

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin	
COUNTY: Milwaukee	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER APR 11 1972	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON: Pabst Theater
AND/OR HISTORIC: Congressmen to be notified:
Sen. William Proxmire
Sen. Gaylord A. Nelson
Rep. Henry S. Reuss

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 144 East Wells Street
CITY OR TOWN: Milwaukee
STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55 COUNTY: Milwaukee CODE: 079

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)		<input type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: City of Milwaukee
STREET AND NUMBER: City Hall, 200 East Wells Street
CITY OR TOWN: Milwaukee STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55

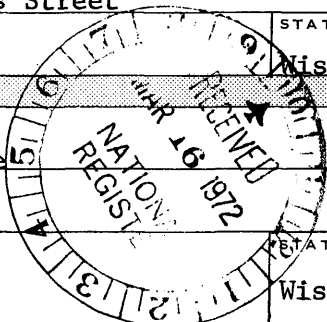
5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Milwaukee County Courthouse
STREET AND NUMBER: 901 North Ninth Street
CITY OR TOWN: Milwaukee STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey
DATE OF SURVEY: 1969-70 Federal State County Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Library of Congress
STREET AND NUMBER: Washington
CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE: Wisconsin
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

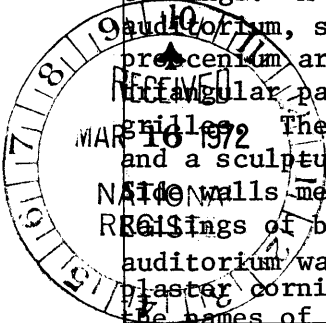
The Pabst Theater is a rectangular building measuring some 148 feet east-west by 80 feet north-south. On the first story, south and west walls are chiefly light gray sandstone; above this level, they are St. Louis pressed brick, with ornament of stone, brick, terra cotta, and pressed metal. The south (principal) elevation is further embellished by a single-story ornamental iron porch which extends most of the width of the facade. The north wall is Milwaukee common brick, as is the east wall, which, it should be noted, was left in its present naked and homely state by demolition of the building's east wing forty-odd years ago. The main entrance is located near the east end of the south elevation. Here four sets of metal-clad double doors give access to the entrance foyer which opens into the main lobby. Within the building the theater is oriented east-west, having lobbies, public cloak-rooms, restrooms, and staircases on the east, stage, dressing rooms, equipment rooms, and the like on the west, and the domed auditorium between. The auditorium proper consists of main level and two balconies and presently seats 1549. Auditorium and public areas on the east are covered by a gambrel roof, the stage by a convex mansard.

Newspaper accounts of 1895 tell us that Frederick Pabst spent "upwards of \$300,000" to build, furnish, and equip his theater, sparing no expense in creating a magnificent edifice, with magnificence defined not only in terms of costly materials, luxurious appointments, and elaborate ornament but also in terms of stage facilities, audience accommodations, acoustics, and safety. The stage was flexible and well-equipped; every seat in the house commanded an unobstructed view of the stage; acoustics were excellent; and it was described in 1895 as "the most thoroughly fireproof [theater] in the world."

In planning the Pabst the architect, Otto Straack, made no attempt to copy the earlier theater on the site, as regards either interior or exterior, though both designs shared remotely Italian ancestry. Journalists of 1895 described the Pabst as "Italian renaissance" in style, but it cannot be counted among those rather literal classical revival buildings that were appearing in great number throughout our nation by the mid-1890's. Rather it is, as 20th century commentators have noted, a grand example of the "opulent Victorian Baroque," with Renaissance sources very freely and richly interpreted. The interior was particularly lavish. In foyer, main, the mezzanine lobbies was wainscot of gold Siena marble, with base and chair rail of green marble.

Lobbies were fitted with gold scagliola columns and marble and plaster pilasters in the Ionic order and were crowned by paneled ornamental plaster ceilings. A splendid white marble staircase joined the two lobbies. In the auditorium, side and rear walls were punctuated by Ionic pilasters. The proscenium arch, in the west wall, was set in a large rectangular panel with rectangular panels above the arch at north and south having ornamental plaster friezes. The archivolt was heavily encrusted with decorative plaster work, and a sculpture of Apollo with Tragedy and Comedy surmounted the proscenium. Side walls met the proscenium at shallow angles and contained the box seats. Settings of boxes and balconies were richly decorated. Crowning the auditorium was a shallow circular dome which rose above a richly ornamented plaster cornice, about the base of which were pilaster-framed plaques bearing the names of celebrated figures in the fine arts.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1895

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Ethnic</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In recognition of its historical and architectural significance, the Pabst Theater was named a Milwaukee Landmark in 1967. And, as indicated, it was documented for the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1969-70. Both the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission resolution and the HABS report remark on the important role that the Pabst has played in Milwaukee's cultural life. The latter states: "In 75 years of almost continuous use the Pabst has welcomed a dazzling array of talent presenting a kaleidoscopic variety of theatrical and musical performances. It began, of course, as a German theater, opening . . . with 'Zwei Wappen,' a comedy by Oscar Blumenthal and Gustav Kadelburg that had premiered at the Lessing Theater in Berlin on November 18, 1894. . . . And from the 1890's until World War I the Pabst featured German-language productions. Many writers have observed that these years were particularly rich ones in Milwaukee's cultural history, witnessing an impressive flowering of the arts and letters, and while none would assign exclusive credit for this to the city's German-Americans all concede that their contributions--including the Pabst Theater--were very significant indeed, earning for Milwaukee the flattering nickname "Deutsch-Athen,"

Architecturally, the Pabst is a fine example of late Victorian design in Milwaukee. It was designed by German-born Otto Straack (Strack), who, if not one of the city's most distinguished architects, was well-regarded locally not only for his work on the theater but also for a number of buildings at the Pabst-Brewing Company and several elaborate residences.

Finally, it should be noted that the Pabst is Milwaukee's last surviving 19th century theater.



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The HABS data report includes a four-page bibliography. Among the more significant publications cited therein are:
 "A Grand Playhouse," Evening Wisconsin, November 9, 1895, 1, 3.
 "New Pabst Theater," Milwaukee Sentinel, November 10, 1895, 9, 10.
 "A Palace Play House," Milwaukee Journal, November 9, 1895, 10.
 Perrin, Richard W. E., Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee, 1968, 47.
 The most recent publications include two based on HABS records:
 "Pabst Theatre, Milwaukee, 1895," Marquee, III, No. 1, 1971, 11.
 Wietczykowski, Mary Ellen, "HABS Milwaukee," Wisconsin Architect, XLII, No. 12, December, 1971, 14-17.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

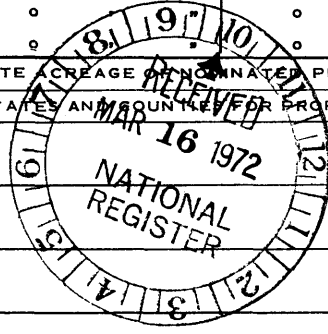
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		N 43° 02' 28.5"	W 87° 54' 36"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

16/425526
4765570
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.1

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



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Mary Ellen Wietczykowski, Chairman
 ORGANIZATION: Milwaukee Landmarks Commission DATE: Feb. 14, 1972
 STREET AND NUMBER:
210 West Michigan Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Milwaukee STATE: Wisconsin CODE: 55

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name <u>James Morton Smith</u> <u>James Morton Smith</u> Title <u>Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin</u> Date <u>March 3, 1972</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Robert M. Utley</u> Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date <u>4/11/72</u></p> <p>ATTEST: <u>William H. Huntley</u> Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date <u>APR 11 1972</u></p>
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(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

PABST THEATER

6.

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Buildings and Sites (state)

1969-71

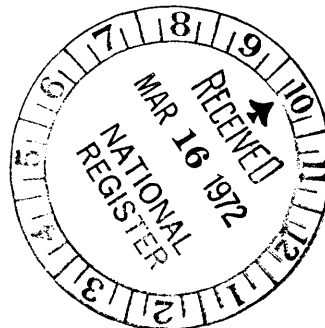
State Historical Society of Wisconsin

816 State Street

Madison

Wisconsin

Code: 55



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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Wisconsin	
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(Number all entries)

PABST THEATER

7. DESCRIPTION

And, as it happens, much of this sumptuous design has survived the years. On the exterior, south, west, and north elevations have undergone only minor modification; a few openings have been bricked up, several new openings created, new fire escapes installed. On the facade, a small balcony has been removed and a large vertical sign set in place. The interior has seen considerably more alteration, but, even so, substantial portions of the original remain. The most significant changes were made in 1928-29. These included: 1) reconstruction of the foundations; 2) installation of new heating and ventilating systems and new lighting; 3) redesign and rebuilding of most basement spaces; 4) alterations to the stage, including installation of new flooring and removal of fly gallery and freight elevator; 5) in the theater proper, lowering and enlarging the orchestra pit, removal of the box seats and redesign of these areas, installation of new seating on main level and in the first balcony and alteration of the seating arrangement in these areas; 6) in the lobbies, removal of the original staircase and construction of a new staircase from salvaged materials and bricking up of doorways joining lobbies and east wing (the surviving section of the 1870-71 building). And, as is to be expected, the entire interior was redecorated at this time. No really important changes have been made since the 1920's, except, of course, demolition of the east wing. Only minor alterations were carried out in connection with the much-publicized renovation project of 1961.

The Pabst not only retains most of its Victorian flavor but also continues to be a good theater, with good acoustics and good facilities for performers and audiences. This is not to say that the building's condition is all that it might be, however. The theater is structurally sound, but it is badly in need of repair (as well as redecoration). Thoroughly renovated, it could serve the community for many years to come.

