

City of Milwaukee
Historic Designation Application Instructions
Site or Structure

CITY OF MILWAUKEE

2014 JAN 15 PM 2: 50

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

To be considered for designation by the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission, it is necessary for an applicant to complete the enclosed application form and return it. The application is designed so that it can be completed without professional assistance. Although most of the items are self-explanatory, some may be unfamiliar to you. The following instructions explain the most frequently misunderstood items. If you have further questions, do not hesitate to contact the Historic Preservation Commission staff at (414) 286-5722.

- 1. Historic Name:** This is ordinarily the first name given to the building or the name of the original owner. A name associated with a site at a later date may also be used if it can be demonstrated to have more historic validity than the name by which it was first known.

Common Name: This is usually the name by which a site is currently popularly identified. It may be the same as the historic name.
- 5. Representation in Existing Surveys:** If you know whether or not your property has been included in the City of Milwaukee Historic Building Inventory or some other inventory or has been previously historically designated by either the former Milwaukee Landmarks Commission or the National Register of Historic Places, please indicate this information. If you do not know, just write "unknown."
- 6. DESCRIPTION Written Description:** Describe the structure's shape, building materials, and exterior features in paragraph form. Specify types and colors of materials, the design or pattern of decorative ornament, and the arrangement of architectural elements. Also describe other features on the site such as outbuildings, decorative fences, sculpture, fountains, or landscape treatments that may add to the significance or historic character of the site. Briefly describe additions or alterations and non-historic features. Use continuation sheets, if necessary.
- 7. SIGNIFICANCE Written Statement of Significance:** In a brief opening paragraph, enumerate the areas of significance previously checked and explain specifically why the site is important in each of these categories. In subsequent paragraphs, and on continuation sheets, if necessary, detail the history of the site and the people or events that have contributed to its significance. You may want to attach photocopies of documentation to support and further amplify your research.
- 8. Major Bibliographical References:** Include major references. Use continuation sheets if necessary. Be sure to include publisher, city, and publication dates for books and edition dates for newspapers and periodicals.
- 9. Property Description:** Indicate the acreage of the nominated property (if less than one acre, just say "less than one acre") and the legal property description from the deed or tax assessor's records.

Return the form to: Historic Preservation
City Clerk's Office
200 E. Wells St.
Room B-4
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 286-5722



HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION APPLICATION

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1. Name

Historic: Germania Building

and/or Common: Germania Building/Brumder Building

2. Location

Street & number 135 West Wells Street

Aldersperson: Ald. Robert Bauman

District(s): 4th

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Present Use			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> park	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> cemetery	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> other
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> religious	<input type="checkbox"/> military	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site		<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> private- residence	<input type="checkbox"/> museum	

4. Owner of Property

Name: The Equitable Bank SSB

Street & number: 2290 North Mayfair Road

City: Milwaukee State Wisconsin Zip 53226

5. Representation Existing Surveys

Inventory: Milwaukee Reconnaissance Survey; Central Business District Survey

Date: 1979;1986 federal state county local

Depository for survey records:

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Organization City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Section

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Street & number 200 East Wells Street, Room B-4

City Milwaukee

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE State Wisconsin Zip 53202

Previous historic designation:

National Register Date _____ Name _____
 City of Milwaukee Landmark Date _____ Name _____
 Other
 Name of Program Local Historic Designation 9/27/1983 rescinded 6/16/1987 Date designated _____

6. DESCRIPTION

Condition:

Check one:

Building form:

excellent
 good
 fair
 deteriorated
 ruins

original site
 moved date
 altered
 unaltered

Number of stories 8

Foundation:

stone brick concrete block concrete
 other

Roof:

gable (flank end cross)
 gambrel (flank end cross)
 hip mansard flat
 other copper domes

Walls:

clapboard brick stucco stone wood shingle slate terra cotta
 asphalt siding asbestos tile aluminum siding artificial stone other

Written description: (Continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

The Germania Building is a major commercial/office block located in the city's Westside commercial business district. It is eight stories tall and is in the shape of a pentagon. There are three principal elevations, fronting on West Wells Street, North Plankinton Avenue and North Second Street. The other two sides conform to the lot lines perpendicular to Plankinton Avenue and Second Street. The five sides surround a central light court of comparable configuration. The building is constructed of plaster-encased steel frame construction with exterior bearing walls of masonry with the first two stories being of cut limestone, and the upper six stories of tan colored pressed brick and terra cotta. The flat roof is concealed by a highly detailed cornice featuring modillions, dentils, rosettes and the cornice is surmounted by a tall parapet.

Within the broad scope of the Classical revival, the design is dominated by elements of Beaux-Arts Classicism with Germanic features. The main entrance on Wells Street is framed by a three story pedimented central pavilion featuring paired granite columns of the Tuscan Order supporting a balcony at the third floor. The central pavilion features two carved limestone lions and, in the center there originally stood a ten-foot-tall bronze statue of "Germania."

At the cornice line is a large central pediment with a large terra cotta cartouche bearing the 1896 date and supported by two oversized cherubs.

The four main corners of the roof feature copper domes with spike finials. As originally built, the domes were flanked with large eagles perched on spheres.

The street facades show advancing and receding planes common to the Beaux Arts Classicism. The middle stories, four through six, feature bay windows separated by piers which rise into carved capitals and connecting round arches which surround the seventh story windows. The eighth floor windows are separated by paired pilasters and columns.

Alterations to the exterior have been few and have been primarily confined to repairs and replacement of entrance doorways, the removal of the "Germania" statue in 1917, loss of the eagles from the roof at an unknown date. The third floor balcony was reopened in 1983.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

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Areas of significance:

- agriculture
- architecture
- art
- commerce
- communications
- community planning
- conservation

- economics
- education
- engineering
- exploration/settlement
- industry
- invention
- landscape architecture

- law
- literature
- military
- music
- philosophy
- politics/government
- religion

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- science
- social/humanitarian
- theater
- transportation
- other (specify)

Date built or altered: 1896

Builder/architect: H. Paul Schnetzky and Eugene R. Liebert

Written statement of significance: (continue on a separate sheet, if necessary)

The Germania Building is significant for its architecture and history.

The building was constructed in 1896 as the headquarters for the Germania Publishing Company of George Brumder, who, at the time, was the largest publisher of German language newspapers in the country. It represents the success and widespread influence of a business that rivaled its English language counterparts by providing German language news to a clientele that was a significant part of Milwaukee's culture by the end of the nineteenth century. At the time of its construction it was touted as Milwaukee's largest downtown office building and was built without any borrowed funds. Brumder's success extended to the founding of the Germania National Bank, and he was influential in the Concordia Fire Insurance Company, both of which were housed in this building.

The building is an excellent example of Milwaukee's Ethnic Architecture which displayed a German interpretation of the Beaux Arts style with its tan brick, copper domes and prominent central pavilion. At the time, a German Renaissance was taking place Milwaukee with Milwaukee' City Hall and the Pabst Theater and the Pabst Building (no longer extant) all bringing an Old World character to the city. Schnetzky & Liebert, the architects for the Germania Building, were among the more innovative of their time.

The Germania Building housed Brumder's publishing enterprises through 1925 when the printing presses were removed. By this time, with the anti-German sentiment generated by World War I, the building was known as the Brumder Building. The former printing press area in the basement was converted into an indoor public parking facility. The Brumder family continued to own the building until 1946 when it was sold to the Plankinton & Wells Company.

Daniel Hoan had offices in the building following his mayoral years and many government offices were also located here. During the anti-war period of the 1960s, files from the Draft Boards were removed from offices in this building and set on fire in the triangle park across the street.

The building was locally designated under Milwaukee's Historic Preservation Ordinance in 1983 but the designation rescinded in 1987 due to the fact that Historic Milwaukee, Inc. held a preservation easement on the façade. The local designation was deemed to be redundant. The building is a contributing building in the Plankinton-Wells-Water streets National Register Historic District, listed June 13, 1986.

8. Major Bibliographical References

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Historic Designation Study Report 1983

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9. Property Description

Acreage: Less than 1 acre

Legal property description:

Denison & Martin's Subd of Lots 1-2-3 BLK 59 NE 1/4 29-7-22 LOTS 1-2-3 & 8 thru 12
BID #21

Tax Key # 3920001121

10. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Robert J. BAUMAN 4th District Alderman

Organization: City of Milwaukee

Street: 200 E. Wells St

City: MILWAUKEE State: WI Zip: 53202

Telephone (days) 414-286-3774 (evenings) _____ Date: 1/15/14

Return to: Historic Preservation
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