

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**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 Van Brunt, Daniel C., House

and/or common Horicon Community House

2. Location

street & number 139 West Lake St. not for publication

city, town Horicon vicinity of congressional district Second

state Wisconsin code 55 county Dodge code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name City of Horicon,
c/o John Marohl (President, on behalf of Board of Trustees of the Horicon Community House

street & number 412 Maple St.

city, town Horicon vicinity of state Wisconsin 53032

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dodge County Courthouse

street & number 127 E. Oak Street

city, town Juneau state Wisconsin 53039

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Daniel C. Van Brunt House, formerly the Horicon Community Center, is situated near the center of a long rectangular lot whose spacious lawn is interspersed with large hardwoods and cedar as well as a variety of ornamental shrubs. To the east the lawn slopes down to the city park along the banks of the Rock River, with the commercial city center visible in the distance. To the west, beyond a barn and paved parking lot adjacent to the house, the property extends to the crest of the hill. The surrounding residential neighborhood is an eclectic mixture of late nineteenth century homes.

The Van Brunt house, built of cream brick on a masonry foundation, is asymmetrical in mass. To the front left (northeast) is a two-story, cube-shaped central block which dominates the composition. A one-story wing is attached to the front right and a two-story wing is located to the rear (south) of the central block. On the east wall of this rear wing is a one-story projecting bay; on the southwest corner is a three-story well tower. Both the tower and the southernmost portion of this rear wing were added to the original structure. A windmill which once sat atop the well tower was removed between 1900 and 1911. The original standing seam metal still covers all hipped roofs on the building whose wide overhanging eaves are adorned with wood brackets and mutules. A square, bracketed cupola which once marked the peak of the main roof has been removed.

Three porches are attached to the house. To the left rear, behind the bay and extending to the south wall, is an open porch with square corner columns and curved bracing. Historic photographs show that the front facade originally had a porch of similar construction which was removed in the first decade of the twentieth century when an encircling open verandah with covered porch was installed. The balustrade over the porch included in that construction is no longer extant. A wide flight of concrete steps serves this front entrance. The third porch extends from the rear of the front right wing to the well tower and exhibits square columns with no bracing. The fenestration of the house is based upon symmetrical disposition of rectangular, mostly multi-paned windows with crested, cast-iron hoodmolds. The original three unit system of the central block has, however, been modified by the installation of a large plate window on the east wall where two original windows had been. The only other exterior modification is the removal of an interior panelled brick chimney which once projected from the roof of the one story front wing. The front entrance consists of a glass panel door enclosed by leaded sidelights and transom.

The plan of the house exhibits an irregular arrangement of rooms and staircases. The front entrance opens into a moderate sized hallway from which a broad staircase with original balustrade ascends to the second floor. To the right of the hall is the original reception room, now a meeting hall. To the left of the hall two doors serve a large meeting room originally divided into the parlor (front) and sitting room (rear) by a wall which has been removed. From this room a door opens to the rear into another large room which was once divided into the dining room on the right and the library (with bay) on the left by a set of sliding doors. Further to the rear is the kitchen and adjoining pantry space. A bedroom located between the hallway and the dining room has been converted into storage. The well tower is inaccessible except through a trap door in the ceiling. A second staircase leads from the dining room to what were originally servants quarters on the second floor. A small bedroom has been converted into a bath, but otherwise the upstairs remains structurally intact. Woodwork throughout the house is original with particularly fine panelling in the dining room and library. The present large and small meeting rooms each contain an ornate marble fireplace with metal grill.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) association with signifi- cant person; com- munity service
Specific dates 1858 ¹	Builder/Architect S. and Alexander Wiseman ²			

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Constructed in 1858 for William Decker, the Daniel C. Van Brunt House is significant as the residence of Daniel C. Van Brunt from 1868 until his death in 1901. Van Brunt contributed to the civic, social, and commercial growth of Horicon, primarily as the founder and developer of an agricultural implements company which came to be (and remains) the largest local industry. Architecturally, the Van Brunt House is significant as a fine example of a period of construction, the Italianate Style. Having served as the Horicon Community Center for more than 50 years, the building is also significant as the hub of many civic and social activities.

Association With Locally-Significant Person

Daniel Conover Van Brunt was born in Springfield, New York in 1818. In 1846 he emigrated to rural Dodge County, Wisconsin where he farmed for three years before opening a wagon shop in Mayville with his brother George. There the two brothers produced what are said to be the first wagons built in Dodge County. They also began experimenting with different designs for a mechanical broadcast seeder and eventually patented a workable model. In 1860 the Van Brunts built and sold their first seven machines; the first successful broadcast seeder marketed in the U.S.³

The following year the brothers sold the Mayville shop and relocated in Horicon. By 1863, 560 machines had been built and in need of more space the Van Brunts acquired the property on which their factory would be built. (The east facade of the Van Brunt House overlooks the factory grounds.) After the retirement of his brother George in 1870, Daniel Van Brunt retained sole ownership until 1882 when, in partnership with two other men, the company was incorporated as Van Brunt and Wilkins Manufacturing Company. Van Brunt remained president, treasurer, supervisor of production, and principal stockholder until his death in Horicon in 1901.⁴ At that time the firm employed 300 workers and had produced more than 100,000 machines many for export to such countries as Germany, Russia, Chili, Denmark, and Canada.⁵

Van Brunt was succeeded as president of the company by his son Willard who changed its name to Van Brunt Manufacturing Co. In 1911 it became a subsidiary of John Deere Co. and remains the largest industry and employer in Horicon.

Van Brunt was prominent in the civic and social life of Horicon. A local philanthropist and prominent member of I.O.O.F., Van Brunt was also involved in politics. For several years he was village president and for 25 years served as director and treasurer of the school board. In 1884 he was a Republican presidential elector and in 1890 was the congressional candidate of that same party.⁶ He was also a founder and, till his death, president of the Horicon State Bank.⁷

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED
UTM NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Horicon NW, Wis. (Orthophotoquad) +
Horicon, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000
1:62500

UTM References

A

1	6	3	6	7	6	0	0	4	8	1	2	0	2	5
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

F

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

G

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

H

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, Block 1, south addition to the Village, now city of Horicon; also lots 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, Block 8, west addition to said city of Horicon.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William Carl Haygood

organization N/A

date May, 1981

street & number 217 N. Orchard St., Apt. #1

telephone (608)258-8128

city or town Madison

state Wisconsin, 53715

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Richard Murray

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 7/30/81

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
Entered in the National Register

for Secretary
Sharon Lyles

Keeper of the National Register

date 9/14/81

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Daniel C. Van Brunt House

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The only substantial modifications to the interior of the house are the modernization of the kitchen (to meet code requirements) and the removal of the partition wall in the large meeting room. However, the sliding panelled doors which had been installed in that wall, as well as the set from the library, have been saved in the adjoining barn.

Several small outbuildings adjacent to the house and visible in early photographs have been demolished. However, southwest of the house still stands a large two story-plus-attic structure built before 1900, originally used as a stable and cow barn. Until recently it has been used for municipal storage. The barn is constructed of stuccoed lath and timber on a plastered fieldstone foundation. Three-light shed dormers are set into the broad gable roof. Windows are regular-spaced but vary in size and all are multipaned. A large garage door has recently been installed in the lower north facing wall and a small gable-roof entry covers the door in the center of the foundation of the west wall. To its right is an oversize plank door.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Daniel C. Van Brunt House

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Architecture

The Daniel C. Van Brunt House was built in 1858 by the Wiseman Brothers, prominent local builders of the period.⁸ After being sold by dentist William Decker, the original owner, the property changed hands several times before acquisition by Daniel C. Van Brunt in 1868.⁹

The building is one of two surviving structures built by the Wiseman Brothers in Horicon. Of all surviving Italianate buildings in Horicon, the Van Brunt House has been least altered from its original state. In addition to retention of its exterior decorative details, the house contains most of the original interior fittings.

Community Service

Before her death in 1916 Martha Van Brunt, widow of D. C. Van Brunt, informed attorney F. H. Clausen of her wish that the Van Brunt House should someday become the property of the people of Horicon.¹⁰ In accordance with this wish, her sister and heir, Mary M. Eichelberger, bequeathed the property to the people of Horicon and provided in her will that an endowment fund be established for the maintenance of the property.

Upon the death of Mrs. Eichelberger in 1922 the provisions of her will were duly executed and a fund of \$25,000 set up of which the interest was to be used for maintenance of the property. Management of the property was vested in a Board of Trustees with the codicil that they put the property to public use.

Thus the Daniel C. Van Brunt House became the Horicon Community Center, and for over 50 years housed a wide variety of civic and social functions: weddings, graduations, receptions, and parties to celebrate confirmation or baptism. Numerous fraternal, church, educational, youth, union, and civic organizations met there.

Since 1979 the building has stood vacant. In September of 1980 the Board of Trustees unanimously agreed that application be made to have the Horicon Community Center considered for nomination on the National Register of Historic Places. It is their hope that the property be preserved as a local landmark and continue to serve the people of the city of Horicon in some capacity.

¹ Allie Freeman and Walter R. Bussewitz, History of Horicon, privately pub., Horicon, Wis., 1948, p. 65.

² Ibid., p. 65.

³ "Death of D. C. Van Brunt - A Prominent Pioneer of Dodge County and Manufacturer of Horicon Passes Away," The Dodge County Citizen, January 17, 1901.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Daniel C. Van Brunt House
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

- 4 History of Horicon, p. 79.
- 5 The Dodge County Citizen, 1901.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Homer Bishop Hubbel, Dodge County Wisconsin Past and Present, Chicago, S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1913, p. 369.
- 8 History of Horicon, p. 65.
- 9 Abstract No. 104963, county of Dodge, State of Wisconsin, December 18, 1980.
- 10 Information of Mrs. Van Brunt's wish relating to the bequest of the Van Brunt House and property was told to F. H. Clausen, attorney, and related to Rachel Mueller by Dr. Fred A. Karsten, grandson of Mr. Clausen, as detailed in The Horicon Reporter, Vol. 81 No. 3, February 20, 1964, "Horicon Community House Served Well But Years Took Their Toll and Renovations Must Be Made."
- 11 "Mrs. Mary J. Eichelberger Passes Away Suddently Saturday" and "Will of Horicon's Benefactress Discloses Many Handsome Bequests," The Horicon Reporter, Vol. 40, No. 1, Harry Roate, ed. to pub., March 18, 1921.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Daniel C. Van Brunt House, Horicon, Dodge Co., Wisc.

Continuation sheet

Item number 9,11

Page 1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Beaver Dam Citizen, September 5, 1980.

The Dodge County Citizen, January 17, 1901.

Freeman, Alice and Bussewitz, Walter R., History of Horicon, privately published, Horicon, 1948.

The Horicon Reporter, March 18, 1921, February 20, 1964.

Hubbell, H. B., Dodge County Wisconsin Past and Present, S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., Chicago, 1913.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian
State Historical Society of Wisconsin
816 State Street
Madison

May, 1981
608/262-2970
Wisc. 53706

Research assistance by: Mrs. Charles H. Mueller
220 N. Finch Street
Horicon

January, 1981
414/485-4529
Wisc. 53032