

**Victor Schlitz Mansion & Harley-Davidson Museum
Milwaukee
Post-Event Write-up
by Marcy Hotz**

On a chilly, damp Wednesday morning in late April, about 27 cheerful, chatty Miata lovers met outside the Victor Schlitz Mansion in Milwaukee.

As we gathered in the side yard of the 1890 Victorian Queen Anne-style mansion once owned by Victor Schlitz, Tim and John, the two current owners and residents, gave us an overview of the stately home's interior and its contents. The Victor Schlitz Mansion was completed in 1890, following two years of construction on two of the five city lots Victor Schlitz purchased with money he inherited from his uncle, Joseph Schlitz, founder of the Schlitz brewery. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. One of our participants commented that she had once worked in this building.

The home is laden with distinctive detail on the outside, including a turret, a matching curved porch wall, stained-glass windows, and a separate small porch. The front steps are adorned by twin lions on either side.

The Schlitz family lived in the home which the children sold to the St. Vincent de Paul Society following the deaths of Victor and his wife, Augusta. The building has served as an orphanage, a Montessori school, a boarding house, and a single-family home over its lifetime.

On entering the huge home, one is awed by the 12-foot ceilings, carved woodwork and ornate doorknobs, hinges, and strike plates. As we moved through the many rooms on the first floor—a parlor, dining room, the beautifully updated kitchen with a butler's pantry, and bathrooms (including one toilet with a wood-clad tank on top and a chain pull to flush)—we were overwhelmed by the many pieces of art, glassware, statues, collectibles, and antiques. Tim and John had been antique dealers, and when they went out of business, they brought what was left into their new home—and then bought more! Much of the art was Asian, as Tim proudly pointed out. He played a metal disc, about the size of an LP record, with holes punched in it that played a musical tune. These discs use the perforations to pluck tuned teeth on a metal comb to produce music.

The second story contained five bedrooms, a sitting room for watching TV, at least three bathrooms, and even more of the art, glassware, statues, collectibles, and antiques—plus several taxidermied birds and classic miniature books. I overheard words like:

Incredible
Gorgeous pieces
Overwhelming
So much stuff
Exquisite
Dusting would be a full-time job
Overcrowded
And more....

There was also a third story and a basement which contained Christmas accoutrements.

After about an hour, we Miatans climbed into our vehicles (mostly OTMs) and wound our way over pothole-riddled downtown streets, through construction and detours, and finally to a restaurant named “Motor,” across the street from the Harley-Davidson Museum. The large group crowded around one very long table (a bunch of tables, really) and renewed our acquaintances.

Mary Lynn C collected everyone’s lunch money, and a subset of the lunch bunch crossed the street to enter the Harley-Davidson Museum. This museum is the only Harley-Davidson Museum in the world, and whether you’re a devoted biker or just interested in learning more about an American institution, there is plenty to explore. You’ll see more than 450 motorcycles and artifacts, dating back to the oldest known Harley-Davidson motorcycle, Serial Number One. During WWII, chrome was scarce, so the metal was painted black; rubber was needed for the war effort, so plastic handle grips were used instead.

From there, a few folks opted to check out the Lombardi Brewing Company, a new brewery started by the grandson of Vince Lombardi.

Many thanks to Mary Lynn and Tom Cinealis for an educational and fun day when driving around top-down was not an option!