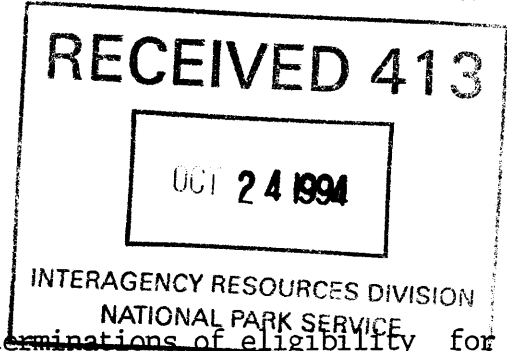


NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8/86)
Wisconsin Word Processor Format (1331D)
(Approved 3/87)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

1. Name of Property

historic name HARDWARE MUTUAL INSURANCE COMPANIES BUILDING

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1421 Strongs Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Stevens Point

N/A vicinity

state Wisconsin

code WI

county Portage

code 097

zip code 54481

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. of Resources within Property	
		contributing	noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total
Name of related multiple property listing:		No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register	
<u>N/A</u>		<u>0</u>	

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Jeff Dean
Signature of certifying official
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

12/14/94
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet

Edson H. Beall

12.1.94

 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet

 determined not eligible for the National Register.

 removed from the National Register.

 other, (explain:)

Entered in the
National Register

for Signature of the Keeper

Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/Business

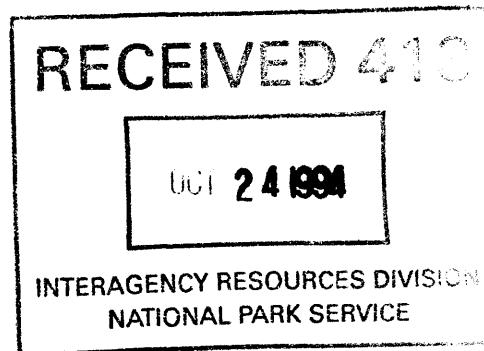
COMMERCE/Business

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The exterior is further enriched by extensive classical, allegorical and other related carvings. On the west facade the parapet wall includes scroll cresting over the central eight columns. Below the parapet the cornice soffit is ornamented by mutules and guttae. On the northern section of the west facade the name HARDWARE MUTUAL INSURANCE appears twice in the frieze, marking the original and added sections of the building. The rest of the freize includes a series of griffins, along with the seals of the United States and Canada. The seals of various states are carved in the first floor spandrels, while other symbols representative of the United States, hardware, and insurance have been carved into the foundation belt course. Stone urns and sunken planters are located between the columns on the west facade, and elaborate stone braziers, adapted to electric lighting, flank the main entrance.

On the first three floors the interior is arranged around a central elevator lobby, with a staircase at either end of an adjoining north-south corridor. Immediately inside the main entrance is a marble vestibule created by a second set of Yellin wrought-iron-and-glass doors, doubled in height by a matching transom. Inside these doors a full-width staircase ascends to the first floor octagonal lobby. The floors, stairs and walls of this space are clad entirely in various colors of marble from Italy, Belgium, France and the United States. (4) Marble columns stand in the four principal corners of the lobby. The painted canvas on the lobby ceiling, as well as the canvas over the stairs, is the work of Mrs. Telford Paullin of New York. (5) The four seasons are represented in the canvas over the stairs, while the lobby canvas represents the signs of the zodiac and the dieties of Greek mythology. Other distinctive features of this space include wrought iron lanterns, railings, doors, and chandeliers by Samuel Yellin. The two elevators are paneled in burlled walnut and have domed ceilings of polished brass.

The north corridor provides access to the original half of the building constructed for both the Hardware Mutual Fire Insurance Company and the Hardware Mutual Casualty Company in 1922. The floors and wainscoting in the corridor are terrazzo, and the walls and ceilings are plaster. The doors and their surrounding woodwork are wood and have brass door knobs embossed with the initials of Hardware Mutual Insurance Companies. On the right of the corridor are locker, lavatory, and other utility rooms with glazed doors, transoms, and overhead lights. Beyond these is an open terrazzo staircase with wrought iron bannisters and wooden handrails. On the left of the corridor opposite the stairs are the offices of company president P. J. Jacobs. At the end of the corridor is what was one of several policy and underwriting rooms, a large open work space which comprised most of the entire north wing. The walls and ceiling in this room are plaster, and the flooring beneath the contemporary carpeting was at one time cork. The Walker floor duct electrical

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system at one time found here and throughout the building was reputedly one of the first in Wisconsin. (6) A secondary corridor, a series of small offices along the southern wall of the north wing, and an accounting department along the eastern wall have all been incorporated into this space by the removal of glass partition walls.

The offices of P. J. Jacobs are as distinguished as the lobby. The door to these offices is fully lighted with Tudor Revival leaded art glass by G. Owen Bonawit of New York City. (7) Immediately inside is a walnut-paneled waiting room with a tiled floor and a screen of art glass windows separating the room from the office of the president's secretary. The glass in these windows, also by Bonawit, include medieval figures forging swords and armor as symbols of the hardware trade. Above these a canvased ceiling has been painted with a map of North America, the work of Andrew T. Schwartz of New York City. (8) The map is in the style of those used by fifteenth century navigators, and indicates the location of the home office with a star, radiating out to each branch and local office. Beyond the waiting room, the president's office is similarly paneled, and tiled with the signs of the zodiac in the border. A fireplace of Bedford limestone is carved with the seal of the National Retail Hardware Association, and a brass wall clock from Gorham Jewelers of New York repeats the zodiac symbolism elsewhere. The plaster ceiling was inspired by a paneled ceiling in France and was at one time painted red, blue, green, and cream. The exterior Bonawit art glass windows in the office have been removed, probably when the other windows were replace in 1979.

The south corridor provides access to that portion of the building constructed for the Hardware Mutual Casualty Company in 1930, and to the 1937 auditorium. The floors and wainscotting in the corridor are terrazzo, and the walls and ceilings are plaster. On the immediate left of the corridor are two wrought-iron-and-glass Yellin doors which open into the auditorium vestibule. Beyond these are locker, lavatory, and other utility rooms with glazed doors, transoms and overhead lights. The doors and their surrounding woodwork are wood and have brass door knobs embossed with the Hardware Mutual insignia. Further down on the right is the south terrazzo staircase with its wrought iron bannisters and wooden hand rails. Unlike the north staircase, this one is separated from the corridor by double doors. Past the staircase at the end of the corridor is what was one of the policy and underwriting rooms, a large open workspace which comprises the entire south wing. The walls and ceiling in this room are plaster, and the flooring beneath the contemporary carpeting is cork. On the left of the corridor, opposite the auditorium vestibule, is what was a visitors' reception room and related offices. A second Schwartz map was located in the reception room, but this is no longer extant. The walls and ceilings in these rooms are plaster, and the floors beneath the contemporary carpeting is cork. The glazed doors and transoms match those in the corridor.

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The Childs and Smith Art Deco auditorium and its vestibule are another prominent feature of the interior. The floor and walls of the vestibule are linoleum tile, the trim is aluminum, and the ceiling is domed and indirectly lit above an aluminum cornice. The north wall includes a full length plate glass window into the lobby information booth, and the south wall is mirrored. Beyond this vestibule is a 350-seat auditorium with a 30-foot stage. The floor is inlaid linoleum tile with a geometric Art Deco motif, the walls are veneered aspen with horizontal inlays of mahogany and cork, and the trim and cornice is aluminum. The proscenium arch and sides of the stage also utilize mahogany and aluminum, repeating the horizontal lines of the inlaid walls. The line of the proscenium is then repeated in the dome of the gypsum-block ceiling, which is indirectly lit by recessed lighting above an aluminum cornice.

On the second floor the central lobby has a terrazzo floor and is fully paneled in marble, with wrought iron wall sconces and elevator doors, and Tudor Revival plaster crown molding. A central Yellin wrought iron ceiling fixture is no longer extant, and contemporary doors have been cut through the marble paneling opposite the elevators, to provide access to the 1960 board room. This large, contemporary feature replaced the historic board room and the related executive offices of Carl Jacobs, president of the Hardware Mutual Casualty Company. These offices and the board room were finished in a similar manner to the first floor offices of P. J. Jacobs, and included paneling, Tudor Revival plaster ceilings, and Bonawit art glass windows, none of which is extant. The balance of the second floor follows the arrangement, physical finish and general usages of the first floor rooms. These second floor rooms also retain a similar proportion of the simple historic fabric, although the west wall of the north corridor has been removed.

The third floor lobby is less ornate than the second floor lobby and is only wainscotted in terrazzo. The balance of the floor copies the room arrangement and finish of the second. The fourth floor lobby and corridor has linoleum flooring and no other distinguishing features. The fourth floor occupies only the south half of the building and is windowless on the principal facades, having been intended for duplicating and storage.

Since the addition of the auditorium in 1937 the building has experienced various modifications. As previously stated the executive offices and board room of the Hardware Mutual Casualty Company were removed about 1960, and in 1979 the original windows were replaced with aluminum-and-glass units. There have also been a number of changes in the functional interior spaces. These have been largely limited to the removal of selected walls to provide for contemporary work flow, and the installation of dropped accoustical ceilings to accomodate new HVAC systems. With

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one or two exceptions, these alterations have had a nominal impact on the character defining interior spaces and have had no noticeable impact on the site and form of a building which remains one of the most impressive and dramatic structures in the city.

The building is presently undergoing adaptive reuse by Sentry Insurance, utilizing the Department of Interior standards for rehabilitation.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Stevens Point Daily Journal, November 17, 1979.
- 2 "The Hardware Mutual Insurance Building, Stevens Point, Wis.," p. 304.
- 3 "The Home Office Building of the Hardware Insurance Companies," p. 1.
- 4 "Little Visits to Big Places," p. 4.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 "The Home Office Building of the Hardware Insurance Companies," p. 10.
- 8 Ibid., p. 11

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1921-1943 (1)

Significant Dates

1922 (2)

1930 (3)

1937 (4)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Childs and Smith (5)

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Hardware Mutual Insurance Companies Building is nominated to the National Register for its local significance under criteria A and C. The Hardware Mutuals Building is associated with the early development of the Wisconsin Retail Hardware Association and its successful program to provide Wisconsin hardware merchants with affordable insurance. Architecturally, the building is a fine local example of the Neoclassical Revival style addressed in Cultural Resource Management In Wisconsin. The Hardware Mutuals Building is also reflective of a significant period of growth and achievement in the city of Stevens Point.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Stevens Point incorporated as a city in 1853, developing in the 19th century as an important lumbering, commercial, and transportation center for the Wisconsin River pineries and the surrounding farmland of Portage County. In 1870 Stevens Point became the county seat, and in 1871 the Wisconsin Central Railroad located its division repair shops there. A state normal school was established at Stevens Point in 1892.

By the turn of the century Stevens Point had a population of 9,524. (6) Lumbering had exhausted local resources of white pine, and the economy was gradually shifting to the manufacture of finished wood products. At this time the area also began to develop as a center of paper and pulp manufacture with the construction of the Whiting-Plover Paper Company mills in 1893. These significant industries were joined in 1912 by the Hardware Mutual Fire Insurance Company, which within a decade became one of the largest employers in Stevens Point. (7)

X See continuation sheet

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Rapid industrialization and commercial growth during the early twentieth century led to the formation of the Stevens Point Chamber of Commerce. Organized in 1920, the Chamber elected Fred Copps, H. A. Vetter, P. J. Jacobs, and E. A. Oberwieser to the board. Copps and Vetter were officers of successful family businesses, and both held public office. Jacobs was secretary and treasurer of the Hardware Mutual Fire Insurance Company, while Oberwieser was an officer of the Whiting-Plover Paper Company and president of the Citizens Bank. (8)

Working through the Chamber of Commerce, these four men implemented an aggressive program of community development. Their program for the Chamber included the successful promotion of public road improvements, waterworks, street lighting, and telephone service. They also organized the financing and construction of the 1921 Whiting Hotel (NRHP 1991), and coordinated substantial improvements under their individual control. The most notable among these was Jacobs' 1922 Hardware Mutuals Building, constructed directly across the street from the hotel. Private and public efforts such as these resulted in a period of significant achievement in Stevens Point, characterized by the dedication and financial commitment of its community leaders.

COMMERCE

Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin does not yet include study units on the themes of commerce or trade associations. When completed, the unit on commerce will confirm that nearly every community in the state has a history of commercial activity, locally represented by numerous examples of diverse resource types. The resource types identified will include a small number of early 20th century service industry office buildings, typically located in mid-sized and larger cities. The unit on trade associations will similarly note that these associations generally organized near the close of the 19th century, seldom constructed related resources, and usually provided their memberships with a chartered cooperative service that sometimes emerged as a leader in its respective industry.

The Hardware Mutuals Building is historically significant to both of these themes. At the close of the nineteenth century hardware merchants in Wisconsin were confronting increased competition from the expansion of mail order business. Insurance companies were also beginning to charge stiff premiums for the small inventories of combustible merchandise kept in their stores. Individually, local merchants were unable to deal with these problems, so in 1896 they organized the Wisconsin Retail Hardware Association, applying their collective strength to effect change. (9)

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The power of the Wisconsin association was leveraged by a growing number of state hardware associations across the country. Massachusetts organized the first in 1893, after which nearly every state in the union followed suit. Nationally, these associations were able to coordinate successful boycotts of manufacturers and wholesale jobbers who favored mail order companies with preferential pricing. A few of the larger associations also formed mutual fire insurance companies.

The Minnesota association organized the first hardware mutual in 1899. Initially offered as one of the benefits of membership, policies were soon accepted from members of other state hardware associations. (10) Dissatisfied with Minnesota's \$3,000 policy limit, the Wisconsin association established its own mutual in 1904. Organized as the Hardware Dealers Mutual Fire Insurance Company of Wisconsin, the company had offices in Berlin and \$500,000 of insurance in force by the end of the first year. A year later that coverage increased to \$1,000,000, and in 1908 a 50% dividend was declared. (11) Policies from other state hardware association members were aggressively pursued from the beginning, and by 1909 the company was licensed in thirty states. Soon the company was underwriting the Wisconsin association and paying association directors a commission on policies.

In 1911 hardwareman P. J. Jacobs took charge of the company and a year later moved its offices and five employees to Stevens Point. Concurrently, Wisconsin became the first state to enact workmen's compensation legislation. As other states followed suit, Jacobs helped the association organize a separate casualty company to provide this coverage in Wisconsin. Organized in 1914 as the Wisconsin Hardware Limited Mutual Liability Insurance Company, the company's first officer was Jacobs' son Carl. The new company accepted policies from any non-member retail merchant, offering workman's compensation, general liability, and plate glass coverages. Automobile insurance lines were added in 1916.

Soon after this the relationship between the companies and the association began to change. With the liability company's acceptance of non-member policies, annual meetings could no longer be held jointly with the association. Then in 1919 the fire insurance company joined forces with two Minnesota association mutuals, forming Federal Hardware and Implement Mutuals. (12) This move allowed all three companies to underwrite greater risk throughout the United States and Canada.

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While the volume of policies increased, association membership in Wisconsin declined. Once the second largest association in the nation, the Wisconsin Retail Hardware Association experienced a permanent drop in membership with the depression that followed World War I. (13) Later, when joint headquarters were constructed for the companies, the association kept an office in a corner of the building, its activities underwritten by the companies it founded.

While in Berlin the business office had been located over a store. In Stevens Point the companies occupied the MacDonald Block on the southeast corner of Strongs Avenue and Clark Street. All filing, underwriting, policy writing, claims, accounting, and stenographic work was conducted there until 1920, when the liability company moved its offices to the second floor of the Majestic Theater Building on Main Street (Matthias Mitchell - Main Street Historic District, NRHP 1986). That same year it adopted the name Hardware Mutual Casualty Company and implemented a nationwide expansion plan, licenses being quickly secured in nine states. (14)

To keep pace with the growth of both companies, a new office building was undertaken to function as joint headquarters. Built on the site of the MacDonald Block, the building encompassed 40,000 square feet and could accommodate up to 150 employees. The first floor was occupied by the fire company, and the second floor by the casualty company. The entire third floor was left to future expansion. Built for only 56 cents a cubic foot, it was said at the time to include every modern business convenience, as well as the finest craftsmanship available in America. (15)

Marbled and frescoed in its public areas by artists of national stature, the building was installed with a floor duct electrical system, indirect lighting, and acoustical ceilings, and was equipped with the latest tabulating, policy writing and mail room machinery. All employees were provided with locker rooms, while the facilities for women included showers, baths, and a beauty parlor. A community room in the basement for parties and dances, as well as tennis courts on the grounds, were among the advantages of being an employee of the Hardware Mutual Companies.

Completed in 1922, the new facility was a significant addition to the civic improvements promoted by the Stevens Point Chamber of Commerce. These improvements included the 1921 Hotel Whiting (NRHP 1991) directly across the street. Located just outside the older central business district, these two buildings represented a new and dramatic presence in the local economy. With new and impressive headquarters, Hardware Mutual salesmen and district managers were brought in from across the country and put up at the Whiting, providing Stevens Point commerce with a national horizon.

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The new office building also marked a similar transition within the companies. In 1922 the casualty company opened its first branch office in Milwaukee. This was followed by a Minneapolis office in 1923, and by offices in Chicago, Indianapolis, St. Paul, and Boston by 1926. (16) By that same year the fire company had branch offices in Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Newark, and San Francisco, where the first decentralized policywriting department was established. The importance of this growing network was symbolized on the ceiling outside P. J. Jacobs' office, where a hand-painted map of North America indicated the headquarters with a star radiating out to each branch office, the name of each manager lettered above the location.

The casualty company opened its Boston office the year before Massachusetts became the first state to mandate automobile insurance. Deluged with new policies as other states passed similar legislation, the casualty company continued to decentralize its policy writing department, as did the fire company. Nevertheless, within six years the third floor was completely occupied by the casualty company and more space was needed to better accommodate the 50,000 to 60,000 policies it handled there. By 1930 another 60,000 square feet was added to the building, extending the Neoclassic facade a full city block.

Not long afterwards the expanded building was sold to the more rapidly growing casualty company. (17) For more than a decade the casualty company wrote more auto insurance policies than any other company in Wisconsin, and was soon writing more than \$7,000,000 in total premiums annually. (18) In 1932 it was the fourth largest mutual casualty company in the United States. That same year the fire company was the second largest mutual fire company, with assets over \$5,000,000 in 1934. (19) The volume of mail generated by both companies also represented 41% of local postal revenues, qualifying Stevens Point as a first class post office. (20)

In the decade that followed, the headquarters continued to serve both companies as the lines between the two began to blur. In 1941 the sales and advertising departments, as well as both corporate libraries, were merged. In 1958 the casualty and fire companies expanded their lines of coverage by incorporating the Sentry Life Insurance Company, and in 1963 the trade name Hardware Mutuals was dropped in favor of the unified name of Sentry Insurance. Sentry Insurance continued to utilize the building as headquarters until 1977, when it moved into new headquarters on the outskirts of town.

While today Sentry Insurance has greater name recognition than Hardware Mutuals, the company emerged as an insurance industry leader utilizing the latter name. The Hardware Mutuals Building is associated with this emergence, and with a significant period of growth and development in Stevens Point, which recommend the building's inclusion in the National Register for its local historical significance.

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ARCHITECTURE

Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin states that the Neo-classical Revival style in Wisconsin began in 1895, following the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, and continued through the Great Depression. The exposition's "White City," a formal grouping of classical buildings, exposed millions of Americans to classicism and popularized the ideal it represented. In the following decades an unprecedented number of public, institutional, and commercial buildings were constructed in the Neo-classical style.

While the study unit on the Neo-classical Revival style does not identify character-defining features or subtypes, Marcus Wiffen describes the monumental style as having broad expanses of plain wall surface, level rooflines unbroken by sculpture, Greek order decorative features, and pedimented porticos. Other sources identify dominant full-height columns and symmetrically balanced doors and windows. The study unit on the concurrent Beaux Art style (1895-1920) categorizes it as sharing the formal characteristics of Neo-classical design, but often including paired columns, decorative urns, anthemia, and sculpture.

The Hardware Mutuals Building possesses the distinctive architectural characteristics of the Neo-classical Revival style. Encompassing nearly an entire city block with massive expanses of dressed stone, the principal facade is dominated by a colonnade of engaged three-story Doric columns, between which the fenestration is formally balanced. Stone spandrels between the first and second floors are carved with the seals of various states in which the company did business. Between the second and third floor the spandrels are metal with Neo-classical fretwork. The jambs and lintel of the central entrance form a propylaeum enriched with allegorical carving, acroterium, and scroll cresting. Elsewhere the exterior is extensively enriched by low relief classical, allegorical and other related carvings.

Beaux Arts elements include the two sets of paired columns, the row of stone urns and the elaborate braziers that flank the main entrance. These atypical features compliment comparable characteristics of early 20th century Period design found on the interior. Principal among these are the offices of P. J. Jacobs, which include tile floors, Tudor Revival leaded art glass by G. Owen Bonawit, and the canvas ceiling map painted by Andrew T. Schwartz in the style of those used by fifteenth century navigators. The offices of Carl N. Jacobs and the board of directors rooms on the second floor were similarly finished but are no longer extant.

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Another significant interior feature more in keeping with the Neoclassical Revival style is the central lobby, where the floors, stairs and walls are clad entirely in various marbles from Italy, Belgium, France and the United States. The canvas on the ceilings in this space represent the four seasons over the staircase, while the lobby canvas represents the signs of the zodiac and the deities of Greek mythology. Less typical is the 1937 Art Deco auditorium with its domed ceiling, aluminum cornice, aspen and mahogany inlays, and geometric inlaid flooring.

A number of prominent artisans are associated with these distinctive features of the interior and exterior. The most notable of these is Samuel Yellin of Philadelphia, whose iron work graces the main entrance and lobby. Yellin's studio crafted iron work for the Bok Carillon Tower at Mountain Lake, Florida; the National Cathedral at Washington, D. C.; the Federal Reserve Bank, Equitable Trust Company, and St. Bartholomew's in New York City; as well as a number of memorials at Yale University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Northwestern University. (21)

The bas relief figures around the main entrance are the work of sculptor Ulysses Ricci of New York, whose work is included in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C. (22) The surviving ceiling map was painted by Andrew T. Schwartz, who painted similar features for the Brooklyn Edison Company of Brooklyn, New York; the Essex County Trust Company of East Orange, New Jersey; and Walter Baylies of Boston, Massachusetts. (23) Less is known about the work of Mrs. Telford Paullin, who painted the magnificent lobby ceilings, and G. Owen Bonawit, who leaded the wall of glass in P. J. Jacobs' office.

The selection of these artists and the design of the building was the work of the Chicago architectural firm of Childs & Smith. Organized in 1912, the firm was headed by Frank A. Childs and William Jones Smith. (24) The reputation of the firm lay chiefly in large, public structures such as courthouses, schools, banks, and university buildings which they designed throughout the Midwest. In Wisconsin their commissions included the Jefferson County Courthouse, the First National Bank of Menasha (Upper Main Street Historic District, NRHP 1984), Lawrence Chapel and Sage Hall at Lawrence University in Appleton, Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids, the Employer's Mutual Insurance Company Building in Wausau, and several estates in Neenah, including the William C. Wing House (NRHP 1993).

Establishing their initial reputation with Period Revival estates, Childs & Smith made the natural transition to designing Neoclassical public, institutional, and commercial buildings for the banks, businesses, and charities of their wealthy residential clients. The size of these more imposing buildings and the connections they reinforced eventually led the firm into vast industrial commissions that utilized Art Deco and other restrained contemporary design trends.

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The Hardware Mutuals Building reflects the design evolution of the firm. While constructed in two phases nearly a decade apart, the uniformity of the principal facades conveys an ascetic classicism adapted to an institutional operation of industrial proportions. The typical Neoclassic expanses of plain wall surface are extensively fenestrated to provide the vast interior work areas with natural light. The expected portico is replaced by an integral colonnade confined within the rectangular building mass.

These efficiencies are enriched on the exterior by the restrained use of Beaux Arts features, including paired entrance columns, elaborate braziers, and numerous planters and urns. Inside the predominantly spare work areas and corridors provide a more vivid contrast to the marble walls, wrought iron and painted ceiling of the Neoclassic lobby, and to the paneling, leaded glass, and tiles of the remaining Tudor Period Revival office. These features, along with the Art Deco auditorium and industrial classicism of the exterior, serve in many ways to summarize the work of Childs & Smith.

The Hardware Mutuals Building is architecturally without parallel in Stevens Point. The most comparable structure is the Period Revival Hotel Whiting (NRHP 1991) across the street. Both buildings massively dominate facing city blocks, but architecturally they represent separate design trends. The only other extant Neoclassical Revival structure in Stevens Point is the modest 1921 Citizens' Bank (Matthias Mitchell - Main Street Historic District/1991) which, as a simple storefront bank building, has little in common with the massive grandeur of the Hardware Mutuals Building.

While some of its character-defining office spaces have been removed, the Hardware Mutuals Building retains sufficient interior and exterior integrity to recommend its inclusion in the National Register for its local architectural significance. The architectural significance of this massive structure is an essential complement to its historical significance.

FOOTNOTES

- (1) The period of significance commences with construction to the fifty year threshold, during which time the Hardware Mutual Insurance Companies occupied the building and became a leader in the insurance industry.
- (2) "Now We're Sixty," 6.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Stevens Point Daily Journal, 3/4/1937.

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Section number 8 Page 8 Hardware Mutual Insurance Co. Bldg
Stevens Point, Portage Co., Wisc.

- (5) Architecture, 304.
- (6) McGlachlin, 80.
- (7) A History of the City of Stevens Point, 11.
- (8) Rosholt, 436.
- (9) Rammer, 25.
- (10) Ibid., 12.
- (11) Ibid., 32.
- (12) Ibid., 41.
- (13) Ibid., 33.
- (14) Stevens Point Daily Journal, 7/28/1958.
- (15) "Hardware Mutual's New Home," 12.
- (16) "Now We're Sixty," 6.
- (17) Rammer, 34.
- (18) Ibid., 97.
- (19) "Little Visits to Big Places," 7.
- (20) Ibid, 6.
- (21) Craft Horizons, 40.
- (22) "The Home Office Building," 1.
- (23) Ibid., 16.
- (24) National Architect, March 1947.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Anonymous. A History of the City of Stevens Point. Private, 1958. Stevens Point, Wisconsin.

Adams, Peter J. Hotel Whiting Nomination, 1/20/1990.

_____. William C. Wing House Nomination, 5/23/1992.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

See continuation sheet

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
Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property 3.5 acres

UTM References

A 1/6 2/9/4/8/2/0 4/9/3/2/8/8/0 B / /// ///
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
C / /// /// D / /// ///

____ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and the north 57 feet of Lots 15 and 16; Block 28, Strong Ellis & Others Addition.

____ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries encompass all the land historically associated with the Hardware Mutuals Building and follows the present lot lines.

____ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Peter J. Adams
organization N/A date October 25, 1993
street & number 636 East Doty Avenue telephone 414/725-1945
city or town Neenah state Wisconsin zip code 54956

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Section number Photos Page 1 Hardware Mutuals Building
Stevens Point, Portage Co., WI

Photographic Materials - Identification

Hardware Mutual Insurance Companies Building, Stevens Point, Portage Co., WI.
Photos by Peter J. Adams, October 1993.
Negatives at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

- #1 of 10: View from west.
- #2 of 10: View from south.
- #3 of 10: View from east.
- #4 of 10: View from north.
- #5 of 10: Detail of brazier.
- #6 of 10: Detail of entrance.
- #7 of 10: Detail of lobby.
- #8 of 10: Detail of president's office.
- #9 of 10: Detail of Art Deco auditorium.
- #10 of 10: Detail of corridor.

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Section number Owner Page 1 Hardware Mutuals Building
Stevens Point, Portage, Wisconsin

Sentry Insurance
1800 N. Point Drive
Stevens Point, WI 54481
715/346-6000

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Section number 9 Page 1 Hardware Mutuals Building
Stevens Point, Portage Co., WI

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Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles. M.I.T. Press, 1979. Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Wyatt, Barbara. Cultural Resource Management Plan In Wisconsin. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986. Madison, Wisconsin.

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American Architect. Vol. 69, No. 2369, 4/13/1921; Vol. 70, No. 2374, 8/17/1921.

National Architect. Vol. 3, No. 3; 3/1947.

"The Hardware Mutual Insurance Building, Stevens Point, Wis." Architecture, undated clipping, Sentry Insurance Historical Collection.

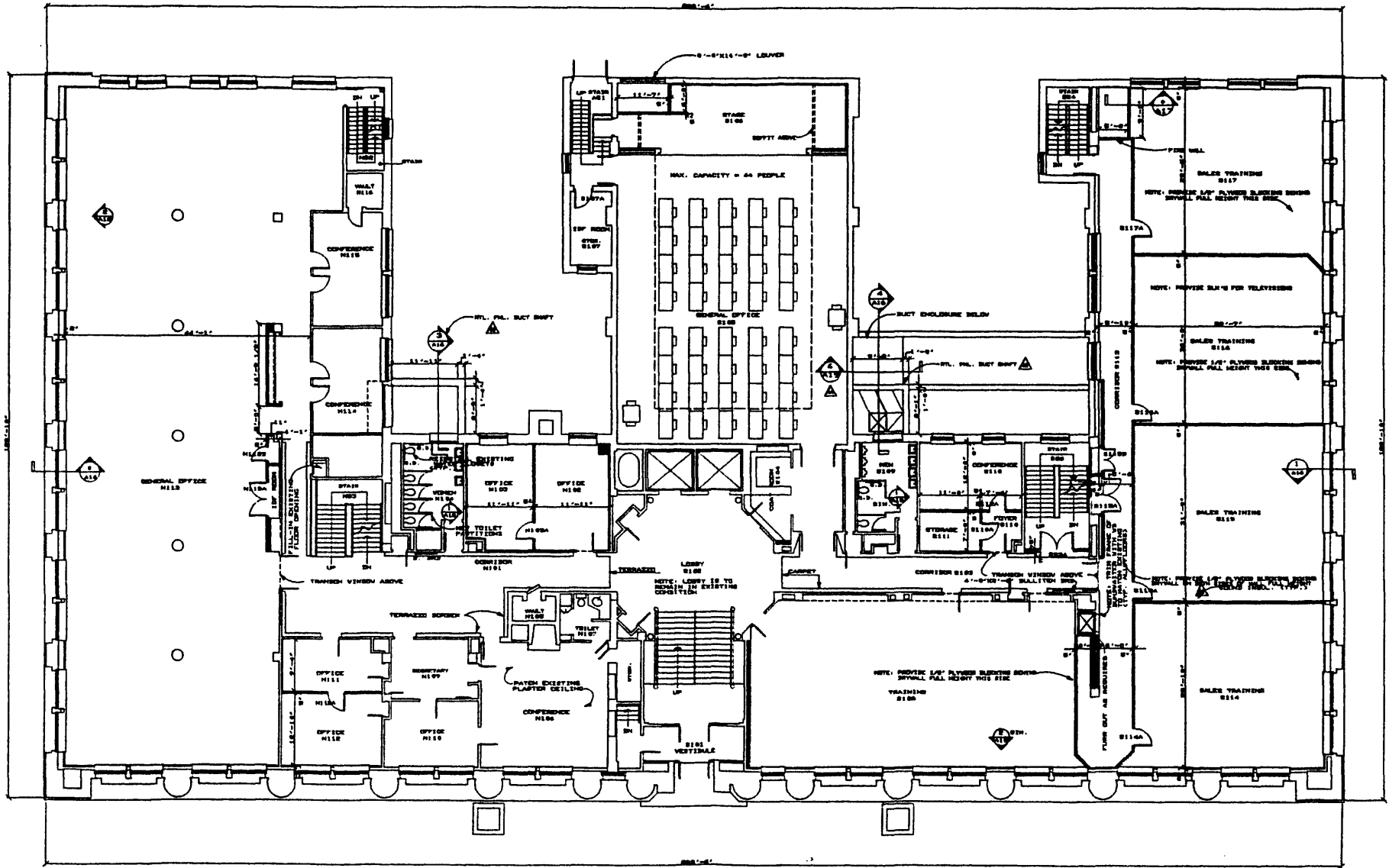
"Hardware Mutual's New Home." Journal of American Insurance, undated clipping, Sentry Insurance Historical Collection.

"The Home Office Building of the Hardware Insurance Companies." Undated manuscript, Sentry Insurance Historical Collection.

"Little Visits to Big Places," The Worzallian. Worzalla Publishing Co., undated. Stevens Point, WI. Stevens Point Public Library Historical Collections.

"Now We're Sixty," Notecaster, undated clipping, Sentry Insurance Historical Collection.

"The Legacy of Samuel Yellin," Craft Horizon, April 1978. Stevens Point Historical Collections.



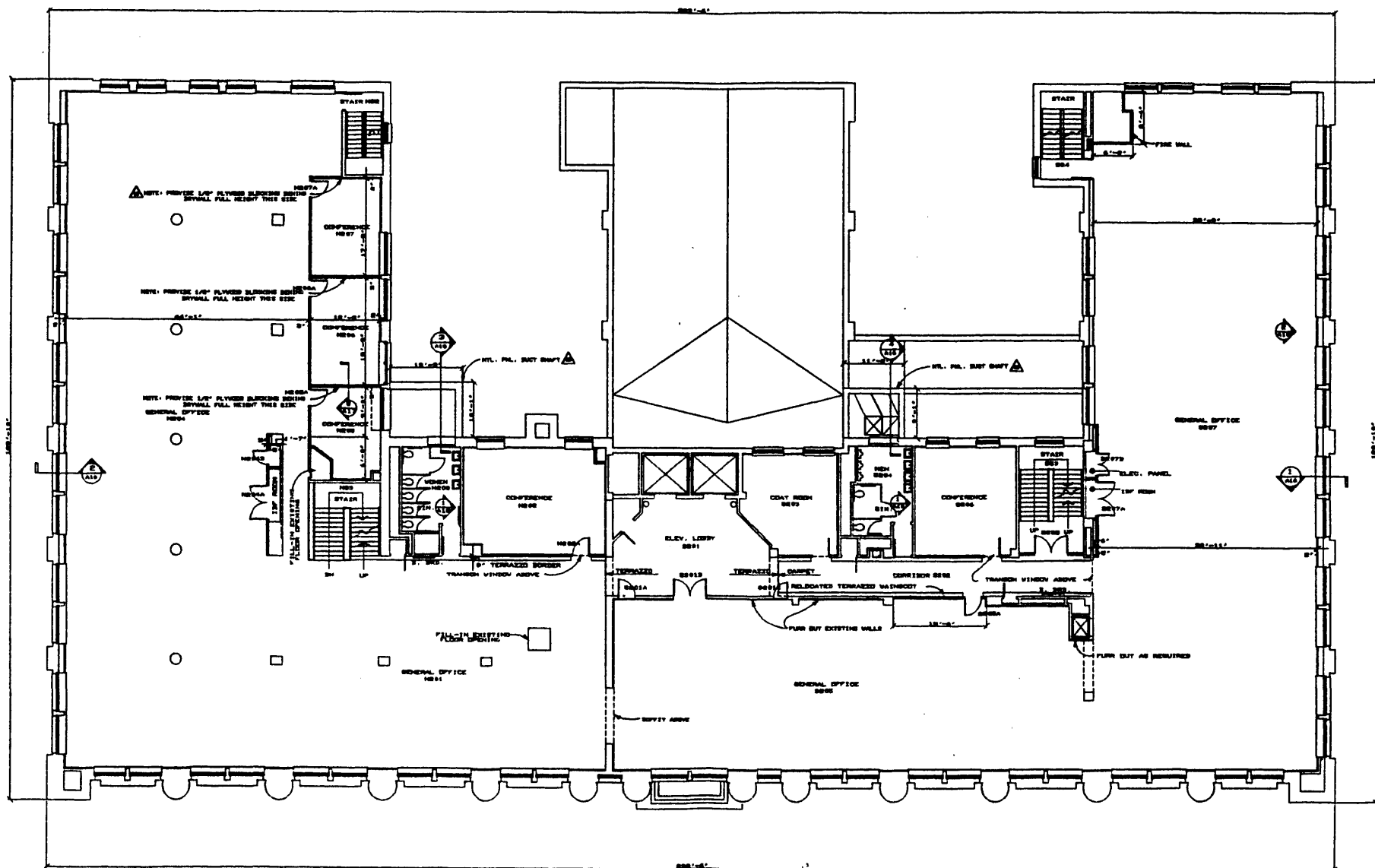
WALL KEY
 [Symbol] - METAL STUDS AND DRYWALL
 [Symbol] - CONCRETE BLOCK
 [Symbol] - BRICK VENEER

FIRST FLOOR PLAN



NOTE: FIELD VERIFY ALL DIMENSIONS

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY
1		ISSUE FOR PERMITS	VA
2		ISSUE FOR PERMITS	VA
3		ISSUE FOR PERMITS	VA
4		ISSUE FOR PERMITS	VA

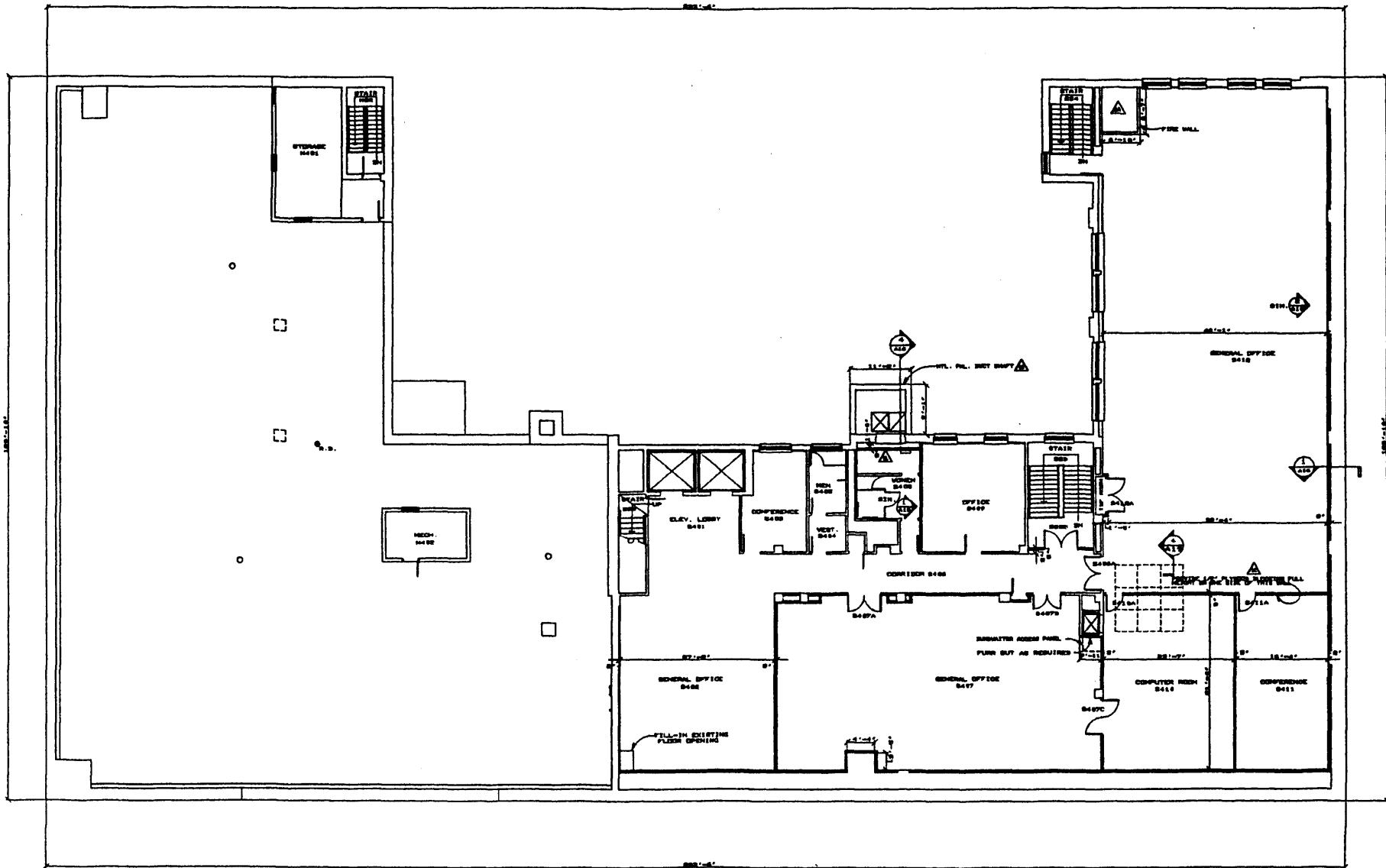


SECOND FLOOR PLAN



- WALL KEY**
- METAL STUDS AND DRYWALL
 - CONCRETE BLOCK
 - BRICK VENEER

NOTE: FIELD VERIFY ALL DIMENSIONS



FOURTH FLOOR PLAN



- WALL KEY**
- METAL STUDS AND DRYWALL
 - CONCRETE BLOCK
 - BRICK VENEER

NOTE: FIELD VERIFY ALL DIMENSIONS

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY	CHECKED
1	09 APR 1993	ISSUE FOR PERMITS	WAA	
2		REVISED PERMITS	WAA	
3		REVISED PERMITS	WAA	
4		REVISED PERMITS	WAA	
5		REVISED PERMITS	WAA	

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DATE
09 APR 1993
PLAN NUMBER
7

A7