



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

**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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Century Building
 other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number	808 North Old World Third Street/ 230 West Wells Street	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Milwaukee	N/A	vicinity
state	Wisconsin	code	WI
county	Milwaukee	code	079
zip code	53203	zip code	53203

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Saina Lenkuuna
 Signature of certifying official/Title

7/14/2017
 Date

State Historic Preservation Office - Wisconsin
 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
 (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of commenting official/Title

 Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

Century Building
Name of Property

Milwaukee County
County and State

Wisconsin

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:
 entered in the National Register.
____ See continuation sheet
____ determined eligible for the
National Register.
____ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the
National Register.
____ See continuation sheet.
____ removed from the National
Register.
____ other, (explain):

by Barbara Wyatt
Signature of the Keeper

8-28-17
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as
as apply)
 private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)
 building(s)
district
structure
site
object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources
in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
1	buildings sites structures objects
1	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property
listing.)
N/A

**Number of contributing resources
previously listed in the National Register**
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/TRADE/business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
COMMERCE/TRADE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style
LATE 19th AND EARLY 20th CENTURY Revivals/Italian
Renaissance

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation Concrete

walls Terra Cotta, Brick

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1925

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Alschuler, Alfred S. (1876-1940)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- 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 #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.43 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16T	425530.54	4765702.36	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Emily Ramsey	date	January 18, 2017
organization	MacRostie Historic Advisors LLC	telephone	(312) 786-1700
street & number	53 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1142	zip code	60604-3619
city or town	Chicago	state	IL

Century Building
Name of Property

Milwaukee County
County and State

Wisconsin

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Callan L. Schultz	date	January 18, 2017
organization	Northpointe Development Corporation	telephone	(920) 303-9404
street & number	420 South Koeller Street	zip code	54902-5547
city or town	Oshkosh	state	WI

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. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Site and Setting

The Century Building is located on a corner, has two primary facades and two street addresses: one at 808 North Old World Third Street, and the second at 230 West Wells Street. The building is in downtown Milwaukee's commercial district, just west of the Milwaukee River, in the city's Westtown neighborhood was constructed in 1925. Designed in the Commercial style, with restrained elements of Classical and Italian Renaissance Revival styles in the decorative details, this office building is located on just less than an acre of land. The building abuts the property line to the west and south, a surface parking lot to the north, and a public alley to the east, and is surrounded by a mix of low- to mid-rise buildings, surface parking lots, and modern parking structures. Buildings in the immediate area range in date from turn of the century through the present and are consistent in massing and scale to the Century Building.

This steel-framed Commercial style building is clad with white glazed brick and terra cotta embellishments with Classical Revival and Renaissance Revival ornamentation including draped garlands, escutcheons, fleurs-de-lis, Vitruvian scrolls, and a parapet ornamented with balusters. The building's street-facing facades are symmetrically designed and regularly fenestrated with original Chicago style windows at the second floor and original 1-over-1, double-hung wood sash windows on the upper floors.

The interior of the Century Building retains a high level of architectural integrity. Highly detailed cast iron and brass main entrances open into an L-shaped lobby with ornate details such as marble walls, a coffered ceiling, Renaissance chandeliers, and etched brass elevator doors. Upper floors are used for offices.

Exterior

The Century Building is an 8-story office building with a rectangular footprint of 125 x 150 feet and a flat asphalt roof. The steel-framed building has concrete floors, and is supported on a concrete foundation.

West Facade

The Century Building's primary (west) façade fronts onto North Old World Third Street and is clad in ashlar glazed white terra cotta. The façade is arranged in the tripartite composition which defines the Commercial style, having a two-story base, a five-story mid-section, and a one-story upper section including a decorative cornice and parapet. The two-story base has as its focal point a centered entry having a prominent two-story arch. On the first floor commercial storefronts extend to either side of

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the entrance and the second floor has three bays to each side of the arch, with each bay having a single, large Chicago style window. The mid-section is broken into 12 structural bays. Each of the ten center bays are the same width and each bay has one, double-hung window per floor. Each end bay is wider than the rest, paired with double-hung windows on each floor. The top story mirrors the window configuration below it, but is differentiated by a slightly projecting string course below the windows, and a decorative cornice and parapet above the windows.

At the first floor, a green marble base runs at length along the west façade below replacement storefront windows with non-historic awnings and signage. The storefront at the southwest corner of the building features an entrance angled in plan with an aluminum storefront system and black granite surround. A stone figurative sculpture, once part of the entrance to the adjoining Grassler & Gezelschap Building (demolished), protrudes from the northernmost corner of the façade.

The historic, monumentally scaled, arched entrance, is centrally located and intact. The arched entrance stretches two stories high with an ornamental cast iron spandrel featuring decorative scrolls and dentil detailing, flanked by large brass lanterns. "CENTURY BLDG" is etched into the spandrel block with a three-part lunette window situated above. There is a deeply recessed vestibule having marble flooring, a decorative chandelier, and storefront windows on either side. The vestibule leads to the entrance. The highly-detailed cast iron entrance surround features a set of double glass paned doors flanked by a single door on either side. All doors have a brass frame, bronze kick plate, and decorative brass detailing with a single large pane of glass. A single transom spans the width of the opening and is topped off with the name of the building in the spandrel above.

The second story has six, large, Chicago style windows: three-part window grouping having a large, fixed, center window flanked by narrower double-hung windows. There are three of these windows to each side of the entrance arch. The arch is topped off in the center by an escutcheon. Flag poles extend from either side of the arch. Decorative terra cotta sills feature Vitruvian scrolls rest beneath each second-story window opening. A band of terra cotta fleurs-de-lis topped by a band of Vitruvian scrolls spans above the second story, separating the base from the mid-section.

The upper stories are minimally decorated. The verticality of the design is emphasized in the central bays of floors four through seven with recessed spandrel panels sitting between each story separated by vertical bands of ashlar terra cotta. Each recessed spandrel panel features a simple circular ornament. The eighth (or attic) story is separated from the mid-section below by the simple terra cotta string course. Each bay is separated by a bas relief terra cotta panel and topped with draped terra cotta garlands. Above the band of garlands is a slightly projecting cornice with modillions. Above the cornice there is a parapet wall. The section of parapet above each end bay is solid, while the parapet sections above the middle ten bays have balustrades. An escutcheon containing the overlapping letters "C" and "B" (for "Century Building") is incorporated in the balustrade in the center of the west façade.

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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

South Facade

The building's second primary façade faces south and fronts West Wells Street. It is similar in design to the west façade with its tripartite horizontal massing, vertical window bay configuration, and centrally located entrance. This side of the building is longer, having 16 bays, the original green marble base has been replaced, and replacement storefront windows with non-historic awnings and signage stretch along the first story. The storefront at the southwest corner of the building has an angled entrance with aluminum storefront system and black granite surround, installed in approximately 1954.

Unlike the west façade, the entrance is only one-story in height with a flat aluminum awning above. This historic entrance, still intact, also has a recessed vestibule, though it's much simpler in design, having decorative brass framed doors with glass panels, a large transom window, and an aluminum door surround. The storefront windows flank the recessed vestibule in front of the doors.

The second story has nine Chicago style windows with decorative terra cotta sills featuring Vitruvian scrolls. A band of terra cotta fleurs-de-lis topped by a band of Vitruvian scrolls spans above the second story, separating the base from the mid-section.

The upper stories are minimally decorated. The verticality of the design is emphasized in the central bays of floors three through seven with recessed spandrel panels sitting between each story, separated by vertical bands of ashlar terra cotta. Each recessed spandrel panel features a simple circular ornament. The eighth (or attic) story is separated from the mid-section below by a simple, projecting terra cotta band. Here, each bay is separated by a bas relief terra cotta panel and topped with draped terra cotta garlands just below the parapet. The design of these features is the same as was described on the west façade. An escutcheon containing the overlapping letters "C" and "B" (for "Century Building") is incorporated at the center of the balustrade.

East Facade

The east wall faces onto a public alley and is clad almost entirely in glazed cream-colored brick with exposed flat slab concrete structural framing. This side does not face the street, is strictly utilitarian in design, and does not feature any decorative ornamentation. The southernmost bay is the only exception, which carries on the pattern of white terra cotta from the south elevation. The elevation is regularly fenestrated with a mixture of 3-over-3, double-hung wood sash windows and 1-over-1, double-hung wood sash windows, all original to the building. The storefront window on the first story of the southernmost bay has been infilled. The southern portion of this side is three bays wide before recessing above the first story to accommodate the L-shaped interior floor plan. The recessed portion

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Century Building
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of the east facade is three bays wide and features a metal fire escape to the north. There are two shipping and receiving areas at the first story.

North Facade

The building's north facade once shared a party wall with a neighboring four story building, which has since been razed. The building now abuts a surface parking lot. This side is clad almost entirely in glazed cream-colored brick with exposed flat slab concrete structural framing and common brick along its former party wall. This wall does not face the street, is strictly utilitarian in design, and does not feature any decorative ornamentation. The facade is regularly fenestrated with a mixture of 3-over-3, and 1-over-1, double-hung wood sash, all original to the building. The easternmost 10 bays above the first story are recessed to accommodate the L-shaped interior floor plan. The westernmost portion of the building is three bays wide, delineated by the exposed structural framing. A rooftop penthouse at the corner of the "L" is clad in brick and visible from this side.

Interior

The Century Building has a highly intact, ornate ground floor lobby and ground floor retail spaces, with L-shaped double-loaded corridors with perimeter offices on the upper floors. Retail spaces are arranged along North Old World Third Street and West Wells Street with individual entrances both from the street and from the building's interior. Typical of historic retail spaces, these areas are highly utilitarian in character and have been altered by previous owners and tenants, though they do retain their original overall spatial layout.

Highly detailed cast iron-trimmed main entrances along North Old World Third Street and West Wells Street provide access to a lavish L-shaped ground floor lobby featuring marble flooring leading from the vestibule through the lobby interior, marble-clad walls, ornamental plaster coffered ceilings, ornamental iron work, Renaissance-style chandeliers, and etched brass elevator doors with upper lunettes. Elevators are still manually operated with an accordion brass cage and original doors and hardware.

Interior stairs situated west across the lobby from the main entrance feature marble treads and marble risers leading up to the second floor, partially overlooking the two-story elevator lobby on the south end of the building through large arched openings. The original wood handrails with iron balustrades are intact. An additional stairwell is located at the far east end of the building. Both stairs provide access to all floors.

Above the first floor, the building's footprint is L-shaped, allowing for double-loaded corridors to provide maximum light and ventilation into the interior office spaces. The upper floors feature original

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wide corridors, each with original marble floors and bases, original wood and glass paneled doors, original hardware, wood chair rails, and original elevator doors. Additional features such as mail chutes are intact. All upper floor spaces have dropped ceilings to accommodate modern HVAC systems. Upper level perimeter office spaces have seen the most change throughout the years with non-historic partition walls, though the spaces retain their original overall spatial layouts. Offices typically have non-historic flooring and baseboards, yet most retain their original wood window casings. The original barber shop on the fourth floor remains largely intact with marble flooring and walls, and has been converted to a public restroom.

Integrity

The Century Building's exterior remains largely intact with no additions or major alterations. The most significant change to the building's exterior is the modernization of the west and south storefronts along North Old World Third Street and West Wells Street. Major storefront renovations were completed in 1954, although there have been some more recent changes, including new signage. An article from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* in 1954 shows the ribbon cutting for the newly remodeled Century Building, which most likely included storefront renovations.¹ The west entrance and portions of the south entrance retain historic features and finishes. The building also retains its original wood windows in all other locations of the building.

Inside, the Century Building retains all of its character-defining decorative elements and original spatial layout including the highly-detailed ground floor lobby and upper floor corridors. Historic features and finishes include elevator doors, marble lobby floors, coffered ceilings, office doors and hardware, decorative brass and iron work, and lighting. The spaces that have seen the most change on the interior of the building are upper floor office spaces, which have been altered to accommodate various tenants; these perimeter office spaces, however, retain their original spatial layout and window casings and continue to express the character of an early-twentieth century office building.

¹ "Ribbon Cutters." *Milwaukee Sentinel*. Sunday, December 19, 1954.

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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Summary

The Century Building located in downtown Milwaukee, Wisconsin, is locally significant under National Register Criterion C for Architecture as an excellent local example of a late Commercial style, tall office building and is notably a rare Milwaukee work by prominent Chicago architect, Alfred S. Alschuler.

Completed in 1925, the Century Building was built by local businessman Charles Kasik to house the headquarters for his growing company, the English Woolen Mills; to house retail space for a new Kasik retail venture, Century Clothing; and for use as a speculative office building. The completed building is an exceptionally large and intact Milwaukee example of 1920s Commercial style tall office building design, characterized by the building's internal steel structure faced with "curtain walls" of terra cotta and brick. The Century Building's intact tripartite exterior massing, regular exterior fenestration, and restrained Classical-inspired exterior ornamentation make it an excellent example of the Commercial style's unique combination of innovative construction and aesthetic features.

Alfred S. Alschuler, architect of the Century Building, was a nationally-recognized architect, best known for his early twentieth century commercial, industrial, and institutional works both in Chicago and across the country. The Century Building is only one of two known works by Alschuler in Milwaukee.

The Century Building's period of significance is the year 1925, its date of construction.

History of the Century Building

The Century Building was commissioned in 1925 by prominent Milwaukee businessman Charles Kasik (1871-1968), the founder and president of the English Woolen Mills, one of the largest manufacturers of men's clothing in the Milwaukee area during the first half of the twentieth century. Kasik was born in Prague in what is today the Czech Republic and came to Milwaukee with his family in 1882. There, he sold newspapers as a young man, eventually moving on to work as a woolen salesman for a number of jobbers in the Milwaukee area before starting his own company, the English Woolen Mills, in 1910. Kasik became a prominent member of the Milwaukee community as a business man and entrepreneur. He was a lifetime member of the Milwaukee Elks Club and member of the Milwaukee Athletic Club from 1920.

By 1925, the success of the English Woolen Mills prompted Kasik to commission prominent Chicago architect Alfred S. Alschuler to design a new eight-story building at the corner of Third and Wells

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Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

streets in downtown Milwaukee as the headquarters for his growing business operation. Completed at a cost of \$1,000,000, and christened the Century Building, Kasik's new building housed English Woolen Mills main offices and a men's retail store, Century Clothes, owned and operated by Kasik until 1954.² The building also housed a variety of tenants including a number of real estate, investment, and insurance companies, as well as lawyers, architects, a barber shop, and dentist offices.³

English Woolen Mills' custom tailored suits were a product in high demand in early-twentieth century Milwaukee. In 1915, a custom tailored suit could be purchased from the company for \$16.50, and during the Depression of the 1930s, for \$25.⁴ In 1954, the store sold 9,000 suits in one day of sales.⁵ Ready-made suits and a more leisurely attitude toward dressing decreased the demand for custom-tailored clothing. Late twentieth-century inflation also played a large part in the decline of Kasik's original business. The English Woolen Mills operated their store out of the Century Building from 1925 until it closed in 1980.

In addition to Charles Kasik's Century Building completed in 1925, the English Woolen Mills company had five other locations throughout the city by 1915, including on the southwest corner of Twelfth and Cherry streets, the southwest corner of Thirty-Fourth Street and North Avenue, the northwest corner of Grove and Walker streets, the southwest corner of First Avenue and Mitchell Street, and on Kinnickinnic and Howell avenues.⁶ According to *The Railroad Telegrapher* there were six other specialty-order clothing companies in Milwaukee in 1916, including Union Label Tailoring Co., Scottish Woolen Mills Co., Royal Woolen Mills, Stock Bros., Superior Woolen Mills, and National Woolen Mills.⁷

The 90-year-old Century Building today remains in use as an office building and is one of the oldest and largest office buildings in Milwaukee's Westown neighborhood.

Architect Alfred S. Alschuler (1876-1940)

Alfred S. Alschuler (1876-1940), architect of the Century Building, was best known for his work in and around his hometown of Chicago, although as a nationally-known designer, his work can be found scattered across the country. Born to German immigrant parents in Chicago, Alschuler earned his

² "Founder of Mills, Charles Kasik Dies," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, Monday, June 3, 1968.

³ Milwaukee City Directories, 1924-1965.

⁴ "Stitch in Time," *Milwaukee Journal*, Tuesday, October 14, 1980.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Advertisement for the English Woolen Mills, *The Milwaukee Journal*, March 26, 1915.

⁷ *The Railroad Telegrapher*, no. 7 (July 1916), 1031.

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Century Building
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bachelors and master's degrees in architecture from the Armour Institute of Technology (now the Illinois Institute of Technology) and spent a year studying at the Art Institute of Chicago. In 1899, he began his professional career in the office of architect Dankmar Adler, who was the professional partner of Louis H. Sullivan, the well-known Chicago architect credited by many as the primary mover in the early architectural development of the tall office building. In Adler & Sullivan's office, Alschuler worked alongside young architects who would later become known for their own work, including Simeon Eisendrath, Hugh Garden, Henry Ottenheimer, and Irving Gill.

After Dankmar Adler's death in 1900, Alschuler left the firm and worked for Samuel Atwater Treat until opening his own independent practice in 1907. Alschuler's solo practice would become one of the region's largest architectural firms working in the 1910s and 1920s. Although a specialist in the design of industrial and commercial buildings, Alschuler received a wide array of building commissions including office towers, synagogues, libraries, industrial buildings, automobile showrooms, and hotels.⁸ He developed a number of patents on his construction methods, including a two-story elevator system for distributing packages in mail order houses; specifications for metal lath construction; a system for constructing concrete columns supported on steel columns in multi-storied buildings; and a method of roof construction.⁹ Alschuler was the first architect in Chicago to use reinforced concrete and was a leader in the use of multicolored terra cotta and standardized office-building units.¹⁰ He was a trustee of Armour Institute of Technology and a member of the American Institute of Architects and Tau Beta Pi Honorary Society. Alschuler was active in the field until his death on June 11, 1940, nearing the age of 64.

Although Alschuler's work spanned various architectural styles, examples of architectural modernism stand out among his most notable work. His 1926 design for a manufacturing plant for the Florsheim Shoe Company (Chicago Landmark) at 3963 West Belmont Avenue, is a bold example with sleek, rectilinear design formed by its exposed concrete structure. The Benson & Rixon Department Store at 230 South State Street in Chicago, a 1937 Art Moderne-style design with smooth terra cotta cladding, is another important work by Alschuler. His best-known work, the London Guarantee Building (1923) at 360 North Michigan Avenue (Chicago landmark), is a 22-story Classical Revival-style building featuring a concave façade topped by a cupola replicating a Greco-Roman lantern.

In Chicago, many more of Alschuler's designs are local and national landmarks. Additionally, Alschuler was well known across the country for office-retail buildings, similar to Milwaukee's Century Building.

⁸ City of Chicago Landmark Report: Goldblatts Department Store.

⁹ Various patent records, Alfred S. Alschuler Collection at the Spertus Institute Ashler Library.

¹⁰ Ibid.

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Outside of Chicago, Alschuler was a sought after architect; he designed a concrete laboratory building for Inland Steel Company in Indiana Harbor, Indiana, and the Myers Department Store in Springfield, Illinois, completed in 1925. Shortly before his death, Alschuler designed two W. T. Grant Department Stores, both completed in 1939: one in Fort Worth, Texas, and the other in Buffalo, New York.

Alschuler's only other known work in Milwaukee besides the Century Building is the Central Steel & Wire factory warehouse building (4343 South 6th Street; extant). The building was built by Milwaukee's Meredith Brothers and designed by the architectural firm, Friedman, Alschuler & Sincere in 1956. The modernist industrial building's expansive grid of steel sash curtain walls, which strongly defined the building's design, was covered with putty-colored panels in 2001. The Century Building remains the only example of Alschuler's work in Milwaukee that retains its historic integrity.

Commercial Style Architecture

The Century Building is an excellent example of Commercial style architecture, a design aesthetic for new urban American office buildings popular from approximately 1885 to 1930. The tall height and simplicity of Commercial style architecture reflected advances in construction technology that permitted the creation of the world's first tall urban office buildings, dubbed "skyscrapers." Often referred to as the "Chicago style," referencing the city that was home to some of the style's earliest examples and practitioners, buildings in the Commercial style are primarily characterized by their internal steel-frame construction and relatively unadorned and utilitarian exterior "curtain walls" of brick and stone, and, later, terra cotta. Commercial style buildings first appeared in America's largest cities, most notably Chicago and New York, in the 1880s and 1890s, and were later constructed in other urban centers like Milwaukee beginning at the turn of the twentieth century. The majority of curtain-wall Commercial style buildings in Wisconsin were built in larger urban centers like Milwaukee. The earliest of these buildings in Milwaukee include the Railway Exchange Building (229-231 East Wisconsin Avenue, completed 1899) designed by architect William Le Baron Jenney, and the original north portion of the Gimbels Department Store (101 West Wisconsin Avenue, completed 1902) designed by architects Daniel Burnham & Co.¹¹

Prior to the development of steel frame technology, building height had been constrained by the need for masonry structural walls. The wall-width necessary for walls to carry structural load was substantial which in turn made it impractical to construct tall buildings. The strength of newly-developed steel frame skeletons of the 1870s and 1880s allowed for taller buildings without the bulk of heavy masonry walls, and, more and larger window openings. The invention of the elevator also

¹¹ Wyatt, Barbara, Ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.

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allowed for taller buildings by making upper floors more accessible. The first skyscrapers to be constructed in this style were usually between six and twenty floors in height and were almost always office buildings located in the dense urban commercial districts of Chicago and New York.

As Marcus Whiffen describes in his book, *American Architecture from 1780*, Commercial style buildings typically have “straight fronts, or slight central projections at most, flat roofs, and level skylines. The character of their façades derives from the fenestration, to which any ornament... is altogether subordinate.”¹² Overall window fenestration is generally regular in pattern and rectangular in shape, often with large “Chicago style” windows which both allowed for large amounts of light infiltration and ventilation. The ground floor (and sometimes the second floors) of Commercial style buildings usually contained large display windows for retail and commercial storefronts. Some examples of this style employ varying levels of decorative elements borrowed from other popular revival styles of the era, including Classical, Romanesque and Gothic Revival ornament while others are very simple in design with no notable ornamentation or reference to past architectural styles.

The Century Building is an excellent and highly intact Milwaukee example of late Commercial Style of architecture, with a large tripartite massing and simple Classical-inspired terra cotta cladding typical of tall office buildings from the decade before the Great Depression. The Century Building features ground floor retail storefronts and prominent street-facing building entrances. The rest of the building is regularly fenestrated with Chicago style windows at its second story and original 1-over-1 double hung wood windows on its upper stories. Inside, the building retains original ground floor retail locations and a highly decorative ground floor lobby with original stairs and elevator doors. The building’s upper floors retain original office corridors and an intact 4th floor barbershop along with more utilitarian perimeter office spaces.

History of the Westown Neighborhood

The Century Building is located in a Milwaukee neighborhood presently known as Westown (formerly Kilbourntown), in the downtown commercial district just west of the Milwaukee River. The neighborhood is bounded by I-794 on the south, the Marquette University neighborhood on the west, McKinley Avenue on the north, and the Milwaukee River on the east.

Milwaukee’s commercial history began with the first settlement of the town in 1835. The physical characteristics of the Milwaukee and Menomonee rivers divided the area into three sections: east, west, and south. Byron Kilbourn, an Ohio engineer and surveyor, settled the area to the west of the river, which came to be known as Kilbourntown. By the mid-1800s, a bridge was constructed to connect the

¹² Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 183.

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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

west side neighborhood with the primary business district on the east side centered on North Water Street and East Wisconsin Avenue.

Following the Civil War, the Westown neighborhood grew with the construction of substantial brick store buildings to replace the smaller buildings of the previous generation. Retail commerce dominated West Wisconsin Avenue at this time, and the area emerged as Milwaukee's leading shopping district. The economic growth in 1890s Milwaukee increased demand in Westown for larger retail stores and more downtown office spaces, spurring three decades of building in the neighborhood and the construction of some of the city's largest retail-office structures. While Milwaukee's older east side office buildings usually did not feature integrated, purpose-built commercial spaces and made these areas subordinate features to their office functions, Westown's early-twentieth century office buildings often featured ground floors designed specifically for commercial use, retail floors that were expressed as significant exterior features and became an important part of Milwaukee's Commercial style architectural language, a characteristic unique to this section of the city.¹³ The mixed-use retail and commercial buildings of Westown became a defining feature of this neighborhood, and many of their department stores and offices remain important features of the community.

New construction came to a virtual halt with the onset of the Great Depression in 1929, with the exception of occasional storefront remodelings. Much of Westown's existing building fabric was altered or demolished beginning in the mid-twentieth century. Today, much of the Westown community includes new construction and surface parking lots where historic office and retail structures once stood.

The West Side Commercial Historic District, which includes several late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century retail and office structures along the Milwaukee River and Wisconsin Avenue in Westown, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2000. The Century Building is located north of Wisconsin Avenue across Wells Street, which is outside of the boundaries of the West Side Commercial National Register Historic District.

Comparable Commercial Style Buildings in Downtown Milwaukee

Although the Westown neighborhood has undergone a substantial amount of demolition and redevelopment in the last five decades, a handful of late Commercial style buildings constructed within the first half of the twentieth century similar in massing and scale to the Century Building can be found in Westown neighborhood today; however, few compare to the level of architectural integrity as the

¹³ West Side Commercial Historic District, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, National Register of Historic Places #78003462 (December 22, 2000), 4.

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Century Building
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Century Building.

Other late Commercial Style buildings in downtown Milwaukee comparable to the Century Building include:

Plankinton Arcade Building

- 161 West Wisconsin Avenue
- Completed 1915-16; 1924-25; designed by Holabird & Roche
- Significant addition; interior floor plan compromised
- Contributing resource in the West Side Commercial Historic District

Strauss Building

- 236 West Wisconsin Avenue
- Completed 1924
- Storefront alterations; replacement windows
- Contributing resource in the West Side Commercial Historic District

Franklin Bank Building

- 707 North 11th Street
- Completed 1929, designed by Eugene R. Liebert
- Storefront alterations; replacement windows

Commerce Building

- 744 North 4th Street
- Completed 1927; 1956; initially designed by Martin Tullgren & Sons
- Storefront alterations

Milwaukee Journal –Sentinel Company Complex

- 333 West State Street
- Completed 1924; 1961; initially designed by Frank D. Chase
- Highly altered with non-sympathetic replacement windows

When comparing architectural distinction and integrity of the Century Building to those listed above, the Century Building stands out as one of the best examples with only a few others having similar

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Section 8 Page 8

Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

design and integrity.

Summary

The Century Building is locally significant under National Register Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an excellent local example of a Commercial style tall office building and notable as a rare Milwaukee work by prominent Chicago architect, Alfred S. Alschuler. The building is a highly intact example of early-twentieth century tall office building architecture in Milwaukee, and continues to express significant construction and aesthetic features typical of the style. The building serves as a very good example of a Commercial style building, retaining much of its historic features and finishes including floor plan and circulation pattern, an elaborate main entrance, original windows throughout, highly decorative lobby finishes (marble flooring and walls, coffered ceilings, and brass lanterns), as well as intact upper floor corridors including marble flooring and original wood and glass paneled doors. The building is also an intact reminder of the development of Milwaukee's Westtown neighborhood, west of the city's primary downtown commercial district across the Milwaukee River. The Century Building is a well-preserved and rare local example of work by prominent Chicago architect, Alfred S. Alschuler.

While there are a few other buildings in the Westtown neighborhood of Milwaukee's downtown that are similar in scale, style, and method of construction, the Century Building stands out as one of the best examples of the style.

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Section 9 Page 1

Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Sources Consulted:

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Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 2

Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

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Section 10 Page 1

Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Century Building is located in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on part of a city block bounded by Old World Third Street to the west, Wells Street to the south, a public alley to the east, and a private parking lot to the north. The building is located in the Original Plat of the Town of Milwaukee west of the river in Sections (20 and 29)-7-22 in Block 56 and includes lots 11, 12, 13, 14, and the south half of lot 10.

Boundary Justification:

The nomination boundaries encompass the building's current parcel of land which is the same as the historic parcel associated with the Century Building in Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

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Section photos Page 1 Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Photo Log

Name of Property: Century Building

City or Vicinity: Milwaukee

County: Milwaukee **State:** Wisconsin

Photographer: John Cramer

Date Photographed: October 2016

Location of Original Files: Wisconsin Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, Madison, WI

- Photo 1 of 12:** West and South Elevations - looking northeast.
- Photo 2 of 12:** West Entrance - looking northeast.
- Photo 3 of 12:** South and East Elevations - looking northwest.
- Photo 4 of 12:** North Elevation - looking southwest.
- Photo 5 of 12:** West Vestibule - looking northwest.
- Photo 6 of 12:** First Floor Lobby - looking southwest.
- Photo 7 of 12:** First Floor Elevator Lobby - looking southeast.
- Photo 8 of 12:** Second Floor Corridor - looking northeast.
- Photo 9 of 12:** Typical Elevator Lobby - looking southeast.
- Photo 10 of 12:** Typical corridor - looking northeast.
- Photo 11 of 12:** Southwest Stair - looking southeast.
- Photo 12 of 12:** Typical Restroom - looking northwest.

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Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951.

Figure 2: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1969.

Figure 3: West and south facades, c.1930.

Figure 4: Lobby elevator detail, c.1926.

Figure 5: West and south facades at intersection, c.1948. University of Wisconsin Libraries.

Figure 6: Historic first floor plan

Figure 7: Historic typical upper floor plan

Figure 8: Basement plan and photo key

Figure 9: First floor plan and photo key

Figure 10: Second floor plan and photo key

Figure 11: Typical upper floor plan

Figure 12: Site plan and photo key

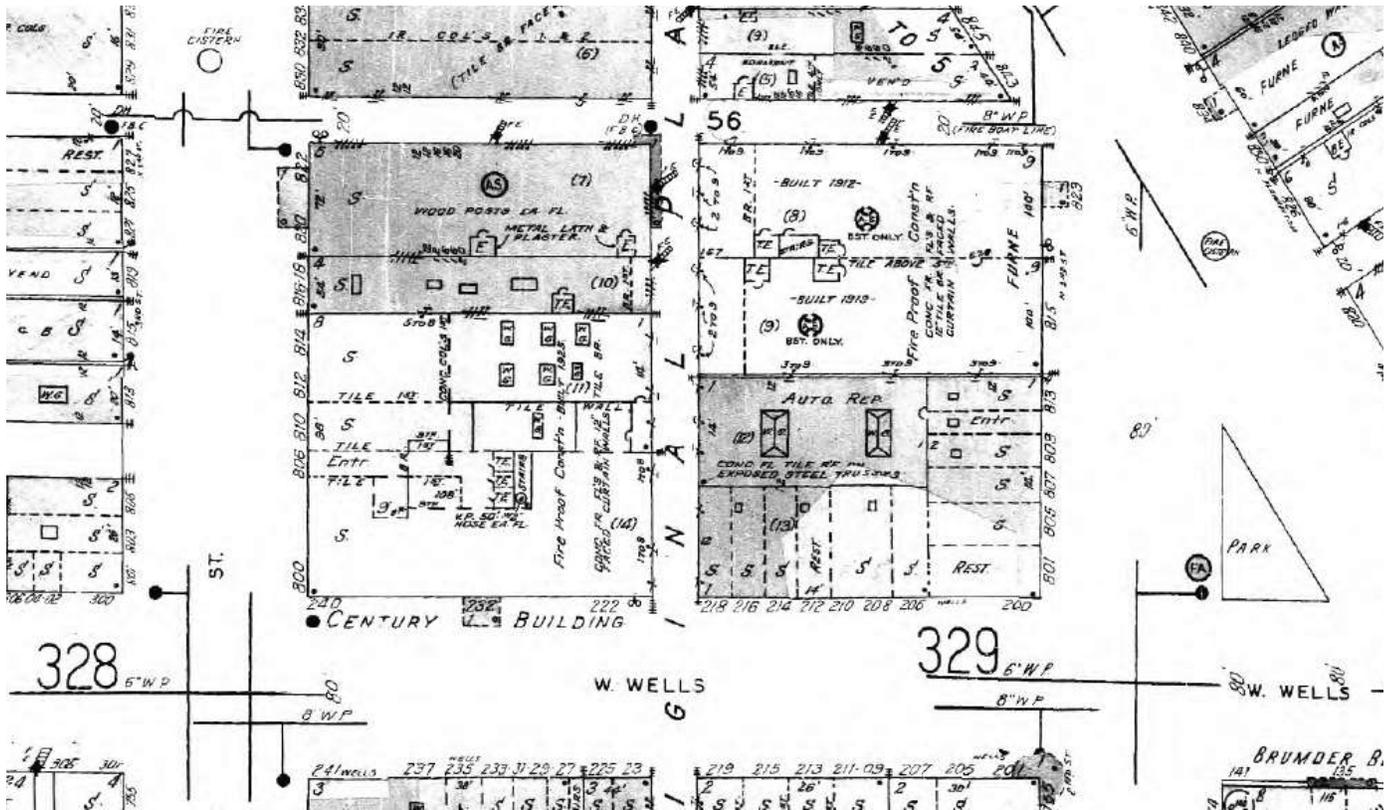
United States Department of the Interior
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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Section figures Page 2

Figure 1: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951.



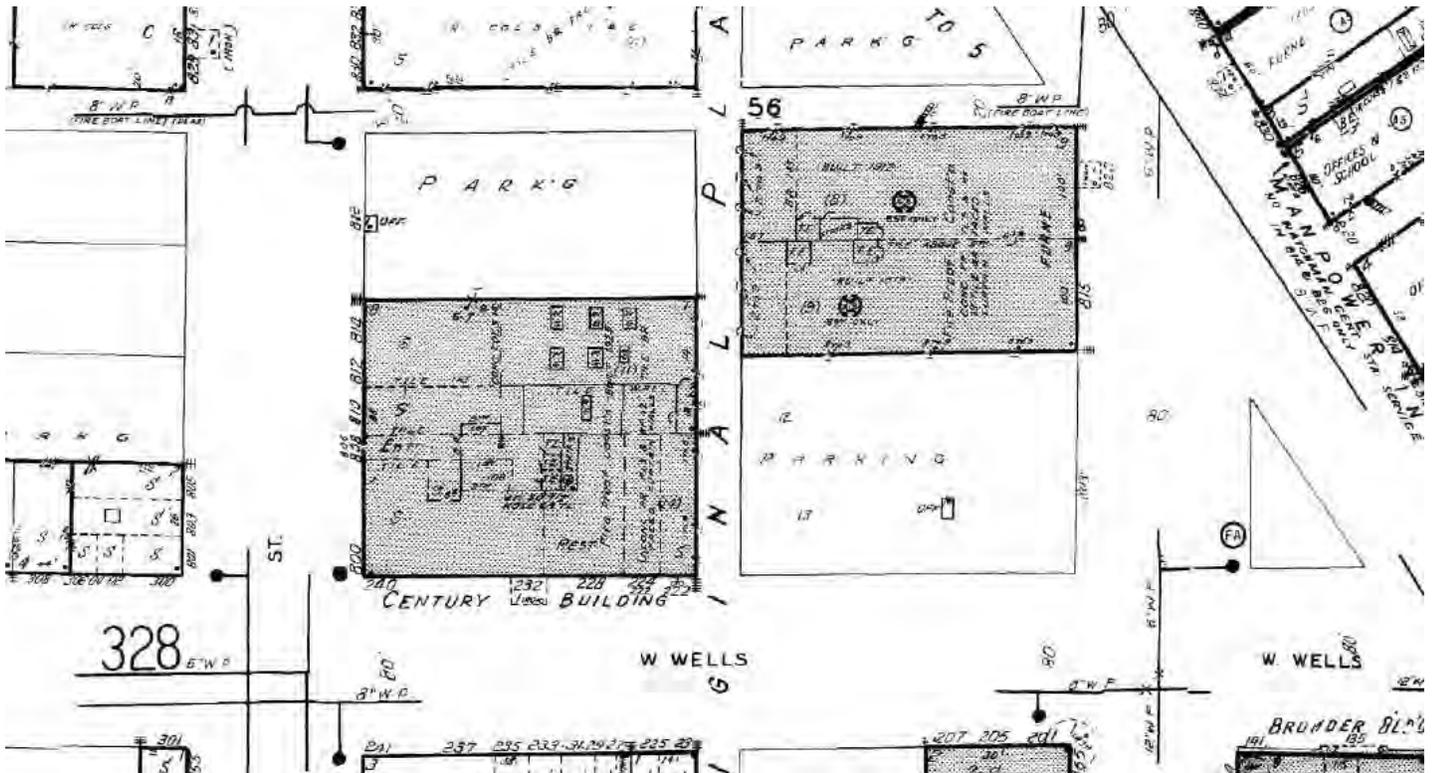
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Century Building
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Figure 2: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1969.



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Century Building
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Figure 3: West and south facades, c1930.



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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Figure 4: Lobby elevator detail, c.1926.



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Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Figure 5: West and south facades at intersection, c1948. University of Wisconsin Libraries.



Digital Image © 2008 University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries

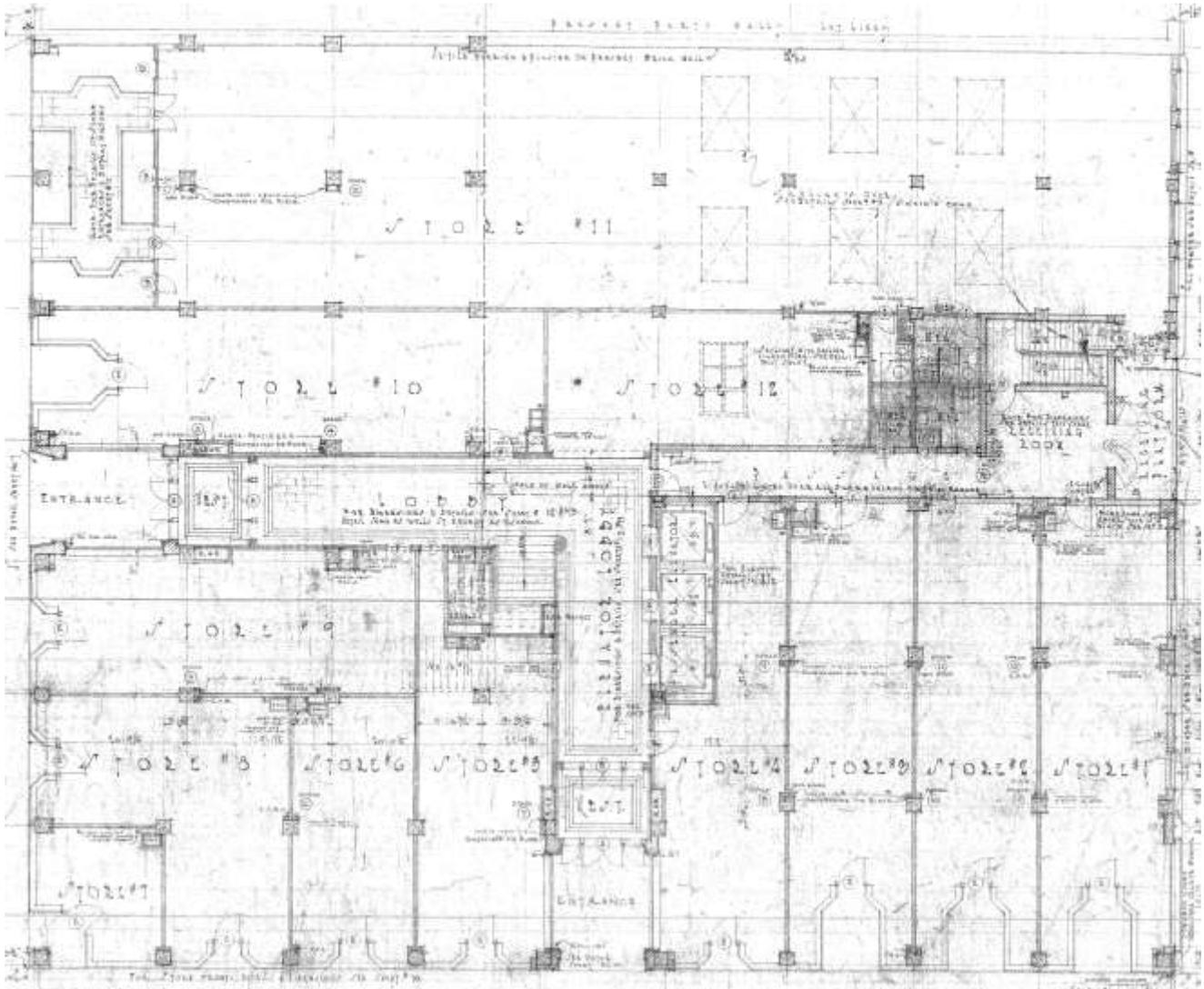
**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
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Section figures Page 7

Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Figure 6: Historic first floor plan



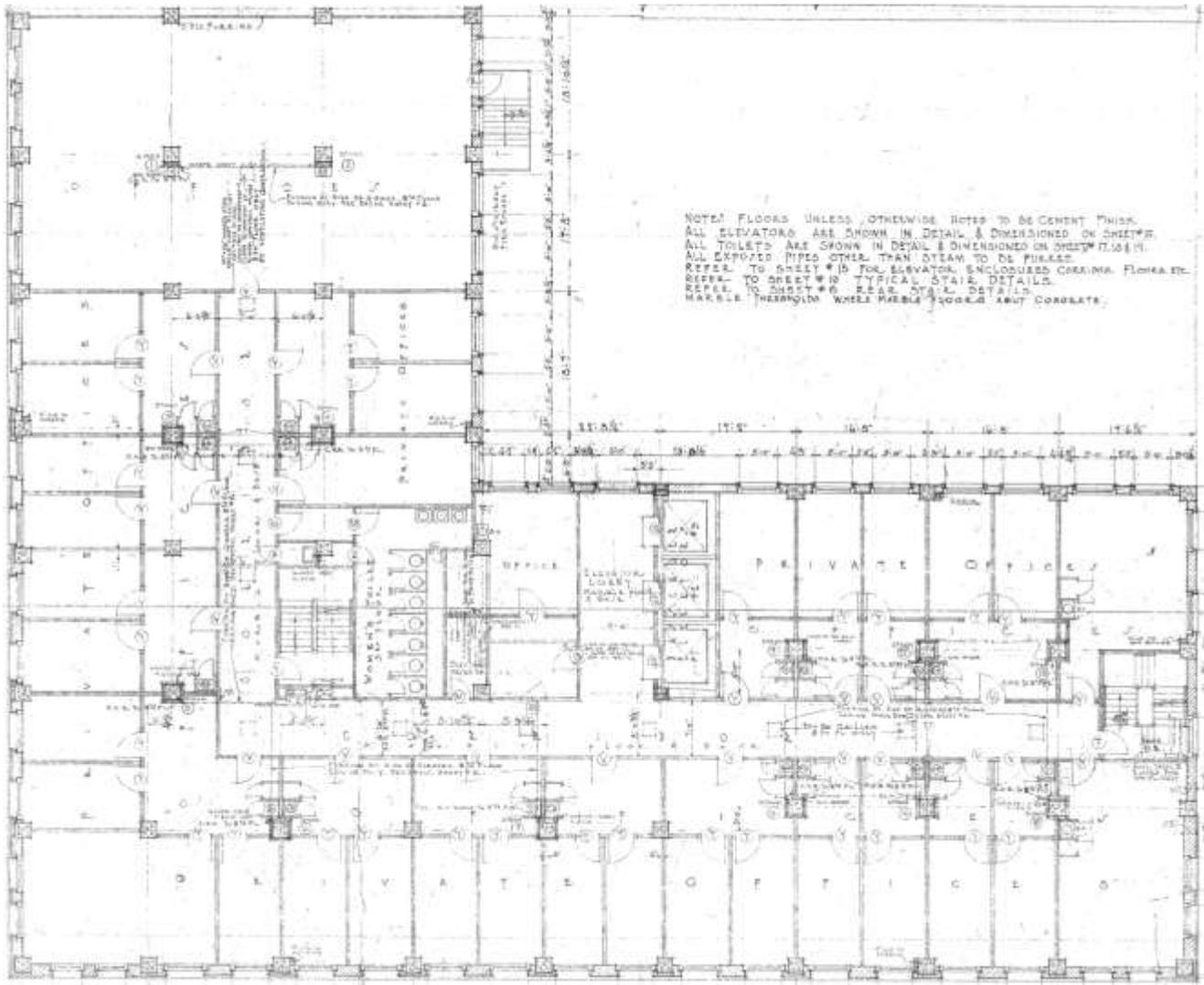
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Section figures Page 8

Century Building
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Figure 7: Historic typical upper floor plan



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Figure 8: Basement plan and photo key

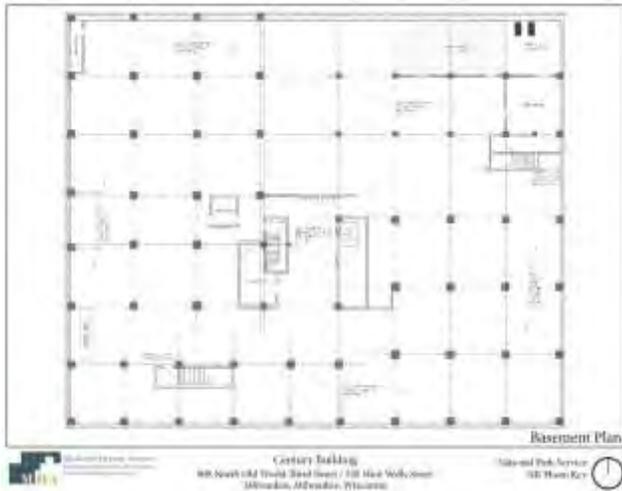


Figure 9: First floor plan and photo key



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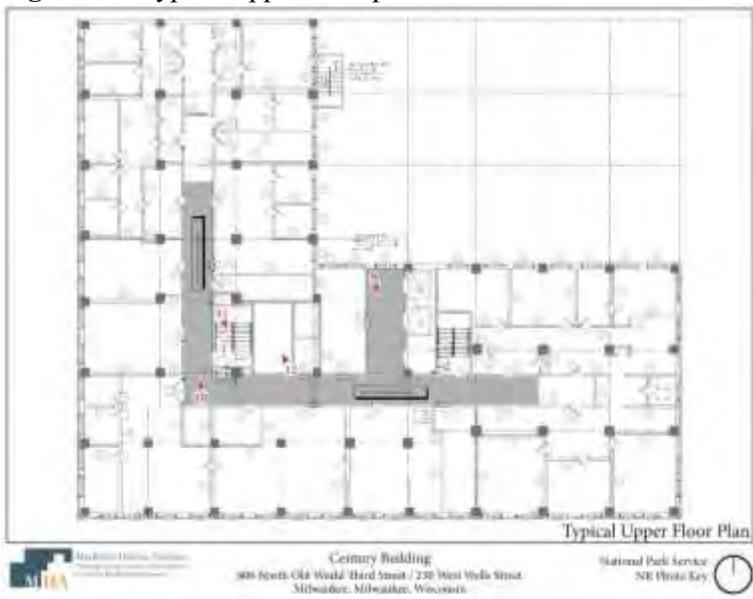
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Century Building
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Figure 10: Second floor plan and photo key



Figure 11: Typical upper floor plan



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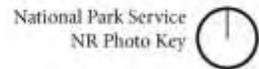
Section figures Page 11

Century Building
Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Figure 12: Site plan and photokey



Century Building
808 North Oldworld Third Street (230 West Wells Street)
Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin



MILWAUKEE, WI
2016

USGS
7.5 Minute Series
MILWAUKEE QUADRANGLE
WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE CO.

Legend:
 - Interstate
 - Major Road
 - Minor Road
 - Boundary
 - Water
 - Wetland
 - Contour
 - Spot Elevation
 - Spot Height

Scale: 1:24,000

Produced by the United States Geological Survey



*Century Building
 808 North Old World Third Street /
 830 West Wells Street
 Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin*

*16T 425530.54 4765702.36
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 7/14/2017 Date of Pending List: 8/9/2017 Date of 16th Day: 8/24/2017 Date of 45th Day: 8/28/2017 Date of Weekly List: 8/31/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 8/28/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/
Criteria

Reviewer Barbara Wyatt Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2252 Date _____

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.



WISCONSIN
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY



TO: Keeper
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Peggy Veregin
National Register Coordinator

SUBJECT: National Register Nomination

The following materials are submitted on this Fourteenth day of July 2017, for the nomination of the Century Building to the National Register of Historic Places:

1 Original National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form
1 CD with NRHP Nomination form PDF
 Multiple Property Nomination form
12 Photograph(s)
1 CD with image files
1 Map(s)
12 Sketch map(s)/figures(s)/exhibit(s)
1 Piece(s) of correspondence
 Other:

COMMENTS:

 Please ensure that this nomination is reviewed
x This property has been certified under 36 CFR 67
 The enclosed owner objection(s) do or do not constitute a majority of property owners
 Other:



Office of the City Clerk

Jim Owczarski
City Clerk
jowcza@milwaukee.gov

Richard G. Pfaff
Deputy City Clerk
rpfaff@milwaukee.gov

March 21, 2017

Peggy Veregin
National Register Coordinator
Wisconsin Historical Society
Division of Historic Preservation and Public History
816 State Street
Madison, WI 53706

Dear Ms. Veregin

RE: CLG Review of the National Register Nomination of the Century Building
808 North Old World Third Street, Milwaukee, WI

In accordance with the provisions of the Certified Local Government Agreement between the City of Milwaukee and Wisconsin State Historic Preservation Office, the Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission has reviewed the National Register nomination of the Century Building. The Commission determined that the building met the Statement of Significance as outlined in the application and voted to support the nomination on March 13, 2017.

The Historic Preservation Commission was impressed by the little known history of the building and its association with prominent Chicago architect, Alfred S. Alschuler. National and State Register listing will now allow the building to enter a new era of use and still remain a strong presence in downtown Milwaukee.

If you need additional information or have any questions please feel free to contact the Historic Preservation Commission staff at (414) 286-5722.

Sincerely,



Matt Jarosz, Chair
Milwaukee Historic Preservation Commission

C: Jim Owczarski

