

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**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 Farmers' and Merchants' Union Bank

AND/OR COMMON

Farmer's and Merchants' Union Bank

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER Northwest corner James Street and Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Columbus

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

\_\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

COUNTY

Columbia

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- \_\_\_DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- \_\_\_STRUCTURE
- \_\_\_SITE
- \_\_\_OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- \_\_\_PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- \_\_\_BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- \_\_\_IN PROCESS
- \_\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- \_\_\_UNOCCUPIED
- \_\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- \_\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED
- \_\_\_NO

**PRESENT USE**

- \_\_\_AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- \_\_\_EDUCATIONAL
- \_\_\_ENTERTAINMENT
- \_\_\_GOVERNMENT
- \_\_\_INDUSTRIAL
- \_\_\_MILITARY
- \_\_\_MUSEUM
- \_\_\_PARK
- \_\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- \_\_\_RELIGIOUS
- \_\_\_SCIENTIFIC
- \_\_\_TRANSPORTATION
- \_\_\_OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

T. B. Thomas, President, Farmers' and Merchants' Union Bank  
(414)623-4000

STREET & NUMBER

159 West James Street

CITY, TOWN

Columbus

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 53925

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Columbia County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Portage

STATE

Wisconsin

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Wisconsin Historic Sites and Buildings Survey

DATE

1969-72

\_\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_COUNTY \_\_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin

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# 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

True to the Sullivan dictum that "form follows function," this small, compact bank, for all its elaborate and beautiful ornamentation, has the look of soundness and solidity and imparts the feeling of permanence and safety befitting a bank. Morrison describes it thus:

"The exterior is made of tapestry brick, ranging widely in color through browns and golden yellows. The general form...is severely rectilinear, with broad expanses of plain wall surface against which the decorative enrichment of the portal and range of side windows stands out the more vividly. The small facade has only two openings below: the entrance door and a large window opening on the officers' platform within. Resting across these is a high decorative lintel, or panel, with the name of the bank lettered on a polished slab of verde antique marble framed by lavish terra cotta ornament in a mottled green color. The arched opening above has a lunette with colored glass, and a recessed archivolt in four faces...the heraldic lions perched on Sullivanesque fasces...seem somewhat out of place." (One might observe that rather than looking out of place they appear disproportionately small but otherwise quite in keeping with the general ornament of the facade, each sitting upright and bearing a shield on which are carved the initials F and M.) The side wall, slightly battered in its lower half, has a massive solidity akin to that of the Egyptian style, but with the lyric ornament of the row of arched windows, nothing of its ponderous character.

The interior is a long narrow room, affording space for tellers' cages only on once side, but the arrangement of these is essentially the same as in the (Sullivan) bank at Sidney (Ohio).<sup>1</sup> This is not to say that the interior has any lack of spaciousness. One does not feel crowded inside the building, and one is impressed by the lasting beauty of the stained glass in the front and rear lunettes and in the five-window arcade along the side. All of this glass is original, fully intact, and as strikingly beautiful now as when it was installed in 1919, the year in which the bank was built.

To the original one-story annex at the rear of the building has been added an extension of three more bays, all done with painstaking care to carry out the original design of the building. Even the terra cotta ornamentation has been made from impressions taken from the original work in other parts of the building and was matched with the original in color so that it not only closely simulates the original mottled green now but will also continue to match it as aging progresses. The addition to the annex is the only major alteration, and the original main body of the bank, inside and out, remains essentially unchanged. The building has been maintained with much pride and care.

<sup>1</sup>Morrison, Hugh. Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture, W. W. Norton, N. Y., 1935, pp. 223-224.

<sup>2</sup>National Register Form. Donald Anderson, State Historical Society, Wisconsin.

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# 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 1919

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Louis Sullivan

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Columbus bank is the last of the series of eight banks that Sullivan designed throughout the midwest and the next to last commission he finished before his death in 1924. The bank is one of two Sullivan buildings in Wisconsin, the other being one of the few residences he designed; the Mrs. Josephine Crane Bradley residence of 1909 in Madison. Although not as rich in detail as Owatonna and Sidney, Ohio, the Farmers' and Merchants' Union Bank is entirely by his own hand and executed at Sullivan's insistence by Kristian Schneider. He personally supervised its design and construction living in Madison while it was being built.

Hugh Morrison quoting Thomas Tallmadge discusses these last bank commissions scattered in small midwestern towns: "These buildings stand out like jewels on the shoddy main streets of the prairie towns. Tallmadge says of Sullivan's banks: 'Their color, brilliance and gaiety entirely put in the shade the thin, awkward and wan examples of the country builder, and to the same degree the pallid and pudgy Roman frontispieces of the city architect... The ornament, by its intricacy and vitality, compels the interest of the commoner who would, as we, pass by a mile of eggs and darts without sensing their existence... These banks are a book of wonders to a people who all of their lives have been contemptuous of or oblivious to architecture.'"<sup>1</sup>

The ornament at Columbus is particularly fine and is fully documented in Sullivan's own A System of Architectural Ornament, Eakins Press, 1924 reprinted in 1967. It was these publications that came at the end of Sullivan's life that probably gave him great pleasure and a feeling of accomplishment that had been absent from his life for many years. The drawings and records of his architectural ornament are now prized possessions in our museums and libraries.

<sup>1</sup>Morrison, Hugh. Louis Sullivan, Prophet of Modern Architecture. W. W. Norton, N. Y., 1935, pp. 206-207.

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# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 6	3 3 7 3 5 0	4 8 0 0 1 5 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Northeast 16½ feet of northwest 54 feet of lot 8, southwest 37½ feet of lot 9. Northeast 22 1/2 feet of northwest 26.4 feet of lot 9. Northwest 26.4 feet of lot 10. Block 5, Luddington's town plat.

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

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service

DATE

July 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  X

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Farmers' and Merchants' Union Bank, Columbus, Wisc.

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

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