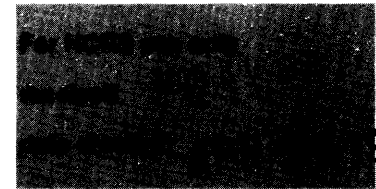


**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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



882

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Wisconsin National Life Insurance Building

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 220 Washington Avenue not for publication

city, town Oshkosh vicinity of _____ congressional district Sixth

state Wisconsin code 55 county Winnebago code 139

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 checked="" 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 <u>N/A</u>	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 type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Wisconsin National Life Insurance Co.; Dean Arganbright, President

street & number 220 Washington Avenue

city, town Oshkosh vicinity of _____ state Wisconsin 54901

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Winnebago County Courthouse

street & number 415 Jackson Avenue

city, town Oshkosh state Wisconsin 54902

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

see continuation sheet

title Wisconsin Inventory of
Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978 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 date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated east of the North commercial area in Oshkosh, the Wisconsin National Life Insurance Building is a free standing structure exhibiting the formal order and symmetry characteristic of the Neo Classical style. The rectangular three story structure is constructed of reinforced concrete with stone veneer facing on three sides and brick covering the rear elevation. The building is in an area of similarly scaled buildings with intermittent open spaces enhancing the designs.

The building is raised on a low stone base and, consequently, the main facade is approached by stairs. Four engaged Corinthian columns, recessed from the face of the building, control the facade and the disposition of fenestration. Three rows of rectangular windows pierce the smooth wall surface between these colossal columns. The main entrance is centrally located and accented by a heavy console supported entablature. The third floor windows are recessed slightly, creating a "gallery" and respecting the trabeated construction: decorated to a greater degree than the other levels, the third story includes a row of stone owls at sill level.

The expanse of smooth stone marking the corners of the building is delineated by pilasters terminating in Corinthian capitals. On the east and west sides this area is pierced by first and second story windows with simple balconies. A succession of fluted pilasters divides the side elevations into five units of windows.

The vertical forces introduced by columns and pilasters culminate in an ornate neo Grec frieze, the focal point of the composition. The glazed terra cotta frieze consists of bold figures in brown and blue on a yellow field. The main motif, two griffins with paws resting on a tablet, alternates with foliated scrolls. Appropriate moldings enrich the cornice which is surmounted by a band of paired antafixae alternating with lion heads.

The classical vocabulary continues to some extent on the interior. Remodelling in 1957 added office space, an additional floor level and a penthouse; however, the main hall remains essentially as designed. Ingress is gained by passing through a small vestibule which is sheathed in marble and features a plaster ceiling and brass fretwork radiator grilles. The plaster ceiling continues into the hall and creates the impression of a coffered ceiling with rosette patterns. The frieze surrounding the room rests on the capitals of thin marble pilasters. The wall surface is covered with low relief swag, urn and medallion patterns.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1925–27¹ **Builder/Architect** Auler & Jensen²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Wisconsin National Life Insurance building, an imposing and elaborate example of the NeoClassical style, is architecturally significant as a representative example of a period of construction. The exuberant ornamentation, combined with fine proportions, distinguishes the Wis. Nat'l Life building from similarly scaled buildings in Oshkosh and places it among the most important NeoClassical buildings in the state. Retention of fine ornamentation on the interior contributes to the quality and significance of the building.

The Wisconsin National Life Insurance building was designed by the local architectural firm of Auler and Jensen, both of whom had worked and studied under William Waters. Auler and Jensen drew on classical precedents for the majority of their large commercial and institutional projects in the city. The Wisconsin National Life building resembles a number of these designs in general massing as well as individual components. The strength of this particular building rests mainly in the embellishment of the cornice and the integration of this to the remainder of the building.

The Wisconsin National Life Insurance Company was created in 1908 by the officers of the Oshkosh Chamber of Commerce and was envisioned as an alternative source of employment during a period of decline in the lumber industries. George M. Paine, president of Paine Lumber Company and the Chamber of Commerce, served as the first president of Wisconsin National Life.

In addition to its role in diversifying the local economy, Wisconsin National Life had the distinction of being the first legal reserve stock life insurance company in Wisconsin. In contrast to most insurance firms which were mutual associations (with the risk shared with policy holders), Wisconsin National Life was a stock company with the risk taken by the company and profits retained, rather than shared as dividends. Although an unusual alternative in the early twentieth century, this type of insurance company has since become more prevalent.

The Wisconsin National Life Insurance Company occupied two offices in Oshkosh prior to construction of the present building in 1927.

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreege of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Oshkosh, Wisconsin

Quadrangle scale 1: 24,000

UMT References

A	116	371701410	41871471910	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Leach's Map Lots 46-10-11 E 1/2 of Lot 12 also E 100' of W 160' & W 60' of N 60' of Lot 9 Block 39

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 Dorothy Steele, Architectural Historian

organization Howard, Needles, Tammen & Bergendoff

date September 1981

street & number 6815 West Capitol Drive

telephone 414-463-2310

city or town Milwaukee

state Wisconsin 53216

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 Henry

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 3/16/82

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 4/29/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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

Wisconsin National Life Insurance Building

Continuation sheet

Item number 6

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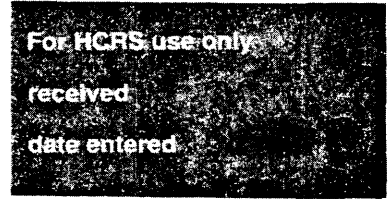


6. REPRESENTATION:

Intensive Survey of Oshkosh
1980
State Historical Society of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Wisconsin National Life **Item number** 7 **Page** .1

Insurance Building

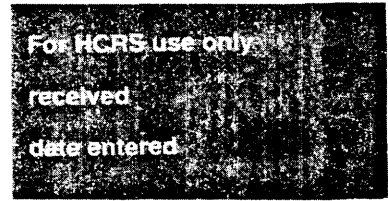
This hall is the center of the interior design with access to surrounding offices achieved through openings on the east and west walls. The original staircase, located at right angles to the hall, retains bronze railings and newel posts topped by urn shapes.

FOOTNOTE

1. Blueprints - 1957 Remodeling, Ben Ganther Construction Co. located in WNL building.

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Continuation sheet WNL Insurance Building

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BLUEPRINTS:

Wisconsin National Life Insurance Building. 1925 Auler & Jensen

Wisconsin National Life Insurance Building Remodeling.
Ben Ganther Construction Company 1957

BOOKS:

- Karstadt, Clinton, editor. Oshkosh: 100 Years A City
Oshkosh: Castle - Pierce Printing Company 1953.
- "A Striking Landmark - The New Home of Wisconsin National Life"
The Wisconsin Magazine September 1928

MAPS:

Sanborn Perris Map of Oshkosh, 1946
State Historical Society of Wisconsin Archives

INTERVIEW:

David Diercks, General Counsel and Manager of Investments, Wisconsin National Life Insurance Company, Telephone interview by Charles Causier, Historian, HNTB. October 12, 1981.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service****National Register of Historic Places
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Wisconsin National Life Insurance Building

Continuation sheet

Item number 11

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11. FORM PREPARED BY:

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Telephone (414) 463-2310
September 1981