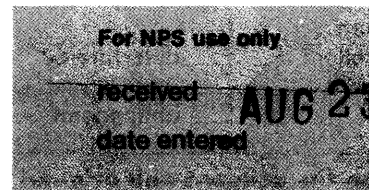


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 (The Athenaeum)
and/or common Woman's Club of Wisconsin (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 813 E. Kilbourn Ave. not for publication
city, town Milwaukee vicinity of congressional district
state Wisconsin code 55 county Milwaukee code 079

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Woman's Club of Wisconsin; Mrs. Bayard M. Horter, Jr., President
street & number 813 E. Kilbourn Avenue
city, town Milwaukee vicinity of state Wisconsin 53202

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, Milwaukee County Courthouse
street & number 901 N. Ninth Street
city, town Milwaukee state Wisconsin 53233

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic Survey of the City of Milwaukee/
title Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no
date 1978-79 federal state county local
depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin;
Department of City Development, City of Milwaukee
city, town Madison; Milwaukee state Wisconsin

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

After additions made in 1896, 1936, and 1950¹ to the original 1887 building, the Woman's Club of Wisconsin is currently a one hundred-by-eighty-foot two-story rectangular structure of cream brick with contrasting foundation, courses, and sills and lintels of ashlar. Black composition shingles (originally slate) cover the hipped roof, whose eastern portion (1896) is a step (several feet) lower than the original; wood window frames and the front double doors are painted to match. Alternating large and small shouldered gable dormers rise from the facade through the roofline on front and side elevations. Although the original front facade (1887) was symmetrical, the resultant one is a well-balanced vertically-regular assemblage of window sizes and types, all rectangular. Three cream brick chimneys, a small steep gable dormer with trefoil-shaped hood, and a small cross-gabled fleche rise from the roof.

The original eighty-five-by-forty-five-foot building was symmetrical in design and plan. A large shouldered gable dormer rose from the front elevation through the roofline in the center of the front (north) facade, between matching smaller dormers to each side. The recessed double-door entry in the center of the first story was served by a flight of stone stairs; sometime after the 1896 addition was completed, the stairs were removed and double doors and a transom were installed at street level beneath the original stained glass panels over the entry. Where originally there were paired double-hung windows topped by stained glass panels on the first story, single oversize double-hung windows (a twentieth-century alteration) now fill the rectangular openings. Two-over-one windows in the second story and dormers, and pairs of triplets of small narrow rectangular windows, appear as original.

In the first addition (1896), a large shouldered gable-dormer unit framing triplets of windows, and a ground-level entry unit, were added. The entrance and a side window are framed by a small shallow projecting shouldered pavilion on the ground story. The new end wall (facing east) was designed with a large gable end, an enlarged "match" to the west end, but without the latter's symmetrical window scheme. The second (1936) and third (1950) additions of cream brick to the rear are utilitarian in nature and do not contribute to the character of the nineteenth-century building.

The original plan of rooms in the 1887 portion of the building is still evident: "the basement . . . with kitchen, etc., the first story consisting of a large club parlor, with a seating capacity for two hundred persons, club library, committee room, hall, dressing room, etc. . . . The second story to be arranged as a large hall or assembly room, with dressing rooms attached, and a seating capacity for about four hundred. . . ."2 In addition to the kitchen, the 1887 basement includes a president's room (now dining room) and service rooms, augmented by other service and storage rooms in the 1896, 1936, and 1950 additions (see attached floor plans). The dominant flavor of the decoration in the nineteenth-century public rooms is Tudor in style, with dark paneled mahogany wainscoting, doors, and door and window frames characteristic of those spaces. Paneling

(continued)

¹City of Milwaukee building permits.

²Fifth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Athenaeum, Milwaukee, 1892, p. 29.

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Woman's Club of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co., WI

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lines the hall of the divided stair over the 1896 entrance; the closed mahogany balustrade is cut in a tracery pattern. Pillars with paneled mahogany pedestals, octagonal shafts, and Corinthian capitals support the entablature enclosing the "Great Hall"; the room has mahogany wainscoting, an early Tudor-type timber-framed ceiling with heavily-molded beams, and a fireplace with paneled chimneypiece and green marble apron. The dining room (originally the Club parlor) at the west end of the plan is again paneled in mahogany; here painted ceiling beams are supported by full-length octagonal columns with composite capitals, and the chimneypiece is of ornately-carved sandstone. Walls and woodwork in the library are painted, including the two shallow arched niches at the east end of the room. The ballroom or hall on the second floor retains its original form. The walls and timbered ceiling, composed of great semi-circular arches, are painted plaster and wood framing; at the east end of the room, a balcony (over the doorway) is enclosed by a classical frame. Rooms added in 1936 and 1950 are not considered significant to the nomination.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

_____ 1887,¹ 1896² (construction and addition)
Specific dates 1887-present (period of significance) **Builder/Architect** George B. Ferry¹

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Woman's Club of Wisconsin is of national level significance historically in that it represents both the first known stock company formed by women in America, and one of the earliest women's clubs formed for the purpose of stimulating intellectual and humanitarian pursuits in the community. As originally designed and shortly-after expanded, the club building, a fine conservative blend of late-nineteenth-century revival styles, represents a period of construction, as well as the work of master Wisconsin architect George B. Ferry.

Social/Humanitarian

The Woman's Club of Wisconsin was founded at the Wisconsin Avenue home of Mrs. Alexander Mitchell in October of 1876, in the nation-wide kindling of interest in Women's concerns sparked by the Centennial. The thirty Milwaukee women who formed the organizing group had "grown not only weary, but rebellious" to hearing of the "'Sphere of Woman' a modest, retired one, . . . where, with quiet, beautiful patience, she shall rear her children and obey and please her lord."³ Declaring ". . . that we have as much right to dwell in the sunlight and make a noise as our brother man," the Club stated as the first article of its proposed Constitution:

"The object of this Club shall be primarily to elevate and purify our civilization. As a means toward this end, it shall seek to excite woman to intellectual and moral culture, and also to a careful study of the practical arts of our common life. The Club shall, also, offer opportunity for this culture and encouragement in a field of activity for meritorious talent."⁴

Present at the organizational meeting was Mrs. Julia Ward Howe of Boston,⁵ representing the Woman's Club of New England, who had accepted the invitation of the Milwaukee women to assist in the founding of their organization. Mrs. Mitchell was elected the first President; Mrs. W. L. Page, First Vice President; Mrs. William Pitt Lynde, Second Vice President; Miss Mary Mortimer, Secretary; and Mrs. J. H. Warner, Treasurer.

As members and activities increased, it became increasingly difficult to assemble in members' homes or in rooms donated by local colleges and hotels, and in the 1880s, the idea of constructing a clubhouse arose. In June of 1876 the Club's Board of Directors proposed that a clubhouse with a rentable hall or auditorium as well as meeting rooms to provide income, be constructed, with the construction itself to be financed through the sale of stock. The stock company, called the Athenaeum, with Martha E. Fitch as President, sold one thousand shares (most to Club members) at twenty-five dollars per share.⁶ A committee chose the building site in the city's residential area, and specified the clubhouse's desired dimensions and composition. This founding of the first known women's stock-holding company was judged then to have potential repercussions

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Peck, Ellen M. H., First, Second, and Fifth Annual Report of the Secretary of 'The Athenaeum,' Cramer, Aikens & Cramer, Publishers, Milwaukee, 1887, 1889, and 1892, respectively.

Woman's Club of Wisconsin, 1876-1976, privately published, Milwaukee, 1976.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Milwaukee, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6	4	2	6	5	7	1	0	4	7	6	5	7	1	1	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

Plot of Lot No. 1 (in N $\frac{1}{2}$) of Sec. 28 NW $\frac{1}{2}$ Sec. 28-7-22 Block 95 Lot 12 and N 29.22'. Lot 11 Exc. (W40' and N40' for streets and E 6.5' for alley and W37' of E43.5' of S1.22' of N29.22' of Lot 11).

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

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By (continued)

name/title Diane H. Filipowicz, Architectural Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date March, 1982

street & number 816 State Street

telephone 608/262-2970

city or town Madison

state Wisconsin 53706

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

Richard Murray

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date

8/11/82

For NPS use only

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

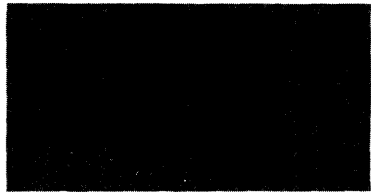
Bill Groven
Keeper of the National Register

date

10/7/82

Attest:
Chief of Registration

date



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

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Woman's Club of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co., WI

Continuation sheet

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beyond the Club's operations; as Secretary Ellen Peck speculated in The First Annual Report of the Secretary of 'The Athenaeum' in 1887, ". . .if the experiment of forming the first 'Woman's Stock Company,' prove a successful one, it will furnish an argument in favor of other forms of co-operation among women, for the accomplishment of needed objects."⁷

Confirmation of the importance of the venture came one year later in the form of a challenge from Indianapolis: "Our Propyleum will soon vie with your Athenaeum."⁸ When that club and company was successfully established with the dedication of the Propyleum in January of 1881, Ellen Peck of the Woman's Club of Wisconsin was present as a supporting sister.⁹ In the interim, Martha Fitch had gone to Philadelphia in 1890 to encourage the incorporation of the New Century Club; following her speech, \$50,000 in stock was subscribed, and Mrs. Fitch was named an honorary member and "mother" of the Philadelphia club.¹⁰

In addition to the regular meetings of the Woman's Club of Wisconsin, the Kilbourn Avenue clubhouse was the site of a great range and number of social and educational activities promoted or sponsored by the Club in Milwaukee: botany, geology, and art lectures; a Ladies Art Class, Girls' Cooking Club, a public cooking club (the first in the city), the early Boys' Club, the College Endowment Association, a history club, art exhibits, dances, musicales, lectures, Unitarian Church services (pending construction of a separate structure), and the National Whist Conference in 1890.¹¹ Woman's Club members were involved in "sponsorship of the first Kindergarten in Milwaukee, the development of the manual training, the domestic science department of Milwaukee schools, the moral and financial support of the first vacation school which eventually grew into our now nationally famous municipal recreation department."¹² In the last fifty years, the Club has maintained a Children's Service Society; Welfare Committee (which supported the hiring of the first woman probation officer in Milwaukee in 1926); participated in WW II activities of the Red Cross, Motor Corps, and Civil Defense; and supported the work of various agencies assisting the chronically ill, mentally retarded, foreign-born, and contemporary problems.

Architecture

The eclectic character of the Woman's Club building was achieved with decorative additions to the original design. Originally devoid of overt stylistic references, George B. Ferry's Woman's Club of Wisconsin building of 1887 was "Gothicised" with the addition of a trefoil-trimmed dormer and cross-gabled fleche (along with an eastern extension) in 1896. The general Richardsonian aspect, expressed in restrained rustication in the foundation and contrasting courses, slim shallow buttresses against the brick walls, and shouldered gables rising through the hipped roof, was tempered by the symmetry of the composition; the asymmetry introduced by the east bay was visually resolved by the addition of another large shouldered dormer, and the smaller decorative dormer and fleche.

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National Park Service

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Located in a residential area of high-quality large and multiple-unit buildings of mixed nineteenth and twentieth century characters, the Woman's Club of Wisconsin is, by subsequent contrast, a well-maintained example of the talent of one of Wisconsin's premier architects. At the time of the design of the building, architect George B. Ferry was at the mid-point of his Milwaukee practice before joining into partnership with Alfred C. Clas. Born in Springfield, Massachusetts, Ferry (1851-1918) attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the early 1870s, and moved to Milwaukee to establish a practice in 1881. Better known for the many commissions accepted in partnership with Clas (from 1890-1918), Ferry's own oeuvre of the 1880s also includes the Oconomowoc City Hall (1886), listed in the National Register in 1980. The Ferry & Clas partnership was prominent in the design of substantial public buildings in the Neoclassical style (the Milwaukee Public Library of 1893-97, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin of 1900) and a number of large-scale upper-middle class residences in Milwaukee and other cities in the state. Ferry was "senior partner, designer, and architectural critic" of the firm, which received recognition for buildings at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition (1904), Panama-Pacific Exposition (1915) and at the Paris World's Fair.¹²

Compatible additions to the rear in matching cream brick were designed by Eschweiler & Eschweiler (east end) and Perce G. Schley (west end) in 1936 and 1950 respectively.¹³ These are not considered significant to the nomination.

In recognition of its historical and architectural significance, the Woman's Club of Wisconsin was designated as a Milwaukee Landmark in 1970.

¹City Building Permit; Milwaukee Sentinel, May 5, 1887.

²State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, 1960, p. 129.

³Report of the Committee of Organization, as reported in Woman's Club of Wisconsin, privately published, 1978, p. 9.

⁴Ibid., pp. 9-10.

⁵Ibid., p. 7.

⁶"Historical Sketch of the Athenaeum," in Fifth Annual Report of the Secretary and Treasurer's Statements, of 'The Athenaeum,' Milwaukee, 1892, p. 28.

⁷First Annual Report of the Secretary of 'The Athenaeum,' Milwaukee, Wis., 1887, p. 12.

⁸Second Annual Report of the Secretary of 'The Athenaeum,' Milwaukee, 1899, p. 11.

⁹Fifth Annual Report of the Secretary of 'The Athenaeum,' Milwaukee, 1892, p. 32.

¹⁰Milwaukee Journal, Sunday, September 23, 1923.

¹¹Ibid., and Woman's Club of Wisconsin, 1976.

¹²City Building Permits.

¹³City of Milwaukee Building Permits.

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

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

Woman's Club of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co., Wisc.
Continuation sheet

Item number 11.

Page 1.



FORM PREPARED BY

Research Assistance By: Mrs. Katherine M. Seaman, Mrs. Eleanor C. Bell
Woman's Club of Wisconsin
813 E. Kilbourn Ave.
Milwaukee
July, 1980
414/276-5170
Wisc. 53202

BASEMENT
5

