

May 4, 2022

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To the honorable Chair and Commissioners,

The Milwaukee Preservation Alliance supports the nomination of the Filer and Stowell Company Complex for the National Register of Historic Places. We concur with the nominator that the property is eligible under Criterion A for its important association with sawmill machinery and engine manufacture in Milwaukee and its prominent role in the city's industrial history.

The first building in the complex was constructed in 1881 for the Whitehall Sewing Machine Company, who built the Pattern Shop building, in the Bay View neighborhood of Milwaukee. Whitehall Sewing Machine Company left and the complex was occupied from 1888 to 1891 by the Wilkins Manufacturing Company, who created the oldest parts of the Foundry building. In 1892, the buildings were purchased and occupied by Filer and Stowell Company, who, between 1892 and the 1950s added several buildings and additions to the complex. As staff states in their report, "During World War II, the company was one of only 14 foundries in the US that made marine steam engines for Liberty Ships, used to supply troops in Europe." Later, in the 1950s, the company was the largest producer of sawmill machinery in the country. In the course of Milwaukee's important manufacturing history, Filer and Stowell was one of the largest players, along with giants Allis Chalmers, Nordberg, and Vilter Manufacturing.

A total of twelve buildings, ten of which are contributing, and one contributing structure, make up the complex. The Pattern Shop was designed in Renaissance Revival form by renowned architect Henry C. Koch with classic Milwaukee Cream City Brick facade. Importantly, from when the buildings were built or additions added upon between 1892 and the 1930s, these buildings retain their integrity from their period of significance and are preserved in their original locations.

As staff indicates, while the buildings are utilitarian, they "do give us an insight into the well-built and traditional forms that housed the manufacturing that made Milwaukee famous" and meet the criteria for designation in the National Register for their contributions to Milwaukee's industrial heritage.

Respectfully,  
Tim Houge  
Jeremy Ebersole  
Milwaukee Preservation Alliance