

1 City, Village or Town: Superior		County: Douglas	Surveyor: P. Lusignan	Date: 2/1/85	Street Tower Avenue Number 1301-1305
Street Address: 1301-1305 Tower Avenue		(SW corner of Tower Ave. & N 13th St.)	USGS Quad and UTM Reference: 15 / 568465 / 5174550	Acreage: less than one	
Current Name & Use: Kresge Building		Current Owner: Dakota Sup. Co. / Attention: T. Pierce Century 21 1708 Belknap, Superior			
Film Roll No. DG - 8	Affix Contact Prints		Current Owner's Address: 1301 Tower Avenue, Superior, WI 54880		
Negative No. 5			Legal Description: West Superior, Fourth Division; Lots 1, 2 and 3, Block 134.		
Facade Orient. East					

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

3 <u>Architectural Significance</u> <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 <u>Historical Significance</u> <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: _____	Section 15 Map Name Superior Intensive Survey
Architectural Description and Significance: The 1892 Wemyss Block at 1301 Tower Avenue is a distinctive commercial building which employs Romanesque forms and dramatic aspects of the Classical Revival, to create a unique eclectic design classified as "modernized classic" in contemporary accounts of the day. ^B The three-story brick and steel framed structure contains a dramatic arcaded upper floor area displaying slender Ionic columns and Romanesque detailed brick piers. (continued) Interior visited? <input checked="" type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No	Historical Background and Significance: The Wemyss Block, built in 1892-1893, was one of the last of the major commercial buildings erected along Tower Avenue during the Superior boom era. The building, constructed by the prominent Noonan & Schmidt Bros. contracting firm of Superior ^C is representative of the type of ornate, speculative construction which dominated the era. In early 1892 Rowland Wemyss, former (continued)	

5 Sources of Information (Reference to Above) A <u>Evening Telegram</u> , Superior, 2/5/1934 B <u>Evening Telegram</u> , Superior, 4/23/1892 C Assessor's Records D 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: _____	Map Code H
	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	

Architectural Description (continued)

Grouped in sets of three, the window arches of the north and east facades are supported on attenuated Ionic columns. The delicateness of the dividing columns gives the wall surface an appearance of lightness, which is counteracted by the solid brick piers which frame the slightly projecting end bays. These brick piers are capped by carved stone capitals in floral motifs. A monochromatic paint layer now covers the original light-covered brick and sandstone surfaces of the major elevations detracting from their visual richness. Crisp egg and dart, and greek key moldings divide the first, second and third floor levels, while the building roofline features a continuous, denticulated metal cornice surmounted by a tall parapit wall. A series of three skylights can be found on the slightly pitched roof.

The ground floor areas of the imposing structure have seen a series of alterations. The North 13th St. (north) facade still features the original "electro-bronzed iron" framing members which formed the original storefront areas, but the massive plate glass panels which were a trademark of the building, have since been replaced with smaller display areas. The main (Tower Ave.) facade dates to the 1920s and 30s. Four separate entrance setbacks mark the street level, while a brilliant red and tan pigmented structural glass facia panel is visible above the awnings. The moderne Vitrolite panels carried the S.S. Kresge Co. signage that gave the building its common name. All upper story windows have been boarded up with plywood panels.

To the rear of the rectangular main block is a 56' x 48' addition erected in 1898 for storage space. Two stories in height, the brick structure features no distinctive detailing. A vacated elevator shaft is also visible to the rear.

The interior of the building, which at one time featured offices and living spaces on the upper floors, is now vacant above the first floor level. All partitions, plumbing and heating fixtures have been removed, leaving 12 foot high ceilings and regularly spaced iron support columns as the only accoutrements. The first floor area is, remarkably, one of the few late 19th century commercial interiors still relatively intact. The open space features the original exposed iron support columns, maple flooring, and pressed metal ceiling (14' in height).

Occupying a frontage of 75 feet on Tower Ave. and 92 feet on North 13th Street, the 26,000 square foot Wemyss Block is located in the heart of the Tower Ave. business district with parking areas to the rear and the massive 1892 Maryland Block located across N 13th Street.

Historical Background (continued)

manager of the Land & River Improvement Co., contemplated the erection of a major commercial property within the heart of the growing business district. Wemyss had built a number of speculative residences within the city and had helped direct much of the Land & River Company's speculative efforts. Wemyss hired local architect Carl Wirth to draw up the plans for a two story structure which would cost approximately \$50,000. By the time of its completion in early 1893, the building had grown to three stories and had cost a total of \$80,000 to erect. Designed in a "modernized classic" style the building would come to house the retail furniture concern of Frank Kelly and Michael May (1896-1916). In 1898 a small 56' x 48', two-story addition was completed to the rear of the site. One of the largest furniture dealers in the head of the Lakes region, the

Historical Background(continued)

May Furniture Co. would remain the building's major tenant until 1916 when the concern was moved next door to the Maryland Block and the Wemyss building was taken over by the Grand Rapids Furniture Co. under Peter S. Skamser. Between 1913 and 1916 extensive remodelling was done to the building, creating office space on the second floors and living quarters above that. In 1939 the S.S. Kresge Co. purchased a long term lease on the site and proceeded with the latest remodeling seen at the storefront areas today. The partitions, heat and water supplies to the upper floors were also removed at this time. At present the ground floor is occupied by a second-hand furniture concern and the upper floors remain vacant.

Significance

While alterations diminish the building's architectural integrity, the structure still exists as a significant local example of Classical Revival influenced commercial architecture in a form not common to the predominantly Victorian-Romanesque Tower Avenue streetscape. The mass, scale and upper story detailing set this large commercial block apart from its neighbors as a significant local example of late 19th century design.

The Wemyss Block is historically significant as a representation of the work of various land speculators and investors in the community during the late 1880s and 1890s. Erected by former Land & River Co. employee Rowland Wemyss, the block exemplifies the work of local investors and businessmen to create a new commercial and trade center in the rapidly growing port city of Superior Wisconsin during the region's Boom Period.

Address 1301-03-05 TOWER AVE

District _____

Owner DAKOTA SUP. CO ET AL

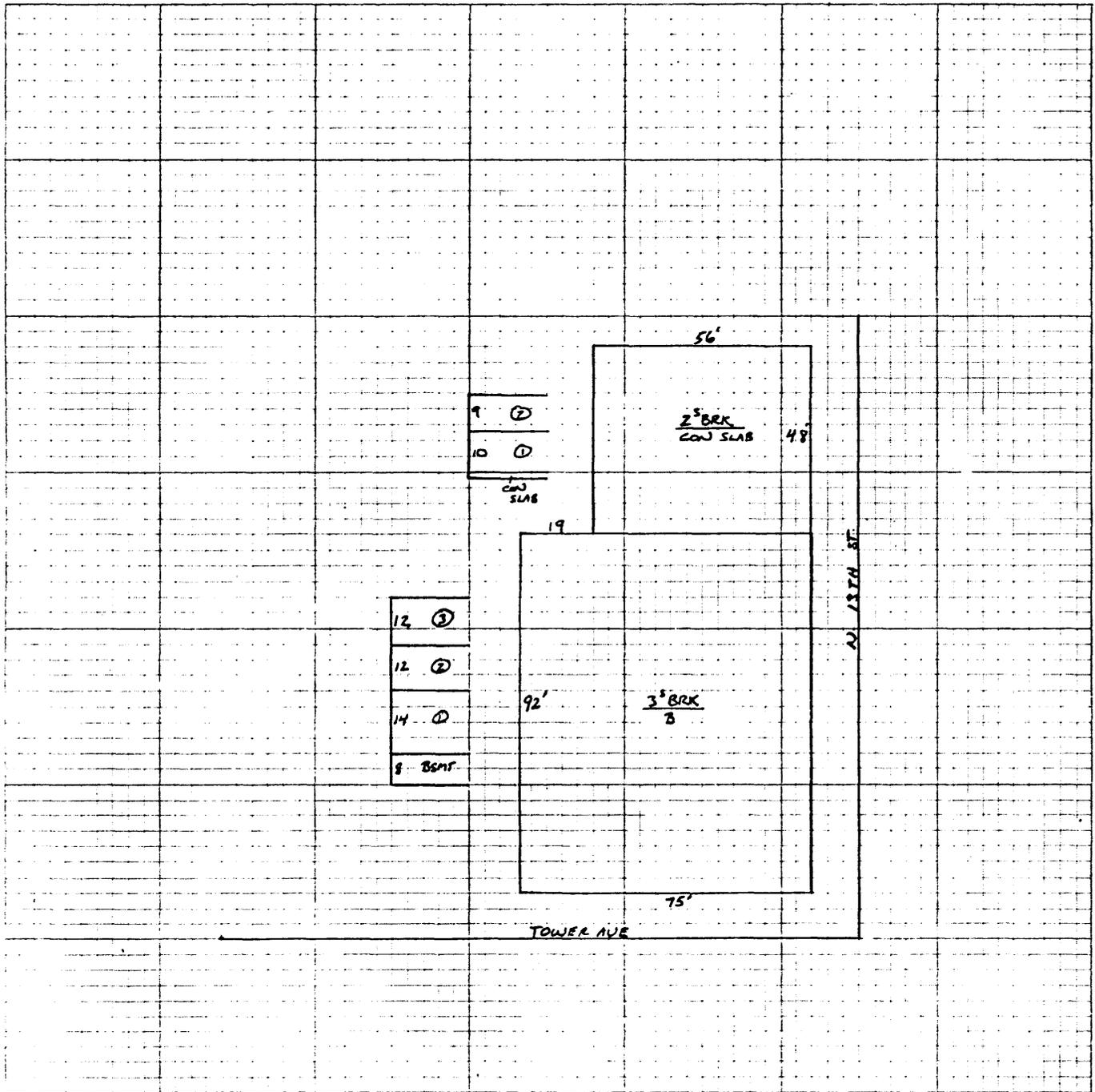
Key No. _____

Date of Appraisal 9/80

Made By RG

Year of Const. ~~1900~~ 1892

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



Computations & Other Pertinent Data 2ND & 3RD FLOORS VACANT - NO HEAT, PLUMB, & ELEC

FLOOR AREA - 1ST FLOOR - 9,588 SQ FT - 37%

2ND " - 9,588 SQ FT - 37%

3RD " - 6,900 SQ FT - 26%

TOTAL SQ FT : 26,076 SQ FT

