

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin	
COUNTY: Milwaukee	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
DEC 27 1974	

1. NAME

COMMON:
AND/OR HISTORIC:
Iron Block

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
205 East Wisconsin Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Milwaukee Congressional District: 5th

STATE Wisconsin	CODE 55	COUNTY: Milwaukee	CODE 53202
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input 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

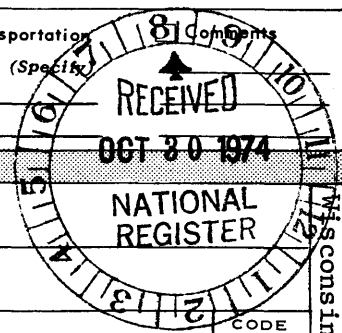
OWNER'S NAME:
Promised Land Company, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER:
312 East Wisconsin Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Milwaukee

STATE:
Wisconsin

CODE:
53202



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:
53233

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:
Washington

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE:
District of Columbia

CODE:
20540

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Milwaukee
ENTRY NUMBER: 20540
DATE: DEC 27 1974
FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

This Milwaukee Landmark stands on the southeast corner of North Water Street and East Wisconsin Avenue in the heart of downtown Milwaukee. It is a long, narrow rectangular building measuring some 40 feet (three bays) north-south by 120 feet (five bays). The facades (north and west elevations) are cast iron and were planned and manufactured at the Architectural Iron Works in New York City. As was true of so many of its cast-iron contemporaries, the Iron Block's design was influenced by Venetian Renaissance sources.

The framing is conventional brick and timber construction, but the foundations of north and west walls are unusual. Here the architect employed a series of inverted semi-circular arches of brick between the courses of sandstone and limestone. According to the HABS report, foundations of this type "were believed to reinforce the walls against inward collapse and to distribute the vertical load over a greater wall area."

On the lower stories exterior and interior have been significantly altered over the years. The HABS study gives this account:

"As first built, the Iron Block was a four-story building (with an attic) having a high basement in the northwest corner, lighted by windows in the Water Street (west) wall and in the two west bays of the Wisconsin [Avenue] side. Stairways connected grade level with first story entrances on both sides, the Water Street entry being in the central bay, and the one on the Wisconsin [Avenue] side in the second bay from the west. East of the latter, in the three remaining bays of the north facade, were four street level shops with entries on grade. First story windows, like those in the floors above, were round-arched; basement windows had shallow, segmental arches. The west entrance, also arched, was surmounted by a balustrade. Today, the building has five full stories in the northwest corner, the street level shop there having an entrance on grade. The Water Street entrance and its balustrade no longer exist; all Wisconsin Avenue entrances are now at street level. Windows of the present second (originally first) story are rectangular, and the string course above them has been modified."

As is to be expected, the street level storefronts have undergone repeated remodelling. Regarding the exterior, it may also be noted that portions of the iron ornament have been removed from the upper stories and the cornice cut back. In 1879 the present elevator was installed, and during the following year the top floor, which had housed the Masonic Hall, was converted into suites of offices. At the turn of the century a five story brick-faced addition was erected on the south side of the building. Interiors that retain something of their original character are to be found on the third and fourth floors, where the mid-19th century plan, with offices opening off central (east-west) corridors, and most of the original doors and round-arched doorways remain.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1860-61

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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <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 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

Prefacing the HABS data-report is this brief statement of significance:

"The Iron Block is notable as one of Milwaukee's most prominent early commercial buildings, as one of the small number of pre-Civil War structures remaining in the central business district, as the city's chief example of the use of the cast-iron front, and as the work of George H. Johnson, the English-born builder-architect who figured so significantly in the development of building technology a century ago."

The block was built for James Baynard Martin (1814-1878), a grain and real estate dealer, insurance executive, and banker, in 1860-61. At that time George H. Johnson was manager of the architectural department of Daniel Badger's Architectural Iron Works in New York City, where, as stated, the cast-iron plates for the street fronts were pre-fabricated. Although the Iron Block was not the only building of this type erected in mid-19th century Milwaukee, it was the city's most ambitious essay in cast-iron and is, in all probability, the lone surviving example. Its foundation, incorporating a series of inverted arches, may also be unique in Milwaukee, and its elevator, dating back to the 1870s, is reportedly the oldest still in service in the midwest.

Documented in measured drawings, data-pages, inventory, and photographs for the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1969, the Iron Block was designated as a Milwaukee Landmark in 1973.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A two and one-half page bibliography is part of the HABS documentation. Recent publications include:

Perrin, Richard W. E., Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee, 1968, 54.

Sturges, W. Knight (intro.), The Origins of Cast Iron Architecture in America, New York, 1970, 25 and Plate XLVI.

Wietczykowski, Mary Ellen, "1870 in 1970: The Century-old Buildings of Downtown Milwaukee," Wisconsin Academy Review, XVII, No. 4, Winter, 1970-71, 1-8, 14.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

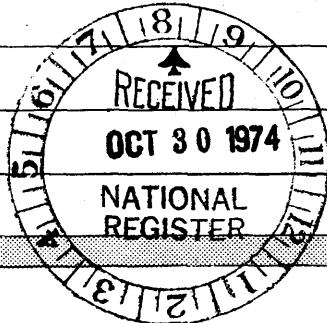
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	

U.T.M. Zone 16:
425,960 E.
4,765,260 N.

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **Less than 1.0**

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 AND TITLE:
Mary Ellen Wietczykowski, Chairman

ORGANIZATION: **Milwaukee Landmarks Commission** DATE: **Aug. 17, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
734 North Ninth Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Milwaukee** STATE: **Wisconsin 53233** CODE: **55**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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:

National State Local

Name: James Morton Smith
James Morton Smith

Title: Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date: Oct 23, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

A. P. Martensen
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 12/27/74

ATTEST:
W. Monte
Keeper of The National Register
Date: **DEC 26 1974**

HM 16 / 425980 / 4765260

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Wisconsin	
COUNTY	
Milwaukee	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	DEC 27 1974

(Number all entries)

IRON BLOCK

6. Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Buildings and Sites (State)

1971

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

816 State Street

Madison

Wisconsin 53706

Code: 55

