

1 City, Village or Town: Superior		County: Douglas	Surveyor: P. Lusignan	Date: 2/1/85	Tower Avenue
Street Address: 1202-1208 Tower Avenue		USGS Quad and UTM Reference: Superior WI-MINN 15 / 568520 / 5174670		Acreage: less than one	
Current Name & Use: Empire Block / Commercial property			Current Owner: I. and C. Grossman		
Film Roll No. DG -7 , 9	Affix Contact Prints		Current Owner's Address: 16 B Hayes Court Superior, Wisconsin, 54880		
Negative No. 34, 19			Legal Description: West Superior, Fourth Division; Lots 25, 26, 27 and 28, Block 130		
Facade Orient. West					

2 Original Name & Use:	Source	Previous Owners	Dates	Uses	Source
Empire Block	A,B,C				49N
Dates of Construction /Alteration 1892	Source A,B				
Architect and/or Builder: Carl Wirth	Source B				14W

3 Architectural Significance <input type="radio"/> Represents work of a master <input type="radio"/> Possesses high artistic values <input checked="" type="radio"/> Represents a type, period, or method of construction <input type="radio"/> Engineering <input type="radio"/> None	4 Historical Significance <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with lives of significant persons <input type="radio"/> Assoc. with significant historical events <input checked="" type="radio"/> Assoc. with development of a locality <input type="radio"/> Other: _____ <input type="radio"/> None Period of significance: _____
Architectural Description and Significance: The solid-looking Empire Block is a wood-frame structure with brick bearing walls enclosing a total of approximately 27,000 square feet of space. The three-story Romanesque Revival influenced design, by local architect Carl Wirth, features dramatic trabeated window openings on the upper two floors. The building's paired windows are capped with massive rusticated sandstone lintels set in large two story bays, which are divided by engaged brick pilasters. (continued) Interior visited? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Historical Background and Significance: The Empire Block was erected by the Empire Building Company in 1892. The Building Company had been organized as a land speculating and investment concern by Franklin Billings (former Governor of Vermont), O.P.C. Billings of New York, and Superior businessmen Edward Bailey and F.W. Downer. ^B One of the last major speculating firms to establish in the city before the 1893 depression, the company erected a number of commercial and residential sites in (continued)

5 Sources of Information (Reference to Above) A Assessor's Records B Evening Telegram, Superior, 2/5/1934 C Sanborn Insurance Map, Superior, WI, 1892-1905 D City Directories, Superior, WI, 1892-1930. E F	6 Representation in Previous Surveys <input type="radio"/> HABS <input type="radio"/> LDMK <input checked="" type="radio"/> WIHP <input type="radio"/> NRHP <input type="radio"/> other: _____
	7 Condition <input type="radio"/> excellent <input checked="" type="radio"/> good <input type="radio"/> fair <input type="radio"/> poor <input type="radio"/> ruins
	8 District: _____ <input type="radio"/> pivotal <input type="radio"/> contributing <input type="radio"/> non-contributing
	9 Opinion of National Register Eligibility date: _____ initials: _____ <input checked="" type="radio"/> eligible <input type="radio"/> not eligible <input type="radio"/> unknown <input type="radio"/> national <input type="radio"/> state <input checked="" type="radio"/> local

SUBJECT: Tower Avenue
 NUMBER: 1202-1208
 TOWN: 49N
 RANGE: 14W
 SECTION: 15
 MAP NUMBER: Superior Intensive Survey
 MAP CODE: B

Architectural Description (continued)

Each of the pilasters is in turn detailed with a carved stone capital. Individual window units are divided by paired Romanesque columns of pressed brick capped by intricate floral motifs. The dramatic use of sandstone and molded brick are trademarks of C. Wirth's designs, which can be found in a number of major sites within the city.

The upper window fenestration is continued on the building's north side. In some cases the structure's original sash has been altered or replaced with infill units. A stone cornice details the building's roofline.

The ground floor area, which rests on a sandstone foundation, has undergone considerable alteration. The most dramatic feature being the addition of a modern mansard pent roof above the Tower Avenue storefronts. Individual store display areas have also been modernized. Although partially obscured by the pent roof addition, a strongly detailed sandstone entry arch is still visible to the center of the facade. The entry provides access to the upper floor apartments and offices.

The building's north (12th Street) elevation is in a better state of preservation and features a series of brick-arched doorways and stone trimmed window openings. To the rear (east), a one story brick addition projects from the building's southeast corner. A simple storage area, the outbuilding is of no significance. The rear face of the main building features simple segmental-arched openings and a steel fire escape.

The interior of the structure contains little detailing of a significant nature, most of the original materials having been removed in various remodellings which have occurred over the years.

Historical Background (continued)

the downtown area. The three-story Empire Block was by far their most lavish and significant effort.

Designed by prominent Superior architect Carl Wirth in a rich, Romanesque manner, the building cost approximately \$50,000 to erect.^B The building's initial tenants would include: the grocery concern of Lucious Miley and Joshua Polin, both of whom lived upstairs apartments; the drug store of Charles W. Aust (1892-1912), which became the Ryan pharmacy in 1913; and the quickly expanding hardware concern of James G. Pease (1893-1927).^D Suppliers of hardware for both home and work (e.g. stoves, bicycles, mining, lumber and milling equipment), the Pease concern was to grow into one of the community's major supply houses and served a broad region stretching across the upper portions of Wisconsin and Michigan. While the ground floor area of the building remained strongly commercial, the upper stories varied in use from offices to apartments and flats.

In 1892, the Empire Building Company was induced into erecting a two-story brick structure to the rear of its property. The building was to be occupied by the first post office in the new commercial area of the city and was an important signal of the arriving of the new downtown district. (see ISF form for 1716 North 12th St.)

Significance

A handsome Romanesque Revival structure, the locally significant Empire Block departs strongly from the round-arched Romanesque of earlier Tower Ave. designs (New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts blocks). In its dramatic use of rusticated native sandstone, molded brick and large expanses of glazing, the Empire block is a significant example of the unrestrained exuberance that marked the late 19th century boom period in Superior. The work of locally important architect Carl Wirth, the building shows the eclectic nature of his design work. The Empire Building is historically significant as a representative of the work of various land speculating firms and investors in the community during the late 1880s and 1890s. The block exemplifies the work of these firms in creating a new commercial and trade center in the rapidly growing port city of Superior.

Address 1202-08 TOWER AVE

District

Owner I & C GROSSMAN

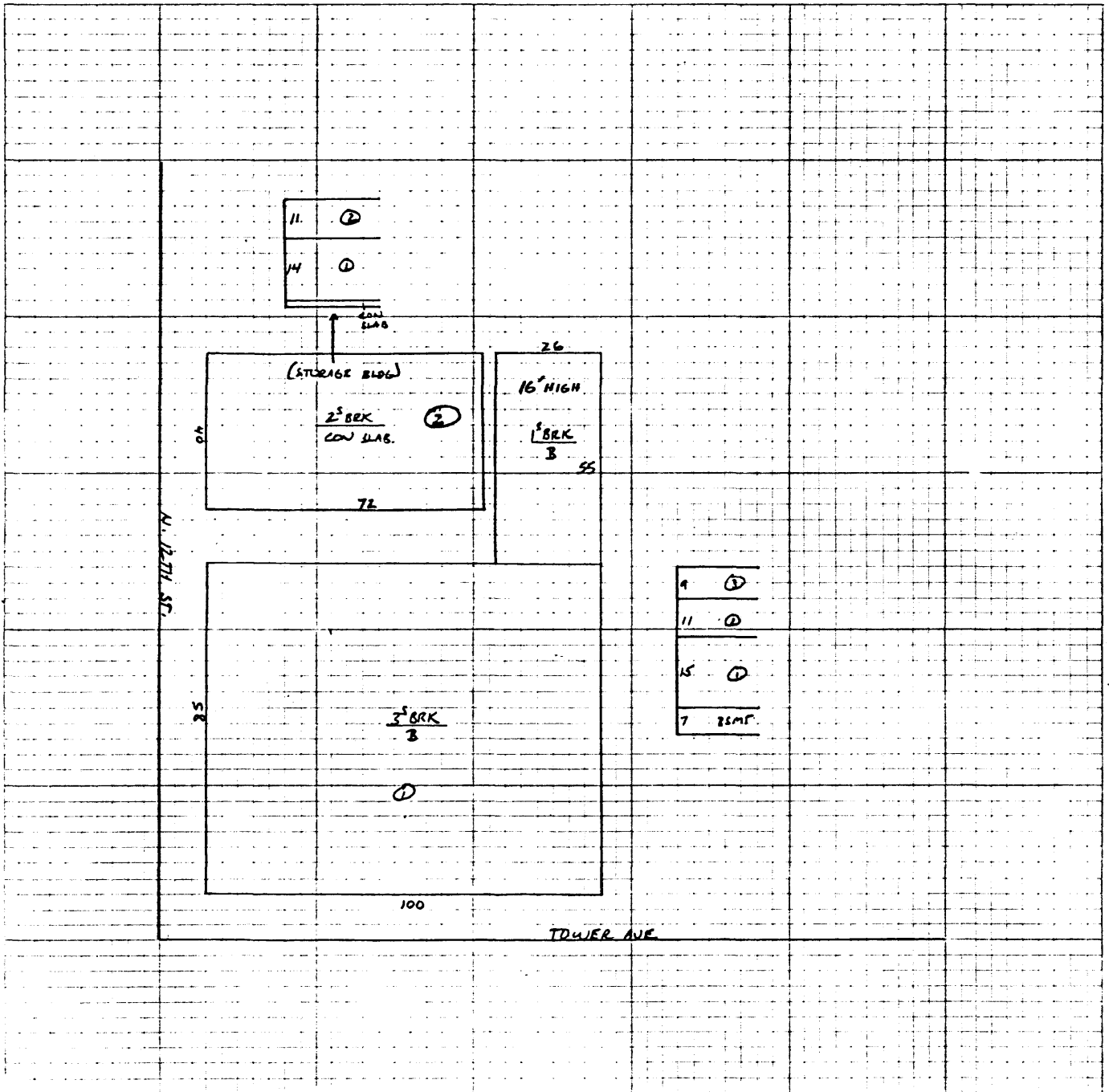
Key No.

Date of Appraisal 9/80

Made By RG

Year of Const. 1905 1892

Indicate on Building Sketch: No. Stories - Story Height - Wall Mat'l & Thickness - Type & Size Windows Scale: 1" = 40 Ft.



Computations & Other Pertinent Data ① LUXE FURNITURE & RADIO STORE - UNCAL

-2ND FLOOR - 2 SLEEPING RMS. @ \$85 PER MONTH

4 APARTS @ \$150 PER MONTH

-3RD FLOOR - 9 SLEEPING RMS. @ \$65 TO \$85 PER MONTH

4 APARTS @ \$150 PER MONTH

② 2 BRK WAREHOUSE - 40 X 72 = 5,760 sq ft @ 19.00¢ = \$109,440

