

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED FEB 17 1977
DATE ENTERED APR 29 1977

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Vilas, Jr., Joseph, House
AND/OR COMMON
Vilas-Rahr House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
610-616 North 8th Street
CITY, TOWN
Manitowoc
STATE
Wisconsin
VICINITY OF
6th
COUNTY
Manitowoc
CODE
55
CODE
071

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 type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY (two owners)

NAME City of Manitowoc	The Masquers, Inc.
STREET & NUMBER 817 Franklin Street	616 North 8th Street
CITY, TOWN Manitowoc	STATE Wisconsin
VICINITY OF	54220

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Manitowoc County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
1010 South 8th Street

CITY, TOWN
Manitowoc

STATE
Wisconsin 54220

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Wisconsin's Inventory of Historic Places

DATE
1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN
Madison

STATE
Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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

This nomination includes two significant historic buildings originally part of one ownership but currently separately owned. The Vilas-Rahr house itself is owned by the City of Manitowoc and operated as museum and civic center. The adjacent stable, built at the same time as the house, is owned by a local theater group, "The Masquers." Attached to the west side of the house is a major addition built in 1975 and housing a gallery, offices, restrooms and shipping facilities. The nomination is bounded by 9th Street on the west, Park Street on the south, 8th Street on the east, and private property lines on the north.

The Vilas-Rahr house is a two-and-one-half story building with a one-story red brick base. The upper stories are covered with green shingles. The main facade faces east and contains a gable with a Palladian window on the north side and a round engaged tower on the south corner. A gabled dormer on center provides additional fenestration for the third floor. The original front entrance was lost during remodeling, though the current owner intends to restore it from the original plans. The original entry was through a hipped-roof porch resting on round-arched supports. A porch on the north side repeats the round-arch theme and still exists.

The interior of the first floor has been moderately remodeled. The original plans contained six basic rooms with ancillary facilities: sitting room, chamber, dining room, reception hall, parlor and kitchen. The walls between the sitting room and chamber have been removed to create the large, elongated "Victorian Room." The walls between the reception hall and dining room have been removed to create the long "Center Gallery." The "Center Gallery" is currently used for changing art exhibits. The "Victorian Room" contains exhibits of nineteenth-century furnishings. The kitchen remains in use as a kitchen, though modernized during a 1950 renovation of the first floor. The "Rahr Parlor" occupies the original parlor and is the most original space on the floor. Most of the 1950's alterations have been removed from this room as the result of a private grant in 1976 from the Rahr family for its restoration. A stair hall between the parlor and kitchen remains intact.

On the second floor, originally containing six bed chambers, less remodeling has occurred. No walls have been moved, but some bath facilities have been removed and the spaces resulting are used for storage. Currently the six rooms are used as a board room and library; the "Schwartz Room" with a permanent exhibit of Chinese ivory carvings; one unused room to be renovated in 1977; the "Doll Room" with changing exhibitions of dolls; the "Schuette Indian Room" with permanent displays of prehistoric artifacts; and the "Pioneer Cabin" containing a free-standing replica of a pioneer cabin. All the rooms were wall-papered during the Rahrs' period of occupation. Since 1950 all walls have been painted, though woodwork has been left natural. The main stair hall in the center of the second floor has a staircase, banister, trim, flooring and wainscot all of quarter-sawn oak. Above the wainscot the walls were painted in 1950. A landing between the first and second floors contains a triple window of colorless leaded glass with amber medalion motifs.

On the third floor, six rooms were used as bedrooms and one had a large fresh water storage tank. It is used for storage and is not open to the public. Original hardwood and pine woodwork has been painted over.

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The large addition to the west of the house was kept to a low one-story height and built with compatibly-colored brick to harmonize as much as possible with the historic house. It attaches to the house at two points on the west facade and contains a large courtyard between the house and the new addition. Though the addition clearly intrudes on the character of the house, the intrusion has been kept to an absolute minimum, under the circumstances, and helps to perpetuate the use and existence of the house by the functional enhancement it represents. It is evident that the protection of the character of the house was one of the primary tasks of the designers of the addition. For purposes of this nomination, the addition itself is not held to be significant.

The stable, located north of the house, is a one-and-one-half story building of a style compatible with the house. Originally, it served as a stable for horses, hay storage, and garage for three carriages. Currently it is used by a local theater group as a rehearsal hall, scene-making shop, boardroom and costume storage facility. The only significant exterior alteration to the building is the filling of the original carriage entrance on the east facade and its replacement with a conventional door. The interior has been refurbished for the adaptive use to which it has been put.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			Association with locally significant persons

SPECIFIC DATES 1891-1893¹

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ferry and Clas, Milwaukee

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecture. The Vilas-Rahr house is representative of the work of a local architectural master, the third criterion of eligibility. The architectural firm of Ferry and Clas, Milwaukee, which designed the house,² was one of the most prestigious and the largest in nineteenth-century Wisconsin. The partners, George B. Ferry (1851-1918) and Alfred C. Clas (1860-1942), practiced together from about 1890 to shortly after 1910,³ and designed several notable buildings already listed on the National Register, including the First Unitarian Church, the Public Library and Museum, and the Frederick Pabst house, all in Milwaukee, and the State Historical Society in Madison.⁴ Ferry, the principal designer of the firm, was educated in Springfield, Massachusetts, and studied architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he was a classmate of Louis Henri Sullivan. Clas, who was raised in Sauk City, Wisconsin, worked for three architects in Milwaukee and California before establishing a partnership with Ferry in 1890. Stylistically, the Palladian window in the gable end and the bell-roof on the tower were among Ferry's favorite motifs. The house, while retaining the verticality and massing of the Queen Anne, evidences an overall covering of shingles and quieter general effect associated with the Shingle Style. In this, the house represents the influence of the Shingle Style as expressed in Wisconsin in the 1890's and the first decade of the twentieth century. While not an example of the Shingle Style in the Eastern sense, it is among the finest examples in Wisconsin of this influence. Here, the Queen Anne is maintained in general plan and massing while the more superficial aspects of the Shingle Style -- a covering of shingles coupled with a masonry base -- are used to update the design. Compared to eastern Shingle Style houses the plan is relatively compartmentalized, further illustrating the conservatism of midwestern design during a period of primarily eastern innovations in open planning.

History. The house is associated with persons significant in Manitowoc's past, the second criterion of eligibility. It was built starting in 1891 for Joseph Vilas, Jr. (1832-1905), who occupied it in 1893 and lived there until his death. Vilas was instrumental in promoting railroad development in Manitowoc in the 1870's. He persuaded the county to vote a bond issue for the construction of the Milwaukee, Lake Shore and Western Railroad and served for a number of years as president of the company and trustee for its bond holders. He was instrumental in connecting Milwaukee and Appleton

1. Manitowoc, Wisconsin Illustrated, pp. 6-7; Manitowoc Pilot, April 20, 1893.
2. Plans for house by Ferry and Clas.
3. Milwaukee City Directories.
4. Wisconsin's Inventory of Historic Places.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Mr. J. Vilas, Manitowoc, Wis.," original plans for Vilas house, Ferry and Clas, Architects.

Milwaukee City Directories, 1891 to 1910.

"Flags at Half Mast in Honor of R. Rahr, Sr.," Manitowoc Times, October 19, 1921.

"Funeral of Mr. Rahr to be Held on Friday," Manitowoc Herald, October 19, 1921.

American Biographical Publishing Company. "Hon. Joseph Vilas," Biographical Dictionary

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.45 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	6
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4	4	7	3	2	0
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4	8	8	2	8	8	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Jeffrey M. Dean

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

January 4, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-9504

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

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 M. Krumm

TITLE Acting Director
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 2/14/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>acting chief</i> DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE 4/29/77
ATTEST <i>Charles A. ...</i> KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE 4-29-77

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to Manitowoc, and served as a company director until 1892, when the Chicago and North Western acquired the line. From 1863 to 1864, Vilas served as a state senator; and from 1893 to 1895 he was mayor of Manitowoc. He was also active in numerous other eastern Wisconsin businesses.⁵

In 1910 Reinhardt Rahr acquired Vilas' house and, the same year, established a local brewery and malt house with his father, William, and two brothers. The brewery became a significant local industry and important to Manitowoc's economy. It was eventually acquired by Anheuser-Busch, Inc. Reinhardt Rahr died in 1921, and the family continued to occupy the house until 1941 when his widow and son, Guido, deeded the house to the City.⁶

Thus for some fifty years the house was owned and occupied by individuals who were involved in key local business enterprises. For the subsequent 35 years it has been operated as a public museum by the city government, its current owner.

5. Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, pp. 360-361.
6. Hutchinson letter of November 24, 1975.

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and Portrait Gallery. Chicago, 1895.
Hutchison, Joseph S. Letter to Dr. James Morton Smith dated November 24, 1975.
Hutchison, Joseph S. "Interior Description: the Vilas-Rahr Mansion, of the Rahr-West Museum, Manitowoc, Wisconsin," 12-page undated manuscript ca. December, 1976.
Hutchison, Joseph S. "The Stables," undated two-page manuscript ca. December, 1976 State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography. Madison, 1960.
Art Gravure and Etching Co. Manitowoc, Wisconsin Illustrated. Milwaukee, 1891.
Manitowoc Pilot. April 20, 1893.
Chicago Herald. March 3, 1893. (Remnant of this paper found within walls during a remodeling project, further verifying date of construction.)
Information supplied by Richard W. E. Perrin, Milwaukee.