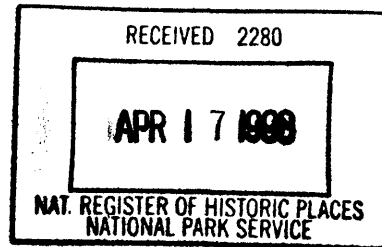


United States Department of Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name The Schwartz Ballroom

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number	700 South Main Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Hartford	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Washington	code 131 zip code 53027

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination \_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant \_ nationally \_ statewide  locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

4/2/98  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_ meets \_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
( \_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

The Schwartz Ballroom      Washington Co.      Wisconsin  
Name of Property      County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper      Date of Action  
Edson H. Beall      5-20-98

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property (check many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include listed resources within as the count)	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district		<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site		<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register  
N/A

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium</u>	<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE/Auditorium</u>

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instruction)
<u>Modern Movement</u>	foundation <u>Concrete</u>
	walls <u>Brick</u>
	roof <u>Asphalt</u>
	other <u>Wood</u>

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1  
The Schwartz Ballroom

Hartford, Washington County, WI

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The Schwartz Ballroom is located at 700 South Main Street in the city of Hartford, Wisconsin. The Schwartz lies east of Main Street and is closely neighbored by private residences to the North and West. An expansive dirt parking area surrounds the ballroom to the East and South. The main entrance to the ballroom lies on the southward facing facet of the structure and leads into a small foyer. Two pairs of double doors used for band access face West and East. The Schwartz was built in 1928.

The Schwartz is constructed in an octagonal plan. Each of its eight sides rises thirteen feet and is constructed of nearly 75,000 Chicago clay bricks built upon a concrete foundation<sup>1</sup>. The dance floor itself is supported by 72 concrete piers.<sup>2</sup> The ballroom's roof slopes gently upwards from each of the walls and culminates in an eight sided cupola used for ventilation at the apex. The exterior of the octi-faceted roof is covered with an layer of asphalt shingles. Tripartite groups of six-over-six double-hung sash windows are present on seven of the ballrooms sides though the windows on the southeast and southwest facets of the structure have been covered with boarding. Other than this alteration and the new layer of shingles that replaced the ballrooms original green asbestos complement, the ballroom's exterior remains faithful to its historic appearance.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Largest Octagonal-Type Building in Wisconsin Being Erected in Hartford."  
The Hartford Times. Hartford: WI. April 20, 1928.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>"Largest Octagonal-Type Building in Wisconsin Being Erected in Hartford."

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Section 7 Page 2  
The Schwartz Ballroom

Hartford, Washington County, WI

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The Schwartz's interior begins at the vestibule and foyer attached to the southern side of the structure. This entrance leads into a foyer which lies between the ballroom itself and the social hall that is attached to the southwestern side of the ballroom. The foyer has a "U" shaped plan which wraps around the social hall on three sides. The walls are clad with vertical pine tongue and groove paneling. The ceiling is drywall. This foyer area possesses the original ticket-taking booth. An original telephone booth lies next to the ticket booth. Also adjoining this foyer area are two coat rooms, one historic, the other modern. The historic coatroom remains in service as a coat room. The second was created by partitioning a corner of the social hall and has since been converted into a preparation area to service the adjoining social hall. Two sets of double doors, one to each side of the ticket booth provide access to the ballroom's Great Hall.<sup>4</sup>

The centerpiece of The Schwartz is its Great Hall. This octagonal area used for dancing possesses a diameter of 112 feet.<sup>5</sup> The ballroom's eight-sided roof rises 36 feet above the floor to culminate at the ventilating cupola.<sup>6</sup> The interior of the roof is clad with a rough "Spanish" texture plaster and conceals the rafters. The apex of the interior roof is adorned with a massive, ornate, 2,000 pound Art Deco chandelier.<sup>7</sup> The chandelier is composed of a large

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<sup>4</sup>Site Visit, The Schwartz Ballroom, Town of Hartford, WI, 4/3/97

<sup>5</sup>"Largest Octagonal-Type Building in Wisconsin Being Erected in Hartford."

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Site Visit.

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Section 7 Page 3  
The Schwartz Ballroom

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wrought iron ceiling medallion from which the chandelier is suspended. The medallion has an open grillwork in the Art Deco style, which allows for ventilation. The grillwork is composed of a pattern of triangular ribs interspersed with floriated scrolls. The chandelier is a pendant type fixture composed of four tiers that are comprised of numerous chevron shaped pieces of satin finish glass held in a wrought iron frame. The dance floor is lighted by two rings of Art Deco hanging light fixtures in a sympathetic design to the chandelier.

The dance floor is covered with a maple flooring. The raised floor possesses an unique "sanidite" floor covering.<sup>8</sup> The dance floor is unobstructed and allows 1500 couples to dance comfortably due to the engineering of the octagonal form which creates a vast open span without interior posts.<sup>9</sup> Raised spectator platforms surrounded the dance floor and held upholstered opera chairs. These were replaced by two full service bars that lie on the southeast and southwest facets of the hall.<sup>10</sup> Built behind and above the ticket booth in the southern part of the ballroom is a booth housing motion picture equipment.<sup>11</sup> The 18 ft. by 36 ft., elevated stage lies on the northern facet of the interior and is adorned by proscenium molding above the stage, and an elaborate vernacular stage curtain. All of these features remain in good condition today.

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<sup>8</sup>"The 'Schwartz' Wisconsin's New and Finest Ball Room To Be Open Oct. 20-21."

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Site Visit.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid

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The Schwartz Ballroom

Hartford, Washington County, WI

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The ballroom is an all season facility that is heated by a steam generated from pipes beneath the dance floor and piped through ducts into the dance hall. These same ducts were used to cool the building with fresh air in warm months.<sup>12</sup> The ventilating process was reputed to change the air in the hall every seven minutes.<sup>13</sup>

Attached to the southwest portion of the ballroom is the common hall and annex used for social gatherings. This wooden frame, roughly cruxiform plan, gable-roofed structure is covered with hand cut cypress shingles. The structure rests on a foundation of concrete, possesses six-paned and nine-paned double-hung windows, and an asphalt shingled roof. A brick chimney is attached to the southeastern wing of the building. The interior of this area measures 45x55 feet and is paneled with stained, tongue in groove vertical wood paneling.<sup>14</sup> A grand rough-cut field stone fireplace lies on the southern wall. The social hall is lighted by original Art Deco milk glass pendant lights. Remodeled modern lavatories are attached to the social hall: gentlemen's to the east and ladies' to the west. The lavatories are also connected to the hallway leading to the dance hall by enclosed hallways along the perimeter of the annex. The kitchen area also adjoins the social hall on the south, attached to

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<sup>12</sup>Ibid.

<sup>13</sup>"The 'Schwartz' Wisconsin's New and Finest Ball Room To Be Open Oct. 20-21." The Hartford Times. Hartford: WI. October 12, 1928.

<sup>14</sup>"The 'Schwartz' Wisconsin's New and Finest Ball Room To Be Open Oct. 20-21."

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The Schwartz Ballroom

Hartford, Washington County, WI

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it by a pantry. The two boilers lie in the basement underneath the bar, gentlemen's bathroom, and kitchen areas of the social hall.<sup>15</sup>

The Schwartz Ballroom is currently in sound condition. Its distinctive octagonal architecture and unique steel engineering that creates an unobstructed dance floor still exist in their original forms. The Schwartz continues to fulfill its original role by providing ample facilities for dancing and social gatherings as well as remaining architecturally pleasing. The Schwartz is an unique melding of form and function that deserves to be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

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<sup>15</sup>Ibid

The Schwartz Ballroom

Washington Co. Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

**8. Statement of Significance**

Applicable National Register Criteria  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the  
criteria qualifying the property for the  
National Register listing.)

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from  
instructions)

A Property is associated with events  
that have made a significant  
contribution to the broad patterns of  
our history.

Entertainment/Recreation  
Politics/Government  
Engineering

B Property is associated with the lives  
of persons significant in our past.

Period of Significance  
1928-1946

C Property embodies the distinctive  
characteristics of a type, period, or  
method of construction or represents  
the work of a master, or possesses  
high artistic values, or represents a  
significant and distinguishable entity  
whose components lack individual  
distinction.

Significant Dates  
N/A

D Property has yielded, or is likely to  
yield, information important in  
prehistory or history.

Significant Person  
(Complete if Criterion B is  
marked above)

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

A owned by a religious institution or  
used for religious purposes.

Cultural Affiliation

B removed from its original location.

N/A

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery.

Architect/Builder

E a reconstructed building, object, or  
structure.

F a commemorative property.

Messmer, R.A. (Architect)

G less than 50 years of age achieved  
significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)



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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

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The Schwartz Ballroom is being nominated under Criterion A for the significant roles it played in local recreation/entertainment history as a ballroom and war time history for its use as a German POW camp. It is also being nominated under Criterion C as an example of a property type for the significance of its octagonal construction and unobstructed dance floor. The ballroom played its most significant roles in local history from its construction in 1928, through the discontinuation of its service as a prisoner of war camp in 1946.

### Historical Significance

The Schwartz Ballroom is a historically significant part of both the recreation and World War II social history of Hartford and Washington County. The construction of The Schwartz in 1928 was a major development in the recreation of the area during the heyday of ballroom dancing and big bands. The popularity of these forms of recreation persisted until the 1950s. The Schwartz also served as a Prisoner of War camp during World War II and therefore played a unique and essential role in the local history of that era. The Schwartz is a physical embodiment of both those historical periods.

### Recreational History Background

The Schwartz Ballroom is located in the city of Hartford in west central Washington County. The Rubicon River runs through the middle of the city and was the catalyst for the initial development of Hartford. As the surrounding hardwood forest was cleared, the

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

newly dammed Rubicon attracted a sawmill and gristmill. The cleared land proved to be fertile and Hartford quickly developed as a productive agricultural center as well. The presence of the Milwaukee & La Crosse railroad spurred Hartford's industrial development and by the time of its incorporation in 1855, Hartford was well on its way to becoming a thriving, dynamic community.<sup>1</sup>

The Schwartz Ballroom's construction was funded by Joseph Schwartz Jr. and the Schwartz family. Joseph Schwartz Sr. had been a local farmer who sold his farm in 1903 and bought the local George Portz Brewery, renaming it the Schwartz Brewing Company. Upon his death, his son Joseph Jr. took over the brewing business.<sup>2</sup> The Schwartz Brewing Co. brewed beer in Hartford until 1938.<sup>3</sup> In 1919 the Schwartz Brewing Co. bought the Eagles Park and began leasing it and its recreational facilities to the Kissel Mutual Association in 1920.<sup>4</sup> It was in this park, by then called South Side Park, that Joseph Schwartz Jr. began construction of his ballroom in 1928.

The initiative to construct a ballroom in Hartford sprang out of a combination of civic pride and economic profit. Upon hearing of plans for the construction of The Schwartz, the land in question was quickly annexed into the city of Hartford, thus providing the city

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<sup>1</sup>Vogel, John N., Louis Kissel and Sons Thematic Resources of Hartford National Register Nomination, Hartford, Washington Co., Wisconsin 6/9/88.

<sup>2</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?" The Hartford Times-Press, Hartford: WI. March 20, 1997.

<sup>3</sup>Apps, Jerry, Breweries of Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1992, pp. 228.

<sup>4</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?"

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

with a significant water and electric customer. The planned ballroom was viewed by its builders as not only a dance hall, but also as a public meeting place that was equipped to show motion pictures.<sup>5</sup> Indeed the local paper expressed public opinion by saying that The Schwartz by "being the largest hall of any city in Wisconsin under 10,000 in population", would "mean a great deal to the city of Hartford".<sup>6</sup> It was the general opinion that The Schwartz would "act as a magnet for people" and be a "feather in Hartford's hat" because of its magnificent facilities and that the patronage of the ballroom would be beneficial to local Hartford businesses.<sup>7</sup> The Schwartz family saw the profitability of a ballroom of this scale in Hartford because there was "nothing outside of Milwaukee or the larger cities that can compare with [The Schwartz]".<sup>8</sup>

Thus, to take advantage of this opportunity, the Schwartz family contracted the architectural firm of R.A. Messmer and Brother to design the plans for the new facility. Robert A. Messmer was the chief architect for The Schwartz. Robert Messmer was born in Madison, Wisconsin on August 29, 1870. His father was Henry Messmer, a native of Switzerland who had immigrated in 1866 and founded his architectural firm in Milwaukee in 1871. Upon Henry's death in 1899, Robert assumed control of the firm of H. Messmer and Son and changed its name to R.A. Messmer and Brother. The firm was well known in Milwaukee and the surrounding area for their

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<sup>5</sup>"Largest Octagonal-Type Building in Wisconsin Being Erected in Hartford."

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid.

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

work; designing projects such as the Uniondale Sanitarium, several area high schools, and the West Allis City Hall. Robert Messmer also designed the Edward Rohnert Coffee Roasting Factory in Milwaukee, the Hortonville Community Hall in Hortonville, Wisconsin, and the Kewaunee Public School in Kewaunee, Wisconsin, all of which are on the National Register of Historic Places.

Construction of The Schwartz began in the spring of 1928. The ballroom was to become "the largest octagonal-type building in Wisconsin" according to the local paper and was greatly anticipated by the surrounding community.<sup>9</sup> The new structure was to be constructed in an octagonal form whose walls were to be strengthened to support the cone shaped steel structure of the roof. The walls were to be made of Chicago clay brick and placed on a foundation of concrete. The height to the top of the flagpole adorning the cupola was 96 feet while the distance around the hall was 375 feet.<sup>10</sup> Dirt from the excavation was used to fill in an adjoining pond in the park to level the ground. The masonry, steel structure, and carpentry contracts were all awarded to local craftsmen. Everything regarding the construction of The Schwartz was "done with a view to permanency" and "the investment in grounds and buildings and equipment will reach a great sum."<sup>11</sup> The final cost of the project reached \$150,000 dollars.<sup>12</sup> The Schwartz family had wanted "the finest ballroom in Wisconsin", and according to the Hartford Times,

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<sup>9</sup>"Largest Octagonal-Type Building in Wisconsin Being Erected in Hartford."

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>"The 'Schwartz' Wisconsin's New and Finest Ball Room To Be Open Oct. 20-21."

<sup>12</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?"

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

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"they...got it".<sup>13</sup> The ballroom at Rosenhiemer's Resort in Cedar Lake, Wisconsin, was a wood frame building with steel trusses. While this ballroom also had an unobstructed dance floor but could not accommodate crowds equal to The Schwartz's capacity, nor could it operate year around because it was not heated.<sup>14</sup> The dance pavilion at Gonring's Resort, also in Cedar Lake, was not heated though it did have a larger capacity than Rosenhiemer's ballroom.<sup>15</sup> When compared to the other ballrooms of the area, the true uniqueness, in terms of both architecture and engineering, of The Schwartz quickly becomes apparent.

The Schwartz opened on Saturday October 20, 1928 to music from Harold Austin and his New Yorkers. The number of people attending was "the greatest crowd of people that has ever turned out in Hartford to any public dance" and some people came from "as far as fifty miles away."<sup>16</sup> Faulty surface treatment on the dance floor on opening weekend led to the floor forming "a paste which was like mixing flour and water".<sup>17</sup> This initial problem was quickly remedied and The Schwartz began a successful career that saw such notables as Perry Como, Tommy Dorsey, Duke Ellington, Benny Goodman, and Louie Armstrong among others entertain crowds at

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<sup>13</sup>"The 'Schwartz' Wisconsin's New and Finest Ball Room To Be Open Oct. 20-21."

<sup>14</sup>"Rosenheimer's Packed in the People." The Hartford Times-Press. Hartford: WI. March 13, 1997.

<sup>15</sup>"Remember When Gonring's Was 'the' Place?" The Hartford Times-Press. Hartford: WI. March 6, 1997.

<sup>16</sup>"Crowds at Opening of The 'Schwartz.'" The Hartford Times. Hartford: WI. October 26, 1928.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

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the ballroom. Guy Lombardo and his Royal Canadians drew the record crowd at The Schwartz when 6000 people jammed the ballroom by 9:30 and several hundred more listened to the concert from the outside of the ballroom.<sup>18</sup> WTMJ Radio began making live broadcasts from The Schwartz in 1931 and Joseph Schwartz Jr. contracted with CBS to broadcast live performances. These live performances were heard in New York, California, and many places in between and garnered national recognition for The Schwartz by 1932.<sup>19</sup> As time progressed The Schwartz even yielded to fads by hosting roller skating parties in the 1940s.

#### Entertainment/Recreation Background

The construction and subsequent success of the Schwartz ballroom was a result of the popularity of big bands of the era. This movement had its roots in the jazz and ragtime of the 1910s which, until the middle of the decade, had been a primarily private pursuit. However, by 1914 the Fox Trot and Charleston coupled with famed dance teams such as Irene and Vernon Castle brought the dance craze to the general public. This passion for dance as an easy to learn form of recreation was directly responsible for the construction of the hundreds of public dance halls that became prevalent in the 1920s.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?"

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>Fuhrman, Ann, The Silverdome Ballroom National Register Nomination, Town of Hewett, Clark Co., Wisconsin, 12/31/96

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

Advances in the technology of the era also spurred the dance phenomenon. Many popular music acts released records at the end of the 1910s and spurred the development of record companies such as Victor and Columbia. However, perhaps the greatest motivation of the dance craze was the spread of the radio. Technological advancements made the radio an appliance that could be found in any household in America. This development led to the spread of commercial radio industry which, in turn, helped spread the popularity of many dance bands during the 1920s. Both swing bands and traditional bands profited from this increase of exposure well into the 1940s.<sup>21</sup>

Increased interest in dance music led to great demand for facilities in which to dance. From the 1920-1940s, dance halls were popular social gathering places where people met not only to dance but to see friends, meet new people, and to observe fashion. The development of the automobile further augmented the attendance at dance halls throughout the nation and with demand, came profit. This profitability led to further construction of ballrooms throughout the 1920s until the 1940s. Many were built by private ventures as well as by fraternal and other organizations. These halls were built everywhere from hotels and restaurants to universities. This interest continued until the 1950s, when the big band craze began to tail off. The hundreds of ballrooms and dance halls are a surviving testament to this historic era.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

The Schwartz is a locally significant for its important role in the entertainment history of the Hartford area. It served a socially important function as a primary meeting place where the people of the area could congregate and participate in a dance craze that is regarded to be one of the signatures of this historical area. This groundbreaking musical movement prompted the construction of The Schwartz Ballroom and the ballroom is today a monument to this unique part of the recreational history of Hartford.

#### World War II Social History

The hard economic times of World War II brought The Schwartz into a new role of service. In October of 1944, Joseph Schwartz announced that he had leased The Schwartz to the United States government for use as a prisoner of war camp. Three-hundred and fifty beds were moved into the ballroom. This proved to be too much for the ballroom's ventilation system so five tents were erected around the ballroom to accommodate the overflow.<sup>23</sup> The prisoners provided labor at local industries such as canning plants and hemp manufacturers.<sup>24</sup> Prisoners also provided supplemental labor at local farms. This labor was essential because manpower in the United States was scarce during this period due the military mobilization for World War II.

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<sup>23</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?"

<sup>24</sup>"Prisoners Expected at Schwartz." The Hartford Times-Press. Hartford: WI. September 8, 1944.



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Life as a prisoner at The Schwartz consisted of a strict schedule of work combined with numerous leisure activities. By being awake at 5:30 and off to work by 7:30, the prisoners were left with little idle time during the workday. They were paid eighty cents a day for the work they provided. When the work day ended at 4:00, prisoners were occupied with movies or sports. The Schwartz's POWs formed as a seven-piece band and chorus that performed for the local people and sang mass on Sundays at an area church. Many prisoners even went on dates with local women. The short three foot fence surrounding the ballroom made this possible. The end of the war brought a close to the camp in January of 1946 when the prisoners were shipped back to Germany. Following this, The Schwartz reverted back to its original purpose and dances resumed.<sup>25</sup>

Between 1942 and 1946 almost 400,000 German prisoners of war were interned in the United States. In many small towns throughout the US, "the first contact with the military reality of the conflict came with the appearance in their communities of large numbers" of prisoners of war as they were called upon to work with and adjust to the presence of German prisoners.<sup>26</sup> The POW experience was found throughout the United States. The camp in Hartford was small in comparison to many others such as the larger Camp McCoy which was also in Wisconsin. The POW camp that The Schwartz housed had a profound effect on the surrounding

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<sup>25</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?"

<sup>26</sup>Krammer, Arnold, Nazi Prisoners of War in America, Stein and Day, New York, 1979.

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community of Hartford. Prisoners became an integral part of the community during their imprisonment at the ballroom by working with, dating, and performing music for the residents of Hartford. The prison's band performed regularly at Hartford's band shell in the summertime and the prison chorus even participated in Christmas masses. The chorus' popularity in the area even led to the production of a record.<sup>27</sup> The prisoners worked alongside Hartford residents in the area's canning factory and tannery. POWs even joined area farmers in the fields and helped produce hemp and onions.<sup>28</sup> Because of this interaction between the people of Hartford and the German prisoners, the prison helped to define Hartford's experiences during World War II. This bond of shared experience between Hartford's residents and the Schwartz's prisoners is evidenced by the fact that, following the end of the war, some prisoners even decided to return and live in the Hartford area. While Hartford was one of many small towns that had similar POW camps, this was a fascinating period of local history and this era is embodied in the ballroom that held the prisoners.

The Schwartz Ballroom is a concrete reminder of a pivotal part of Hartford's history. The ballroom and its prisoners were the closest and most poignant contact that most of the local people had with the World War II experience. The ballroom is significant for the role it played in this particular portion of local history and the experiences it provided to the people of Hartford.

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<sup>27</sup>"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?"

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

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The Schwartz represents an era of reform in the treatment of prisoners of war influenced by the passage of the Geneva Convention which aimed to enforce a worldwide standard in the humane treatment of Prisoners of War.

The Schwartz camp addressed unique needs in the community of Hartford created by the war. Critical labor shortages existed during the war that were created by the assignment of vast numbers of young adults to military service and defense production. For communities like Hartford, prisoners of war provided labor critical to the war effort such as the production of food and raw materials. While prison labor did not contribute directly to the war effort, their efforts freed laborers to work in more critical wartime capacities.

### Architectural Significance

As an octagonal ballroom, The Schwartz is architecturally significant as a property type. The octagonal building form was first widely used in beginning in the 1850s and is a relatively rare architectural form in itself. Used most commonly on barns and houses, the octagonal form is normally characterized by an eight-sided structure of two stories. About half of the known octagonal structures have a characteristic cupola at the apex of the roof. Orson Fowler popularized the form beginning in 1849 by exposing the

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octagon's beneficial qualities in light allowance and ventilation.<sup>29</sup> The Schwartz possesses all the characteristics of the rare octagonal mode while serving in an unique function as a ballroom. By combining these qualities, The Schwartz is a rare example of an octagonal ballroom.

The Schwartz's architect, R.A. Messmer, probably had specific goals in mind when he chose to use an octagonal shape for the proposed ballroom. By reinforcing each of the eight sides of the ballroom and using steel structural supports for the roof, Messmer was able to bestow upon the Schwartz its most notable trait, its unobstructed dance floor. The unique engineering of the octagon and the building materials allowed Messmer the luxury of forgoing intrusive structural supports that would impede onto the dance floor proper.

The Schwartz ballroom was decorated in the Art Deco style and the adjoining hall is constructed in a vernacular fashion with some Art Deco ornamentation. The Art Deco style utilized futuristic and stylized detailing. Art Deco takes its name from the Exposition des Arts Decoratifs that occurred in Paris in 1925. Architectural and decorative examples of this style exhibit hard angular edges that allude to machine made origins. The style symbolizes the opportunities that technology and industrialization offered. Art Deco is also related to the early twentieth century art movement of cubism. The Art Deco ornamentation is present in the decorative

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<sup>29</sup>McAlester, Virginia and Lee, A Field Guide to American Houses, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1984, pp. 235-237.

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The Schwartz Ballroom Hartford, Washington County, WI

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molding in the proscenium above the stage in the ballroom, the massive chandelier at the apex of the ballroom's interior roof, and the hanging light fixtures throughout the structure. All of the ornamentation possesses the typical characteristics of the Art Deco style that began to gain acceptance in 1925. They have geometrical design, repetition of motif and angularity, and clarity and abstraction of classical detailing, giving a distinct industrial feel to the ornamentation.

The Schwartz ballroom is architecturally significant as an excellent local example of an unusual building type. Designed and built as a ballroom, the Schwartz's distinctive octagonal form makes use of the structural properties of octagonal construction to fulfill the programmatic needs for a large open span dance floor. The dramatic soaring interior created by the octagonal dome was then ornamented in the Art Deco style, a decorative form that was strongly associated with the emerging Jazz Age that the Schwartz helped to engender.

The Schwartz Ballroom has been an integral feature in the lives of the people living in and around Hartford, Wisconsin. The ballroom represents a multitude of Hartford's historical eras, from the dominance of dance to the unforgettable war experiences the town's people shared. It has been and continues to be a focal point of social gathering and dancing. It is a well preserved blend of practical function and rare architecture. The Schwartz Ballroom is an embodiment of the history of Hartford. It deserves the preservation that would enable it to continue playing its significant role in the lives of the area's people for generations to come.

The Schwartz Ballroom Washington Co. Wisconsin  
Name of Property County and State

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (NPS):  
\_\_\_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
\_\_\_ previously listed in the National Register  
\_\_\_ previously determined eligible by the National Register  
\_\_\_ designated a National Historic Landmark  
\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #  
\_\_\_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
\_\_\_ Other State Agency  
\_\_\_ Federal Agency  
\_\_\_ Local government  
\_\_\_ University  
\_\_\_ Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/8/8/3/2/0</u>	<u>4/7/9/5/9/8/0</u>	3	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting		Northing	
2	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>	4	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / / / / /</u>
	Zone Easting	Northing		Zone Easting		Northing	

\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Todd DeBruin - Student  
organization University of Wisconsin-Madison date 4/21/97  
street & number 7321 Gwenn Court telephone (419) 885-2932  
city or town Sylvania state OH zip code 43560

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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(Rev. 8-86)  
Wisconsin Word Processing Format  
(Approved 1/92)

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The Schwartz Ballroom Washington Co. Wisconsin

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"The 'Schwartz' Wisconsin's New and Finest Ball Room To Be Open Oct. 20-21." The Hartford Times. Hartford: WI. October 12, 1928.

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"Who Doesn't Have Fond Memories of The Schwartz?" The Hartford Times-Press. Hartford: WI. March 20, 1997.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
(Rev. 8-86)  
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(Approved 1/92)

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Section 10 Page 1  
The Schwartz Ballroom      Washington Co.      Wisconsin

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**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

The boundary for The Schwartz Ballroom is a quadrilateral plot of land that begins from a point 30' to the Southwest from the Southwest corner of the annex. The quadrilateral measures 120' on the North side, 285' on the East side, 170' on the South side, and 240' on the West side. The area abuts the residential properties to the North and West and the dirt parking areas to the East and South. The determined boundary allows the historical significance of the structure to be maintained.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

The Schwartz Ballroom sits on a large ten acre parcel. Therefore, the boundary that has been determined includes only the significant resource. Non-significant structures and the parking facilities are excluded from the pertinent boundary.



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ photos Page 1

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Photo documentation

1. The Schwartz Ballroom
2. Washington County, Wisconsin
3. Todd DeBruin photographer
4. August 1997
5. State Historical Society of Wisconsin
6. Looking North West
7. #1

The above information is the same for all photographs except as indicated below:

Looking East  
#2

Detail looking East  
#3

Interior looking North  
#4

Interior looking North West  
#5

Interior Light Fixture looking up and North  
#6

Interior fireplace looking South  
#7

Interior detail looking North  
#8

The Schwartz Ballroom                      Washington Co.      Wisconsin  
Name of Property    County and State

**Property Owner**

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Glen Hayden  
street & number 700 South Main Street      telephone (414) 673-4946  
city or town Hartford      state WI      zip code 53027

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY Schwartz Ballroom  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: WISCONSIN, Washington

DATE RECEIVED: 10/27/99 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/11/99  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 98000564

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 11.5.99 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Additional Documentation Accepted**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER Beal DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

