are no full fireplaces, evidence exists of openings into the flue where wood or coal stoves were probably connected. There are several existing fireplaces in buildings 625-631 on the second and third floors. In these buildings, however, the fireplaces are less ornate as they have a single brick hearth (in running bond) and plain wood surround and mantel.

3) Wall Finish: All the interior walls and ceilings in the Rieman Block are plaster on wood lath. In most cases, when the plaster is on an interior wall it is in fair condition. There is cracking evident and some deterioration, however most of the plaster is still firmly held to the supporting wall. Exterior wall conditions, however, are less stable and there is much greater evidence of the plaster cracking and coming loose from the wall. Almost all of the ceiling plaster has extensive cracks or noticeable damage. As the existing roof is in poor condition, much of the ceiling plaster on the upper floors and on the ceilings of the second and third story rear portions show some rear damage. In some cases, entire ceilings have fallen.

4) Skylights: There are three existing light monitors or skylights, one each above the main stair in 619, 623 and 625 respectively. They appear to be in good condition, fully glazed and watertight. The skylights are approximately 3' square and have two sloping sides of glass. The inside face of the lightwell directly below each skylight is finished in a beaded board, set vertically.

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GENERAL DESCRIPTION (continued)

5) Floors: All the floors in all the buildings appear to be identical. All are a fairly soft wood, probably pine, tongue and grooved, set in a north-south pattern directly over the supporting joists. The floor in general appears to have been left unfinished or possibly stained. Several floors have been painted. Most of the wood floors are in fairly good though weathered condition. There are several isolated areas where there is severe deterioration from water infiltration, vandalism or fire in particular. The floors on the 2nd and 4th floors rear of building 617, third floor rear of units 619-623, and 2nd and 3rd floor rear of 625-627 are in poor condition.

6) Stairways: The existing stairways in the 4 larger units, 617-623 are in excellent condition. The stairs are solid with only minimal wear evident. The first to second floor stair is missing in building 617, however, in 619-623 this stair is present and extends from directly behind the storefront, along the east wall, through a section of three winder treads, to the second floor. From this point on up to the fourth floor, the stair changes directions to a 'switch-back' stair with landing. The stair rail is unpainted mahogany, with turned-spindle pickets and decorative round newell. In general, all stair elements are in good condition and all intact in units 619-623. The stairways in building 625-631 are less grand, and certainly less prominent than those in the 4 larger buildings. In buildings 625-631, all stairs from the first to the second floor are in the rear section of the building. The stairs to the upper levels become more narrow as they continue to the top floor. These upper level stairs are quite steep, with narrow wooden tread.

7) Moldings: None of the buildings in the Rieman Block group have elaborate molding or trim. As with other architectural features, buildings 617-623 are somewhat more ornate but what there is, is limited to door and window casing and baseboard. There is no wainscot, crown molding or chair rail. The window trim in buildings 617-623 is a 5" wood molding with an 'o-gee' profile at the center and square ends. Window trim in the smaller building, 625-631, is a simple 4" wood molding with an inside beaded edge. This 4" molding with beaded edge is typical for all interior doors throughout the eight buildings.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1880 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Applicable Criteria: A, B, and C

Applicable Exceptions: none

Level of Significance for Evaluation: local

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Rieman Block is significant architecturally as an example of a type of nineteenth urban structure that is unusual for the Lexington Market area in Baltimore. In the years following the Civil War, this section of the city which was once primarily residential rapidly developed into a commercial center focused on the market. Row houses were converted for commercial use on the first floor and residential above. New buildings were generally simple. The Rieman Block, although it appears to incorporate older buildings, stands out because it is elaborate compared to the others. The structure also achieves significance from association with Joseph Rieman (1822-1898) for whom the block was developed. Rieman was a real estate developer and member of the boards of several corporations.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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See Continuation Sheet No. 7

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .175 acre

Quadrangle name Baltimore, West, Maryland

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	1 8	3 5 9 8 4 0	4 3 5 0 1 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

D			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

E			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

F			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

G			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

H			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification The property consists of the city lots on which the resource stands and is bounded on the north by Lexington Street, the east by Pearl Street, the south by an alley, and the west by Arch Street.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	n/a	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jean T. Crolius

organization Jean T. Crolius Associates date January 1984

street & number 218 West Lanvale Street telephone (301) 462-2971

city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21217

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature] 5-3-84

title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCERS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<u>[Signature]</u> Keeper of the National Register	Entered in the National Register date <u>6-7-84</u>
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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Continuation sheet Rieman Block Baltimore City, Maryland Item number 8 Page 6

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

Joseph A. Rieman, the son of Henry Rieman, was born in 1822. At a young age he took charge of his father's packing and provision interest at their western branch in Cincinnati. Joseph Rieman was a grandson of Daniel Rieman, a Hessian soldier who came to America to fight for the British during the Revolution. He stayed after the war and, with Basil Warfield, established the first sugar refinery in Baltimore. Joseph's father first gained his wealth in that refinery and later, when Joseph took charge of his father Henry's enterprises, he also became a wealthy and influential citizen. Among other things he is remembered as: sending the first telegram from Cincinnati to Baltimore, about 1845; a president of the Baltimore Passenger Railway Company, Savings Bank of Baltimore, and Commercial and Farmer's National Bank; a director of the B&O and Northern Central Railroads; and a member of the Committee of Five, which encouraged industrial development in Baltimore in the latter half of the nineteenth century. After he retired from the packing and provision business in 1870, known as Henry Rieman & Sons, he devoted some of his time to real estate, including the construction of the Rieman Block.

In April of 1880, Joseph Rieman began accumulating land at the southwestern edge of Lexington Market for a block long commercial/residential development. By September, he succeeded in obtaining a building permit for the construction of Rieman Block. The property was an extremely valuable piece of real estate since it was located diagonally from one of the Lexington Market sheds. Lexington Market is the City's oldest and most famous public market, established in 1782. Many stores and hotels had sprung up around the market in the early nineteenth century, but Rieman Block is the most elaborate rowhouse group to be developed in conjunction with the Lexington market place. It continued to be owned by Rieman heirs until 1952.

In 1887, Henry Rieman and Sons moved into the field of investments, calling themselves capitalists in directories and remained active in the firm until 1898 on death of Joseph, then Joseph's son, Charles E. took over. It became a real estate firm in the 20th century.

Rieman Block is architecturally significant as one of the few large rowhouse groupings in this portion of downtown Baltimore and for its elaborate styling. Mansard roofs and terra cotta decoration are unusual for this area which is generally comprised of small row groupings and buildings with little ornamentation. According to Dr. Martha Vill, of the Geography Department of the University of District of Columbia, to build a row grouping with a row of shops on the first floors and residential units above is very rare. The more common plan at this time was to build a row house grouping and one shop on the first floor of one corner of the row. The units closer

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Continuation sheet Rieman Block Baltimore City, Maryland Item number 8 and 9 Page 7

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (continued)

to the market are larger and more decorative than the units which step down toward West Baltimore. It was surely built to attract high quality businesses to the important Lexington Market retail area, which was experiencing a post-civil-war boom, as well as better than average housing units on the upper levels. Early tenants, about 1886, of the first floor shops were milliners, stationers, and costumers. According to the City Directory, these carriage trade retailers lived above the shops. Later, the early 1900's, came retail tradsmen in tea and coffee, shoes, wallhangings and provisions.

In the middle of the 20th century, Baltimore's retail district declined and buildings, such as Rieman's Block, had deteriorated. However, plans exist today to revitalize the area and to rehabilitate Rieman Block will once again play an important role in this area, one hundred years after it was first constructed. Its significance to this revitalization is further enhanced because according to Barry Dressel, Assistant Director of the Peale Museum, Fred Shoken, Research Analyst at the Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation, the Rieman Block is the only one of its kind extant in Baltimore; a terraced rowhouse grouping built as first floor shops with living units above.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Maryland Historical Society - Wood's City Directory 1882, p. 734
published by John H. Woods, 12 South Street,
Baltimore.
- Polk's City Directory 1885, p. 1084
published by Patriot Publishing Co.,
Printer, Harrisburg, Pa.
 - Who's Who in Maryland, Vol. 1, 1939, p. 736
Compiled and Edited Under the Direction of
Albert Nelson Marquis, pub. The A. N. Marquis Co.
Chicago, Ill., 1939.
- Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, Baltimore, City Hall
- American Architecture Magazine, Vol. 8
July-Dec. 1880, p. 23 & p. 131.

Rieman Block
Baltimore city
Maryland

property boundaries, 1984

REVISIONS

BLK'S 614 & 615 CONSD PER DEED & PLS; CSH 557-567
LOT 10 PER FIELD C SH 72-73-74-75-76

616

PEARL

591

ST.

621	620	627	625	623	621	619	617
9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2

ALLEY

ARCH ST

ARCH

ST.

633	632	631	630	629	628	627	626	625	624	623	622	621	620	619	618	617	616	615	614	613	612	611	610	
19	18	17	16	15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1						

ST