

Overhauling the Hoffman building



Andy Ouriel, Sandusky Register 1-4-2021

SANDUSKY - For the Torres family, there's a personal stake in play for their latest project. Spouses Ed and Jennifer, of Sandusky, previously lived around the corner from a historic three-story building at Hancock and Scott streets. "We have always loved this property," said Jennifer, Sandusky Central Catholic School / St. Mary's graduate. "We've always wanted to see it completed, but kept watching, and waiting, for it to be done. But it never was."

Past owners, for whatever the reason, tried to resurrect the structure, once serving as a headquarters for a prominent coal and milling company. But they couldn't fully bring it back online. It has sat either vacant or severely underused for many years, if not decades. Starting in early 2019, Ed and Jennifer - who run two local companies in Amerihome, which buys and rehabs multiple

residential properties in Sandusky, and Americrew, which specializes in kitchen and bathroom remodels - negotiated with a realtor to acquire the building. "When it finally came within our budget, where it made sense for us, we jumped on it," said Jennifer. They took possession in fall 2019. They also acquired an adjacent house on Hancock Street in a package deal.

A complete transformation of the property commenced. It is, by far, the biggest project either of their companies has pursued. Plans call for creating three separate warehouse-style lofts, one on each floor. Each leasable living space totals roughly 1,600 square feet. The bottom two floors will feature two bedrooms, while the penthouse should offer three. Both Ed and Jennifer expect to finish all work by spring. They recently invited the Register inside for a tour but wouldn't allow for pictures until all interior aspects are completed.

Right now, Ed estimated they're about 70% done:

- What's finished: electrical, plumbing and heating, ventilation and air conditioning work; They also restored the crown-fit molding and removed an old freight elevator, replacing it with a new staircase.

- What's left: painting, hanging spiral ductwork, installing doors, trim and light fixtures along with refinishing hardwood floors

All told, when factoring in acquisition and all undertakings, the overall investment should total at least \$250,000.

"We are not going to buy property that won't produce cash flow," said Ed, a Sandusky Schools graduate. He pointed at the many new apartments in downtown and home remodels occurring citywide paired with overflowing demand for new housing to back up his statement. "We are trying to create equality and safe housing in the city," Jennifer said. "This building was a perfect opportunity to do that and take it to the next level."

Ed and Jennifer, who have two adult-aged children, also felt comfortable going forward with this project due to Sandusky's ongoing neighborhood initiative plan. Officials designated the Historic Hancock Corridor as one of its six neighborhoods to vastly improve through several means. "We want to make this the gateway to downtown," Jennifer said. "We really believe in Sandusky, and it has so much to offer. That is why we have been investing our money and time here for the last 17 years. We hope our other projects will keep getting larger."

Ed echoed similar sentiments. "We love restoring buildings and being a part of our city," he said. "We have our eyes set on a couple more projects after this one is complete."

History lesson - The Sandusky Library History Blog provides some insight into Daniel Hoffman and the building named after him at Hancock and Scott streets:

Beginning as Hoffman Coal and Milling Co., the Hoffman Coal Co. served the Sandusky area for 65 years.

In the 1890 city directory, Daniel Hoffman advertised as a dealer in coal and wood at the corner of Scott and Hancock streets. Later he also sold feed and grain.

Daniel's sons, Charles J. and William H. Hoffman, took over the business when Daniel retired. Brothers Fred and Daniel Hoffman Jr. were also associated with the family coal business through the years. Charles and William Hoffman also owned the Electric Glass Cleaner Co. in Sandusky.

Charles J. Hoffman obtained a patent in 1901 for an elevating truck. The Sandusky Evening Star of Aug. 31, 1903, stated that the handy combination truck is said to be a fine device, "combining all the requirements of elevator, store, mill and warehouse trucks."

The patent for this truck can be viewed online at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

The Hoffman family was well known in the Sandusky area:

- Charles J. Hoffman ran an ice cream and sandwich shop on Scott Street in the 1920s and 1930s. The statue "Puck" was located at this site.
- Carlyle Hoffman, grandson of Daniel Hoffman Sr., was a lawyer with the Veterans Administration in Cleveland for many years
- Granddaughter Dr. Kathryn E. Hoffman was a physician and surgeon in Cleveland.