



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Keeler Building

Other names/site number: NA

Name of related multiple property listing:
NA

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 56 North Division Avenue

City or town: Grand Rapids State: MI County: Kent

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

 national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B X C D

Brian Murray, SHPO 9/28/17
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date
MI SHPO
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: Date

Title : State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Patrick Andrews
Signature of the Keeper

11/27/2017
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/Specialty Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ChicagoSchool

Materials:(enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Reinforced Concrete, Brick, Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Built in 1911 and enlarged in 1913, the seven-story Keeler Building was one of the first reinforced concrete structures in Grand Rapids. The well-known architectural firm of Osgood and Osgood designed the building in the Chicago School style of architecture. It was used as a furniture exhibition building from 1913 until the building was sold in 1958. Over the years, it had slowly evolved into an office building, holding governmental offices during the war years of the 1940s and beyond, as furniture exhibition buildings and that method of furniture display fell out of favor. An unusual feature of the building was its first-floor arcade off which interior stores could be reached by the public. The architectural integrity of the building's exterior is very strong and that of the upper exhibit floors remains strong. However, only a shadow of the arcade is obvious on the first floor.

Narrative Description

Set in the urban center of downtown Grand Rapids, the Keeler Building was built to be in close proximity to other furniture exhibition buildings for convenience during Grand Rapids' furniture expositions. In 1910, the Keelers purchased the property fronting on Division Avenue between

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the Murray Building to the south and the First Methodist Episcopal Church (known as the Church of the Holy Toothpicks for its multiple attenuated brick spires) to the north. They then engaged the city's father-and-son architectural firm of Osgood and Osgood to design a new building for displaying furniture manufacturers' goods. Within weeks of completion, the Keelers purchased the property to the north to expand their building. The church was demolished and an addition to the exhibition building was completed in 1913, creating a 173,500-square-foot building. The building was originally constructed to have perfect symmetry facing Division Street, but that balance changed slightly with the addition to the north. However, the addition maintained the building's most significant features, copying the Chicago windows, matching the existing terra cotta work and brick, and expanding the reinforced concrete structural skeleton from which the curtain walls could hang.

Still a vibrant part of the downtown, the Keeler Building fronts on North Division Avenue and Fountain Street, tucked between Kendall College of Art and Design, Fountain Street Church, the Grand Rapids Public Library, Civic Theater, and Grand Rapids Community College. An alley on the east side of the building, owned by the Keelers, runs between Keeler and Fountain Street Church. The south end of the building is currently adjacent to a surface parking lot created after the Murray Building was torn down in the late 1950s.

Chicago School is a native Midwestern commercial style of architecture. It is a blend of aesthetics and technology that took advantage of new materials and a new way of expressing honesty in a building's structure. Architects practicing in this style shunned eclectic styles that were so popular at the turn of the twentieth century. The Keeler Building is clearly designed in the Chicago School style with a nod toward neoclassical architecture in its three-part division. The terra cotta detailing at the first two floors provides the base, the next five floors, bereft of detail, create the shaft, and the upper level's horizontal banding, formerly topped with a huge overhanging cornice, create the capital.

The concrete structure, although hidden behind brick, is expressed in the continuous piers between windows and horizontal bands between floors. As if to emphasize that the brick covering the concrete structure was not structural, masons laid the bricks from the top down rather than in the traditional method of wall building, from the grade upward.¹ The large, horizontal openings between piers are almost completely filled with Chicago Style windows - broad, fixed central glass elements with double-hung windows on each side. These windows have been replaced over the years, but maintain a look similar to the original Chicago Style window with double hung windows either side.

At the Division Avenue and Fountain Street facades, the building's exterior is finished with a bright red, Blackstone brick laid in a Flemish bond. The red brick on the Fountain Street side wraps around to the alley just to cover the corner column. The remainder of the east façade uses a more common, utilitarian, light sand colored brick with exposed concrete structural elements at

¹ Dean, Ben H., "A NEW ERA IN BUILDING: Concrete, Reinforced and Trussed, Gives Grand Rapids Two of Its Finest New Structures Erected Along Lines Entirely New in This City - Unique Methods Which Reverse Old Way," *The Grand Rapids Herald*, December 10, 1911, page 58.

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floors and vertical piers. The south side of the building was built tight against the Murray building and the brick is now covered with massive metal panels, presumably to protect the softer interior brick that was exposed when the Murray Building was demolished.

Due to its striking contrast with the red brick, the most prominent feature on the building is the use of ivory colored terra cotta on the Division Avenue façade and wrapping one bay around on the Fountain Street façade. Wide terra cotta banding is used to frame the storefronts and the second-floor windows, creating an entablature between the second and third floors with two story pilasters between each storefront. Between the storefronts and the second floor, the terra cotta features a decorative motif of quatrefoil flowers. More delicate banding frames the windows from the third floor to the seventh floor. Above the seventh-floor windows, a wide terra cotta banding again acts as an entablature. A large, overhanging terra cotta cornice was removed in the late 1950's.

The original recessed-entry storefronts have long since been removed. Large, flush glass panels recessed slightly from the terra cotta piers now fill those openings between pilasters. Early photographs show awnings originally located above the first-floor storefront windows with transom glass above the awnings. The awnings have been removed and the transoms infilled with metal panels. Terra cotta frames the main entrances to the building's arcade on Division Avenue and Fountain Street. Above each entry, in relief is the name "KEELER." Original doors were replaced in 1942 with revolving doors that are still in place. More recently, doors and windows surrounding the Division Avenue entry were infilled with red marble panels inscribed with "Keeler Building" and black marble panels at the base. A third entrance framed with terra cotta is located at the corner storefront where Fountain and Division meet.

Original windows along Division Avenue were Chicago Style with a large fixed centerunit and one double hung window on either side. The units on either end of the 1911 building (bays one and seven from the south) and on the north end of the 1913 addition (bay ten from the south) featured a single large fixed unit at the center. The remainder of the windows featured a large central window with a muntin bar that aligned with the sash bar of the double hung windows. The replacement windows use two separate fixed windows with a vertical mullion at the center rather than the single windows originally featured.

Originally, the north facade featured a unique arrangement of windows. Chicago Style windows were located the width of the entire second and seventh floors and at the other floors in only the east and west bays. Sometime between 1936 and 1972, the north wall was punctuated with windows in all the bays. They filled almost each entire opening framed by the concrete structure and matched the pattern of the windows on the west, Division Avenue façade. A few storefronts were also cut into the building along this façade. Windows on the east façade of the building are tall double hung windows, many filling in most of the structural bay. Bays are more discernible at this location because the concrete structure is visible. A few of the windows were shorter, not filling the bay either vertically or horizontally. Most of the windows appear to have been replaced at one point. There are still a few wood windows and wood framed storefronts off the alley. Over time, many of the replacement windows have been infilled with plywood or metal panels. Some window locations have been bricked over. It is presumed that the south wall

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featured no windows as it abutted the Murray Building. However, a few windows were cut into the east end of this façade after the Murray was demolished.

In a new take on the traditional Grand Rapids furniture exhibition buildings, the Keeler was designed with the first two floors devoted to shops and the upper five to furniture showrooms. The first floor was unique to Grand Rapids in its design of an arcade extending east from the main entrance off Division Avenue to intersect with a wide arcade running north and south near the center of the building from the Fountain Street entrance. Originally, there were three stores with recessed entries fronting on the street and the arcade on either side of the Division Avenue entrance and three smaller stores on either side of the elevators and fronting on the arcade and the alley. With the 1913 addition, more stores were added on the first floor, fronting on Division, Fountain and the arcade. Many of the furniture manufacturers who exhibited to the trade on floors above maintained retail stores on the first floor. This was noted by the press as having a positive impact by keeping Division Avenue a “live business street.”²

White marble paneled walls clearly define the location of the arcade and are still mostly intact except for the loss of their large glass storefront windows. Walls between stores have been demolished or relocated. The flooring in this area has many layers of built-up flooring materials. Newspaper accounts note Tennessee marble floors in the arcade, but those are covered with carpet over more contemporary tiles at this time and it’s not clear what still exists as the original material. A wood sub-floor is visible in some former shop locations. A variety of ceilings have also been used over the years; remnants of a ceiling grid remain, but all early panels have been removed, exposing plaster ceilings with significant adhesive remnants. Some concrete structural columns are exposed while some are still covered in plaster. All the recessed entryways of the storefronts facing the street have been removed and, although there is evidence of a recessed entryway in one location off the arcade, it has been moved to be flush with the arcade. Exterior transoms are covered over and from within, it appears that the glass has been removed. The walls of the main elevator lobby on the south end of the building have been paneled over with marble tiles popular in the 1980’s.

Although early accounts of the building’s design note that the second floor was also to have an arcade, there is no physical evidence that it was ever finished in that manner. On the upper floors, entire floors were left open without permanent interior walls for the display and sales of furniture. Instead, displays relied upon temporary walls or partitions as needed to best display their wares. Even at the addition, the open floor plan remained seamless, providing the most flexible of interior spaces. It appears that the ceilings, walls, and columns were originally finished with plaster. The floors are wood under more contemporary finishes.

Over the many years the building was occupied, most of those upper floors were configured into smaller offices with an open office plan, some floors divided more than others, depending on need. Most were finished with lay-in ceilings or tiles glued directly to the plaster ceiling. Some of the ceiling grid remains and there is a lot of adhesive on the plaster ceilings that remain.

² New Keeler Building Nears Completion,” *The Grand Rapids Herald*, January 14, 1912, page 4.

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Some of the wood floors are visible, although it is hard to tell if they are just sub-floors. Sporadically, there is wood baseboard trim used around columns and on walls. Some of this appears to be original as its use is consistent in style from floor to floor.

New walls that were added are gypsum board, although in at least one case, the wall is concrete block with a gypsum board finish. Gypsum board has also been used to enclose many of the plaster columns and electrical conduits, making them appear far larger than the structure they hide. Original plaster is in poor condition in most locations due to a lack of heat in the building for more than twenty years. Simple, painted wood trim and a wood window stool is used at the windows on a few of the floors. On the seventh floor, many of the wood floors are buckled and plaster damaged or missing from water infiltration through the roof. Some concrete structural elements directly beneath the roof may need to be repaired or replaced as well. However, because of the openness on the upper floors, this building is well suited to adaptive reuse.

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Period of Significance

1911-1958

Significant Dates

1911
1913

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Osgood & Osgood Architects
Hauser, Owen & Ames Contractors
Pulte Plumbing – Plumbing Contractor
Roseberry-Henry Electric Company – Electrical Contractor
Weatherly Company – Heating System Contractor

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Keeler Building in Grand Rapids, Michigan, built as the Keeler Furniture Exhibition Building in 1911 and extensively enlarged in 1913, is significant under Criteria A (Commerce) as it represents a business model and a building type integral to the city’s history and national importance as a center for the manufacturing and merchandising of furniture. Blessed by its location on a river, which provided power as well as transportation to major population centers in the Midwest and beyond, and its proximity to plentiful forest lands, Grand Rapids became an

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early leader in the mass manufacture of furniture in the United States. With the growing demand from all parts of the country for affordable furniture and improved accessibility afforded by railroads, the local manufacturers organized yearly expositions and found it necessary to provide space for displaying their furniture and, soon, the wares of out-of-town manufacturers who flocked to the expositions. By the late 1880s, a loose collection of spaces in warehouses and hotels proved inadequate to the volume of business generated, and whole buildings were leased for the event. Enterprising businessmen perceived value in large buildings constructed for the express purposes of furniture display. The Keeler Building was one of ten such structures built in Grand Rapids between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1920s and was financed by brothers Miner and Isaac Keeler, whose business interests included Keeler Brass Company, a supplier of hardware and finishings to the furniture industry. By 1958 it ceased to be used as a furniture exhibition building and was sold by the Keeler family.

Additionally, the Keeler Building is significant under Criteria C as one of the earliest buildings in Grand Rapids to utilize reinforced concrete construction, an engineering feat that allowed the architectural firm of Osgood & Osgood to pierce the nonbearing exterior walls with bands of three-part Chicago Style windows on all seven floors. The building is designed in the Chicago School style of Architecture, and introduced an innovative ground floor plan with an interior arcade, providing access from the street and from wide interior passages originating at main entrances on both Fountain Street and Division Avenue elevations.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Keeler Building is a part of the history of furniture exhibition buildings in Grand Rapids, a story that began with the 1899 Blodgett office building – soon devoted solely to the display of furniture—progressed to structures designed expressly for the display of furniture by the end of the century and continued through the 1920s. In all, ten exhibition buildings provided space for out-of-town manufacturers who poured into town for Grand Rapids’ furniture expositions. The annual events benefitted a number of auxiliary businesses locally, not only the city’s own furniture manufacturers, but restaurants and hotels accommodating visiting crowds, transportation businesses bringing exposition visitors into town and ferrying them from place to place, publishing and design firms providing programs, menus, trade journals and related materials, and many more businesses that contributed to the annual shows, adding to the city’s coffers and employing its citizens.

During the Panic of 1893, brothers Miner S., George L. and Isaac H. Keeler took over a failing manufacturing company in the small town of Middleville, approximately twentymiles southeast of Grand Rapids, and envisioned a profitable future supplying hardware to the larger town’s burgeoning furniture industry. They changed the name to Keeler Brass Company and, in 1900, moved the business to Grand Rapids. Keeler Brass supported not only Grand Rapids’ signature industries, but also supported the state of Michigan’s automotive industry through the manufacture of a variety of automobile parts. The company took pride in its adaptability, shifting production to gun cartridges and belt fasteners for the military during World War I, surviving the

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Great Depression by developing and producing stainless steel door handles for Studebaker and Ford, and producing canteens and other metal products for the armed forces during World War II. The company was a leader in adapting new products and technologies –the first wooden screw manufacturer outside the East Coast in 1921 (recognized the next year as the most modern manufacturer of that product) and implementing die casting methods as a cleaner, less expensive and stronger alternative to sand casting.

The brothers' ability to recognize technologies and business trends informed their decision to add a furniture exhibition building to their business ventures. In 1910 they purchased land on North Division occupied at the time by a brick livery and a boarding house, then engaged the city's father-and-son architectural firm of Osgood and Osgood to design a new building for displaying furniture manufacturers' goods. In a new take on a Grand Rapids tradition, the building was designed with the first two floors devoted to shops and the upper five to furniture showrooms. The arrangement of the ground floor was unique in its plan of shops opening onto the wide corridors of an arcade as well as to the Division streetscape. The building served its purpose well and, in 1913, the Keeler brothers exercised an option to purchase the land immediately north of the Keeler Building in order to add an extension of sixty-six by 150 feet and seven stories in height.

Built in 1911, the seven-story Keeler Building was one of Grand Rapids' first structures of reinforced concrete construction. This method of construction was much commented upon in publications of the day – its increased resistance to fire, its speed of construction, and the wonder of curtain walls in contrast to traditional structures upheld by load-bearing walls. Validating its place in Michigan's annals of construction, the 1976 U.S. Department of the Interior publication, *The Lower Peninsula of Michigan: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites*, notes the structure's reinforced concrete construction and concrete slab floors as a first in Grand Rapids, designed to hold a dead load of 225 pounds per square foot (live load 450), as a concept revolutionary at that time.

The Keeler Building is distinctly Chicago School in style with its red brick exterior with ivory terra cotta trim, prominent at shop levels and echoed in window detailing on floors above. The underlying structure of the building – reinforced concrete standards supporting concrete-slab floors - was celebrated by the city's journalists as a wonder of a new age of building. Freed of the necessity of bearing the building's weight, exterior walls became curtain walls that could be pierced with a multitude of windows in the Chicago style – large, fixed central glass elements with double-hung windows on each side. The 1913 addition, comprised of three additional bays, negated the symmetry of the original Division entrance – a central bay with three identical bays to each side – but the integration of the extension is otherwise almost seamless. The horizontal bands of terra cotta ornament with cornice surmounting the top of the second floor and the pilasters between bays present an almost perfectly uniform aspect to the street (careful inspection notes the pilaster at the meeting of the two building is double the width of all the others), and as one looks above second-floor level, the joint in the fabric of the brick is visible to only the most discerning eye.

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Significance under Criterion A (Commerce)

Located on a major river that provided power and transported goods to population centers ringing the Great Lakes and beyond, Grand Rapids was also blessed with proximity to vast acres of forests. It grew beyond its 1826 trading post beginnings and was officially incorporated as a city in 1850, its citizenry then numbering 2,686. William Haldane, the city's first resident cabinetmaker, sold early Grand Rapids handmade chairs, tables and beds necessary for everyday life (and their final necessities as a maker of coffins). Others followed and brought with them, from the East Coast's fledging factories, knowledge of mass production and early power machinery they could put to use on virgin Midwestern lumber.

The city at the rapids of the Grand River was at the junction of the right time and the right place. Americans eager for new frontiers followed the Ohio River beyond the Appalachian Mountains and the Erie Canal west from New York and New England, and the country's population center shifted westward – from Boston to Cincinnati to Indiana. People were on the move, at the very beginning of a shift from a completely agrarian and self-sustaining society to a country learning to embrace urban living. Railroad transportation improved and, in 1854, Grand Rapids gained a link to a more urban America as a stop on the Grand Rapids & Indiana Railroad route from manufacturers of furniture for a mass market.

As they were employed outside of farms, Americans had more money to spend; the beginning of mass production meant that stylish furniture was within reach of those who lacked the wealth to purchase fine custom-made furniture. It was a perfect storm as growing consumerism met the Victorian preference for layers of decoration in the home. Americans in increasing numbers had a hunger for stylish home goods and Grand Rapids had resources to feed it. The young country celebrated its first century with the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition in 1876, and enterprising manufacturers saw a new way to showcase their products; Grand Rapids manufacturers Nelson-Matter, Berkey & Gay, and Phoenix were among those visionaries and sold every stick of furniture they took to the event. Back in Michigan, and encouraged by their success, a group of local manufacturers held the first Grand Rapids Furniture Market in 1878, and the city's national reputation as "The Furniture City" was begun.

As railroad trains and steamships brought eager buyers as well as manufacturers from all over the country anxious to sell to the attendant crowds, the host city began to cater to the needs of visitors to its semi-annual shows. In addition to hosting dinners, parties and sight-seeing, Market organizers realized out-of-town sellers would pay for display space to show their goods to best advantage. Manufacturers were put up in office buildings, hotels, lodge halls or wherever rooms might be available. Lumber baron D.A. Blodgett financed the construction of a large office building in 1889; its original purpose was soon eclipsed, however, as it occupied a prime location for visiting manufacturers' displays. The Blodgett Building represented a new business model – devoting an entire building to furniture showrooms and leasing out those spaces. In 1899 financier and entrepreneur Dudley E. Waters oversaw the building of Grand Rapids' first structure designed specifically for furniture display. Although it was five stories (a sixth floor added soon after it opened) in height and covered most of a large city block, the demand for showroom space continued to grow. Furniture exhibition buildings continued to be built into the

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1920s, ten structures in all. A grand, thirty-four-story “Furniture Capital” building was on the drawing board in 1927, but was never realized. The level of enthusiasm may lean toward hyperbole, but a November 28, 1913, article in *The Grand Rapids Herald* included this paean to the city’s special building style in a story on another proposed exhibition building that would have faced the Keeler Building across Division Avenue:

Grand Rapids is the only city in the world that has specially designed buildings for the display of furniture: Has the only real furniture exhibition, which attracts buyers not only from every part of the United States, but from foreign countries. Nearly every manufacturer in the country is a semi-annual exhibitor and very many lease space in these exhibit buildings and maintain offices here the year round.

Brothers Miner S., Isaac H. and George L. Keeler were well-established businessmen in 1910, having purchased a faltering manufacturing business in Middleville, Michigan (a small town twentymiles southeast of Grand Rapids), during the Panic of 1893, envisioning a profitable future in the design and production of brass hardware for the growing furniture industry in the larger city. The brothers renamed the business Keeler Brass Company and, after early success – the company shipped sixty thousand units in 1898 – moved their foundry operation to Grand Rapids in 1901. Observing the twice-yearly influx of furniture companies and eager buyers, the Keelers knew firsthand the success of the city’s furniture exhibition buildings and were well aware that such buildings were leased to capacity almost as soon as the structures were completed.

Miner and Isaac Keeler purchased land on Division Avenue in downtown Grand Rapids in 1910 with plans to replace the existing livery stable and boarding house with yet another exhibition building with a fine space for the offices of Keeler Brass. Construction began in June of 1911 and, thanks to innovative construction methods, it was hoped that the building would be available for leasing by the furniture market of January 1912 (in actuality, spaces were leased in time for that year’s July event). The Keeler Building was another success for the Keeler brothers, leased at peak capacity, and another jewel in the crown of showroom facilities that ringed downtown Grand Rapids. Seeing the success of their building, the Keelers quickly decided to exercise the option they had taken on land to the north of the structure and, rather than erect a hotel (another booming business due to the crowds of furniture merchants and buyers) as they had originally considered, added another three bays to the structure’s original seven, thereby adding seventy-five thousand square feet of additional floor space; the newly expanded exhibition space accommodated eighty manufacturers at peak capacity.

The furniture exhibition buildings, in their relationship to the semi-annual furniture markets, were a facet of an industry that was a huge part of the Grand Rapids economy in the early years of the twentieth century (and for some decades into the future). By 1912 according to an article in *The Grand Rapids Herald* dated January 12 of that year, the income from the midwinter and midsummer shows alone was ten million dollars, and the visitors to the events spent a half a million dollars yearly. E.V. Hawkins, president of the exhibitors’ association at the time, pointed to these figures noting that they “...indicate with striking emphasis just what the Grand Rapids furniture markets mean to Grand Rapids.” In the 1913 holiday issue, *Grand Rapids Furniture*

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Record estimated that besides forty-seven local manufacturers' goods, the year's markets had displayed the wares of 225 exhibitors from across the country. By the 1920s the combined floor space available in Grand Rapids' exhibition buildings totaled 1.5 million square feet. Added to income from actual sales, as well as income to the many auxiliary businesses that served the furniture industry and its exhibitions – providers of accommodation, purveyors of food and entertainment, printers of programs and publications, transporters of out-of-town visitors – the furniture industry truly swelled the coffers of the city and provided livelihoods for a large portion of its citizens.

By the mid-twentieth century, a number of factors led to the end of Grand Rapids' dominance in furniture exhibitions. At the time of its construction, Dudley Waters' Furniture Exhibition Building was the country's largest building devoted to furniture display, a distinction relinquished when Chicago's Merchandise Mart opened in 1930. War years led to restrictions on materials and correspondingly less demand for household goods, reflected by smaller visitor numbers at the exhibitions. In the post-war years, production of lower and middle range furniture lines migrated to Virginia and North Carolina. With the growth in southern furniture manufacturing, the Southern Furniture Market, established in High Point, North Carolina, in 1909, grew in prominence and became known as the International Home Furnishings Market (later, the High Point Market), and eventually assumed the mantle of the country's pre-eminent furniture exhibition. At the time of Grand Rapids' "Diamond Jubilee" market in 1953, only two of the city's furniture exhibition buildings were devoted to the purpose for which they were constructed. By the 1960s, no more than two dozen high-end manufacturers remained in operation; in 1965, the Grand Rapids Furniture Market Association decided to discontinue furniture exhibitions.

Most of the furniture exhibition buildings are still standing – a few were razed, the Keeler Building itself eyed by a local parking lot entrepreneur as a potential stretch of blacktop – one hiding for years beneath a blank stare of glass and aluminum panels. Over the years, the buildings have been adapted to other uses, often as office buildings; the Keeler Building was no different. *Polk's Grand Rapids City Directory for 1941* showed fourteen showroom tenants remaining on upper floors, joined by an architect's office, a radio station, the Internal Revenue Service office and an assortment of shops along Division Avenue and the interior arcade. Five years later, the 1946 directory shows that two showrooms remained and the building then housed six more government offices, several department offices for Michigan Bell Telephone and several insurance companies in addition to ground-level shops. The building was sold to a New York real estate company in 1958 and then to a succession of owners and developers (including Amway, which considered moving some of its offices from the suburban headquarters to downtown Grand Rapids, but did not, and sold the building four years later), culminating in the last tenant being evicted in 1995. The building is the last remaining large commercial space in downtown Grand Rapids that remains undeveloped, but with good stewardship, the one-time Keeler Building could discover a new purpose and regain some of its polish.

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The Keeler Brothers and Keeler Brass Company

Isaac Nathaniel Keeler was born in Saratoga, New York, in 1821, and at age twenty-nine moved to Michigan and became an early settler of the village of Middleville. He was involved in several area businesses, and encouraged his five sons to become businessmen. Isaac H., Miner S. and George L. did so: a 120th anniversary publication, *Keeler: 120 Years in the Making*, relates that George ran a dry goods store and Miner “found talent for organizing and merchandising.” In 1890 the three brothers, father Isaac, and other Middleville investors formed the Middleville Manufacturing Company. An economic slump brought on by the Panic of 1893, along with an inefficient plant manager, left the company faltering, and in 1893 the three brothers bought out the other owners, intending to turn it around, sell it, and recoup their losses. When a visitor from Grand Rapids spoke of the burgeoning business of furniture manufacturing in his home town, the brothers decided to produce brass hardware and reformed the business as Keeler Brass Company. As mentioned above, within five years of reorganization, the company was shipping sixty thousand units a year; in 1900, the company moved to Grand Rapids, positioning them closer to the manufacturers and to a plentiful supply of workers for their factory, and within a year had doubled the amount of units shipped in 1898.

From the first, the Keeler brothers prided themselves on an ability to adapt easily to changing trends and technologies (as they had from the start in deciding to throw in their lot with a growing furniture industry) coupled with a strong work ethic and the desire to do well by their employees. From Miner to his son Isaac, to Isaac’s son Miner II, successive family executives (Keeler Brass was family-owned from its beginning until 1979) kept the company functioning and their workers employed through wars and the Great Depression by adapting: the company made cartridges and belt fasteners for the military during World War I stainless steel door handles for Ford and Studebaker during the Depression, and canteens for the military during World War II, all the while maintaining their workforce. When a need arose for wooden screws in the furniture industry, Keeler Brass responded by becoming the first wooden screw manufacturer outside the East Coast, and when another company was able to undercut Keeler’s price on door handles, the company was an earlier adapter of die casting, a more efficient, economical means of production than traditional sand casting. The company produced utilitarian items such as automobile handles and refrigerator door handles for Kelvinator, but also took a keen interest in fine design; in 1909, Miner toured Europe with William H. Gay, of the Berkey & Gay Furniture Company, and one of the company designers, where it was Mr. Keeler’s particular project to study fine furniture in galleries and museums across the Continent. Over the years, Keeler Brass worked closely with furniture designers to produce hardware that enhanced their work. In 1993 the company established a scholarship to be awarded annually to a Kendall College of Art and Design student in the Furniture, Industrial Design, or Interior Design programs, guaranteeing a continuing relationship with local designers and innovators.

The support of the furniture industry that largely made Grand Rapids and of the automotive industry that made Detroit and much of the state of Michigan made Keeler Brass a success for more than a century. Not surprisingly, it made rich men of the Keelers, and their personal philosophy resembled their business philosophy of supporting local institutions and commerce. Their wealth and acute business sense afforded them entry into banking: Miner and Isaac were

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major investors in the Citizen's Savings Bank of Owosso in 1895, and Isaac was appointed president; Miner was a stockholder in Kent State Bank; and both Minor and Isaac were stockholders in City Trust & Savings and the Grand Rapids City National Bank. The founders of Keeler Brass felt an obligation to improve the lives of their workers and of their city, and subsequent generations of Keelers have given generously to Grand Rapids, often in support of the arts or education. Miner S. Keeler and his wife supported commissioning an Alexander Calder sculpture for the city, and contributed money to Grand Rapids' art museum and symphony, and Grand Valley State University as well as providing a large portion of the funding for an addition to the Grand Rapids Public Library. The Keeler name is justifiably known and respected throughout Grand Rapids.

Significance under Criterion C (Architecture & Engineering)

Reinforced Concrete

Unreinforced concrete traces its history back to the Roman Empire. But, the science behind reinforced concrete developed and matured in the short span of the last half of the nineteenth century. This development helped shape new architectural styles and unleashed creativity in the form of the Modernist movement of the early and mid-twentieth century. Reinforced concrete is a combination of concrete with steel (or iron) reinforcing bars. Concrete's weakness is its low tensile strength and ductility. By adding steel reinforcing bars to the wet concrete, the concrete is able to better resist tensile stresses that would normally cause failure.

French industrialist Francois Coignet built the first iron reinforced concrete structure in Paris in 1855 using a two-way grid that he patented. French inventor Joseph Monier is given credit for a more sophisticated technique of reinforcing concrete with his patent in 1877. He used concrete columns and girders reinforced with iron rods in a grid pattern. This design was later refined and transformed by German engineers Wayss and Koenen. They are credited with fine tuning the location and size of reinforcing to maximize tensile strength. This system was in use in the United States by the 1890s, but the work of American inventor Thaddeus Hyatt made it possible for reinforced concrete to progress to this new level of engineering. Through his experiments, he discovered that concrete and iron have almost identical coefficients of thermal expansion and elongation of both under load is virtually the same.³

The first concrete bridges in North America were designed by English engineer Ernest L. Ransome in the late nineteenth century. His key innovation (patented in 1884) was to twist the reinforcing bars to improve their bond with the concrete. In 1889, Ransome designed the structural system for the California Academy of Science using the modern technique of concrete floor slabs spanning between beams of rectangular section, slab and beams all cast together as a monolith. In addition to his innovation of twisted bars, he created a light well by cantilevering the floor slab from an inner row of columns.

³ Condit, Carl W., "The First Reinforced Concrete Skyscraper: The Ingalls Building in Cincinnati and Its Place in Structural History," *Technology & Culture*, January 1968, Johns Hopkins University Press & the Society for the History of Technology, pp 1-33.

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By 1903 there were four leading American firms designing and building reinforced concrete buildings: Ransome & Smith of San Francisco; the Baltimore Ferro Concrete Company; the Ferro-Concrete Company of Cincinnati, and the Trussed Concrete-Steel Company of Detroit. Each used the basic techniques of Ransome's heavy monolithic beam and slab construction with tension reinforcing, the two-way reinforcing systems of Monier & Wayss, the bent bars and stirrups of Hennebique (a French mason turned contractor) and the hoops and continuous helixes for compression members, the former originally proposed by Hyatt and the latter by Considere.⁴

One of the first skyscrapers built with reinforced concrete in the United States was the sixteen-story Ingalls Building in Cincinnati, constructed in 1903. Its success contributed to the acceptance of reinforced concrete construction in high rise buildings. Prior to this, people thought a reinforced concrete skyscraper would collapse under its own weight or wind loads because of concrete's low tensile strength. The Ingalls achieved a monolithic structure by bonding freshly poured concrete to partly set concrete at the joints left from the previous day's work. In this design, the floor acts as a diaphragm to sustain bending and shear loads of the wind.⁵ Reinforced concrete construction became popular for skyscrapers because of savings in material costs and increased fireproofing; both aspects gave the newer building method advantages over steel construction.

In 1911, Osgood & Osgood attracted a good deal of attention upon introducing to Grand Rapids reinforced concrete structural members and floors. In addition to designing the seven-story Keeler Building, they also designed the Corl-Knott Building, a six-story warehouse and light manufacturing facility at Commerce Avenue SW and Island (now Weston Street SW), whose construction paralleled that of the Keeler Building and would near completion on a similar schedule. On December 10, 1911, The *Grand Rapids Herald* devoted fully half a page, with banner headline exclaiming *A New Era in Building*, to pictures and copy on the two buildings. (The perceived significance of reporting on the new building technology seems borne out by the article bearing the byline of the newspaper's city editor.) Awe is expressed at the speed of building facilitated by the bearing structure being put in place before exterior walls were built, a contrast to the traditional method of building bearing walls to support the structure's weight. This, the writer notes, was unheard of up to that time: "...according to local engineers, there is not at present any large building which exemplifies the possibilities of reinforced concrete." Also noted were that the Keeler building, so constructed, would be "absolutely fireproof," and the large quantities of material used to put the reinforced concrete frame in place – four hundredtons of steel and four thousand cubic yards of concrete. Concrete was poured in place using a lift and chute method that provided efficiency in labor on such a tall building. Hauser, Owen & Ames started foundation work on the Keeler on June 1, 1911, and employed fifty to seventy-five men on that job. A new story was added every fourteendays and brick was laid from the top down to cover the exposed concrete; this was a very new concept, emphasizing that the masonry was not relied upon for its structural capabilities.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jones, Kent, "Historic Downtown Cincinnati," *History and Heritage of Civil Engineering*, July 18, 2011, American Society of Civil Engineers, Arcadia Publishing, p. 83.

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Six decades later, a survey published under the auspices of the Department of the Interior, *The Lower Peninsula of Michigan: An Inventory of Historic Engineering and Industrial Sites*, singled out the Keeler Building as a noteworthy structure: "...this reinforced concrete building with concrete slab floors was the first of its kind in the city." The entry on the building is more technical than the contemporary newspaper account, noting specific loads the building was designed to support - dead load of 225 pounds per square foot and 450 pounds live load.

Chicago School Style of Architecture

The Chicago School of Architecture, or Chicago School, as it's become known, was one of the most significant architectural movements since the Italian Renaissance. An original architectural style, it applied new technology and materials in a response to economic growth and new concepts in architectural design. The thought process behind Chicago School was so unique that it spoke to an entire generation of Midwest architects. It eventually caught the attention of European architects and inspired the Modern or International Style of Architecture that was born in Europe, but came to the United States with the wave of architects escaping their homelands prior to World War II.⁶

In the late nineteenth century, Chicago emerged as an industrial and commercial leader. With the fire of 1871, the city was faced with large tracts of land that needed to be rebuilt to accommodate booming manufacturing, railroading, and commerce. Innovations in mass transit allowed for the development of suburbs and high density infill at the city's center came in the form of skyscrapers. At the same time, new materials such as reinforced concrete and structural steel offered architects the technical abilities to expand their design horizons and stack their buildings vertically.

Cities in the Midwest had short histories with no relationship with the colonial architecture of the Eastern United States. Some of their leading architects rejected copying historic styles, wanting to apply new theories of design. They shunned eclecticism and felt it was absurd to catch trains in Roman baths, bank in Doric temples, and worship in Gothic churches.⁷ With a re-evaluation of materials, methods, and purposes, a new architectural form was created.

Chicago architects adapted the steel skeleton frame to reach new heights and openness. Walls no longer supported the building, they maximized light and ventilation. This form led to the concept of "design expressing the structure and function of the building."⁸ Or, more succinctly stated by Louis Sullivan – form follows function. "The criterion for a successful building was no longer what it looked like, but how well it fulfilled its purpose."⁹

⁶ Miller, Hugh C., *The Chicago School of Architecture. A Plan for Preserving a Significant Remnant of America's Architectural Heritage*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973, p. 1.

⁷ Fleming, William, *Arts & Ideas*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1980, p. 433.

⁸ Miller, Hugh C., *The Chicago School of Architecture. A Plan for Preserving a Significant Remnant of America's Architectural Heritage*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973, Introduction.

⁹ Fleming, William, *Arts & Ideas*, Holt, Rinehart & Winston, New York, 1980, p. 433.

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The influence of H.H. Richardson, Louis Sullivan, and Frank Lloyd Wright, early leaders of the style, was significant. However, it was William LeBaron Jenney, known for his technical achievements in steel skeleton structure leading to great heights with the skyscraper, who is known as the “father of the Chicago School.”¹⁰ The exterior walls of his Home Insurance Building, built in 1884-85 and demolished in 1931, were reduced to curtains supported completely by the steel structure rather than the wall itself.

The Marquette Building, designed by Holabird & Roche, and completed in 1894, saw the full space between structural elements filled in with windows. It used what became known as a Chicago Style window, which featured a large fixed window at its center with a double hung window on either side. From the design of the Marquette Building, Holabird & Roche developed a standardized form for the office building that was widely used by architects in the Midwest.¹¹ The spaces between the structure were large rectangular bays, filled with Chicago Style windows, sometimes pushed out from the building as bays or oriel windows. Structural skeletons emphasized verticality with continuous piers. Interior layouts provided large, open spaces with only columns instead of bearing walls subdividing them. This simplified form of design met the functional need for light and air and expressed the structural system in an honest manner. It was a blending of aesthetics and technology.

Despite their rejection of historical styles, elements of neoclassical architecture were often used in Chicago School skyscrapers. Typically, they contain three well-defined areas often compared to the three parts of a classical column. “The lowest floors function as the base, the middle stories, usually with little ornamental detail, act as the shaft of the column, and the last floor or two, often capped with a cornice and often with more ornamental detail, represents the capital.”¹²

The Keeler Building is clearly designed in the Chicago School style with a nod toward neoclassical architecture in its three-part division. The terra cotta detailing at the first two floors provides the base, the next five floors, bereft of detail, create the shaft, and the uppermost level’s horizontal banding and topped with a huge overhanging cornice, that has since been removed, created the capital. This building stands as the most fully realized example of Chicago School architecture in Grand Rapids. Architects - and their clients - in the city favored the traditional neoclassical style as the larger city to the west was cultivating architectural innovation. Although Solon Beman, considered a contributor to the Chicago School, designed the ten-story Michigan Trust Building (1892) at Ottawa and Pearl with the style’s familiar continuous horizontal bands of windows, the building displays strong Richardsonian influences in massive Romanesque arches at the lowest levels and broadly arched seventh-story windows.

¹⁰ Miller, Hugh C., The Chicago School of Architecture, A Plan for Preserving a Significant Remnant of America’s Architectural Heritage, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973, p. 8.

¹¹ Miller, Hugh C., The Chicago School of Architecture, A Plan for Preserving a Significant Remnant of America’s Architectural Heritage, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973, p. 15.

¹²“[Commercial Style Definition](#)”. Dictionary of Wisconsin History. Wisconsin Historical Society, Retrieved 2007-06-26.

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William Robinson's 1898 Waters Building (like Keeler, a furniture display building) largely eschews historical references in ornament and displays a rectilinear grid of tri-partite windows expressive of the steel skeleton that bears the structure's weight and frees exterior walls to bring light into the building. Osgood and Osgood's design for the Keeler Building goes further still in outward expression of its inner structure, relegating ornament to the service of a strong grid of repeating horizontal window bays crossed by streamlined vertical piers separating the bays.

The Corl-Knott Building, constructed in the same time frame, and also an Osgood and Osgood design, is slightly smaller than Keeler (six stories in height, seven bays by four bays compared to the Keeler Building's seven stories and original seven bays by six bays). Although it also makes use of the Chicago window and strong outward expression of interior form, Corl-Knott's ornament includes restrained use of classical elements; streamlined as these historical allusions may be, they deny the smaller building the purity of style seen in the Keeler Building. Four years later, Osgood and Osgood's design for the Grand Rapids Savings Bank relied strongly upon neoclassical ornament, including two-story columns at entrances; gone were the horizontal bands of Chicago windows, replaced by smaller windows arrayed with vertical emphasis.

By the end of World War I, as politics, economics and social life changed, American taste in architecture rejected the Chicago School altogether and looked to eclecticism and revivalist styles.¹³ A window had closed, and whatever interest Grand Rapids might have had in Chicago School architecture faded, leaving the Keeler Building the city's exemplar of the style. (Ironically, even the 1922 Morton House hotel designed by Holabird and Roche - whose Marquette Building was a Chicago School landmark - left Chicago School architecture behind in favor of neoclassical styling.)

Osgood & Osgood, architects

The combined careers of Sidney J. Osgood (1845 - 1935) and son Sidney Eugene, known as Eugene (1880 - 1952), working as individuals and as the firm Osgood & Osgood, represent three-quarters of a century of architectural design based in Grand Rapids, Michigan, but with impact far beyond their home city. Over their long period of professional activity, father and son covered much stylistic ground from Sidney's highly ornate Queen Anne wooden church designs through sturdy Richardsonian Romanesque public buildings to commercial buildings using innovative steel or concrete structural technologies to one of Grand Rapids' early skyscrapers and forward.

Sidney J. Osgood was born in Ellsworth, Maine, to Almira and Joseph Osgood; the father was a builder with deep New England roots (ancestor John emigrated from Hampshire, England, to Massachusetts in 1638). Like many a New Englander, Sidney heard the call of the sea and sailed the oceans for four years aboard a windjammer commanded by his uncle. At age nineteen, he apprenticed with his father; during the apprenticeship he helped build churches all over New England, and later pursued architectural training in Boston. During seven years in Boston, he

¹³ Miller, Hugh C., The Chicago School of Architecture, A Plan for Preserving a Significant Remnant of America's Architectural Heritage, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1973, p. 9.

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learned and plied his profession – one of his earliest known commissions a church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, the builder of which was his father –and got married in the Pawtucket church he designed.

In 1876, Sidney moved to Grand Rapids and entered into a partnership with David S. Hopkins, another transplant to the city (from New York state by way of Kalamazoo); two years later when Hopkins left the practice to design mail-order house plans, Sidney entered a brief partnership with George Waddell before pursuing a solo career. With his building and design experience as a young man, he readily found commissions designing churches for small congregations, economical buildings most often of wood, sometimes combined with brick veneer and generally accomplished in the highly ornamental Queen Anne style; Grand Rapids historian Richard Harms refers to Sidney as “Grand Rapids’ master of the Queen Anne church.”¹⁴ In the 1880s, he also designed additions and new buildings for Grand Rapids Public Schools, residences for several prominent citizens, the original Widdicomb factory and other commercial structures, but his most ambitious project in those years was the Kent County Courthouse. It was a massive example of Richardsonian Romanesque – an early representation of the style in West Michigan – of red sandstone surmounting a cut fieldstone base with beltcourses and window arches of limestone. He used the style the following year in his design for the State Masonic Home near Reeds Lake and would utilize it in several courthouse commissions around the state that arose due to interest in his Kent County design.

In the wake of the Panic of 1893 came economic downturn, and most of Osgood’s commissions during the nineties were from a rising middle class for homes in Grand Rapids’ Heritage Hill area. Typically, these were of wood and late Victorian in style, more suggestive of Shingle Style than of the ornate Queen Anne of his wooden churches. As the economy righted itself and the new century dawned, Sidney took Eugene into his practice upon the son’s 1902 graduation from Cornell University’s architecture program and soon made Eugene a partner in the firm. The pace of work picked up once more, and the first decades of the twentieth century brought work for benevolent groups and public agencies. Commissions came from the Holland Retirement Home, D. A. Blodgett Home for Children, Kent County Juvenile Home, schools and libraries, some designed in the familiar Romanesque, but others in the Neoclassical style then becoming more popular. There were factories, three of them for brass companies – Grand Rapids, Wolverine and Keeler - and commercial buildings, but commissions for Masonic Temples in a quartet of Michigan cities marked the beginning of a building niche the father and son would make their own.

The first of the designs was for the Temple in Cadillac in 1889-90, and commissions in Battle Creek (1912), Adrian (1914), and Grand Rapids (1916) followed. These temples were highly thought of and, well into the late 1920s, Osgood & Osgood designed Masonic buildings across Michigan from Sturgis to Manistee, Ypsilanti to Bay City and points between, and eventually throughout the Midwest, into New York and New England, and into Canada. In all, the firm designed more than twenty-five Masonic buildings plus Elks buildings in Grand Rapids and

¹⁴ Richard Harms, “Churches, Temples and More: the Architecture of Osgood and Osgood,” Grand River Valley Review, Volume X Number 1.

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Adrian. Eugene Osgood was chosen as the consulting architect for the 1928 George Washington Masonic National Memorial in Arlington, Virginia, by the association formed to oversee the funding and construction of the project. The opinion of an association member, quoted in the nomination of the Memorial as a National Historic Landmark, succinctly illustrates the firm's reputation among Masons: *Osgood and Osgood probably have the most extensive experience with Masonic buildings of any architects in the United States.*

The early twentieth century brought changes in construction technology, and Osgood & Osgood adopted them in their work. Their first use of structural steel to replace load-bearing walls was the Kortlander Building in 1912. In the same time frame, they were the first Grand Rapids firm to specify reinforced concrete columns and floors to support a building's weight: the Keeler and Corl-Knott buildings were built upon reinforced-concrete frameworks between 1911 and 1912. Although Osgood & Osgood are known for their more historical styles – early work in Queen Anne or Romanesque – designing with the new construction medium allowed Osgood & Osgood the freedom to work in the more contemporary Chicago Style, featuring massive banks of windows piercing exterior walls that were no longer required to support the weight of the building. In 1914 the firm built their first building considered a skyscraper, the thirteen-story Grand Rapids Savings Bank.

The firm had started with Sidney's experience in New England wooden churches, but Sidney and Eugene Osgood proved adept at expressing their designs in varied stylistic languages that evolved over their careers. Many of the wooden public structures have been lost, but preservation efforts in the Heritage Hill Historic District saved many of Sidney's residential designs for posterity. His later buildings (and those designed in conjunction with Eugene or designed by Eugene after his father's death) in stone and brick have tended to fare better, and the buildings based upon twentieth-century structural technologies should maintain their integrity and potential for viable use years into the future. As second- and third-generation builders, Osgood & Osgood progressed skillfully from an age of builders-as-architects working with traditional materials to specialized designers with multiple style, material, and structural options.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # 16.608680.4757610
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: Grand Rapids Public Library

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.741 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 42.965053 Longitude: -85.667686
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

1927or

AD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Part of Lots 3, 4, 5, & 6 Sec 20 Com on S Line Fountain St. 147.44 ft E of NW Cor SD Lot 5 TH S LY 92 ft to a pt 2 ft E of W Line SD Lot 3 S to S line SD Lot 3 E on S Line SD Lot 3 to E Line SD Lot 6 S 66 ft to S Line SD Lot 6 W to E Line Division Ave N 198 ft E to Beg Plat of the Village of Grand Rapids * Campau Plat * /So called/

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

Original and current boundaries of the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Grace A.M. Smith
organization: Designsmiths
street & number: 200 E. Division St.
city or town: Rockford state: MI zip code: 49341
e-mail: designsmiths@hotmail.com
telephone: 616-866-4089
date: June 26, 2017

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Keeler Building

City or Vicinity: Grand Rapids, MI

County: Kent County

State: MI

Photographer: Grace A.M. Smith

Date Photographed: January 27, 2017 (2 - 4, 7- 14, 17 - 20), March 19, 2017 (1, 5, 6), March 21, 2017 (15, 16, 21 - 23)

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0001)

Keeler Building

Name of Property

Kent, Michigan

County and State

- Northwest corner looking southeast
- 2 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0002)
Fountain Street entrance at northwest corner looking south
- 3 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0003)
West elevation along Division Avenue facing northeast
- 4 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0004)
West elevation entrance off Division Avenue looking east
- 5 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0005)
Terra cotta detail between first and second floors
- 6 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0006)
Terra cotta detail looking up
- 7 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0007)
Southwest corner along Division Avenue and Library Street, looking northeast
- 8 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0008)
Southeast corner along Library Street at alley looking northwest
- 9 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0009)
East elevation at alley looking northwest
- 10 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0010)
East elevation at alley looking southwest
- 11 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0011)
North elevation along Fountain Street, looking southwest
- 12 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0012)
North elevation along Fountain Street, looking southeast
- 13 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0013)
North elevation at Fountain Street, entrance
- 14 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0014)
First floor interior arcade, looking south
- 15 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0015)
First floor interior arcade, looking north
- 16 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0016)
First floor interior arcade, looking southwest
- 17 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0017)
First floor looking southeast toward alley
- 18 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0018)
First floor looking west along Division Avenue
- 19 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0019)
Upper floor, typical open office plan
- 20 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0020)
Upper floor, typical open office plan
- 21 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0021)
Fifth floor corridor, looking north
- 22 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0022)
Seventh floor looking northwest at middle bays
- 23 of 23 (MI_KentCounty_KeelerBuilding_0023)
Seventh floor northwest corner bay

Keeler Building
Name of Property

Kent, Michigan
County and State

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.







The Keeler Building is located in downtown Grand Rapids, east of the Grand River



The Keeler Building is adjacent to Kendall College and Grand Rapids Community College



Division



Fountain St ne

ONE WAY

AVAILABLE
DeHaan
Real Estate Inc
698-0700
dehaan@grar.com



GRAND
GAMING CE

SIDEWALK
CLOS

25





·KEELER·

KEELER BUILDING

GENE
57112







GRANDILAN
GAMING CENTER

SIDE
CLC



Grandin
Living Center





DO NOT ENTER

Handwritten graffiti on a white door or wall.





DO NOT
ENTER

SIDEWALK
CLOSED

Handwritten graffiti on a white wall.



LEFT

Division St
Fountain St

ONE WAY

AVAILABLE
C.B. DeLoach
Oral History
1940-2000



KEEPER

Back Entrance

NO PARKING

NO PARKING

3133
31-11705



EXIT









AVAILABLE
C.W. DeHann
Real Estate Inc.
(414) 698-0700











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Keeler Building

Multiple Name:

State & County: MICHIGAN, Kent

Date Received:
10/13/2017

Date of Pending List:
11/14/2017

Date of 16th Day:
11/29/2017

Date of 45th Day:
11/27/2017

Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: 80004806

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 11/27/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept, National Register Criteria A and C.

Reviewer Patrick Andrus

Patrick Andrus

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2218

Date

11/27/2017

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



August 31, 2017

Jeffrey Dombrowski
Investment Property Assoc.
Sperry Van Ness/ Investment Property Advisors
1197 Silverstone Road
Holland MI 49424

RE: Keeler Building National Register Nomination

Dear Mr. Dombrowski:

As part of a "Certification Agreement" the State Historic Preservation Office must request that the City of Grand Rapids review your National Register Nomination for the Keeler Building at 56 North Division, before the nomination can be reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Review Board.

The Historic Preservation Commission, as the agent for the City, will be reviewing the nomination on September 6, 2017 to determine if they find that the nomination meets the selected national register criteria of significance as well as to provide an opportunity for the public to comment. Attached is a copy of the agenda for the September 6, 2017 meeting. The meeting is open to the public, your attendance is not required, but you are obviously more than welcome to attend to. If you have comments you wish to provide to the HPC you may do so in writing through Staff up until 10am on September 5, 2017 or you may provide them in person at the meeting.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rhonda Baker', with a long, sweeping underline.

Rhonda Baker
Historic Preservation Specialist
Phone: 616-456-3451
Fax: 616-456-4546
Email: rbaker@grcity.us

Enclosure

**Certified Local Government
National Register Nomination Review Report**

Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
Michigan State Housing Development Authority

- * **Complete and return to:** National Register Coordinator, Michigan State Historic Preservation
- * Office, Michigan State Housing Development Authority, 735 East Michigan Avenue, PO Box
- * 30044, Lansing, Michigan 48909

Name of Property: Keeler Building
Address: 56 North Division Avenue
Owner: Jeffrey Dombrowski, Keeler Flats LLC
Date Complete Nomination Approved by the SHPO: August 15, 2017

The Certified Local Government (CLG) agrees with the SHPO to expedite the review period for this nomination.

YES (date of agreement) 9-6-17 NO

Emily Clebbey 9-6-17
Signature of CLG Commission Chairperson Date

[Signature] 9-7-17
Signature of Elected Chief Official Date

Date(s) of commission meeting(s) when the nomination was reviewed: 9-6-17

Date of written notice to property owner of commission meeting: 8-31-17

The CLG provided the following opportunities for public participation in the review of this nomination:

Written comment; public comment; public meeting; reports on-line and in City office

Were any written comments received by the CLG? YES NO
We did receive verbal comment that owner is not currently in support.

Was the nomination form distributed to CLG commission members? YES NO

Was a site visit made to the property by CLG commission members? YES NO

If yes, when? They went individually.

CORRECT IN FORM

[Signature]
CITY ATTORNEY

Did the CLG seek assistance of the SHPO in evaluating the eligibility of this property for the National Register? YES ___ NO X

VERIFICATION of Professional Qualifications of Commission in accordance with 36 CFR 61, Appendix 1, of Michigan's Certified Local Government Program.

List those commission members who meet the 36 CFR 61 qualifications required to review this type of resource.

Commission Member

Professional Qualifications

1. Mara Braspeninx State Lic. Hist. Architect
2. Emily Webbing BFA Hist. Pres. & Arch. History
3. _____
4. Staff- Rhonda Baker BFA Public History - 20+ yrs. exp.
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Was an outside consultant used? YES ___ NO X

If yes, provide the name and list the 36 CFR 61 qualifications the person meets:

The CLG Commission finds that the property meets the following National Register criteria of significance: A, C

The CLG Commission finds that the property meets the National Register standards of integrity. YES X NO ___

Recommendation of CLG Commission:

APPROVAL X

DENIAL ___ (specify reasons on a separate sheet of paper)

[Signature]

Signature of Chief Elected Official

9.7.2017

Date

Date of transmittal of this report to the SHPO _____

Date of receipt of this report by the SHPO _____

Walsh, Todd (MSHDA)

From: Timothy R. Dudley <trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com>
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2017 9:41 AM
To: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA)
Subject: RE: Keeler Building

Yes.

From: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA) [mailto:WalshT@michigan.gov]
Sent: Thursday, September 14, 2017 9:32 AM
To: Timothy R. Dudley <trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com>
Subject: RE: Keeler Building

Good morning, Tim.

Thank you for this notice. For clarity sake, namely my own, Arath III is allowing us to proceed with the presentation of the nomination tomorrow, thereby seeking listing in the National Register of Historic Places?

Sincerely,
Todd

From: Timothy R. Dudley [mailto:trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com]
Sent: Wednesday, September 13, 2017 9:39 PM
To: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA) <WalshT@michigan.gov>
Subject: RE: Keeler Building

Hi Todd,

Thank you for speaking with me yesterday. The owner of the Keeler Building, Arath III, Inc., has decided not to object to the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. I wanted to make that clear since I did object to the local historic preservation review board last week before we had sufficient time to gather information regarding the nomination. I don't want there to be any confusion going forward on account of that objection. Any objection that I made on behalf of Arath III, Inc., is effectively withdrawn.

Thanks again for your help.

Tim

From: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA) [mailto:WalshT@michigan.gov]
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 12:08 PM
To: Timothy R. Dudley <trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com>
Subject: RE: Keeler Building

Hi Tim,

Certainly. That document is attached.

Please let me know if you need anything else.

Todd

From: Timothy R. Dudley [<mailto:trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com>]
Sent: Friday, September 08, 2017 12:05 PM
To: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA) <WalshT@michigan.gov>
Subject: RE: Keeler Building

Thank you, Todd. The letter references an attachment that explains in greater detail the results of listing in the National Register. Could you forward me that attachment, as well?

Tim

From: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA) [<mailto:WalshT@michigan.gov>]
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2017 11:42 AM
To: Timothy R. Dudley <trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com>
Cc: Robert C. Shaver <rcshaver@rhoadesmckee.com>
Subject: RE: Keeler Building

Hi Tim,

Please find attached a copy of the notification letter that was sent to Jeffrey Dombrowski on August 17, 2017. Mr. Dombrowski was indicated as the owner of the building in our files.

Sincerely,
Todd Walsh

Todd A. Walsh, Interim National Register Coordinator
Michigan State Historic Preservation Office
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
735 East Michigan Avenue
PO Box 30044
Lansing, Michigan 48909
www.michigan.gov/shpo

From: Timothy R. Dudley [<mailto:trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com>]
Sent: Thursday, September 07, 2017 5:30 PM
To: Walsh, Todd (MSHDA) <WalshT@michigan.gov>
Cc: Robert C. Shaver <rcshaver@rhoadesmckee.com>
Subject: Keeler Building

Todd,

I represent Arath III, Inc., which is the owner of the Keeler Building, 56 North Division Ave., in Grand Rapids. We have become aware that the nomination of the Keeler Building to the National Register is on the agenda for the State Historic Preservation Review Board's meeting on September 15. Arath has not received notice from the State Historic

Preservation Officer of this meeting or of the nomination. Could you please send me a copy of the notice(s) as soon as possible?

Thank you,

Tim Dudley

Timothy Dudley



rhoades
mckee
attorneys

Tel: 616.233.5272
Fax: 616.233.5269
Email: trdudley@rhoadesmckee.com

55 Campau Avenue NW, Suite 300
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
rhoadesmckee.com



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RICK SNYDER
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN
MICHIGAN STATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE



September 27, 2017

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Keeper
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed discs contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the **Keeler Building, Grand Rapids, Kent County, Michigan**. Disc 1 contains correspondence and the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, which includes site maps. Disc 2 contains photographs of this site. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. We enclose a copy of our notification to the city of Grand Rapids, as a Certified Local Government, of this nomination and request for comments. Their response has been included on Disc 1. We also enclose comments from the owner's legal representative indicating their withdrawal of opposition to the nomination. These comments are also included on Disc 1.

Questions concerning this nomination should be addressed to Todd A. Walsh, Interim National Register Coordinator, at (517) 373-1979 or WalshT@michigan.gov.

Sincerely yours,

Brian D. Conway
State Historic Preservation Officer

