National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic	Sonneborn	Buildin	g (Prefer	red)			
and/or common	Paca - Prat	t Build	ing				
2. Loca	_		±**6				
street & number	110 S puth	Paca St	reet		N/.	A not for publi	cation
city, town	Baltimore		N/A vie	cinity of	congressional district	Third	
state	Maryland	code	24	county	Independent city	code	510
3. Clas	sificatio	n d					
Category district _X_ building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private both Public Acquisit in process being consid X N/A		Status occup unocci work in Accessibl yes: re yes: un no	upied n progress e estricted	Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private re religious scientific transpor X other: Va	
4. Own	er of Pr	oper	ty				
name	110 Paca (- Corporat	ion, Dani	lel Goldma	n, President		
street & number	419 West F	Redwood	Street				
city, town	Baltimore		<u>N/A</u> vie	cinity of	state	Maryland 2	1 2 01
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city, town		Baltimo	re		state	Maryland 2	1202
6. Repi	resentat	ion i	n Exis	sting \$	Surveys		
	ryland Histor storic Sites		ust	has this pro	perty been determined el	egible? yes	s <u>x</u> no
date Fe	bruary 1982				federal stat	te county	local
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city, town		Annapo1	is		state	Maryland	

7. Description

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₋ good fair

		Check one
t	deteriorated	_X_ unaltered
	ruins	altered
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Check one _____ original site ____ moved date ___

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

DESCRIPTION SUMMARY

The Sonneborn Building is a nine-story loft building constructed in 1905 on the northwest corner of South Paca and West Pratt Streets in Baltimore, Maryland. The building is of "fireproof" reinforced-concrete construction, faced in buffcolored brick, with a coursed ashlar foundation and stone trim; its detailing reflects the Neoclassical revival of the early twentieth century. The principal (east) facade, on South Paca Street, is eleven bays wide. The central bay, defined by stone pilasters, holds the entrance, which is ornamented with a split pediment surmounted by an oval window. The entrance is further emphasized by a pair of stone pilasters in each of the bays which flank it. Each of the three bays on either side of the central bays holds a group of three tall, transomed 4/4 sash windows on the first floor, with similar windows in a segmental-arched opening on the second. Below the second-story cornice, the brickwork separating the recessed window panels takes the form of rusticated pilasters; from the third to ninth floor levels, these pilasters are plain. The corner bays are expressed as heavily rusticated pilasters up to the level of the dentilled building cornice; these bays hold a single 4/4 window on each floor above the second, and a large bronze name plaque with an elaborate Neoclassical enframement below. A simple cornice separates the eighth and ninth floors, and the ninth-floor windows rest directly on it. The building is ten bays deep. The interior is utilitarian, with an open plan interrupted only by concrete-encased steel columns between the reinforced concrete floors.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

"The two corner bays on Paca Street are emphasized as wide horizontally rusticated pilasters. The basement and trim are of stone. The first two floors are topped by a cornice and have more elaborate detailing than the upper floors. The three central bays on Paca Street are ornamented by six stone pilasters and over the entrance is a split pediment surmounted by an oval window. As on the upper floors, the windows are arranged in groups of three, but those on the first floor have transoms and those on the second floor are set into segmental arches. The corner bays have no windows, instead each features a large bronze name plaque with an elaborate pilastered enframement with consoles and cornice. On these two floors the pilasters between the bays are horizontally rusticated.

The third through eighth floors are treated similarly. The four-over-four windows are separated by flat pilasters. On the corner bays there is a single four-over-four window on each floor. A simple cornice separates the eighth and the ninth floor windows rest directly on it. Above them is the roof cornice, again simple, but enriched with dentils."¹

The interior of the building, other than the first floor, is almost totally wide open. The first floor, or entrance level is divided by a central hallway, which leads to the four (4) elevators in the rear. According to Ervin Hess, the building's maintenance engineer for the past 32 years, the hallway, with its marble walls and terrazzo floor, was installed only about 25 years ago. About 15 years ago the interior was remodeled to accommodate the offices of the Social Security Administration. At that time a suspended ceiling, surface mounted light fixtures, and an air conditioning system, consisting of about 40 floor mounted air handling units, were installed.



GENERAL DESCRIPTION (Continued)

There is nothing of any architectural merit or significance inside the building. The balance of the interior consists of painted, concrete incased steel columns and vinyl floor tile on reinforced concrete floors. The present condition of the building is very much the same as in 1905, when it was built as a clothing manufacturing building, right after the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904. In keeping with the mood of that time, it still has its own wooden water tanks on the roof and its own sprinkler system throughout.

HISTORY AND SUPPORT

The Sonneborn Building "is reported to have been one of the earliest steeland-concrete buildings in the city, and the most modern structure of its kind in Baltimore when it was built."² The building was designed by the firm of Otto Simonson and Theodore Wells Pietsch, two very well known Baltimore architects of the late 19th and early 20th century. It was designed in 1904, right after the great Baltimore fire, to be the latest in fire-proof construction, including its own sprinkler system throughout. It was built in 1905 for Henry Sonneborn and Company as a vertical clothing manufactory.

At the time it was built it was the tallest and largest, strictly manufacturing building in the City of Baltimore. Today it remains the tallest and largest of the remaining loft buildings in what has come to be known as the "Loft Urban Renewal Area."³

"The southwest portion of Downtown Baltimore, known as Loft Urban Renewal Area contains the greatest concentration of warehouses, lofts and vertical manufactories of the period between 1850 and 1910, in the entire state. The buildings are virtually linked to the importance of Baltimore, center for the manufacture of major clothing, pharmaceuticals and tobacco products at that time. The structures outline the stylistic history of commercial building in Baltimore and trace the origins of modern architecture in capsule form."⁴ Buildings of these types once stood in great numbers in Baltimore, but with the large scale

8. Significance



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Specific dates 1	of New York	Builder/Architect	Theodore Wells	Pietsch (1868-10/1/1930)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph) Applicable Criteria: A, C

SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

The Sonneborn Building is significant for its architecture, and for its association with important developments in the history of industry and labor relations. The building embodies the esthetic and functional characteristics of early 20th century industrial architecture, including fine Neoclassical ornament, an open plan providing for efficient use of space as well as ample light and ventilation, and fireproof construction. In the context of the other buildings in Baltimore's Loft District, the large Sonneborn Building stands out in its commanding corner location at an important entrance to the district, and in the contrast of its light buff-colored walls and Neoclassical detail with its red brick and brownstone Queen Anne neighbors. The work of prominent and prolific Baltimore architects Otto C. Simonson and Theodore Wells Pietsch, the building ranks with their best commissions in its highly successful application of decorative detail to a structure designed to maximize industrial utility. The Sonneborn Building is also significant for its association with the development of the garment industry, both in Baltimore and more generally, as the scene of revolutionary advances in manufacturing efficiency and labor relations. At the time of its construction, it represented the largest clothing factory in the nation, and the first known attempt to consolidate all aspects of clothing manufacture under a single roof. The Sonneborn Company also originated several improvements in employer/employee relations, including the institution of trade boards for arbitrating grievances and an internal court of industrial relations. These pioneering efforts established the pattern for the clothing industry, and their interrelated advances in efficiency and industrial relations came to be known industry-wide as the "Sonneborn System."

FOR HISTORY AND SUPPORT SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1

9. Major Bibliog phical References

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- 1. See Footnotes on Continuation Sheets #6, #7 and #8
- 2. Note on file at Maryland Historical Trust, Annapolis, Maryland

Acreage of nominated prope Quadrangle name <u>Balt</u> UMT References	rty <u>.6416 acre (27,</u> imore East Quad.	. <u>95</u> 0 sq. ft.)	Quadrangle scale <u>1:24:000</u>
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Sonneborn BuildingContinuation sheetBaltimore city, MarylandItem number8Page2

HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

clearance of the inner harbor area, their kind is now rare. They exist in heavy concentration only in the "Loft Urban Renewal Area." 5

The design of the Sonneborn Building represents the beginning of the elimination of "exuberant decoration"⁶ of commercial buildings. Its clean simple lines are in sharp contrast with the Abell Building at 329-335 West Baltimore Street which has been called "the finest Victorian warehouse in Baltimore."⁷ Yet its subdued ornamentation fits right in between that of its nearby neighbor, the original Strouse Brothers Company Building built in 1890, at 410 West Lombard Street, which is similar though more subdued to the Abell Building, and the addition to the Strouse Brothers building built in 1906. The addition, completed only one year after the Sonneborn Building, is almost totally devoid of any exterior ornamentation.

The designers of the Sonneborn Building, Otto C. Simonson and Theodore Wells Pietsch, designed many important Baltimore buildings. The utility of design of this building may have been most influenced by the practicality gained by Mr. Simonson's "25 years as Superintendent of Public Works in Baltimore."8 The ornamental touches on the building probably came from Mr. Pietsch who studied "Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,"⁹ and then "went to Paris for supplementary study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts."10 Simonson, is best known for his design of "the Maryland Casualty Company Building (also known as Hearst Tower)" 11 which was built in 1912 and is now known as the Tower Building, located at 222 East Baltimore Street. Pietsch's "best known works were the Zion Church, Built in 1912, U. S. Fidelity and Guaranty Building (1907). Eastern High School (1904) and the Jackson Place School, the later completed in 1923."12 Together, in addition to the Sonneborn Building, they designed what is now the Rotunda Shopping Center at 711 West 40th Street; the American Building across East Baltimore Street from the Tower Building; the United Way Building at 20-24 Light Street; "and the Southern Hotel, Light and Redwood Streets, now the Calhoon MEBA Engineering School. In addition, Pietsch designed the Broadway Recreation Pier in 1914."13 He also designed the old Maryland Institute and surrounding market place buildings, including the Fish Market, in 1907, the Industrial Building at 501 East Preston Street, in 1912; and Saints Phillip and James Church at Charles and 29th Street, in 1928.



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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

"'When my father started the factory - he built the 10-story Sonneborn Building at the corner of Pratt and Paca Streets - there weren't any clothing factories yet.

'At that time men's suits weren't made in one building. An entrepreneur bought a lot of cloth, then he hired a cutter to cut out the different units for him, then he parceled out each of the units - the coat, the vest, the pants, to different contractors to have them sewn up.

'The contractors had shops of their own. They were usually sweat shops.

'My father was the first man to put everything into one building. He hired the contractors as foreman, and the shopworkers as employees.

'It was a revolutionary idea at the time. It was the biggest clothing factory in the country. At one time we manufactured 3,000 suits a day.

But the Sonneborn factory was novel in other ways.

'My father believed in labor justice. He set up trade boards in the plant for arbitrating grievances. The union elected its representatives and the factory hired its labor manager and whenever there were disagreements, they worked them out. It became a pattern for the industry.

'We had 2,500 employees and we had a huge turnover, in some years 50 percent. You see, we were known throughout the world as a haven for homeless Jews. Europe was still having pogroms, and word got around in every country that any Jew who was driven out of his home, if could only get to Baltimore he could find a job at Sonneborn's factory.

'Most of them didn't stay long. Only as long as it took them to get on their feet. Then they left for greener pastures.'"16

The bulk of the important economic and social advances originated by the Sonneborn Company occured after they moved into the Sonneborn Building. "In 1914, it (Sonneborn Company) was the first in America to establish a court of industrial relations."¹⁷ "This change in method of manufacture and in association between employer and employee became known in the clothing industry at the turn of the century as the 'Sonneborn System."¹⁸ The building's size allowed Henry Sonneborn's company great growth. "By 1911 his factory ranked as the largest clothing plant in the world having a daily output of three

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

thousand suits."¹⁹ This great capacity became very important in 1917 when the Unites States Government turned to the Sonneborn Company to manufacture military uniforms during ?World War I.²⁰

The history of the American Labor Movement in Baltimore is intertwined with the history of Henry Sonneborn and Company. Since most of the advances by the labor unions occurred after the Sonneborn Building was built they are also part of its history. In almost every instance those advances occurred as a direct result of the cooperation of the farsighted owners of Henry Sonneborn and Company, like Henry Sonneborn, his brother-in-law Siegmund Sonneborn and his son-in-law Seymour Mandelbaum.

Sonneborn's was the first large company to be "unionized as an open shop in 1904."²¹ "Baltimore was one of the first chartered locals of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union(ILGWU), associated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) . . ."²² "In December 1909, two thousand workers in three large shops went on strike: Sonneborn's, Schloss'; and Silverman's . . .Samuel Gompers arrived to manage the strike."²³

The next breakthrough was Baltimore's selection as 'a strategic place' when Sidney Hillman's Amalgamated Clothing Workers seceded from ILGWU in 1913. To organize Baltimore, they stategically selected Sonneborn's, already the best organized and best paid work force . . . The union and Sonneborn quickly reached an agreement to organize a system of arbitration: they appointed Jacob Moses, judge of the new juvenile courts and Sonneborn's own company legal adviser, as arbitrator. Sonneborn formulated an internal Plan of Organization for his factory that sought to reconcile a patriotic conception of American constitutional democracy and free-enterprise capitalism. The grievance committee drew members from a 'cabinet' of owners of the firm. a 'senate' of department heads or management, and a 'congress' of workers. The employee's mutual association was more democratic than earlier ones such as on the B & O: all employees belonged, voted, and could stand for election. Workers outnumbered management on the grievance committee, and settlements required nearly the unanimity of a Quaker meeting. Sonneborn introduced the best features of the B & O savings and loan and pension plan, ordered fire drills, and a medical department with oculists and a trained nurse on duty at all times.

By 1916, the ACWA had 9,000 members in Baltimore, . . . The ILGWU and the ACWA were struggling for control. The ILGWU had the reputation of being easier on management. On 2 February, the ACWA called out 2,000 workers from Sonneborn's and 700 from Strouse's for a demonstration . . . On 3 March police refused to let 500 Sonneborn workers picket . . . Inside Sonneborn's, the cutters (ILGWU) refused to go out with ACWA and the hostility resulted in a fight on the floor with cutting shears. But the ACWA won, and attributed its national survival to the courage of the Baltimore tailors. A thousand workers participated in family celebrations of Sonneborn's ninetieth birthday. The workings of a labor

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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

court or board of arbitration were now extended to the entire industry. Work stoppages were practically eliminated. Jacob Moses settled some 900 cases, and Frank Goodnow, president of the Johns Hopkins University, was frequently involved in the mediation process.

The talent for containing conflict was a remarkable example to Baltimore. Jewish culture had embodied the tug of war between faith and reason, the law and the spirit, individualism and solidarity. The European Jews had struggled for centuries already with the moral problems posed by the coexistence of rich and poor. Therefore, in spite of the argument and agitation on the surface, there was beneath it a process of reflection and cultural foundation that could embrace contradiction and survive conflict. Tradition provides mechanisms for labor mediation; they were outgrowths of millennial effort to keep disputes within the Jewish community and within the framework of Jewish law. In Baltimore, a Jewish Court of Arbitration was functioning by 1912 for a wide range of criminal, civil, and domestic cases."²⁴

The Sonneborn Building has been owned, occupied, worked in, or visited by many people important to Baltimore's growth and development as an important world-wide industrial center. But none was more important than Henry Sonneborn. In most instances it was he who launched the others to their positions of importance. His daughter Henrietta was married to Charles Hutzler, one of the three brothers who founded the department store chain. His other daugher, Sarah was married to Col. Seymour Mandelbaum, who started working for Henry at 24 years of age and wenton to become one of the founders of the Fidelity Trust Company, the International Trust Company, and the United Railways and Electric Company, the builders of Baltimore's street railways. Col. Mandelbaum was also one of the builders of "The Belvedere" hotel. Henry even financed the trip of his niece's husband, Isaac Guggenheim, out west to inspect some mining interests. This trip and Henry's loan led to the founding of Kennecott Copper, American Smelting and Refining Company, and a number of others which formed the basis of the Guggenheim fortune.²⁵

"Although Henry Sonneborn enjoyed a high reputation among his economic peers, it is no exaggeration to point out that he was held in even higher regard by the masses of Jewish people in Baltimore. Their esteem for him was based on his helpfulness in easing the assimilation into American life of so many recently arrived and less fortunate fellow-Jews.

It would be unfair to speak of the life of Henry Sonneborn and mention only the help that he gave to his coreligionists. He was equally alive to the needs of any and every race and creed."²⁶



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HISTORY AND SUPPORT (Continued)

The Sonneborn Building (AKA Paca - Pratt Building, from its location at Paca and Pratt streets) is historically significant for numerous reasons. Its design is the work of the well-known and prolific early 20th century architectural firm of Otto C. Simonson and Theodore Wells Pietsch. It is an outstanding example of the neo-classical transition design from the "exuberant decoration"²⁷ of the Victorian style to the almost unornamented Chicago style of commercial buildings. It is one of the earliest buildings engineered to be fire-proof. It was the first large scale clothing factory in Baltimore and for a time the largest in the world. Its operation revolutionized the clothing industry with its economies of scale. It was also the scene of the origination of many revolutionary changes in employer employee relations. It was specifically designed to improve employee working conditions. The windows were larger to increase the amounts of light and air. The ceilings were higher to improve ventilation. It was engineered to be fire-proof. Also, the original owners were farsighted men who believed in "democracy in business"²⁸ Their company was the first in America to establish a court of industrial relations.²⁹ They were pioneers in establishing workers' grievance committees, pension plans, fire drills and in-house medical departments.³⁰ Their tolerance and acceptance of their workers' desires to unionize made the establishment of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the amalgamated Clothing Workers Association (ACWA) much easier and less acrimonious than it could have been. 31 Most important it is a monument to America's free enterprise system. It was all created by a German immigrant who left home as a fugitive at the age of 23; arrived in America almost penniless; started out as a wandering peddler and worked his way up to being one of the giants of the American clothing industry. Along the way he launched numerous other entrepeneurs and assisted untold thousands of his fellow immigrants to adapt to their new life in their new country. $^{32}\,$

FOOTNOTES

THE SONNEBORN BUILDING

- <u>City of Baltimore Neighborhood Survey (1976) City of Baltimore Commission</u> for Historical & architectural Preservation, 1976. Baltimore: C.H.A.P., 1976.
- 2. John Dorsey and James D. Dilts, <u>A Guide to BALTIMORE ARCHITECTURE</u>. Centerville, Maryland: Tidewater Publishers, 1981, p.101.
- 3. Loft District Baltimore City Historic District Ordinance, 715; 5/12/78; 1130; 6/11/79. Baltimore: C.H.A.P., 1979. (See attached copy.)
- 4. <u>Ibid</u>., p.1.
- 5. <u>Ibid</u>., p.1.
- 6. A Guide to BALTIMORE ARCHITECTURE, 1981, p.98.
- 7. IBID., p. 98.



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FOOTNOTES(Continued) THE SONNEBORN BUILDING

United States Department of the Interior

- Henry F. Withey, A.I.A. & Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of 8. American Architects. Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, 1970, p. 556.
- 9. Ibid., p.472.
- 10. Ibid., p. 472.
- 11. Ibid., p. 555, 556.
- 12. Ibid., p. 472, 473.
- 13. A Guide to BALTIMORE ARCHITECTURE 1981, p. 285.
- 14. "Baltimore: Its Manufacturing Market", Apparel Manufacturer. New York: August 1945, p. 71. (See attached copy).
- 15. Henry Sonneborn Jr., Sonneborn Family Biography. Baltimore: Unpublished, 1980, p.8. (See attached copy).
- 16. Isaac Rehert, "Sonneborn, the 'link' between the pioneer and the future," Baltimore Sun, November 11, 1975. (See attached copy).
- 17. Apparel Manufacturer. p. 72.
- 18. Obituary Siegmund B. Sonneborn, Baltimore Sun, September 20, 1940. (See attached copy).
- 19. A. D. Glushakow, A Pictorial History of Maryland Jewry. Baltimore: Jewish Voice Publishing Co., 1955, p. 133 (See attached copy)
- 20. Baltimore Sun, September 20, 1940.
- 21. Sherry H. Olson, BALTIMORE: The Building of an American City. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980, p. 282.
- 22. Ibid. p. 282.
- 23. Ibid. p. 282.
- 24. Ibid. p. 282, 283.
- 25. Sonneborn Family Biography, p. 7.
- 26. Ibid. p.9.
- 27. A Guide to BALTIMORE ARCHITECTURE, p. 98.
- 28. Baltimore Sun, September 20, 1940.

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Continuation sheet Baltimore city, Maryland Item number 8

FOOTNOTES (Continued) THE SONNEBORN BUILDING

- 29. Apparel Manufacturer p. 72
- 30. BALTIMORE: The Building of an American City p. 282.
- 31. Ibid. p. 282.
- 32. Sonneborn Family Biography, p. 9.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA - VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1, 2 and the eastern half of Lot 3, Block 630, Ward 4, Section 8 in the Baltimore City Tax Records. Beginning at the southeast corner of Pratt Street; thence, northerly 175.5 feet \pm to intersect Lemmon Street; thence west 159.26 feet \pm to intersect the partition line through Lot 3 in block 630; thence, south 175.5 feet \pm to intersect W. Pratt Street; thence, east 159.26' \pm to the place of beginning, containing .6416 acre.