

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only
received JUN 8 1983
date entered

1. Name

historic Germania Building
and/or common Brumder Building (1917 - 1980)

2. Location

street & number 135 West Wells Street not for publication
city, town Milwaukee vicinity of
state Wisconsin code 55 county Milwaukee code 079

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Plankinton & Wells Company
street & number 135 West Wells Street
city, town Milwaukee vicinity of state Wisconsin 53203

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Milwaukee County Courthouse
street & number 901 North 9th Street
city, town Milwaukee state Wisconsin 53233

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Intensive Survey of the
title City of Milwaukee has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1978-79 federal state county local
depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin
816 State Street
city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated on a major downtown block, the Germania Building is a commercial/office building of eight stories, 90,000 square feet, in a pentagonal shape. Three sides front on, respectively, North Plankinton Avenue (historically West Water Street), West Wells and North Second Streets; the other two sides conform to lot lines perpendicular to Plankinton Avenue and Second Street. The five sides surround a central light court of comparable configuration. The building is 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 disguised by a highly detailed cornice, featuring modillions, dentils, rosettes, and a tall parapet.

Within the broad scope of the Classical Revival, the design is dominated by elements of Beaux-Arts Classicism with Germanic tendencies favored by the owner. The main entrance (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, with the central pavilion featuring two carved limestone lions, and, in the center, originally, a ten-foot-tall bronze statue of "Germania." Above this, the cornice is again pedimented, 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 a spike finial. As built, the domes were flanked with large eagles perched on copper spheres. The street facades show advancing and receding planes, common to Beaux-Arts Classicism; the middle stories (4 to 6) 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.

The main lobby, entirely encased in marble, leads to the passenger elevators and the cast iron main stairway, which features marble and slate treads, ornamental copper plated, cast iron ballusters and an oak handrail. Recently remodeled interior hallways are wainscoted in the original Tennessee marble, removed, cleaned and replaced, topped by a restored and/or replicated oak chair rail. Hallway doors and door trim are restored and/or replicated in oak. The office areas have undergone the predictable and recurring alterations and replacements typical of a commercial office structure. Some original partitions and trim remain, but, inasmuch as all interior walls are non-bearing, most exhibit the effects of accumulated change.

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, and the recent re-opening of the third floor balcony which had been previously enclosed.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input type="checkbox"/> association with a significant person		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	ethnic history (&)			
Specific dates	1896 ¹	Builder/Architect	Schnetzky and Liebert ²	

Period of Significance: 1896-1925

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Germania Building was designed by the architectural firm of Schnetzky and Liebert, and built in 1896 as the national headquarters of the Germania Publishing Company of George Brumder, who, at the time, was the largest publisher of German language newspapers in America.³ The building is significant in its representation of the financial success and widespread influence of a business which astutely served the marketplace in a period of Wisconsin's history when the national language of the immigrant rivaled English in its importance to communication and the socio-cultural characteristics of communities. The prosperity of the owner is indicated by the fact that when it was completed, the building was Milwaukee's largest downtown office building,⁴ and was built "without the use of any borrowed funds."⁵ Brumder's significance extended beyond publishing: he founded the Germania National Bank and was influential in the Concordia Fire Insurance Company both of which were housed in the Germania Building. The building is architecturally significant as a distinctive blend of commercial architecture with the Classical Revival detailing provided by the Beaux-Arts design chosen by the architect.

Architecture. Featuring design aspects characteristic of the region and period--the use of bay windows common to Chicago expressions of Commercial Style, for example--the Germania Building is, however, distinctive in its German neoclassic application of classical detail including the pedimented central pavilion, pedimented cornice, the intermixing and reiteration of orders, and the variation in window treatments. For its period of construction it is a locally significant commercial building, being distinctive in design, size and the nicely balanced scale of its elements.

The building has a geographical and time proximity to other National Register properties including the Pabst Theater (1895) and Milwaukee City Hall (1893-98) with which it can be favorably compared in the richness of detail and the scope of the total design. When it was built the Germania competed, both in its commercial purpose and for a place in the city's skyline, with the earlier Pabst Building (1892) which was substantially altered in 1948 and demolished in 1980.

H. Paul Schnetzky designed the office building for the Val. Blatz Brewing Company (1890) at 1120 North Broadway, and Eugene Liebert designed the Public Natatorium (1894) at 1646 South 4th Street along with residences for such business and community leaders as Henry Harnischfeger, John Schroeder, Philip Lueft and Albert Trostel.

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Brumder, Herbert P. 1960. The Life Story of George and Henriette Brumder. Milwaukee: The North American Press.
- Mallman, Sharon M. 1981. "The Brumders of Milwaukee," Milwaukee History, The Magazine of the Milwaukee County Historical Society, Autumn 1980, 66-79.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6
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4	2	5	6	7	0
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4	7	6	5	4	3	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification Pentagonal parcel, 89 feet along North Plankinton Ave., 101 feet along West Wells St., 125 feet along North 2nd St., perpendicular to North Plankinton Ave. and North 2nd St., in the SE $\frac{1}{4}$ of the NE $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 29, Town 7 North, Range 22 East. (continued)

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	N/A	code	county	code
state		code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gary A. Payne, President

organization Wayfarer, Inc. date January 1983

street & number P.O. Box 117 telephone (414) 594 2795

city or town Eagle, state Wisconsin 53119

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Richard Murray*

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 5/25/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

[Signature] Entered in the National Register date 7/7/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Germania Building Item number 6 and 8 Page 1

Item 6 - additional depository for survey records:

City of Milwaukee
Department of City Development
734 North 9th Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233

Item 8 - continued:

Communications (& Ethnic History. The building was commissioned and built as the headquarters for George Brumder, whose weekly Germania was considered to be the world's largest German language newspaper at this time, and, together with the daily Germania was considered to wield wide political influence. Die Germania had begun publication in June 1873 as a voice of conservative German Lutherans and in September 1874 George Brumder and two partners purchased the paper. Brumder acquired full ownership by 1880. At first only the weekly Germania was financially successful, the daily paper being published only from November 1873 to August 1878. The daily paper was reinstated during the controversy over the 1889 Bennett Law provision that English was to be taught in all of the schools. Abandoning its consistent support of the Republican Party, the Germania supported the Democrats and successfully sought repeal of this law which was viewed as an attack on personal freedoms and cultural traditions by several ethnic/national groups. With continued success, Brumder purchased other newspapers, and, in 1896 built the Germania Building to house his business interests. In it were located Brumder's book store (the origin of his expanding operations), publishing company, his other business endeavors, along with several floors of rented office space. The publishing company printed materials of wide distribution and appeal. These items were in three broad categories of interest: annual calendars and almanacs, self-help books for German-Americans, and, historical works including such subjects as the Franco-Prussian War, the U.S. Civil War, and a general history of the United States, all printed in German. By 1910 the Germania Publishing Company had continued to expand and it owned and published newspapers in Sheboygan, Wisconsin; Lincoln, Nebraska; Buffalo, New York; and Chicago, in addition to Milwaukee. The subscription lists of the various weeklies showed readers in every state of the union and in several foreign countries including Argentina, Brazil, the Philippines, South Africa and the German-speaking portions of Europe.

In response to anti-German sentiment during World War I the Germania Building was renamed the Brumder Building and the weekly Germania became the Milwaukee Amerika, and the daily, the Milwaukee Herald. The Brumder family finally gave up control of these papers in 1934, having moved them from the Germania Building in 1924-25. When the printing presses were

(continued)

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Continuation sheet Germania Building Item number 8 Page 2

Item 8 - continued:

removed after 1925, the basement area was converted to use as a public indoor parking facility (believed to be the first in a downtown office building,) thus bringing to an end the building's role as a publishing headquarters which had lasted nearly thirty years.

Politics/Government. From 1946-1948^{ck} the building housed the offices of the former Socialist mayor of Milwaukee, Dan Hoan. This was the period, after the 1946 demise of the Progressive Party, during which Hoan was working to bring his labor and liberal support into the Democratic Party. Hoan's work in organizing his support into the Democratic Party lead to his being a delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1948, and, Hoan's help in making the Democratic Party an effective contender in state politics eventually lead to William Proxmire's election to the Senate (1957) and Gaylord Nelson's election to the governorship in 1958 and the Senate in 1962.

Here also have been located the offices of many agencies of the United States government, including the Selective Service System. The location of the Draft Boards within the building lead to the September 28, 1968 entry into these offices and the removal of files which were burned in a park across the street, in a significant anti-war protest.

Association with a significant person. Born in Alsace-Lorraine in 1839, George Brumder came to Milwaukee in 1858 where he opened a small book store and publishing company and became involved in Milwaukee's substantial German Lutheran community. By 1896 the publishing company had grown sufficiently to warrant the construction of the Germania Building. However, Brumder's publishing successes also enabled him to expand into other fields.

The Concordia Fire Insurance Company, which numbered many of Milwaukee's prominent German Lutherans among its officers and directors, was located in the building from 1897 to 1929, and Brumder, who became a director in 1891, was its president from 1897 to 1909.¹⁰

In 1903, Brumder founded the Germania National Bank with headquarters in the building. In 1917, the bank was renamed the National Bank of Commerce, and in 1932, it merged into the First Wisconsin National Bank, and was moved from the building.

Brumder operated his businesses in the Germania Building until his death on May 9, 1910.¹¹ The Brumder family continued to own the building until 1946, when it was sold to Plankinton & Wells Company, the current corporate owner.

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Continuation sheet Germania Building Item number 8 and 10 Page 3

Item 8 - continued:

Brumder's business enterprises, centered in the Germania Building, and his involvement in the German ethnic community have certainly had local and state-wide historic significance, and, this influence was sufficiently widespread to be of national significance.

footnotes:

1. Building Permit (No. 531) from records of the City of Milwaukee, Department of Building Inspection & Safety Engineering.
2. ibid.
3. Mallman, Sharon M. 1981. "The Brumders of Milwaukee," Milwaukee History, The Magazine of the Milwaukee County Historical Society. Autumn 1980. p. 66.
4. ibid. p. 70.
5. Brumder, Herbert P. 1960. The Life Story of George and Henriette Brumder. Milwaukee: The North American Press. pp. 51-52.
6. Mallman, p. 70.
7. Brumder, p. 48.
8. Mallman, pp. 74-75.
9. Nesbit, Robert C. 1973. Wisconsin: A History. Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press. pp. 527-530.
10. Mallman, pp. 71-72.
11. Brumder, p. 50.

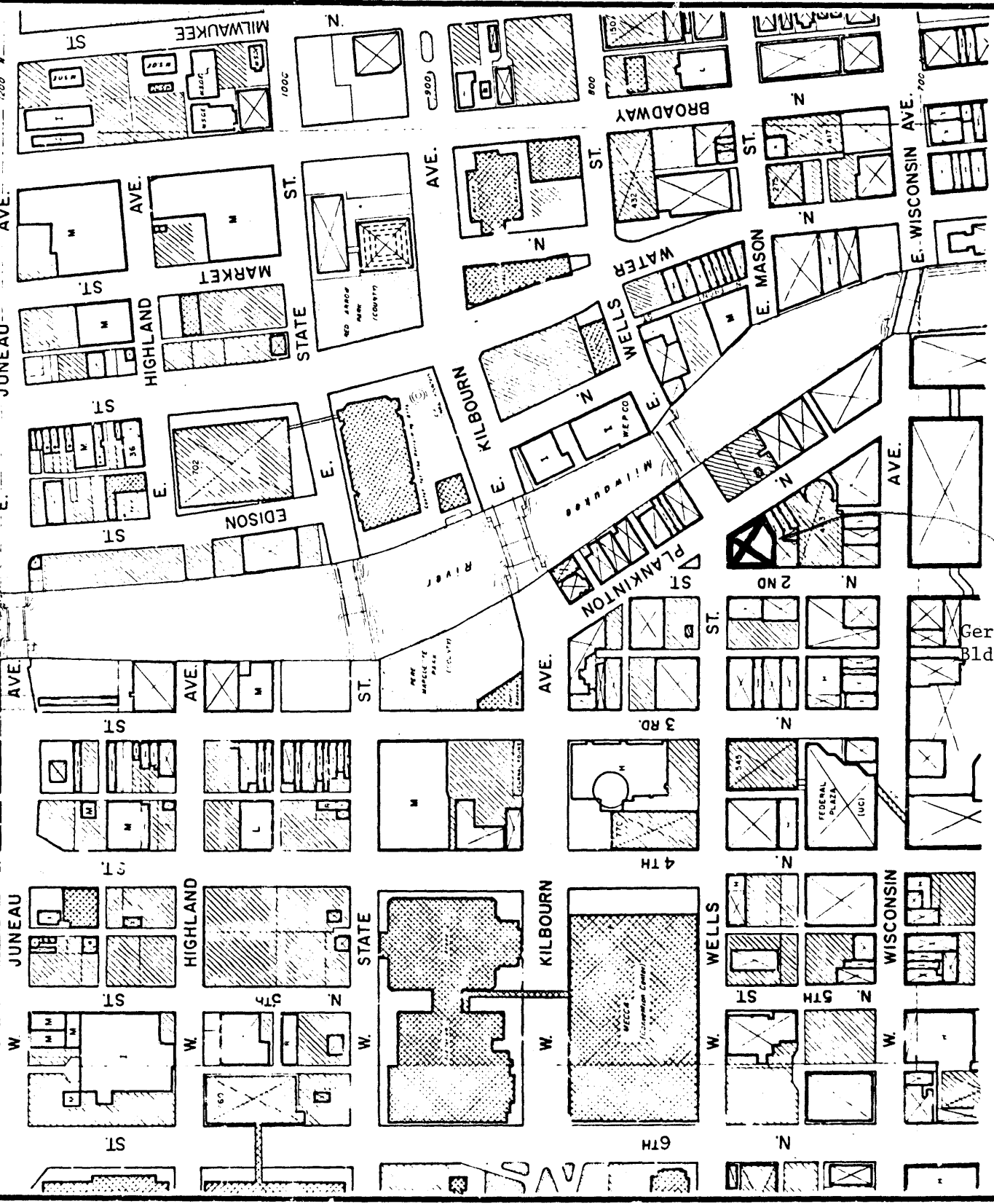
Item 10 - continued:

also known as: Lots 1, 2, 3, 8, 10, 11, and 12 in Denisons and Martin's Subdivision of Lots 1, 2, and 3 in Block 59 in original plat of the Town of Milwaukee on the West side of the river being in the Northeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of Section 29, Town 7 North, Range 22 East, in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

N.E. 1/4 SEC. 29, T.7 N., R.22 E.



REVISED
JAN. 1962-P
FEB. 1962-P
JUN. 1962-P



CITY DEVELOPMENT
CITY OF MILWAUKEE

Germania
Bldg.

JANUARY 1967
SCALE: 1"=100'

GERMANIA BUILDING, Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co.