

# District Survey Form

*Holtz and Water Sts.*

<b>1</b>	<u>DISTRICT</u> GALLUN TANNERY COMPANY BUILDINGS	<u>SURVEYOR</u> Resource Design Group	<u>SHSW STAFF</u>
	<u>CITY</u> Milwaukee	<u>COUNTY</u> Milwaukee	<u>DATE</u> Fall 1982

FILM ROLLS/NEGATIVES

See attached

<u>STREETS:</u>	<u>NUMBERS:</u>	<u>STREETS:</u>	<u>NUMBERS:</u>
See attached			

**2** BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The boundaries of the Gallun Tannery Company Buildings are described as follows: Beginning at the intersection of North Water Street and East Pearson Street, then northeast along the center line to the intersection of North Water Street and East Hamilton Street; then east along the center line to the east elevation of the Gallun Tannery Office Building, then northeast along this line to the n.e. elevation of the Warehouse and north along this line to the center line of North Water Street, then northeast along this line to the north property line of 1863 North Water Street; then northwest to west property line of the same; then southwest along this line to the south property line of the same; then southwest along this line to the south property line of the same; then southeast along this line to the point of beginning, in the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County Wisconsin.

**3** BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The Gallun Tannery Company Buildings is a self contained industrial company defined by several geographical factors and man made ones. The easternmost boundary, behind the main office, is a bluff line, steepest at the northernmost end and gradually diminishing in height as it progresses south. This is roughly demarcated by the intersection of E. Hamilton and N. Water Streets and allows for a wedge shape parcel of land at the foot of the bluff. The Milwaukee River forms the western boundary. A bend in the river at the north end and vacant land beyond defines this north boundary. To the south along the river a change in scale and building use mark the end of the tannery complex. To the\*\*

- 4** SOURCES OF INFORMATION
- A. Rascher's 1888 Sanborn 1894, 1910
  - Still, Bayrd. Milwaukee The History of a
  - B. City Madison: State Historical Society, 1948 (pp. 478, 494, 495)
  - C. Milwaukee Press Club, ed. Commercial History of Wisconsin Milwaukee: Thompson H. Adams, 1910. (pp. 114, 85)
  - D. Commercial Milwaukee. Milwaukee: 1909 (pp. 97, 98)
  - E. Illustrated Review of Milwaukee Its Trade and Industries Milwaukee: 1889 (pp. 173, 178)

**5** MAP REFERENCE

USGS quad: Milwaukee, Wis. (7.5)  
scale: 1: 24,000

<u>UIM references:</u>	
A. 16/426600/4767160	H.
B.	I.
C.	J.
D.	K.
E.	L.
F.	M.
G.	N.
	O.



HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION  
STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF  
WISCONSIN

**6** OPINION OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBILITY  
date: 5/1/83 initials: RDG

eligible  not eligible  unknown  
 national  state  local

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION (continued)

\*\*east is residential housing and to the north beyond the river's bend are other manufacturing facilities.

# 7 Description

General character, building types, styles, environment, important natural and man-made features, qualities that distinguish district from surroundings, nature of intrusions and generally excepted properties.

## GALLUN TANNERY COMPANY BUILDINGS

### Description:

The Gallun Tannery is composed chiefly of production buildings along a narrow strip of land next to the Milwaukee River. A half-block to the east is occupied by an office and store building. The most prominent structure is the five-story brick main office and combination warehouse. Owing to the steep site and angled convergence of two streets, the office is wedge shaped with a rounded corner at the intersection. A prominent corbeled cornice defines the roofline. An elevator/stair tower at the east end extends an additional two stories and likewise is terminated by prominent corbeling. The exterior is divided into three horizontal zones, each defined by a cornice. The basement story is characterized by horizontal banded rustication. This rustication extends up to the second story to provide a frame for the main entrance. The chief feature of the west facade is this double door main entrance. The door is flanked by engaged stone columns which support a rich entablature which in turn supports a Diocletian window. This latter extends partially up to the next floor. Its paneled surround contains rosettes. Windows in the basement story are rectangular with stone sills and pronounced keystones. In the three-story mid-section, tall rectangular sash windows occupy the first floor while the next upper two stories are defined by smaller, round headed sash windows. The top most floor has rectangular openings.

The production buildings across the street from the main office are strung along the river's edge. The street or east facade shows evidence of numerous additions and remodelings over the years. Most portions are three stories high. Most are of brick and some are clapboard now covered with siding. The site itself had once been the location of a paper mill. Conversion to tanning was done in 1876 when the partnership of Trostel and Gallun acquired the site and named it the Empire Tannery.

The most significant of these buildings is the six-story brick and reinforced concrete hide house at the northern-most limit of the complex. Its stark unornamented surface is divided into a one-story base which carries the five floors above. This arrangement plus the pattern of fenestration give it qualities of the Romanesque Revival. The building however was constructed c.1905. The base is characterized by large semi-circular openings. It is completed by a projecting cornice. Windows on the upper stories are chiefly rectangular except for the sixth floor which are round headed. A row of eight uninterrupted brick piers confine the paired windows into vertical groups on the north face. Similar piers on the east face create a pattern of three central windows flanked by single ones. The building terminates at the skyline with a very minimal cornice.

The tannery consists of eight principal buildings that are visible from the street. Seven of these are adjoined on the west side of the street to form a sweeping facade of production buildings that extends for over two blocks. The oldest portion of this complex is the three buildings directly north of the skywalk that connects with the office building. The first one is four stories constructed of cream brick with Gothic Revival corbelling; the next one is three stories of frame construction, now covered with asbestos siding; and the third, also three stories, is constructed of cream brick. All were probably built between 1826 and 1880 as evidenced by their appearance in the

DISTRICT SURVEY FORM

Continuation Sheet: GALLUN TANNERY COMPANY BUILDINGS

Item Number: 7

Page: 2

1876 Rascher's Fire Insurance Maps, and it is likely the frame portion was part of the original paper mill. To the north of this is the eight story hide house built in 1908 and to the south are additional production buildings; two five story units built in 1895 and 1906, and a two story frame unit built in 1908. To the rear of this are numerous additions that were built through 1927 which extends the plant along the river to the south. Across the street is the main office/warehouse building. The part south of the skywalk was built in 1894 and enlarged in 1906 with part to the north. (See map)

The integrity of the tannery is exceptional. The exterior appears much as did when the last addition was built in 1927. The interior of the production buildings has also maintained a considerable amount of its original fabric. In all of the buildings that were toured three remained the original timber and reinforced concrete support and framing member. In the office building all of the original spaces had been subsequently remodeled beginning in the 1930's through the 1950's.

Acreage: The nominated property contains 7 acres.

# 8 Significance

---

---

## Areas of significance

architecture: architecture

history: industry

Period of significance: 1876-1927

---

## Historical development and statement of significance.

---

The Gallun Tannery is an important example of an intact river industry in Milwaukee. The two Trostel Tanneries to the south have been significantly decimated. The Pfister and Vogel site has experienced insensitive modern additions. Numerous smaller tanneries along the Milwaukee River have disappeared. In contrast, the Gallun Complex has remained essentially untouched since the turn-of-the-century. Physical restraints limited its original development and later protected it. Confined between a bluff and the river, it is out of major traffic patterns. Much of the Trostel sites, in contrast, has been converted into surface parking and other non-industrial uses. The evolution of an industrial complex can be seen when viewing the Gallun buildings. The earlier structures are smaller in scale, more severe and relatively plain. The hide warehouse was the last major construction of the complex and it was built at a time of high production. It is the largest in scale of the production buildings and displays considerable abstraction of the Romanesque Revival aesthetic. In this way it is both linked to the similar earlier Trostel tannery buildings yet looks toward the future with complete elimination of historic references and use of reinforced concrete. The office-warehouse building likewise contains elements of the past and future. Its use of classicism is very uncommon to Brewers' Hill industries. Designed in 1894 by Milwaukee architects Ferry and Clas, the rustication and main entrance tie it stylistically to the architects' design for the Milwaukee Public Library of 1895. Likewise, the Gallun office relates to other, later commercial buildings in downtown Milwaukee, namely the Wells Building (1901) and the Milwaukee Interurban Terminal (1903-05). Whereas these latter continue classical motifs throughout the facade, the Gallun office limits the detail to just the basement story and entrance. Upper wall surfaces and crowning cornice retain their stark and vaguely Romanesque quality. Commonly found in commercial, office or residential buildings, Beaux Arts Classicism was making inroads into the Brewers' Hill area primarily through decorative detail on residential construction in the mid-1890s. Its use here in an industrial complex reflects the business concern with aesthetic values in a period of prosperity for the firm.

The Gallun Tannery was founded by August F. Gallun, a native of Germany born in 1834. Gallun emigrated to America in 1854 and after a short stay in Yonker, New York and Chicago, he settled in Milwaukee. Following three years of work in several different tanneries, Gallun set up in business for himself. Thus he continued the trade of his father and grandfather before him. The business was formed in partnership with Albert Trostel who was also a German immigrant. Under their joint efforts the Star Tannery, Phoenix Tannery and Empire Tannery were established along the Milwaukee River. Upon dissolution of the partnership in 1885, Trostel acquired the Star and Phoenix Tanneries while Gallun took over the Empire on North Water Street. Gallun's son Albert F. became a partner then resulting in the name change to A.F. Gallun and Son. By 1889 the tannery complex covered an area approximately 250'x 860' with 860' of dockage along the river. A 300-horsepower engine supplied power to the buildings while 7500 cords of hemlock bark were used in the tanning process. This latter was later recycled as fuel for specially constructed ovens. A store at 202-204 West Water housed the finished stock and it was from there that orders were filled. Sales extended throughout the United States and Europe as well as South America. As business grew, clerical functions required greater space and an office building was constructed in

DISTRICT SURVEY FORM

Continuation sheet: GALLUN TANNERY HISTORIC DISTRICT

Item number: 8

Page: 2

1894, designed by Milwaukee architects, Ferry and Clas. At age 70, August relinquished the management of his firm to his sons Albert and Arthur who then became partners under the name A.F. Gallun and Sons, the Gallun Tannery remains one of few viable business along the Milwaukee River. In an area that had contained twelve or more tanneries at any given time, the Gallun is one of only two in current operation there. Pfister and Vogel Tanning now occupies the buildings that once belonged to Zohrlaut Tanning but production here was always second in rank to their more extensive holdings in the Menomonee Valley. The Star and Phoenix Tanneries of Albert Trostel remain only in part and have been converted into other uses. While ranking number two in production behind Trostel, the Gallun Tannery is a prime example of an industry that at one time had been among Milwaukee's largest. Milwaukee in fact had been one of the biggest tanning centers of the world owing to its proximity to the Chicago and Kansas City cattle markets and its accessibility by rail and water transportation. It was close to supplies of hemlock bark. Every kind of leather was manufactured here with the exception of upholstering leather. By 1909, total output in the tanning industry amounted to \$26,000,000 while employing the services of some 5,000 persons. The war years saw the greatest prosperity for this industry. An all time high was attained in 1919 when production output reached \$60,000,000. Post-war years saw a dramatic decline in leather manufacture. In 1921 alone production fell off by 41%. The popularity of the automobile and a more sedentary life style reduced the demand for leather. The horse was no longer a staple of life so the need for harnesses, collars and saddles fell off. Electric motors eliminated the need for leather straps. Foreign competition also played its part in the industry's decline. From a total of 17 firms in 1924, by 1939 there remained only 10. Of these, A.F. Gallun and sons maintained a secure third place behind Pfister and Vogel Tanning and A.O. Trostel and Sons. Tanneries tended to specialize in the types of leather produced so there were economic niches available to the different companies. Gallun produced primarily harness, collar and saddle leather as well as shoe leather with the latter taking preminence after the turn of the century.

Legal Description: Gallun Tannery Company Buildings

1818 North Water Street  
Hubbard & Pearson Add'n in NW 1/4 Sec 21-7-22  
Block 3 Lots 3-4-5-6-7-8 & W 40' of S 70 Lot 9  
Part Vac St. Adj.

1863 North Water Street  
Water Lots on Mil River (Hubbard & Pearson's  
Add'n) in NW 1/4 Sec 21-7-22 Water Lots 14 to  
39 Incl & Vac St Adj & Part Water Lot 40 Lying  
NELY of a LI Desc as Follows Com NWLY LI N  
Water St 407' NELY of SELY Cor Lot 46-TH NWLY  
at RT Ang with NWLY LI SD St to Milw River  
Dock LI & Abandoned NELY 46.84' of N Marshall  
St Adj Lot 13 of SD Subd

# GALLUN TANNERY COMPANY BUILDINGS

