

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 29 1976

DATE ENTERED NOV 18 1975

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Holt-Balcom Lumber Company Office

AND/OR COMMON

Lumbermill Pizza

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

106 Superior Avenue

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oconto

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8th

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

55

COUNTY

Oconto

CODE

083

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:**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Robert J. Gannon & Leon J. Straub (Oconto Heritage Restoration Committee)

STREET & NUMBER

106 Superior Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Oconto

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 54153

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Oconto County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Oconto

STATE

Wisconsin 54153

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, Volume II: The Inventory

DATE

1975

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This building, erected in 1854, originally consisted of a long, narrow, two-story gable-roofed central portion with a single-story lean-to wing extending the full length of the building on either side. There are returned cornices at both gable ends, although an 1878 sketch fails to show them and leaves some question about their being original. Across the entire first story was a false front. Details of the original interior are unknown, but the exterior still retains much of its original appearance except that c. 1910 the Holt Company built a cement vault with a cement roof into roughly the center third of the south wing, leaving the rest of the wing unchanged. Sometime later, the rear third of the wing was removed completely, and the building remains that way today. The front facade has had one window removed and a recessed entrance and single door installed in its place. Also, a large window was removed from the north side at the front corner and the opening closed and clapboarded. The building has recently been painted.

Renovation ultimately planned by the current owners includes replacement of the two windows which were removed and exact exterior restoration of the north side and main (west) facade. In doing this they will use early illustrations and photographs of the building. The second floor will be made into living quarters. The first floor has been converted to use as a restaurant, which is now in operation.

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Association with historically important persons.	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1854; 1862-65; 1888; 1938 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel B. Gilkey

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1854, Samuel B. Gilkey built an office building and a sawmill on the north bank of the Oconto River in Oconto, Wisconsin and began a lumbering operation. Two years later, a group headed by Rubin M. Norton bought Gilkey out and proceeded to saw 3,000,000 board feet of white pine during their first year of business.¹ However Norton and his associates were unable to survive the Panic of 1857 and had to close.

Earlier, Devillo R. Holt, who had moved west from New York around 1843 to work for the American Fur Company on Mackinac Island, left Astor's employ and moved to Chicago in October, 1847. Within a few weeks he purchased the George Roberts lumber yard. "This was the starting point of a career which was to keep D. R. Holt and his sons active in the lumber business for almost a century, and was to mark the Holts as key figures in Wisconsin and Chicago business enterprises during that period."²

Another important figure, Uri Balcom, who was earlier involved in lumbering operations in the East, came to Oconto in 1856, where he was to remain for over a decade. Here he organized the lumber firm of Eldred and Balcom, which about a year later became Balcom and Calkins. A few years later this firm became Holt, Balcom and Calkins.³ "The first relations between D. R. Holt and Uri Balcom are obscure," but in 1862 the Holt-Balcom Lumber Company was organized with headquarters in Chicago and in that year or 1863 the new company opened a branch office in Oconto in the building Sam Gilkey had built in 1854.⁴

Holt and Balcom immediately expanded into a major northeastern Wisconsin lumbering concern by acquiring large tracts of pine lands and a sawmill in Oconto. The company's entire holdings prior to 1884 are not known, but during its existence the Holt-Balcom and later Holt Company had owned, in addition to its main office in Chicago and branch office in Oconto, much timberland in Marinette and Oconto counties (a small portion of which was purchased to furnish lumber for construction of the Sturgeon Bay-Lake Michigan Ship Canal); the company store in the Oconto office; planing and shingle mills, several grist mills and a feed mill; a hotel at Maple Valley for the men working the pineries; a boarding house in Oconto; stables; four farms; several logging camps; cargo vessels; and subsidiary companies such as the Oconto River Improvement Company, begun in 1899; the Oconto Electric Company, organized about 1902; and the Holt Hardwood Company, established by W. A. Holt in Oconto in 1918. The Holt Lumber Company closed in 1938.⁵

William A. Holt, one of D. R. Holt's three sons, attended Lake Forest Academy and in 1882 began his business career in Holt-Balcom's Chicago offices. In 1888, D. R. Holt bought out Balcom, who had moved to Chicago in 1868 and taken charge of the lumber yards there, and incorporated the Holt Lumber Company as a family business. William A. Holt, having learned the lumber business well by working in both Chicago and Wisconsin, moved to

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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HOLT-BALCOM LUMBER COMPANY OFFICE

8.

Oconto that year and in 1889 took over the company's operations there. He soon became a leading figure in the lumber business and ancillary enterprises as well as in civic affairs. (He served as mayor of Oconto in 1904-1908).⁶

For all practical purposes the Oconto office became the main headquarters for the operation even though the company remained nominally headquartered in Chicago. After D. R. Holt's death in 1899, his son George became president of the company and another son, Charles, remained an officer. But William A. Holt, who was treasurer, actually served as chief executive of the company from then on.⁷ Little was heard of the Chicago office after D. R. Holt's death, and it was not listed in Donnelley's Directory after 1923. In 1922 George Holt had sold his interests to William A. Holt, thus formalizing what had long since been an accomplished fact.

Although at one time there were fourteen lumber companies working in the city of Oconto, the old Holt-Balcom Lumber Company Office, which remained the company's headquarters until it closed in 1938, is the last survivor of all the original structures in the city related to the lumbering industry which was the reason for Oconto's expansion, growth, and major importance during the height of Wisconsin's lumbering era and after.^{8,9}

1. Hotchkiss, p. 421
2. "Outline History of the Holt Lumber Company," p. 1
3. Ibid., p. 2
4. Ibid. Records are unclear on the exact year that the Holt-Balcom Company was formalized, varying from 1862 to 1865. The 1862 figure is commonly used, however. "The truth of the matter seems to be that Holt had at least informal business relations with Balcom as early as 1862-1863.."
5. Ibid.
6. Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, p. 175
7. "Outline History..," p. 4
8. Files of the Oconto County Historical Society
9. Hall, p. 197

11.

Donald N. Anderson, Historian & Registrar, Historic Preservation

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

25 June 1976

816 State Street

608/262-0746

Madison

Wisconsin 53706