

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

For NPS use only

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

received **OCT 30 1985**

date entered

DEC 2 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Hotel Laack

and/or common n.a.

2. Location

street & number 52 Stafford Street not for publication

city, town Plymouth vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county Sheboygan code 117

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" 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
	<u>N.A.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Carey James O'Dwanny

street & number 110 Mead Avenue

city, town Plymouth vicinity of state Wisconsin 53073

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Sheboygan County Courthouse

street & number 615 North Sixth Street

city, town Sheboygan state Wisconsin 53085

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1975 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 type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

When Plymouth businessman, H. C. Laack, built his hotel, he chose a site just off the main commercial street on the route leading to the railroad depots. The architect, Charles Hilpertshauser, of near-by Sheboygan, chose the Queen Anne style for Laack's showplace hotel.

The building is an approximately 56' x 80', three-story, painted brick structure with a raised basement and a false mansard roof. The Stafford Street face (east) is the only decorative facade on the building. The facade is symmetrical around a central doorway. A rusticated segmental arch is all that remains of the once majestic entrance. Originally, a neo-classical portico projected over the sidewalk. A flight of marble steps led to the inset doubled oak and leaded glass doors. Garlanded friezes and a delicate metal balustrade trimmed the top of the portico which doubled as a balcony reached from the second floor hall through a single sidelit oak and glass door. The transom and rusticated round arch over this doorway remain but the door and sidelights were removed long ago.

Unlike the door areas, the rest of the main facade has survived virtually intact. On each side of the door two segmentally arched basement windows peak onto the sidewalk, which has been raised about a foot since 1892. The first story features two very large plate glass windows on each side, under round-arched glass transoms. Brick dentils under the sills, Roman brick arches and rusticated stone capitals form the decorative trim on these windows. Springing from between each set of two windows is a second-story orielled bay window made of galvanized iron. Double-hung windows and simple rectangular panels form the bays, which are capped at the third story by steeply pitched triangular dormers. Each dormer has a pair of double-hung windows. Spanish tiles made of steel and foliate ornament over the windows provide texture. A central dormer also has two double-hung windows. This dormer has battered sides and is covered with smooth metal siding to which foliate ornament has been applied. The lintel over the window says "H. C. Laack," and above this is a cornice with more applied foliate decoration. A neo-classical stamped metal parapet which once crowned this dormer has been lost. Also the metal Spanish tile which originally covered the third story mansard has been replaced by asphalt roofing shingles. Finishing off the composition is a garlanded frieze between the second and third stories.

The south and west sides of the building are functional in design with double-hung windows under segmental arches. Some openings have been bricked up over the years and a rear porch has been removed. The three chimneys have corbelled caps.

The interior of the hotel was always fairly plain and has been altered extensively through the years. Despite this, several important and impressive elements remain. Dominating the large lobby is a massive oak staircase leading to the second floor. When installed, the staircase cost an impressive \$1000.00. Decorated with rectangular panels, both sides of the staircase curve outward into the middle of the lobby. Matching columns still remain, as do the panelled reception desk and a few panels of the oak wainscotting. Also remaining is most of the black and white marble tile floor. A fireplace at each outside wall remains, but the

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marble mantels were stripped off sometime in the past. Bits of the original, brown Lincrusta-Walton wallpaper were recently discovered behind 20th century panelling. The only other original decorative elements to remain are oak window and door surrounds, and stamped tin ceilings and cove cornices in the old dining room and saloon. Unfortunately, the ceilings were irreparably damaged when dropped ceilings were installed.

The original first floor layout included a large lobby and a gentlemen's reading room across the front. Behind the reading room was a ladies' parlor. A central archway led to the dining room and behind the lobby were a baggage room, a clerk's room, the saloon and the kitchen and pantry.

Downstairs, besides the usual storerooms, furnace room, laundry and vegetable and liquor cellars, were also located a washroom and four wood floored sample rooms.

The second and third floors retain the original hotel floorplan of bedrooms, bathrooms, water tank rooms and linen closets. The simple ridged and bull's-eyed clear pine woodwork around windows and doors remains, as do the wide baseboards and corner beads. Originally finished in a natural varnish, all woodwork has been painted. Floors are maple. Although the original doors have been replaced by plain doors the old Victorian brass hardware was reused on the modern doors and the transom windows over the doors were retained.

The current owners are restoring the hotel as a bed-and-breakfast inn. All significant interior details, including wainscoting fragments, brass hardware, all woodwork and stamped metal lions' heads that were part of the damaged ceilings will be reused in the restoration. Lost elements will be replaced with compatible features, including the Spanish tile on the mansard roof, stained glass windows, new front doors and finials and cresting on the dormers. While the portico cannot be rebuilt, a balcony similar in design will be fabricated to restore the decorative effect of the main entrance.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
..... prehistoric	..... archeology-prehistoric	..... community planning	..... landscape architecture	..... religion
..... 1400–1499	..... archeology-historic	..... conservation	..... law	..... science
..... 1500–1599	..... agriculture	..... economics	..... literature	..... sculpture
..... 1600–1699	X architecture	..... education	..... military	..... social/
..... 1700–1799	..... art	..... engineering	..... music	..... humanitarian
X 1800–1899	X commerce	..... exploration/settlement	..... philosophy	..... theater
X 1900–	..... communications	..... industry	..... politics: government	..... transportation
		..... invention		..... other (specify)

Specific dates 1892–1893¹ **Builder/Architect** Charles Hilpertshauser, architect²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Period of significance: 1893–1935³

The Hotel Laack is architecturally significant as an excellent local example of the Queen Anne style. It is historically significant as a leading Plymouth hotel in its day.

History

Henry Christopher Laack was born in rural Sheboygan County in 1850. One of his German-born father's great ambitions in life was to see his son and two daughters well established in good businesses. To this end, he sent his fourteen year old son to Chicago to learn the tinner's trade. At the age of seventeen, H. C. Laack was placed virtually in charge of his own hardware and farm implement business. In 1875, the young Laack celebrated his early successes by building a substantial Italianate cream brick business block to house his firm (extant). About 1880, Laack added a grocery and dry goods department to his store.

Laack invested some of the profits earned in his business in the speculative erection of many residences in Plymouth. In 1889 he commissioned Sheboygan architect Charles Hilpertshauser to erect a monumental two-story business block on Plymouth's main corner (extant). A cream brick Victorian Gothic structure, the design is so unusual that it has been lauded by some and condemned by others.

Three years later Laack erected the Hotel Laack behind his 1889 block. Laack may have developed an interest in the hotel trade as a child when his father built and operated one of Plymouth's first hotels for several years (gone). Before the Hotel Laack opened, Laack owned the Commercial House hotel and saloon, a relatively small but venerable wood-frame structure built in 1850 (gone). Although Laack's hotel is not located prominently on the main commercial street, it was very well sited on the main route from the downtown to the Chicago and Northwestern and Milwaukee Road depots about two blocks away. Across the street from the hotel was the Plymouth Cheese Exchange, where cheese prices were set each Monday morning in the town which called itself the "Cheese Capital of the World." A major component of the hotel's trade was the travelling man. Four large sample rooms on the ground floor allowed the salesman to set out their wares for county merchandisers to peruse. Another attraction was the "splendid" cooking of Mrs. Bean, the hotel manager's wife.⁴ The dining room was also a popular social gathering place for Sheboygan County residents.

By 1910 the Hotel Laack was advertised as "the leading hotel in the city."⁵ A study of other hotels in city directories and Sanborn-Perris maps indicates that

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately .1 acre

Quadrangle name Plymouth South, Wisconsin

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone	Easting					Northing						

C

Zone	Easting					Northing						

D

Zone	Easting					Northing						

E

Zone	Easting					Northing						

F

Zone	Easting					Northing						

G

Zone	Easting					Northing						

H

Zone	Easting					Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundaries of the site follow the legal boundaries of the parcel, which include only a little additional land beyond the land upon which the building sits.(continued)

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 Katherine H. Rankin, Consultant

organization for the owner

date August 29, 1985

street & number 1109 Sherman Avenue

telephone 608-256-2905

city or town Madison

state Wisconsin 53703

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Jeff Dean*

title DIRECTOR OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

date OCT. 22 1985

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

for Allous Byer
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 12/2/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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this boast was probably truthful. For its size, Plymouth had alot of hotels in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. But most of them were small wood-framed structures which were probably more well-known for their wines, liquors, cigars and billiard tables than for their accommodations. Two hotels were located at the depot (gone). Five were built on Mill Street, the main commercial street.

Of these five, two remain, an 1858 frame inn advertised in 1910 as a Deutsches Gasthaus and billiard parlor, and an Italianate brick structure that was built in 1890 and is much smaller and less imposing than the Laack in size and style. The Hotel Laack's major rival appears to have been the Williams Hotel, also built in the same era, but in the Italianate style. Between 1910 and 1927 the Williams was brick veneered and substantially expanded in a simple Prairie style. In recent years the old Williams hotel has been unsympathetically remodelled as a motor inn, now defunct.

Architecture

The Hotel Laack is by far the most imposing hotel building ever built in Plymouth. The opening notice for the hotel stated that "Mr. Laack has spent large sums in the erection of buildings, all of which are adornments to the city," and noted that Laack was largely responsible for the fact that "there are few, if any, places of [Plymouth's] size in the state that have such expensive structures."⁶ Laack's biography said that Laack was "a gentleman who spares neither labor nor money to do well what he undertakes."⁷

Like the Laack block next door the Hotel Laack was designed by noted Sheboygan architect Charles Hilpertshauser. Another rural Sheboygan County native, Hilpertshauser started his career by working as a draftsman for a Chicago architect for five years. In 1885 he went to work for his father, a building contractor. In 1887 he hung out his own shingle. Until his death ca. 1911, he was the leading designer in Sheboygan County. Many of his distinctive business blocks, residences, schools and churches remain throughout the county. An extensive list of his works submitted to the State Historical Society by a descendant indicates that the Hotel Laack was probably Hilpertshauser's only commission for a hotel building.

The Hotel Laack is one of only two Queen Anne commercial buildings remaining in Plymouth, a city dominated by the Italianate style. While the other structure is a pleasant and well-preserved example of the style, the steeply pitched dormers, orielled bays and foliate ornament of the Hotel Laack are unique in Plymouth.

Sheboygan Landmarks, Ltd., a private preservation society, has designated the Hotel Laack a county landmark, as "the best example of the Queen Anne style in Plymouth."⁸

¹Plymouth Reporter, April 28, 1892 and March 23, 1893.
²Signed original plans in the possession of the owner.

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Item #8, page 2, Significance:

- ³The building has been a leading hotel in Plymouth since its erection.
- ⁴Plymouth Reporter, March 23, 1893.
- ⁵Fest-Zeitung, Plymouth, Wis., March 15, 1910.
- ⁶Plymouth Reporter, March 23, 1893.
- ⁷Portrait and Biographical Record of Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, p. 468.
- ⁸Touring Historic Sheboygan County.

Item #9, Bibliographical References:

Architects File, Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

City directories, Plymouth and Sheboygan County, Wisconsin.

Hitchcock, Anthony and Jean Lindgren, Country Inns of the Midwest, New York: Burt Franklin and Co., 1979.

Original architect's plans in the possession of the owner.

Photograph of the lobby in the possession of the owner, ca. 1900.

Plymouth Centennial, 1877-1977, Historical Album, Chippewa Falls: Gilbert Swan, 1977.

Plymouth Reporter, Apr. 28, 1892; July 21, 1892; Feb. 9, 1893; Feb. 23, 1893; Mar. 23, 1893; Apr. 13, 1893; Apr. 27, 1893.

Portrait and Biographical Record of Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, Chicago: Excelsior Publishing Co., 1894, pp. 466-469.

Sanborn-Perris insurance maps, Plymouth, Wisconsin, 1887, 1903, 1910, 1927.

Touring Historic Sheboygan County, Sheboygan: Sheboygan County Landmarks, Ltd., 1976.

Zillier, Carl, History of Sheboygan County, Wisconsin, no place of publication, publisher or date, in the possession of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

Item # 10, Geographical Data, Legal Description:

The south 66 feet of Lot 6 and the south 66 feet of the east 29.1 feet M/L of Lot 7, sub. to alley over S 11.5 feet of said Lots, Block 19, Plymouth original plat.