

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUL 15 1980
DATE ENTERED AUG 27 1980

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 Pioneer Block

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

401-409 Water Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Eau Claire

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

Third

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE
55

COUNTY

Eau Claire

CODE
035

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple (see continuation sheet)

STREET & NUMBER

401-409 Water Street

CITY, TOWN

Eau Claire

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 54701

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Eau Claire County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

201 West Grand Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Eau Claire

STATE

Wisconsin 54701

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1978

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street

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 type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located in a commercial area in west central Eau Claire, the Pioneer Block occupies one-third of the South side of Water Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues. One-half block to the rear (south), the Chippewa River winds through the city. Buildings in the area are generally less-distinguished examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial design.

The Pioneer Block is a 132x120 foot row of five contiguous nineteenth century shops ornamented in a simplified High Victorian Gothic manner. The two-story brick structure is trimmed with contrasting sandstone (now blackened) sills and voussoirs, and metal storefronts, roofline coping, gables, and finials. Each of the five units is defined by enclosing street-level brick pilasters, carried up through the second story as flat, stone trimmed brick piers, and culminating in flattened brick bartizans with metal finials. Three double-hung windows in each unit are separated by brick piers with deep vertical incisions, and capped by alternating brick and sandstone voussoirs. Perhaps the most striking feature of the design is the elaborate imbricated brick cornice. In the second and fourth buildings (Nos. 403 and 407 Water Street) the horizontal expanse is broken by flat bartizans supporting the end finials and center metal pointed arch/gable. Decorative brickwork in the peak of the arches resembles wood half-timbering. Stores at 401, 405, and 407 Water Street retain the original metal storefront framing around portion of plate glass windows: wide, flat brick pilasters at the sides and thin metal ones in the center support a decorated stamped metal cornice and capitals.

Panels of wood or pebble aggregate now fill portions of the large display windows; parts of the upper sash of the second story windows have received similar treatment. Entrances at Nos. 407 and 409 have been replaced with wood panels and new doors. Not visible from the front, only five of the original ten chimneys near the rear remain. The interior of each of the five businesses has been remodelled several times since original construction. In each case, the street-level shops are divided spatially into display windows, showrooms, and storage space. Remodelling of the first-story shops and second-story apartments of Nos. 403-409 is of 1960s and 1970s character: suspended ceilings; wall panelling, and carpeted floors. The interior of Girolamo's Tap (No. 401) has been decorated with cedar panelling, ceiling beams, and booths.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1882¹

BUILDER/ARCHITECT (?) Orff, Minneapolis²

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Eau Claire's Pioneer Block is architecturally significant as an example of derived High Victorian Gothic design applied to a commercial building. The repetition of alternating polychrome store units with Medieval-type brick bartizans and metal pointed arch/gables is an unusual solution to the problem of generating quarters for five businesses destroyed in one stroke by a large-scale fire.

The incident which led to construction of the block, and may have influenced the homogeneity of the design, was a large fire on Monday, April 24, 1882, touched off by cinders from the steamboat Minnie Hernas docked in the Chippewa River. Press reports of the time estimated that two-thirds of the existing building stock of the city was destroyed in a single day, including the original Pioneer Block of 1878. The new building, designed by a certain architect named Orff, of Minneapolis, was to be rebuilt "on uniform plan" at a cost of \$20,000.³ The architect, otherwise unidentified, would have been one of the brothers Orff, both listed in Minneapolis directories as practicing architects from 1881 through 1912.⁴ George, the elder Orff, was also first a building contractor, then Superintendent of Construction of the Minneapolis Public Schools, and finally a building inspector. The younger brother, Fremont D. Orff, practiced in partnership with George, and with Edgar Joralemon of Minneapolis, and is credited with designing several schools, libraries, and commercial buildings in Minneapolis near the turn of the century.

The individual owners of Kinnear's Drug & Bookstore, the Empire Lumber Company, Hoffman's General Store (and doctor's office), Johnson's Bakery & Confectionary, and Morgan's Drug Store were able to move into their new quarters in 1882 within a few months of the tragic fire. Today, Girolamo's University Tap, the Eau Claire Cycle Shop, Hi Fi Liquidator, and University Musicians Supply have the distinction of being located in a building whose style is unique to Eau Claire. Although the city contains many structures necessarily closely post-dating the 1882 fire, only the Pioneer Block was designed resembling the rare High Victorian Gothic mode.

¹ Assessors Records, City of Eau Claire; Eau Claire Weekly Free Press, June 1, 1882.

² Weekly Free Press, June 1, 1882.

³ Eau Claire Weekly Free Press, May 20, 1882.

⁴ Donald R. Torbert, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1951, p. 434.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Torbert, Donald R., unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1951.
Eau Claire News, April 24, 1882.
Eau Claire Weekly Free Press, May 20, 1882; June 1, 1882.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .0485

Quadrangle Name: Eau Claire West, W

Scale: 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 618010 4961830
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See continuation sheet

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

Frederick C. Uecke, Chairman

ORGANIZATION

Eau Claire Landmarks Commission

STREET & NUMBER

1011 State Street

CITY OR TOWN

Eau Claire

DATE

October, 1979

TELEPHONE

(715) 835-5892

STATE

Wisconsin 54701

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL x

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 Mauer

TITLE Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 7/10/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Ray Luce

DATE

8/27/80

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *Kristin F. O'Connell*

DATE

8/20/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
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Item number 4

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Owners of Properties:

401 Water Street

John Girolamo, Jr. (Girolamo's University Tap)
(715) 832-9194

403 Water Street

Robert J. Ruppert (Eau Claire Cycle Shop)
(715) 832-7055

405-407 Water Street

Kenneth R. Chitwood (Hi Fi Liquidator), Milton S. Siker
(715) 832-7055

409 Water Street

Ronald R. Riesterer (University Musicians Supply)
(715) 835-2235

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Verbal boundary description:

- 401 Water St.: E 26 ft. of lot 1, Block 28, Except Alley, City of Eau Claire.
- 403 Water St.: W 7 ft of lot 1 and E 17-1/2 ft. of lot 2, Block 28, Except Alley, City of Eau Claire.
- 405 Water St.: W 15-1/2 ft. of lot 2 and E 9 ft. of lot 3, Block 28, Except Alley, City of Eau Claire.
- 407 Water St.: W 24 ft. of lot 3 and E 6-1/2 ft. of lot 4, Block 28, Except Alley, City of Eau Claire.
- 409 Water St.: W 26-1/2 ft. of lot 4, Block 28, Except Alley, City of Eau Claire.

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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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Continuation sheet

Item number 11

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Form prepared by:

James P. Schuh, Construction Monitor/Rehab. Specialist
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Eau Claire

January, 1980
(715) 839-4943
Wisconsin 54701

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

March, 1980
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