

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

For NPS use only

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

received AUG 9 1984

date entered SEP 7 1984

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Racine Elks Club, Lodge ^{NO.} #252 of the B.P.O.E.

and/or common n.a.

2. Location

street & number 601 Lake Avenue not for publication

city, town Racine vicinity of

state WI 53403 code 55 county Racine code 101

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input 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"/> N.A.	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name The Milwaukee Company, c/o Mr. David Westby, Vice-President

street & number 250 E. Wisconsin Avenue

city, town Milwaukee vicinity of state Wisconsin 53202

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Racine County Register of Deeds

street & number 730 Wisconsin Avenue

city, town Racine state Wisconsin 53403

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic has this property been determined eligible? yes no

Places
date 1975, 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state WI 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

The Racine Elks Club house is located in downtown Racine overlooking Lake Michigan. The surrounding buildings are public in nature and include the post office across the street, Memorial Hall next door and the public library near-by.

The Elks Club is a brick structure with steel columns and girders, three stories in height. The exterior is vitrified red brick with limestone trim. The front of the building faces Lake Avenue to the west. It is seven bays wide with a central entrance portico. Triplets of Tuscan stone columns and pilasters support each corner of the slightly projecting porch. Above, a pierced stone balustrade caps off a heavy modillioned cornice. Windows on the first floor have brick architraves and round arches with stone keystones. The tympani are filled in with plaster and the first story window sash are sixteen-over-one.

The sills of the second story windows rest on the first floor keystones. These windows are flat-arched with flat keystones and eight-over-one sash. Behind the balustrade of the porch is a Palladian window edged in brick with a plaster tympanum. The attic story windows rest on a stone beltcourse which projects out slightly under each window to form the sills. Attic windows are smaller, eight-over-one, and project up into a wide, molded wooden cornice. Over the Palladian window a grouping of three small windows maintains the rhythm. Between each bay is a square brick panel inset with a diamond of green tiles, giving an interesting Chicago School accent to the basically Georgian Revival design. The heavy cornice above is supported by a row of closely spaced modillions and a brick parapet trimmed with rectangular brick panels hides the roof. Brick quoins demarcate each corner of the building.

The north (Sixth Street) side features another main entrance. A two-story grand portico dominates this facade. Above a stone basement and a stone balustrade two-story Tuscan columns support a wide cornice decorated with triglyphs, guttae and dentils. The later entrance is modern glass and metal in a plain design. Windows at the front corner mimic the configuration on the west facade but others have been altered. The original pierced wooden balustrade which once crowned the portico is gone.

The lake (east) side has suffered the most alterations. The brick porch was originally one-story high over an open basement story. Now both stories have been enclosed with brick and picture windows. The original rail of square wood spindles between brick piers remains above, however. At the third story level a group of five windows is now boarded up, but French doors at the right still open onto the porch deck.

The south facade is utilitarian in design with the same parapet and modillioned cornice as the other facades, but the eight-over-one windows are placed asymmetrically to serve functional spaces inside.

The interior of the Elks Club has no significant architectural features remaining, due to two factors: many remodellings through the years, including a major re-

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

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

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Racine Elks Club, Racine, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

modelling campaign in 1947, and the removal by the previous owners of nearly every interior detail before the current owner took possession, including chandeliers, wall tiles pried out, stair railings, etc. The basement bowling alley was warped by flooding sometime in the past and boarded up. On the upper floors, intensive remodelling took place when the old hotel type rooms were converted into apartments.

The interior of the building is currently being renovated in a simple, neo-Georgian style to serve as rental offices.

Item #6: Representation in Existing Surveys

Racine Architectural Survey, Johnson, Johnson and Roy

1974

Local

City Hall

Racine

Wisconsin

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ humanitarian
___ 1800-1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ theater
X 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ transportation
		___ invention		___ other (specify)

Specific dates 1912-1913¹ **Builder/Architect** Guilbert and Funston²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Period of Significance: 1912-1934

The Racine Elks Club building is significant primarily as a fine local example of a neo-classical revival style building and as a representative work of the prominent Racine architectural firm, Guilbert and Funston. It also served historically as a social center not only for members of the Elks fraternal order but for the entire community of Racine, which benefited from the benevolent, educational and patriotic programs sponsored by the Racine Elks Club.

Historical Background

Lodge #252 of the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks was organized by forty of the leading businessmen of Racine in January, 1893. Before erecting their own clubhouse in 1912 the Elks met in halls in various commercial blocks downtown. During a period of waning interest, the exalted ruler of the lodge, T. W. Thiesen, declared that before he retired the Elks would have their own home. Excitement over this remote but enticing possibility generated new interest so that by the time the cornerstone of the lodge was laid, the club had over 350 members. When the Elks Club opened in 1913, the event was of such local importance that a special twelve page supplement to the Racine Journal-Times heralded the dedication.

Among the many fraternal orders in Racine which organized around religion, brotherhood and ethnic ties, the Elks Club was considered one of the most elite. Begun mostly as a social organization, its members also pledged to help brother Elks in time of need. However, the Elks soon took on benevolent activities of benefit to the entire community. The local lodge participated in the national Elks' campaign to promote Flag Day. During World War I the Salvation Army credited the Elks with maintaining the efforts of that group to aid soldiers in the fields. The Elks were also the only private organization accredited by the federal government to provide vocational training for disabled World War I soldiers, sailors and marines. On a local level, the Racine Elks distributed clothing and toys to needy children at Christmas, repaired toys for children at the near-by state children's home, sponsored programs and patrols to promote bicycle safety, awarded scholarships to local high school students, provided transportation for crippled children, organized the Racine Legion Drum and Bugle Corps, supported a semi-pro baseball team, sponsored the Racine Elks Youth Band and sponsored civic banquets and "American Week" events.

The Elks Building in its heyday witnessed elaborate ceremonies, Christmas parties for poor children, national conventions of other associations, and fancy dress balls that were the talk of the town. Local newspaper articles also speak of the many progressive civic projects that began in informal discussions at the Elks Club.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Racine South, Wisconsin

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	3	6	0	4	1	5	4	7	3	1	0	5	1	6	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing									

B

Zone			Easting						Northing									

C

Zone			Easting						Northing									

D

Zone			Easting						Northing									

E

Zone			Easting						Northing									

F

Zone			Easting						Northing									

G

Zone			Easting						Northing									

H

Zone			Easting						Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

Block 31, original plat, lots 1, 12, the north 48' of lot 11 and all of lot 2 except the south 12' thereof. This boundary roughly coincides with the outside walls of the building, except on the east, lake side, on which a small lake front yard is included.

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 Katherine H. Rankin and Timothy Heggland, private consultants

organization for the owner

date May 15, 1984

street & number 1109 Sherman Avenue

telephone 608-256-2905

city or town Madison

state WI 53703

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

date Aug. 1, 1984

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

Entered in the National Register

date 9-7-84

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

Racine Elks Club, Racine, Wisconsin

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

The Elks Club lost some of its elite luster in the 1950s and 1960s when it became known primarily as a good place to drink and gamble at the slot machines. In early 1983 the Elks sold their clubhouse and disbanded permanently.

Architecture

The Racine Elks Club house was designed in the neo-Georgian Revival, a style extremely popular in Racine in the first decades of the twentieth century. The strong Yankee background of many of Racine's social and political leaders created an atmosphere of progressivism in Racine in the beginning of the twentieth century. Progressivism in urban design meant the "City Beautiful," with its neo-classical and Georgian Revival buildings. The Elks Club building was the second major building to be erected in an area that was to become Racine's civic center, in keeping with the "City Beautiful" spirit that Racine embraced whole-heartedly. Later major buildings to be erected in the downtown lakefront area included Memorial Hall next door, the Y.M.C.A., the post office across the street and the Hotel Racine kitty-corner to the Club. A local 1963 newspaper article credits the erection of the Elks Club with the development of that section of the downtown.³

In Racine, the neo-classical revival style was used for gray limestone buildings such as the J. I. Case headquarters (1904), the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1920), Memorial Hall (1924), and the U. S. Post Office (1930). Red brick neo-classical and neo-Georgian buildings still remaining include Dania Hall (1904), the Plymouth Congregational Church (1912), the Jacobsen factory (n.d.), and the Women's Club (1929).

It is difficult to make comparisons between these buildings, which taken as a whole constitute a rich heritage of fine architectural design. Almost all are relatively unaltered on the exterior and because of their imposing designs and prominent locations are visual landmarks in their neighborhoods. The Elks Club buildings ranks among the finest of its type in Racine. It is a representative example of this very important period of architectural design.

It is interesting to note parenthetically that the Racine Elks Club house design contains some elements of the Chicago School on its otherwise neo-Georgian facades. The undulating beltcourse, the inset square panels of stone in the window trim and the panels of glazed tiles all hint at the modern design trends that were popular in Chicago about 50 miles to the south. Indeed, Guilbert's first design proposals included a Chicago School parapet and modern decorative details that were not incorporated into the final design of the clubhouse.

In 1912, prominent architects from various parts of the country submitted plans and designs for the Elks Club house in Racine, but the local architectural firm of Guilbert and Funston won the commission. A. Arthur Guilbert, the principal member

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

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

Racine Elks Club, Racine, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

For NPS use only

received

date entered

of the firm, is generally credited with the design. Guilbert was born in Racine in 1869 and studied at Lehigh University, the University of Michigan and the Chicago Art Institute. In 1901, he returned to Racine and after a few years of working for the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Company, he opened his architectural office. He had several partners, the longest term of which was E. B. Funston (1906-1915).

During his career, Guilbert was the most important architect in Racine. He was lauded for his skill in "adapting ancient and modern⁴ architecture as seen in the notable places of Europe to modern American needs." Newspaper articles for the years 1912 and 1913 mention only one major building constructed in those years not designed by his firm, the old Racine County Courthouse. Newspaper articles on the construction of the old courthouse are sprinkled with bitter comments about the "foreign" architect from Minneapolis and the wishes of many that Guilbert had been hired.

Of the many buildings mentioned in his 1922 obituary as being designed by Guilbert, very few appear to remain. Besides the Elks Club building, only the McMynn School (a plain red brick structure on the northwest corner of Lake and Seventh), St. Luke's Rectory (a Jacobean style house at 614 Main), and the neo-classical limestone Commercial and Savings Bank (at 441 Main) are listed in the Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places.

Therefore, the Elks Club is significant as one of the few remaining designs of a locally prominent architect, A. Arthur Guilbert.

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- 1 Racine Journal-Times, Aug. 3, 1912 and April 9, 1913.
 - 2 Racine Journal-Times, Aug. 3, 1912.
 - 3 Racine Journal-Times, Oct. 6, 1963.
 - 4 Racine Journal-Times, April 3, 1922.

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

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Racine Elks Club, Racine, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

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Racine Journal-Times, Jan. 5, 1912; Jan. 18, 1912; Feb. 22, 1912; June 21, 1912; Aug. 3, 1912; April 7, 1913; April 8, 1913; April 9, 1913; April 3, 1922; May 28, 1939; Oct. 6, 1963; May 14, 1964; Aug. 19, 1964; Jan. 3, 1968.

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