

STATE: <b>Wisconsin</b>	
COUNTY: <b>Columbia</b>	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
<b>55</b>	<b>OCT 18 1972</b>

**1. NAME**  
COMMON: **Farmers and Merchants Union Bank**  
AND/OR HISTORIC: **Congressmen to be notified:  
Sen. William Proxmire  
Sen. Gaylord A. Nelson  
Rep. Robert W. Kastenmeier**

**2. LOCATION**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**159 West James Street**  
CITY OR TOWN:  
**Columbus**  
STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55** COUNTY: **Columbia** CODE: **021**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**  
OWNER'S NAME:  
**Farmers and Merchants Union Bank**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**159 West James Street**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Columbus** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**  
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
**Columbia County Courthouse**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN: **Portage** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**  
TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**Wisconsin Historic Sites and Buildings Survey**  
DATE OF SURVEY: **1969-72**  Federal  State  County  Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
**State Historical Society of Wisconsin**  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
**816 State Street**  
CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

10-5-73

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

True to the Sullivan dictum that "form follows function," this small, compact bank, for all its elaborate and beautiful ornamentation, has the look of soundness and solidity and imparts the feeling of permanence and safety befitting a bank. Morrison<sup>1</sup> describes it thus:

"The exterior is made of tapestry brick, ranging widely in color through browns and golden yellows. The general form...is severely rectilinear, with broad expanses of plain wall surface against which the decorative enrichment of the portal and range of side windows stands out the more vividly. The small facade has only two openings below: the entrance door and a large window opening on the officers' platform within. Resting across these is a huge decorative lintel, or panel, with the name of the bank lettered on a polished slab of verde antique marble framed by lavish terra cotta ornament in a mottled green color. The arched opening above has a lunette with colored glass, and a recessed archivolt in four faces..." That, as Morrison states, "the heraldic lions perched on Sullivanesque fascias....seem somewhat out of place," is a matter of opinion. One might observe that rather than looking out of place they appear disproportionately small but otherwise quite in keeping with the general ornament of the facade, each sitting upright and bearing a shield on which are carved the initials F and M. "The side wall," Morrison continues, "slightly battered in its lower half, has a massive solidity akin to that of the Egyptian style, but with the lyric ornament of the row of arched windows, nothing of its ponderous character.

"The interior is a long narrow room, affording space for tellers' cages only on one side, but the arrangement of these is essentially the same as in the Sullivan bank at Sidney Ohio." This is not to say that the interior has any lack of spaciousness. One does not feel crowded inside the building, and one is impressed by the lasting beauty of the stained glass in the front and rear lunettes and in the five-window arcade along the side. All of this glass is original, fully intact, and as strikingly beautiful now as when it was installed in 1919, the year in which the bank was built.

To the original one-story annex at the rear of the building has been added an extension of three more bays, all done with painstaking care to carry out the original design of the building. Even the terra cotta ornamentation has been made from impressions taken from the original work in other parts of the building and was matched with the original in color so that it not only closely simulates the original mottled green now but will also continue to match it as aging progresses. The addition to the annex is the only major alteration, and the original main body of the bank, inside and out, remains essentially unchanged. The building has been maintained with much pride and care.

1. Morrison, 223-24

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**SIGNIFICANCE**

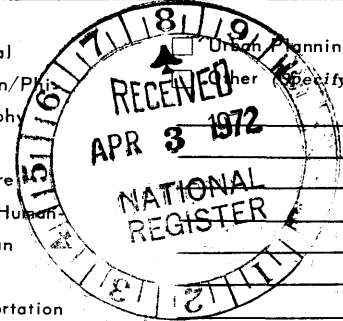
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)      **1919**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Farmers and Merchants Union Bank is significant not only because it was designed and supervised by master architect Louis H. Sullivan, but also because it is the last of a series of eight banks he built in small midwestern and Great Lakes states towns between 1907 and 1919. It was his last architectural commission for a complete building as his final purely architectural commission was for the facade only of a music store and residence in Chicago. The bank is, in addition, one of only two Louis Sullivan buildings in Wisconsin, the other being the Bradley house in Madison in 1909, which was probably as much the work of George Elmsley as of Sullivan himself, although Sullivan was the architect of record.

As to the significance of the Sullivan banks as a whole, Morrison, largely quoting Tallmadge, states: "These buildings stand out like jewels on the shoddy main streets of the prairie towns. Tallmadge says of Sullivan's banks: 'Their color, brilliance and gaiety entirely put in the shade the thin, awkward and wan examples of the country builder, and to the same degree the pallid and pudgy Roman frontispieces of the city architect...The ornament, by its intricacy and vitality, compels the interest of the commoner who would, as we, pass by a mile of eggs and darts without sensing their existence...These banks are a book of wonders to a people who all of their lives have been contemptuous of or oblivious to architecture.'<sup>1</sup>

Experts may vary widely in the way they rate the Columbus bank among those that Sullivan built, but this building, completely Sullivan in concept, design and feeling, will hold its own within the group. Unlike that of many earlier Sullivan buildings the ornamentation was entirely that of Sullivan's hand and not that of Elmslie or an understudy. In concept and execution it is beautiful. The terra cotta molding was done, at Sullivan's firm insistence, by Kristian Schneider.<sup>2</sup> Sullivan himself was proud of this bank, calling it his "jewel box." Throughout the greater period of its construction he lived in the home of the bank president in Columbus so that he could personally supervise the building. The bank has been much photographed to exemplify Sullivan's intricate, masterful ornamentation. Sullivan's drawings for the Farmers and Merchants Union Bank have been published, appearing as special contents in The Bakins Press 1967 reprinting of Sullivan's book, A System of Architectural Ornament, which was first published in 1924.

1. Morrison, 206-207  
 2. Szarkowski, 10

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Connely, Willard, Louis Sullivan As He Lived, Horizon Press, New York, 1960.  
 Morrison, Hugh, Louis Sullivan: Prophet of Modern Architecture, W. W. Norton & Company, New York, 1935.  
 Sullivan, Louis H., A System of Architectural Ornament, The Eakins Press, New York, 1967 (1924).  
 Szarkowski, John, The Idea of Louis Sullivan, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 1956.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		N 43° 20' 19.5"	W 89° 00' 56"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
**Donald N. Anderson, Assistant Director, Historic Sites & Markers Division**  
 ORGANIZATION: **State Historical Society of Wisconsin** DATE: **Dec. 28, 1971**  
 STREET AND NUMBER:  
**816 State Street**  
 CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u>James Morton Smith</u>  <b>James Morton Smith</b></p> <p>Title: <u>Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin</u></p> <p>Date: <u>MAR 20 1972</u></p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Robert M. Utley</u>              Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</p> <p>Date: <u>10/18/72</u></p> <p>ATTEST:  <u>William H. Murray</u>              Keeper of The National Register</p> <p>Date: <u>10-14-72</u></p>
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS