

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received 7/25/84

date entered SEP 6 1984

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

1. Name

historic Astor On The Lake (1920-1941)

and/or common Hotel Astor (1941-Present)

2. Location

street & number 924 East Juneau Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Milwaukee _____ vicinity of

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 type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Bach and Hiller Management, Inc.

street & number 924 E. Juneau Avenue

city, town Milwaukee _____ vicinity of state Wisconsin 53202

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Milwaukee County Court, Register of Deeds

street & number 901 N. Ninth Street

city, town Milwaukee _____ vicinity of state Wisconsin 53233

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Wisconsin Inventory
title of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes no

date June, 1979 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Historic Preservation Division

city, town Madison _____ 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

The Astor Hotel is a large eight-story brick and limestone structure shaped like the letter "E". The three pavilions which form the "E" project southward, toward the front of the building. The Astor Hotel occupies nearly a whole city block, on an 89,000 square foot lot. Total interior space amounts to 330,000 square feet. As of 1981 there were 145 mixed studio one, two or three bedroom apartments, plus 90 single rooms for transient guests.¹ On the ground floor there is a restaurant, as well as meeting rooms, leased commercial offices and shops.

The Astor is built of reinforced concrete and steel with brick and tile curtain walls and French classical details. The original section of the east was constructed between 1918 and 1920 and was "U"-shaped in plan.² The interior of the "U" was filled by a one-story lobby pavilion. A metal canopy was added in 1941, projecting over the sidewalk from an octagonal domed and balustraded pavilion, thus forming a majestic entrance to the lobby.³

In 1925 a new section was added to the west.⁴ The addition is "L"-shaped and has a one-story pavilion in the corner of the "L". A parking garage is also situated on the west. The first two stories of the entire block are faced with a smooth limestone veneer. The remaining stories are constructed of plain brick. The top story of the main facades are demarcated by a heavy belt course and contain round arched windows and balustrades with inset stone panel trim. Windows on the first floor are tall and arched, while some of the windows on the second level are decorated with small stone balconets.

Stained glass in a floral motif lights the dome of the entrance pavilion. Above the reception desk a skylight composed of stained glass in a floral motif exists. The lobby was remodeled in 1982 with new wallpaper, new curtains, new crystal chandeliers and a new marble floor added in front of the reception desk. The Historic Lower East Side Neighborhood Association granted the Astor an award for the sensitively done and tastefully designed lobby work.⁵

The rooms are plain and well made. Plaster and lath walls divide the rooms which are of simple design with well crafted built-ins; most rooms and apartments have been little altered since constructed. Elevators were changed in 1926 and remodeled in 1959.⁶ The Venetian Room is now the Nantucket Shore Restaurant. Fire exits and stairways were brought into conformity with municipal codes in 1945.⁷

The Astor is a strong contributor to the elegant neighborhood of which it is a part. The neighborhood is largely residential and contains modern high rise apartments and condominiums. A number of historic structures and graceful religious edifices also exist in the immediate vicinity. The Astor houses both permanent guests as well as transients, as it has since 1920.

¹ Howard Friederich and Co. "An Appraisal of Hotel Astor," Aug. 10, 1971, Records of the Astor Hotel.

² Application for Construction Permit No. 3630, April 22, 1918, Building Inspection and Safety Engineering Premises Records 1890-Present, Office of Building Permits, City of Milwaukee.

³ Application for Permit to Construct Canopy No. 13891, June 5, 1941, *ibid.*

⁴ Application for Permit for Addition 14044, June 9, 1925, *ibid.*

⁵ Hotel Astor records.

⁶ Application for Construction of Elevators No. 1283, Sept. 9, 1920, Building Inspectors Records; Application to Remodel Elevator Jan. 12, 1926, *ibid.*; Permit to Erect and Remodel Elevators No. 3822, March 27, 1959, *ibid.*

⁷ Leon M. Gurde to Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, March 2, 1945, *ibid.*

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 1918-1920¹; 1925 **Builder/Architect** Martin Tullgren & Sons & Herbert W. Tullgren²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Astor Hotel is of local architectural significance. It is a fine example of Renaissance Neo Classic architecture in a luxury residential hotel. It represents the work of regionally important architect, Herbert W. Tullgren. The Astor's structural integrity is enhanced by its nearly unaltered state. The building is clean lined in appearance. It is stately and conservative, rather than daring or striking.

The Astor's design is straightforward, with polished light gray limestone along the first two stories, contrasting rusticated red brick above that, and capped by a limestone belt along the top story. Openings on the ground floor are arched, cornices are finely detailed, and the moldings are crisply drawn. The impressive skylights in the lobby and entrance pavilion were and are opulent enough to convince visitors and residents of the overall elegance which they could expect at the Astor.

The Astor Hotel was built between 1918 and 1920. The regionally important architectural firm of Martin Tullgren and Sons designed the Astor for Walter Schroeder, a Milwaukee hotel tycoon. Herbert W. Tullgren was the principal architect for the Astor Hotel project.³ Regarded as one of "Milwaukee's finest architects," Herbert Tullgren designed over fifty apartment buildings throughout the state, numerous commercial buildings, and several high schools. By the time he died, in 1944, Tullgren had become "one of the most widely known architects in Wisconsin."⁴ The Astor Hotel was noted by the Milwaukee Journal's editor as being one of Tullgren's "largest and finest" commissions.⁵

Walter Schroeder inherited a successful insurance, mortgage loan, and bond business. In 1912 Schroeder had the firm Holabird and Roche of Chicago design the Wisconsin Hotel, at 720 N. Third, considered the City's best. Schroeder developed the Hotel Astor as part of his chain of eight fine hotels. Eventually, Schroeder operated hotels in Madison (The Lorraine), Wausau (The Wausau), Green Bay (The Northland), and Duluth (The Duluth), as well as in other cities.⁶ The Schroeder Hotel (1929) at 509 W. Wisconsin Avenue which became the flagship of the chain, was designed by Holabird and Roche. The Wisconsin and Schroeder Hotels are of different architectural styles than the Astor.

¹ Application for Construction Permit No. 3630, April 22, 1918, Office of Building Permits, Municipal Building, City of Milwaukee, Building Inspection and Safety Engineering, Premises Records 1890-Present.

² Ibid., "H. W. Tullgren, Architect, Dies," Milwaukee Journal, Feb. 23, 1944.

³ Op. Cit.

⁴ Op. Cit.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Howard Friederich and Co., "An Appraisal of Hotel Astor," Aug. 10, 1981, p. 1; Astor Hotel Records.

9. Major Bibliographical References

1) Building Inspection and Safety Engineering Premises Records 1890-Present; Office of Building Permits, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; 2) "Oscar Brachman, Realtor, Dies," Milwaukee Journal, Sept. 11, 1939; 3) "H.W. Tullgren, Architect, Dies," Milwaukee Journal, Feb. 23, 1944; 4) Building Plans, City of Milwaukee, Municipal Building, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; (SEE CONTINUATION SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL REFERENCES)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 89,000 sq. ft.

Quadrangle name Milwaukee SW/4 15' quad.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	2	6	6	7	0	4	7	6	6	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 All blocks 25-26-27 and 28 except the south 30 feet of the north 90 feet of the west 120 feet of block 27 in the Partition of the E. 1/2 of the S.W. 1/4 of Section 21, Town 7 North, Range 22 East in the City of Milwaukee.

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 Richard H. Zeitlin, Ph.D.

organization Historical Resources, Inc. date

street & number 4325 Critchell Terrace telephone (608) 233-6531

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53711

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 *[Signature]*

title Director of Historic Preservation

date July 18, 1984

For NPS use only

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

[Signature]
Keeper of the National Register

date 9/2/84

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

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Continuation sheet Astor on the Lake Item number 8 Page 1

The Astor Hotel began leasing store fronts in 1929. Early tenants included Rolls Royce, Lincoln, and Dusenburg automobiles, the Wisconsin Telephone Company, and an Oriental rug dealer -- all of which underscore the quality of the clientele and the neighborhood.⁹ The Great Depression brought hardship for all, including the Astor. Ford, Studebaker and Dodge replaced the prestige autos displayed in the 1920's. A fire in 1935 killed two guests, opening the way for bankruptcy and safety code related legal problems.¹⁰ The war years prevented structural improvements because of the need to conserve critical resources.¹¹ After 1945, the building was brought up to code and returned to its position of quiet charm and prestige.

The Astor Hotel, to conclude, is one of the two Renaissance Neo Classic hotels extant in Milwaukee. It is the larger, the earliest, and the better of the two structures. The Astor represents the work of a recognized architectural master. It is largely unaltered. The Astor contributes greatly to the urbane and fashionable Lower East Side Neighborhood environment.

⁹ Leon M. Gurde, Building Inspector, Opinion, Aug. 31, 1929, Building Inspectors Records.

¹⁰ Leon Gurde to Astor Hotel, Mar. 26, 1935, ibid; Carl Penner, CPA to Leon Gurde, Sept. 23, 1935, ibid.

¹¹ Leon Gurde to Industrial Commission of Wisconsin, Mar. 2, 1945, ibid.

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Continuation sheet Astor on the Lake Item number 8 Page 2

Tullgren designed two other luxury hotels in Milwaukee. The Shorecrest (1924-1929) at 1962 N. Prospect Avenue and the Knickerbocker (1929-1930) at 1022 E. Juneau are both located in the same fashionable Lower East Side "Gold Coast" Neighborhood. All of the Tullgren hotels in Milwaukee housed transient guests and apartment dwelling residents. The Shorecrest is an Art Deco building of about one-quarter the size of the Astor. The Knickerbocker is in large part a copy of the Astor, being of the same architectural style, although significantly smaller. All of the Tullgren hotels are distinctive and of high quality.

The Knickerbocker is slightly less graceful than the Astor. In addition to being smaller, the color of its rusticated brick work does not contrast as nicely with the limestone belts as does the Astor's. The Knickerbocker's facade is also more detailed, creating a feeling of business. Partly because of its size, the Astor is able to capture a better sense of horizontality. The contrasting belt course extending over the Astor's three sections is more suggestive of solidity. The Knickerbocker, however, is still a fine building and is, nearly, a replica of the Astor.

Between 1918 and 1939, nine substantial and luxurious hotels were built in Milwaukee. The between-the-wars hotels included The Astor, The Abbot Crest (1226 West Wisconsin Avenue), The Antlers (614 North Second Street), The Knickerbocker (1022 East Juneau Avenue), The Medford (North Third Street and West Michigan Avenue), The Miller (723 North Third Street), The Shorecrest (1962 North Prospect Avenue), The Schroeder (509 West Wisconsin Avenue) and The Hotel Wisconsin (720 North Third Street).⁷ Four of these structures, Abbot Crest, Antlers, Medford, and Miller, are no longer extant. Of the remaining five, only the Astor and the Knickerbocker are done in the Renaissance Neo Classic style.

Situated in Milwaukee's "Gold Coast" the Astor catered to an elite clientele. Over the years the Astor has been home for many of the city's business and social leaders. In 1830, for instance, the Astor was the home of eight corporate presidents, two vice presidents, and a circuit court judge. Walter Schroeder lived there in the years prior to his death. More recently, opera stars and stage personalities have based themselves at the Astor when in Milwaukee.⁸

⁷ Milwaukee City Directory, 1914-1939 (Milwaukee, 1914-1939).

⁸ The Milwaukee Social Register and Directory, 1932-1935 (Milwaukee, 1932-1935), passim;
Milwaukee City Directory, 1922-1932 (Milwaukee, 1922-1932), passim; Astor Hotel Records.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Astor on the Lake

Item number 9

Page 1

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- 5) Howard Friederich and Co., "An Appraisal of Hotel Astor," Aug. 10, 1971, Astor Hotel Records; 6) City Directory, Milwaukee, 1911-1939 (Milwaukee, 1911-1939); 7) Milwaukee Social Register and Directory, 1932-1935 (Milwaukee, 1932-1935); 8) Landscape Research, Built in Milwaukee (Milwaukee, 1981).