

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

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

For NPS use only  
received **NOV 9 1983**  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic United Laymen Bible Student Tabernacle

and/or common George Bray Neighborhood Center

**2. Location**

street & number 924 Center Street not for publication

city, town Racine vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county Racine code 101

**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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Franklin Neighborhood Center, Inc., Ural P. Jackson, Director

street & number 924 Center Street

city, town Racine vicinity of state Wisconsin

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Racine County Courthouse

street & number 730 Wisconsin Avenue

city, town Racine state Wisconsin

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Intensive Survey of the City of Racine has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no 6/26/80

date 1979 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input checked="" 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

The former Union Tabernacle<sup>1</sup> building is composed of a one-story red brick auditorium fronted by a two-story "stepped" brick facade with large arched "tympanum." The spandrels of the three-door front portal are filled with paneled stone; windows overhead are framed with stone and topped by small compound stone tympani. Projecting brick buttresses between the regularly-spaced openings are trimmed with stone and applied carved "finials." A stone coping trims the false facade behind the stepped frontispiece; asphalt shingles in the vaulted roof behind were replaced in 1982.

Side walls were broken by large rectangular windows, which have been covered from inside to accommodate a gymnasium. According to known information, there were no unusual or impressive features of the interior. The original plan has been retained, with offices and a small meeting room at the front of the first floor (with toilets above and services and storage below), and the large assembly hall (now gymnasium) behind. Hardware, plumbing, and painted brick surfaces have been renewed recently. The interior is not considered significant to the nomination.

The Union Tabernacle is a relatively modern element in a late nineteenth-century workers' neighborhood in Racine, composed largely of small-scale frame residences. The area is several blocks west of Racine City Hall and the Lake Michigan shore.

<sup>1</sup> Although the building's "formal" name was United Laymen Bible Student Tabernacle, it was often referred to as the Union Tabernacle, after its original occupants, the Bible Union.

# 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/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

**Specific dates** 1927<sup>1</sup> **Builder/Architect** J. Mandor Matson<sup>2</sup>

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Emblazoned with its large radiating-brick tympanum and stylized stone finials, the former United Laymen Bible Student Tabernacle is a singular representative of Art Deco period church construction. The building was identified in the 1979 Intensive Survey of the City of Racine as one of a number of distinctive churches, especially noteworthy for its period interpretation of elements of medieval church design.

According to his obituary, the building's architect J. Mandor Matson (1890-1963) practiced architecture for fifty-five years; although Norwegian-born, he "lived in Racine for most of his life."<sup>3</sup> Among his credits are the Racine City Hall (1931), Washington Park High School (1927), the Granada and Douglas theaters,<sup>4</sup> Holy Innocents and Zion Lutheran churches, and the Bull Manor Apartments of 1925<sup>4</sup> (included in Racine's Southside Historic District, NRHP 1977). Although Matson was considered a public buildings specialist, the great variety of his building designs testified to his facility in all of the popular revival and "modern" idioms.

The Racine Laymen's Bible Union was organized in November, 1924. Composed of members of various evangelical churches in the city, the organization met weekly for Bible study in host churches. Through joint conviction and generosity, members sponsored the purchase of a \$4,500 lot for construction of a building late in 1925.<sup>5</sup> The membership proposed to construct "an inexpensive hollow tile building ...to seat 1,200 people," but the project was stalled until the selected architect could bring his design into conformance with the budget. Voluntary bid reductions from the general and sub-contractors, combined with a number of pledged contributions, allowed construction of the brick tabernacle valued at \$40,000.<sup>6</sup> On Sunday, May 15, 1927, the "building and the people, both" were "dedicated to the promotion of the same program - Bible teaching and Gospel preaching, with earnest advocacy and generous support of the world-wide mission."

The Laymen's Bible Union and its successor Racine Bible Church occupied the building until 1961. After a three-year vacancy, the building was the local headquarters of the Boy Scouts (1965-69); since then, the Tabernacle has served the Franklin Neighborhood and George Bray Neighborhood Associations.

<sup>1</sup> Building permits, City of Racine.

<sup>2</sup> Racine Journal-News, Saturday, May 14, 1927.

<sup>3</sup> Racine Journal-Times, May 24, 1963

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Racine Journal-News

<sup>6</sup> Building permits, City of Assessor, Racine.

<sup>7</sup> Eugene W. Leath, unpublished "Racine County History," archives, University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

<sup>8</sup> Racine City Directories, 1927-1972.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Karr, Susan E., Architectural and Historical Survey of the City of Racine, Racine Landmarks Preservation Commission, 1979; unpublished field survey notes, Intensive Survey of the City of Racine, 1979.  
Racine Journal-News, 1927  
Racine Journal-News, May 24, 1963

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one  
 Quadrangle name Racine South, Wisconsin Quadrangle scale 1:24,000  
 UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>4</u> <u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>3</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>0</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

76.16 Ft. of S 241 Ft. of E. 245.5 Ft., Block 58, School Section, City of Racine

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

# 11. Form Prepared By

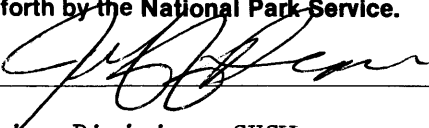
name/title Diane H. Filipowicz/Architectural Historian  
 organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date March, 1983  
 street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 262-2732  
 city or town Madison state Wisconsin

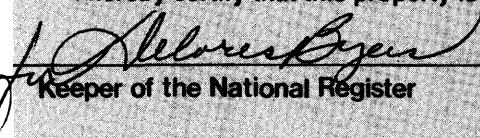
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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   
 title Director, Historic Preservation Division, SHSW date Nov. 1, 1983

**For NPS use only**  
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register  
  
 Keeper of the National Register Entered in the National Register date 12/8/83  
 Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration