

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 5 1985
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Dewitt-Seitz Building

and/or common The Happy Sleeper Building

2. Location

street & number 394 Lake Avenue South N/A not for publication

city, town Duluth N/A vicinity of

state Minnesota 55802 code 22 county Saint Louis code 053

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<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:

4. Owner of Property

name Sam E. Atkins and Virginia R. Cerrillo

street & number Route 1, Box 186 6422 Kings Road

city, town Bayfield, Wisc. 54814 N/A vicinity of Evergreen, Colorado 80439 state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Recorder, Room 102, St. Louis County Courthouse

street & number Fifth Avenue West and First Street

city, town Duluth state Minnesota

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Duluth Historic Resources Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1984 federal state county local

depository for survey records Northeast Historical Society—St. Louis County Historical Society

city, town Duluth state Minnesota

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located two blocks from the Duluth Ship Canal and four blocks from downtown Superior Street, the DeWitt-Seitz Building is an eight story brick structure formerly used as a furniture warehouse and mattress factory. The exterior dimensions are 80 feet on the Lake Avenue side, facing southwest, and 100 feet on the Buchanan Street side, facing southeast. These two walls have a finished facade in glazed red brick with ornamental work over the windows and two intermediate cornices above the fifth and eighth floors. There is also a large painted metal cornice which extends outward from the roof on these two sides only and is an original component of the building.

The other two walls, facing northwest and northeast, are unornamented. The northwest wall is windowless and is partially covered by the adjacent Voyageur Gun Shop. The upper portion of this wall has been painted with an advertisement for Happy Sleeper mattresses. A metal fire escape has been attached to the northeast wall, and a number of its original bricks have been replaced.

There are 25 windows on each floor, except for the first floor, which has 13, and they are spaced at regular intervals on three sides of the building. All the windows are original fixtures, wooden framed and double hung, and the windows on the fifth floor are rounded at the top to enhance the facades of the front and side elevations.

The front entryway has been modified to allow for the construction of an aluminum framed, full light door with sidelights, and a green and white bubble awning has been hung over the front steps. The loading dock and entry on Buchanan Street has evidently not been changed from its original condition.

The structural design is an interior framework of wooden posts and beams with exterior masonry bearing walls. The posts are spaced on a 14 foot by 16 foot grid, and they gradually narrow in size as they mount the building. All the posts are solid wood except for the initial castiron columns in the basement which rest on a concrete floor. The wooden beams that are attached to the posts support a series of joists, two feet on center, which underlie the hardwood floors. The entire framework is in excellent condition.

A wooden staircase has been constructed inside the building against and in the middle of the southeast wall. There are two freight elevators, one in the north corner and one in the east corner, which are original equipment in the building. An integral sprinkler system was added at a later date.

The exterior brick walls are approximately 4 feet thick at the basement, and they narrow to a thickness of less than two feet at the eighth floor. The roof is pitched in the shape of a vee with two drains located in the middle of the building, one on either side.

The first floor was designed for showrooms and offices, and it has a ceiling height of 12 feet with correspondingly tall windows. The other floors have a floor to floor height of ten feet, except for the eighth floor which has a variable height of 12 to 14 feet.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1909

Builder/Architect John J. Wangenstein, architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

George H. Lounsberry, builder

The DeWitt-Seitz Building, built in 1909 and designed by Duluth architect John J. Wangenstein, is architecturally significant as a sophisticated local example of the Commercial style. It is also historically significant because of its association with the jobbing and manufacturing industry that developed in Duluth's waterfront area, located south of downtown on Lake Avenue, directly adjacent to the Duluth Ship Canal.

The DeWitt-Seitz Building was born into a period of Duluth's history that was full of growth and excitement. During the first two decades of the Twentieth Century, railroad expansion, logging, grain shipping, and the mining of iron ore all combined to make Duluth an important new force in the world of commerce. In a spirit of optimism many business leaders confidently predicted a bright future for their city with a population and an economy soon to rival those of Chicago.

An important element of this business boom in Duluth was the creation of hundreds of small manufacturers and jobbers who eagerly tried to satisfy the needs of the new frontier market of northwestern United States and western Canada. Jobbing, the art of buying goods directly from the manufacturers in the east and then selling these goods to the new retailers in the west, became a particularly important part of the Duluth business activity. "Practically every branch of the jobbing business is represented in some form in Duluth," stated an early promotional booklet published by the Commercial Club. "All of the Duluth houses have grown from small beginnings. Gradually their territory has expanded until now it takes in the whole northwest, and the territory is being extended further each year. The jobbing business is an important part of the commercial activities of the city and furnishes employment to several thousand people."

Jobbing led naturally to manufacturing as the new companies developed the capital and the expertise to make these goods themselves. Warehouses and small factories were constructed throughout the city with the largest concentrations being along the Waterfront and in West Duluth. The small strip of land on South Lake Avenue directly adjacent to the Duluth Ship Canal was the site of an uncommon amount of activity. In addition to the DeWitt-Seitz Building there were the warehouses and offices of the Marshall Wells Company, the Northern Shoe Factory, the coffee roasting plant of the Rust Parker Company, and several other smaller concerns. In 1910 a special edition of the Duluth Trade News proudly proclaimed that Duluth was now able to provide everything from furniture and mattresses to caskets and artificial limbs. The Marshall Wells Company alone merchandized a complete line of hardware and household items through hundreds of western retail outlets. At one time it published a catalogue as large and famous as the one from Sears and Roebuck.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Nikolaus Pevsner, A History of Building Types, Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1976, pp. 213 to 224 and 273 to 288.

Lawrence J. Sommer, "Forgotten Industries of Duluth" from Duluth, Sketches of the Past, American Revolution Bicentennial Commission, Duluth, Minnesota, 1976,

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Duluth Quad.

Quadrangle scale 7.5

UTM References

A

1	5	5	6	9	1	4	0	5	1	8	1	1	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

Cowell's Addition, South Lake Avenue, Parcel 10, Lots 1 and 3, Plat 741, City of Duluth.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jim Ganahl, assistant manager

organization DeWitt-Seitz Building

date November 21, 1984

street & number 394 Lake Avenue South

telephone (218) 722-0047

city or town Duluth

state Minnesota 55802

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

Russell W. Fridley

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 7/11/85

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 9/5/85

for Helores Byers
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**

DeWitt-Seitz Building, Duluth, St. Louis County, MN

Continuation sheet Statement of Significance Item number 8

Page 2

For NPS use only

received

date entered

The DeWitt-Seitz Building was constructed in 1909 at an approximate cost of \$60,000. The first owner of the building was the Zenith Investment Corporation, a group of local investors who came together to promote new business in Duluth. The original tenant, for whom the building was named, was the DeWitt-Seitz Company, a furniture jobber and mattress manufacturer that was founded in 1905 by Henry F. Seitz, a traveling salesman, and C. E. DeWitt, a banker and a druggist. The market for the new company covered much of the same territory as the Marshall Wells Company and included the states of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Montana. In the early 1920's the DeWitt-Seitz Company created its own trademark, Sanomade, for all the mattresses that were being manufactured in the building. In 1923 the company employed 60 people altogether who made mattresses, box springs, and double bunk beds for such varied customers as mining and logging camps and steamboats. In 1938 the Taperease mattress, one of the first internal spring mattresses, was patented by the company.

Unfortunately, the bright prospects for the future of Duluth failed to materialize as had been predicted. The Great Depression, changing markets, increased competition, transportation costs, and new ways of doing business were the main elements in the rapid decline of the Duluth jobbers and small manufacturers. The DeWitt-Seitz Company, squeezed out of the furniture business, eventually became the Sanomade Mattress Company and concentrated almost exclusively on the manufacture and sale of mattresses. In 1961 Sam F. Atkins, the present owner's father, purchased both the building and the business and changed the name to The Happy Sleeper. As part of a loosely associated chain of factory outlet stores, the new company tried to revive the mattress business by selling its products directly to the consumer through a display room on the first floor. The attempt was only partially successful, however, and the last mattresses to be manufactured in the building were shipped out in 1983. The building is now occupied by a variety of tenants in such uses as office space, cold storage, and light manufacturing.

Most of the warehouses and factory buildings that were constructed during this boom period in Duluth, under the influence of the Chicago school of architecture, adopted certain elements of what has come to be known as the Commercial Style. The crucial factor in the structural design of this style was the use of a steel girder skeleton and curtain wall construction, which made possible both a greater number of floors and a greater number of windows. Everything was meant to be as functional as possible with basically straight lines and little or no ornamentation.

The DeWitt-Seitz Building can be described as an early example of the Commercial Style, blending together several interesting elements in its overall design. Its basic structure, similar to that of the more well known Butler Square Building in Minneapolis, is an internal framework of massive wooden posts and beams joined to exterior masonry bearing walls. This method of construction was the direct forerunner of the steel girder and curtain wall design, and it

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

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

DeWitt-Seitz Building, Duluth, St. Louis County, MN

Continuation sheet Statement of Significance Item number 8

Page 3

For NPS use only
received
date entered

was still used to a wide extent at the turn of the century in spite of the rapid advances being made in Chicago and elsewhere. The DeWitt-Seitz Building, in the rest of its architecture, more fully portrays the elements of the Commercial Style in its overall height of eight stories, its clean lines, its lavish use of windows on every floor, its lack of elaborate ornamentation, and its large metal cornice extending from a flat roof.

But the building also exhibits several interesting features that can be attributed to two other schools of architecture. The treatment of the two principal facades might more properly be termed Sullivanesque in the way that the recessed windows and spandrels create a feeling of classical columns and arches, all resting on the solid base of the first floor. The ornamental brickwork of the flat arches over the corner windows might also suggest a third architectural influence, that of the Second Renaissance Revival. At any event, this combination of styles gives the DeWitt-Seitz Building a distinctive character that sets it somewhat above and apart from the other Duluth warehouses and manufacturing plants that were built in the same era.

The DeWitt-Seitz Building, furthermore, is one of the few Duluth buildings from this era that remains in a basically unaltered and well maintained condition. Most of the others have either been destroyed or adapted to radically different uses. In its architectural style, as well as in its commercial background, the DeWitt-Seitz Building still stands as one of the best examples of this important period in Duluth's history.

John J. Wangenstein, the architect of the building, was born in Norway around 1860 and studied in a technical school in Trondheim. After immigrating to the United States, he worked in an architect's office in St. Paul, Minnesota, for five years before finally coming to Duluth in 1890 to set up his own practice. In addition to the DeWitt-Seitz Building he designed the Greenway High School in Coleraine, the Bovey School on the Iron Range, the Masonic Temple in Duluth, the Duluth Boat House, and several local residences. He also served as the local architect for the St. Louis County Courthouse in association with Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago.

George H. Lounsberry, the general contractor, was also involved in the building of the Park Point School, the Duluth City Hall, Morgan Park High School, and East Junior High School.

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

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

DeWitt-Seitz Building, Duluth, St. Louis County, MN

Continuation sheet Major Bibliographical Item number 9

Page 2

References

pp. 193 to 205.

The Archives of the St. Louis County Historical Society.

Duluth News Tribune, October 18, 1908, to September 13, 1909.

For NPS use only
received
date entered