



1448

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 18A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Property Name

historic name Max Baumeister Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 27 W. Main

not for publication

city or town Walla Walla

vicinity

state Washington

code WA

county Walla Walla

code 071

zip code 99363

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Allyson Brooks
Signature of certifying official

10/23/00
Date

Allyson Brooks, PhD. State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Edson H. Beal

11/22/00

Joe
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

USSDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

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5. 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>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a
multiple property listing.)

n/a

No. of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register:

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

financial institution

specialty store

medical office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late Victorian/Italianate

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation STONE, BRICK

walls Metal (tin)

Iron (columns)

roof Asphalt

other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture
Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

1889
1889-1917

Significant Dates

1889
1889

Cultural Affiliation

n/a

Significant Person

n/a

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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The nominated property is a two-story masonry-bearing structure, located in the downtown core of Walla Walla, the agricultural center of southeastern Washington State. Built in 1889, the year Washington State was accepted into the Union, the Baumeister Building celebrates this historical moment, bearing the year prominently in its parapet. The building is a fine example of Late Victorian commercial architecture with Italianate detailing and decorative pressed tin cladding common in late nineteenth and early twentieth commercial architecture.

The Baumeister building's adjoining walls consist of three brick wythes, while the Main Street façade is framed with wood studs and clad in decorative pressed tin. The two stories are mutually distinctive. The first-story is framed by decorative cast iron pilaster bearing the manufacturer's name, "Mesker Bros. Front Builders, St. Louis MO." These elements feature simulated capitals with classical palmettes and egg and dart motifs. Recently, missing storefronts were recreated with compatible materials and designs that approximate the original dimensions of the bulkheads, display windows and transoms. All replacement materials are wood and glass, and although no original storefront fabric remained, the new elements are harmonious and appropriate.

The second story has a profusion of applied ornament and Italianate details. The principal features of this story are two, three-part oriel windows with stepped pyramidal roofs. Additional ornamentation is in the form of simple roundels, bullseyes, and scrolls or swags. The flat parapet consists of metal moldings and a dentil course, visually supported by decorated Italianate brackets. The suggestion of pilasters (at each side and framing the double sash windows) terminate in Corinthian capitals. All second story windows are slender one-over-one, double-hung sash. The building name, "Max Baumeister," is affixed in the parapet.

Upstairs offices are accessible via a stairway on the West side of the interior, opening on to Main Street. The second story has a "T"-shaped hallway with the longer section running North-South, and a shorter base running West. Immediately at the top of the stairs is a door opening into an office space. At the northern end of the long hallway there are two large rooms facing Main Street with glass windows. Along the rest of the long North-South hallway, office space opens up on either side. The roof of the

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Baumeister Building is virtually flat, sloping gently North to South and sheathed with rolled asphalt.

The building has undergone several periods of change. The nominated property is actually a replacement of an earlier wooden building that burned in the downtown fire of 1887. From its beginning and beyond its reconstruction in 1889, the building housed a stream of doctors, lawyers, real estate agents, and merchants that occupied its upper and lower floors. One of the earliest occupants of the upstairs was Rosenfeld Smith Co. Wholesalers and Importers of Cigars. Others included the U.S. Grain Inspector, and later, R. L. Carroll, private Investigator, and Dr. Wenham, a physician. Next door on the East side was a bakery, opened in 1878, and one more store down was Green & Jackson, until 1999 the oldest operating drug store in the state. The basement has generally been used as storage space for the retail businesses above. Although it served as a firing range during the time a sporting goods store (Jackson's) occupied the first floor. The now flat parapet once featured decorative triangular pediments. Although the building's dimensions have not changed, some of its interior and exterior fabric has been adapted for all of these tenants.

The most significant of these changes took place when Soper's Leather Goods occupied the building. The appended 1961 photographs show the building before and after extensive remodeling. In order to create a barn effect in keeping with the Western theme of the store, boxes were built around the decorative cast columns of the main floor interior, and the entire building was painted red and white. The transoms were boarded over and a wooden store sign attached. The barn-style renovations and the deep red paint camouflaged much of the building's intricate ornamentation.

The interior of the building also changed significantly during this time. Whereas the Baumeister Building originally had had two separate retail spaces on the ground floor, the 1961 remodeling removed the dividing wall to accommodate Soper's in one large room. The upstairs blinds were closed, the stairway was closed off, and the second story remained unused until the recent rehabilitation. Soper's also removed and roofed over the five skylights in the building (four upstairs, and one on the back section of the ground floor).

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Recent rehabilitation has returned the building to its Italianate character and recreated missing elements, again making it one of the best examples of Walla Walla's early commercial architecture. The five skylights have all been reopened and replaced and the center dividing wall on the main floor has returned the two separate retail spaces. The upstairs was reopened and restored after decades of virtually nonexistent maintenance (the Baumeister and Wenham offices had not even been cleared out before the upstairs had been sealed). The hardwood floor, which had been replaced in 1960, was sanded and refinished. The building owner and renovators researched ceiling styles common in Walla Walla around 1889, and the 1960s ceiling was replaced with a decorative period tin ceiling. Period-style ceiling fans and lighting were also installed, although to meet codes, hidden fluorescent lighting was added.

Building codes required other adjustments. Since the building's only bathroom was located in the basement, handicap bathrooms were installed on each side of the main floor. The storefront was reinforced with steel I-beams to mitigate the sheer factor (to support the load of the second story and to withstand high velocity winds). The long transom-like windows above the three street-level entries (two doors and the stairway to the upstairs) have been removed since city codes determine such large expanses of glass unsafe. This is the most significant discrepancy between the Baumeister Building of today and the original appearance of 1889.

The outside windows were fitted with new glass and the bricks in the exterior were repointed (the old mortar was ground out and replaced with compatible mortar). The upstairs offices have five windows framing the door and one window on the door (the stretch glass in these windows has been in place since 1889). The window and door casings and all other woodwork on the upper level is also original. The interior brick walls were fired with 2"x6"s, insulated, and finished with sheetrock. The storefront now appears almost as it did in an artist's sketch of the building in its early years (available through Penrose Library, Whitman College). The two street-level entrances to the ground floor are restored (Soper's had created a single center doorway). The boxes around the cast posts on the main floor were removed to reveal original detail. Some of the decorative capitals had deteriorated throughout the years, but they were salvaged. Only one (top of the center post) was missing at the time of rehabilitation,

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and may be recast later. Much of the building's visual interest is derived from its ornamental details, which can be disguised or complemented depending on the chosen paint scheme. The paint colors used in the rehabilitation were selected by researching typical color pigments and tones used in the late 1880s. Also, the color palette and placement of colors were chosen to emphasize the texture and intricacy of the stamped metal elements. Colors include shades of gray beige, drab green, burgundy, bronze, and gold. The bullets, rosettes, cornices, dentils, scrolls, shields, and crown molds, along with the stamped fluted metal columns were shaded with the varied colors to add richness to the building. The basic body color acted as a canvas for the rest of the colors to follow. The double-hung window sash and casements were shadowed with deep burgundy and drab green to compliment and finish the look.

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Nominated under criterion A and C, the Max Baumeister Building belongs to a small collection of downtown buildings associated with the city's first substantial settlement and commercial development, and exhibits important stylistic values and period embellishments that have all but vanished from the business district. Only a small number of turn-of-the-nineteenth century commercial buildings survive in downtown Walla Walla, and the Baumeister Building and the Dacres Hotel are further distinguished as the only buildings in Walla Walla with decorative metal cladding. The nominated property is strong visual testament to the city's regional stature as a financial and agricultural center in the late 1900s, and to its once-extensive commercial and municipal infrastructure that has dwindled to only a few city blocks.

Historical Development

Nestled at the base of the Blue Mountains in the fertile wheat-growing region of southeastern Washington, the Walla Walla area was home to several semi-nomadic tribes, including the Walla Walla, Nez Perce, Cayuse, and Umatilla peoples who inhabited the area. Named Walla Walla for its presence of many springs, the valley was attractive for winter occupation because of its mild climate, and was considered an oasis in a semi-arid region.

The Walla Walla Valley was one of the first areas between the Rocky Mountains and the Cascade Range to be permanently settled by Euroamericans. Lewis and Clark traveled through the country in 1805 and 1806. Fur traders carved out early settlements, trading posts, and forts between 1800 and 1820. Missionaries Marcus and Narcissa Whitman settled nearby in 1836, and their Mission soon became an important station for travelers on the Oregon Trail. The United States Army established a fort near the Mission after the deaths of the Whitmans, and a few pioneers elected to remain in the Valley to farm, supplying the increasing numbers of people traveling west. These farms encouraged a town to grow up along the banks of Mill Creek where an Indian trail crossed. The lure of the gold fields in Idaho and Montana in the early 1860s supplied great opportunities for residents of the Valley. Walla Walla quickly became a launching place and supply center for prospectors. Merchants, farmers, and ranchers prospered and Walla Walla eventually grew into a grain, timber, and shipping center, and by the 1870s had become the largest city in the Washington Territory.

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By the 1870s, Walla Walla had evolved beyond its first status as Fort Walla Walla into an extensive commercial center. This prosperity spawned a sophisticated commercial building stock befitting the city's regional prominence. Extending from Main and First streets East to 9th Avenue, West to Palouse, South to Poplar, and North to Rose, the area encompassed a considerable area of twenty-seven city blocks. The center of the commercial district focused along Main Street.

Amidst the vulnerable, wooden false-front buildings of the frontier, more permanent brick buildings, many with Italianate and classical detailing, began to appear. A fine example of these brick buildings is the Reynolds-Day Building on Main Street. Bricks utilized in this and other brick structures were supplied by the nearby D.S. Baker's brickyard. Most of these commercial buildings, less than a dozen of which remain, were finished in smooth stucco or painted brick. During the era of urban renewal, block after block was demolished, and the city's re-emerging historic core survives today as approximately three continuous blocks along Main Street.

Building History

Constructed during this key period of Walla Walla's commercial growth, the Baumeister Building is significant as one of the finest remaining commercial buildings that proclaimed the city's economic and agricultural importance to the region. It remains one of only two downtown buildings with a decorative pressed metal façade once common to late Victorian commercial architecture. Even some materials used in the structure have strong historical origins. The 180,000 bricks used in 1889 were from the first run of bricks manufactured at the Washington State Penitentiary a few miles away.

The first building built by the Baumeister brothers in 1869 on the nominated site had a brick clad front, and housed a newspaper, a hardware store, and their own Oriental Bath and Barber Shop. The Baumeister's business prospered with the steady influx of dusty travelers and tired prospectors wanting the luxury of a hot bath, and with locals who needed a shave and haircut.

After disastrous fires in the downtown area in 1875 and 1887, few wood buildings remained. G.W. Babcock, a well-known architect throughout the Northwest, designed

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many of the new buildings that went up after the fire of 1887, and was a favored designer during this prosperous era. One of the buildings destroyed in the fire was the original Baumeister Building. While the architect of the rebuilt Baumeister Building of 1889 is not known, Babcock did design several prominent and architecturally related buildings in the commercial district, including the Dusenberry-Stencel Building immediately east of the Baumeister (no longer extant), and the Jones Building one block away. The Baumeister differs from Babcock's designs in its use of a pressed metal façade. Though few of his works have survived, Babcock's designs clearly had a profound impact on the commercial architecture in Walla Walla.

The Baumeister Brothers did not stay long in the replacement building bearing their name. In 1903, one brother, Max, built a new building in the center of downtown over Mill Creek at First and Main (the newly rehabilitated Die Brucke Building). However, the Baumeister Building, as noted in section seven, had a steady and prominent group of tenants and businesses, which continues today.

Present Context

Located about one block from the present center of downtown, the Baumeister building of today is surrounded by newer commercial buildings and by historic buildings that have not been well maintained and which lack much integrity. To the West, the section of Walla Walla visible in the attached photocopied 1908 picture of a patriotic parade has all been torn down. (In this picture, the Baumeister is the second building in from the left, somewhat overshadowed by the taller building on the corner of Third and Main. See attached.) An entire block to the West has been torn down and is now the site of various banks and a bus stop. The next block down (to the West) still retains some late Victorian structures, but these lack the integrity of the Baumeister and Dacres Hotel.

To the North of the Baumeister, the older buildings that remain do not retain their original style, and some businesses have applied new stucco fronts over original materials. To the East, the Baker Boyer Bank built a parking garage and new addition onto the imposing 19th century structure on the corner of Second and Main. Further

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East is the heart of downtown, but even here, where several historic buildings remain, most do not retain good integrity and have not been rehabilitated like the Baumeister Building. Further East, (three blocks past the Baumeister) historic buildings are in various states of disrepair and many have been torn down and replaced by one-story commercial structures. To the South, little remains of the commercial district except for two or three isolated buildings.

Given Walla Walla's regional economic influence toward the end of the nineteenth century, the decimated historic building stock in the downtown core cannot begin to portray the sophisticated commercial and architectural heritage of its first years. However, the buildings that remain are architecturally evocative and provide essential glimpses of a commercial district that once encompassed twenty-seven square blocks and possessed all architectural refinements and fashions popular during the mid to late nineteenth century. The Max Baumeister Building is an essential component of this commercial story. Newly rehabilitated it will continue to serve as an important visual anchor to the easternmost end of a fragmented but revitalized historic district.

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Bibliography

- 1 Robert A. Bennet. Walla Walla: Portrait of a Western Town, 1804- 1899. (Walla Walla: Pioneer Press Books, 1980) pp. 80.
 - 2 Bennet, 149.
 - 3 Scrapbook of Soper's Leather Goods Store.
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Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point in the Southerly line of Main Street in the City of Walla Walla, which point is 25 feet and 4 inches Easterly, measured along said Southerly line of Main Street, from the point of intersection of said Southerly line of Main Street with the Easterly line of Third Avenue Southerly (formerly Third Street) in said City, and running thence Southerly, a distance of 120 feet to a point in the Northerly line of the alley; thence Easterly along said Northerly line of the alley, a distance of 39 feet and 10 inches; thence Northerly at right angles a distance of 120 feet to a point in the Southerly line of Main Street, a distance of 39 feet and 10 inches to the point of beginning" (from Maximillian Baumeister's will, No. 37881 Creditors' Claim, pg. 7 of the inventory. January 17, 1952. County clerk files, Walla Walla County Courthouse.)

Boundary Justification:

The above description is the historic legal description that has always defined the building ownership.

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Photographs:

The early historical photographs are available through Penrose Library at Whitman College, Walla Walla, They are in the Northwest archives and were not available for reproduction. Photographs from the 1960s were available from the Sopers' private photo album. The recent photographs were taken in 2000 by Elisabeth Ritacca.

Item:

1. city map of Walla Walla, 1909.
2. city scene, Main Street, 1908. The building with the bay windows is the Baumeister.
3. Front view of the Stencil and Baumeister Buildings (two pages, second is enlarged).
3. View of the Baumeister Building showing the extent of storefront renovations under Soper's.

Additional photographs:

- 1961 photo of the Baumeister before and after renovations
- Original wooden building on the Max Baumeister property. It burned down in 1887.
- The inset photograph is a portrait of the Baumeister brothers' sketch of the structure (The Max Baumeister building, with its identifying bay windows, is directly to the left of the imposing Stencil Building).
- Two reproduced photographs document the 1961 renovation of the building, in which Soper's Leather Goods expanded to include the entire first floor.
- The current appearance of the building, view from across Main Street.