

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **SEP 10 1986**
date entered **OCT 9 1986**

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

1. Name

historic Town of Milwaukee Town Hall

and/or common Old Town of Milwaukee Hall

2. Location

street & number 5909 North Milwaukee River Parkway (rear) not for publication

city, town Glendale vicinity of

state WI code 55 county Milwaukee code 079

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of Glendale

street & number 5909 North Milwaukee River Parkway

city, town Glendale vicinity of state WI 53209

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Clerk, City of Glendale

street & number 5909 North Milwaukee River Parkway

city, town Glendale state WI 53209

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title WI Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Division State Historical Society of WI

city, town Madison state WI

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	1963
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Physical Description

The old Town of Milwaukee Hall is sited on the edge of an open field surrounded by mature fir trees and shrubs about one hundred feet behind the present City of Glendale Municipal Building. The rural setting is similar to its original location amidst flat pastures and farm land. It was moved from its original location on the north side of Bender Road west of Port Washington Road in 1963 to save it from demolition. The present site approximates the appearance of its old site. At the time of the move, the building was in original condition, for the most part, but needed many repairs.

The Town of Milwaukee Town Hall is a rectangular, one-story, end-gable-roofed, frame structure measuring about 20 X 48 feet. The simple, clapboarded structure is built close to the ground on low fieldstone foundations with no basement. It is of vernacular design with only the slightly arched fenestration and paneled front door betraying the influence of the Italianate style. The east elevation is the most architecturally developed. A porch with three square chamfered posts supporting the hipped wood-shingled roof, spans the front of the building sheltering the off-center entrance with transom and a pair of six-over-six, wooden, double-hung windows. On the porch roof, a wooden sign replicating the nineteenth century one reads "Town, Milwaukee Hall". A three-light lunette window in the gable lights the small attic.

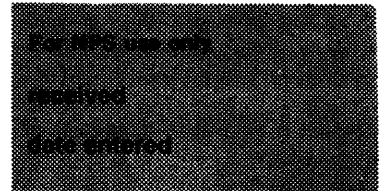
The north and south elevations are identical. Each has clapboarded walls with two, closely-spaced, arched, six-over-six light, double hung windows grouped together at the west end.

The west elevation has a small, shed-roofed, lean-to addition extending completely across the rear. It is about eight feet deep and is clapboarded to blend with the original building. It was built in 1963 to replace a nineteenth century woodshed addition that was originally attached to the rear.

The interior of the building consists of three rooms. The original 1872 town hall space is one large room measuring about 20 X 32 feet. The floors are stained and varnished wood; the ceiling is flush boarded; the walls have flush horizontal boarded wainscoting with a molded cap, above which are board-and-batten walls. The walls and ceiling are painted shades of gray as they were originally. The wainscoting may have originally been oak grained, but it is now painted gray. Two of the three doors are the original, simple, four-panel doors, while one is an early twentieth century two-panel door. The doors, window trim and battens were originally believed to have been painted dark brown, but are now gray. The room contains many of the original furnishings including a cast-iron pot-bellied stove, four long benches, a nineteenth

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Town of Milwaukee Town Hall Item number 7

Page 1

century iron safe and a Late Empire style writing table and three arm chairs. Book boxes, a roll-top desk and miscellaneous late nineteenth century chairs and tables complete the furnishings. A pair of kerosene lamps on cast-iron brackets supplement the three, early twentieth century, pendant-style, electric ceiling fixtures.

The modern lean-to addition is divided into two rooms. The west one-third was intended for a bathroom that was never installed, while the remaining space houses mechanical equipment and is used for storage.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1872¹

Builder/Architect Louis Severin, Builder²

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Significance

The Town of Milwaukee Hall is architecturally significant as a rare intact example of a rural town hall displaying the conservative vernacular architecture characteristic of rural Wisconsin in the mid-nineteenth century. It is of historical significance as the original seat of government for the old Town of Milwaukee, one of the original subdivisions of Milwaukee County. It served in this capacity until 1950 when the Town of Milwaukee was dissolved and much of it incorporated as the City of Glendale. As a museum and meeting facility owned by the City of Glendale, it has continued to serve its intended purpose as a public meeting hall down to the present.

Historical Background

What is now the northern half of Milwaukee County became the Town of Milwaukee in 1838 when the territorial legislature subdivided the county into towns. The original Town of Milwaukee extended as far south as Greenfield Avenue, but it was quickly decreased in size by the creation of the Towns of Wauwatosa and Granville in 1839 and still further by the incorporation of the City of Milwaukee in 1846. Settlement began in the Town in earnest after the lands were surveyed and put up for sale by the Federal Government in 1835. Most of the early settlers were of German, Swiss, French and Dutch extraction. They were farmers by occupation and the character of the Town of Milwaukee was to remain essentially agricultural until the 1950's. The first public buildings erected in the Town of Milwaukee were schools. In the 1840's, small, one-room schools were built at various locations in the far-flung and sparsely populated town, although none of these structures survive today. The government of the Town itself consisted of three supervisors and a town clerk who served without compensation. Once a year a town meeting was held to decide major town issues. Between 1838 and 1872 the supervisors conducted their business at various private homes and taverns.

¹"Proceedings of the Town Board and Minutes of the Annual Meeting", 1872-73; Town of Milwaukee records, Milwaukee Series 5, in the collection of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library.

²ibid

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Item 9, Continuation Page 1

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Thiensville, Wisconsin

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	2	4	3	6	0	4	7	7	5	0	0	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

The nominated property occupies a 25 by 50 foot lot described as follows: that part of the Southeast 1/4 of Section 30, Town 8 North, Range 22 East, in the city of Glendale, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin, bounded and described as follows: Commencing at a point (cont.)

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 Les Vollmert

organization

date June 2, 1986

street & number 2840 N. Stowell Ave.

telephone

city or town Milwaukee

state WI 53211

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

title

date

3/15/86

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 10-9-86

Keeper of the National Register

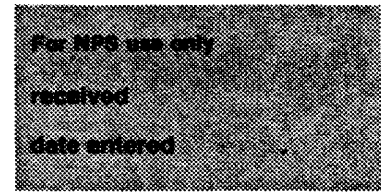
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Town of Milwaukee Town Hall Item number 8

Page 1

At the annual town meeting held on April 12, 1872 a resident proposed that town government could be more efficiently conducted if a centrally located "town house" was built as the seat of government. The citizens subsequently voted to appropriate \$1,000 to erect a town house. A 30 x 100 foot lot near the intersection of West Bender Road and North Port Washington Road was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Max Zabel on July 18, 1872 and in August the supervisors advertised for bids to erect the building. Louis Severin was selected as the contractor from the four bidders. Town clerk Anson Buttles, who was also the County Surveyor, surveyed the lot in August and construction of the town house was started soon thereafter. The building was finished by early November of 1872.

The administration of the Town of Milwaukee's affairs was a simple matter. The infrequent meetings of the three member Board of Supervisors and the annual town meeting was about all that was required to govern the town until 1950. No significant changes were ever made in the town house.

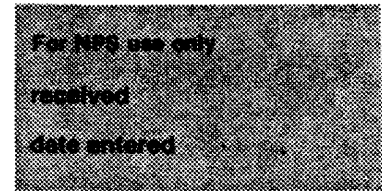
In the 1940's, however, the significant increase in suburban development caused a population explosion in the Town of Milwaukee. As the farm land was redeveloped for residential and commercial purposes, more extensive government services were required. Over the years, the incorporation of five villages, three cities and annexations by the City of Milwaukee eventually consumed all of the Town of Milwaukee. The end of the Town came in December of 1950, when the City of Glendale, with a population of almost 3,200, was incorporated out of the 2.9 square miles of the Town of Milwaukee containing fifty-five percent of its remaining population and seventy percent of its assessed property valuation. After the incorporation of Glendale, the Town of Milwaukee was dissolved. With the subsequent annexation of much of the rest of the former Town of Milwaukee lands, the City of Glendale grew to cover 5.7 square miles.

The old Town of Milwaukee Town Hall fell within the boundaries of Glendale and came under the ownership of the new city. The city used the building only as a polling place in the early 1950's, since the Glendale city offices occupied rented quarters until the present Glendale Municipal Complex could be built. Gradually, the old town hall fell into disrepair.

In 1962, the neglected old town hall appeared to be doomed since its site on West Bender Road was needed for new development. A special committee was appointed by the Glendale City Council to investigate the preservation of the old building as a landmark. As a result, it was decided to move the building to a suitable site near the municipal complex and restore it for use as a museum and public meeting hall. On July 5, 1963, the building was moved and

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet Town of Milwaukee Town Hall Item number 8

Page 2

the Glendale Woman's Club undertook the task of raising funds to restore the structure. By 1967, it had been restored and was in use. It is now used as a museum and meeting hall and serves as the meeting place of the Glendale Common Council once a year.

The town Hall is architecturally significant as a fine example of the simple, conservative, vernacular architecture characteristic of rural Wisconsin in the nineteenth century. Only a few architectural touches such as the arched windows and the elaborately paneled front door betray the influence of current architectural trends in this otherwise straight-forward, utilitarian structure which remarkably enough, has continued in use down to the present without significant alteration. Of the many rural town halls that once existed in Wisconsin, the Old Town of Milwaukee Hall is believed to be one of the best preserved of the few such structures of its era to have survived in tact. *

Although the structure was moved from its original location in 1963 to make way for a water filtration plant, it is still thought to meet the National Register criteria because it was relocated only about 3/4 of a mile to a setting very similar to its original site within the boundaries of the Old Town of Milwaukee to save it from demolition. It has continued to serve its original function as a local government building.

* A review of the State Historic Preservation Division's inventory files for Milwaukee County and the surrounding region uncovered only one other 19th century town hall structure still extant (Village of Oak Creek - c. 1880.).

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Town of Milwaukee Town Hall Item number 9

Page 1

Bibliography

Buttles, Anson M., Fox Point, WI unpublished, undated manuscript entitled "Local History of the North Shore Area Communities" in the collection of the Glendale Parkway Elementary School Library.

Buttles, Anson W. Papers, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library

Final Town Hall Restoration Report - January, 1967 in records of the Glendale Woman's Club.

Herald, April 29, 1965 (Glendale Commemorative Edition)

Ponto, Robert D. "The Town of Milwaukee Town hall" (unpublished manuscript) January 30, 1977, in the possession of the Glendale Womans Club.

"Proceedings of the Town Board and Minutes of the Annual Meeting", 1872-73; Town of Milwaukee records, Milwaukee Series 5, in the collection of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Library.

Watrous, Jerome A. ed. Memoirs of Milwaukee County. 3 vols. Madison: Western Historical Association, 1909.

Item 10

Verbal boundary description and justification (cont.)

in the north line of said 1/4 Section, 1020.49 feet N 89 53' 43" W of the Northeast corner thereof; thence at right angles S 0 06' 17" W, 141.56 feet to the point of beginning of the lands about to be described; thence S 43 11' 55" E, 50.00 feet to a point; then S 46 48' 05" W, 25.00 feet to a point; thence N 43 11' 55" W, 50.00 feet to a point; thence N 46 48' 05" E, 25.00 feet to the point of beginning.