

(Rev. 8/86)
Wisconsin Word Processing Format
(Approved 2/87)

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 12 1988

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Form (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries on a letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

1. Name of Property

historic name Pythian Castle Lodge

other name/site number Crystal Palace

2. Location

street & number 1925 West National Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Milwaukee

vicinity N/A

state WI

code WI

county Milw.

code 079

zip code 53204

3. 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>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Jeffery... Signature of certifying official 1/5/88 Date

Wisconsin SHPO

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Beth Boland 2/25/88

Signature of the Keeper Date

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Social/Meeting Hall

Social/Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)**Materials**
(enter categories from instructions)

Spanish Colonial Revival

foundation Brickwalls Brick

roof Terra Cottaother Cast Stone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Description

The Pythian Castle Lodge is located at 1925 West National Avenue on the southeast corner of South 20th Street and West National Avenue. West National Avenue in the vicinity of the building contains a mixture of late nineteenth and early twentieth century apartment houses, small commercial buildings and a few scattered residences. The city's central business district lies about 3-1/2 miles to the northeast. The building faces West National Avenue across a narrow grass lawn. The landscaping is limited to mature foundation plantings.

The Pythian Castle Lodge is a large, symmetrical, brick, two-story, rectangular, combination flat and hip-roofed, Mediterranean Style structure built in 1927 for the Pythians, a fraternal order, to the designs of Milwaukee architect Richard E. Oberst. The principal elevations facing north, east and west are faced with Sienna-colored, tapestry brick and trimmed with extensive ornamental cast-stone. Clay tile clads the roofs and parapets. The foundation material is poured concrete.

The most outstanding feature of the main elevation facing West National Avenue is a central, square, projecting, three-story, entrance pavilion with a clay tile hip roof. The first story of this pavilion features a Churriqueresque rounded-arched double door entrance flanked by a pair of rope-twisted columns each supporting a small entablature capped with an inverted scrolled console bracket. Above the door at the second story level is an elaborate, Churriqueresque Baroque Style, stone-framed central window flanked by rope-twisted colonnettes and fronted by a minature balcony with a wrought iron railing. Above this, the fenestration of the third floor consists of five round-arched sash windows.

The central pavilion is flanked by two identical, symmetrical, wings that terminate in shallow, projecting, mission-style corner pavilions. The fenestration consists of regularly spaced sash and casement windows glazed with various ornamental leaded pane configurations. The windows are generally rectangular on the first story and round-arched on the second story. A centered second story, copper-clad, oriel window is the focal point of each of the facades of the hyphens flanking the central tower. The oriels are glazed with diamond paned leaded glass. The Sienna-colored brickwork is punctuated

X See continuation Sheet

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by flat, cast stone voissiors around the window openings. Cast stone is also used on the corner pavilions bays for the copings of the curvilinear parapets and the small niches that are centered in them. The hyphens have high sloping Spanish tiled parapets with bracketed eaves.

The side elevations facing east and west are similar in design to the front and each feature shallow, projecting, corner pavilions with shaped mission-style parapets. The fenestration consists of rectangular windows on the first floor and short, round-arched windows on the second floor. The curvilinear parapets are capped with cast stone and contain small niches like those on the West National Avenue facade.

A one-story, brick, flat-roofed tavern addition facing National Avenue was attached to the east elevation in the 1950s. It presents the appearance of being a separate building and does not relate architecturally to the Castle Lodge. It is a rectangular structure with high horizontal strip windows and a chrome fascia in the 1950's modern style. It is a noncontributing structure.

The rear elevation is utilitarian in character and it is composed of a common brick wall fenestrated with windows and doors of various sizes and types placed to respond to floor plan requirements. A large square brick chimney projects from the west half of the rear elevation.

With the exception of the tavern addition and new glass and aluminum entrance doors, the facade of the lodge appears to be in original condition. The windows on the first floor of the west elevation have been filled with glass block.

The building is entered through a vestibule that leads to a rectangular hall containing an open, two-story staircase featuring Mediterranean style ornamental iron railings. A large oil painting of the Damon and Pythias legend is attached to the east wall. The first floor is divided approximately into quadrants. A restaurant and bar are located in the northeast quadrant facing West National Avenue with the kitchen facilities to the rear. A bar room occupies the northwest quadrant facing West National Avenue and a banquet room is adjacent to it in the rear, southwest quadrant of the building. The plan of the second floor is similar, except that office space is located in the northeast quadrant. A bar room is located in the northwest quadrant corner and a large ballroom is located in the southwest part of the building directly over the first floor banquet hall.

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The ballroom was originally barrel-vaulted and it features a large, proscenium arched stage at the east end. A raised area along the walls was apparently used for seating and the center area of the room was left open for dancing or other activities.

The interior apparently retains its original floor plan, but there have been cosmetic alterations, the most significant being the addition of a drop ceiling in the second floor ballroom to reduce the eighteen foot ceiling height to only about ten feet. The entry hall remains largely intact. The walls are plastered, the woodwork is simple and painted. Some original light fixtures survive, mixed with modern replacements. The original interior of the Pythian Castle Lodge was fairly simple with plain plastered walls and polished terrazo floors. However, over the years paneling, wallpaper and new service bars have been added and some of the light fixtures have been replaced. The modern redecorating attempts, which are cosmetic in nature, did not result in the alteration of the original floor plan and have not seriously detracted the building's historic architectural integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: nationally statewide X locally

Applicable National Register Criteria X A B X C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions) Period of Significance Significant Dates

Architecture	1927-1937	1927 ¹
Social History		
	Cultural Affiliation	
	N/A	
Significant Person	Architect/Builder	
N/A	Architect: Oberst, Richard E. ²	

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and period of significance noted above.

Significance

The Pythian Castle Lodge is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places for its local significance in the areas of architecture and social history under criteria A and C. In terms of its local architectural significance under criteria C, the Pythian Castle Lodge is architecturally important as a fine example of a 1920's Mediterranean style lodge building designed by Milwaukee architect Richard E. Oberst. The Pythian Castle Lodge is historically significant under Criteria A as a major meeting place and center of social activity on the city's near south side.

The Wisconsin Cultural Resources Management Plan has identified as a priority the need to research the activities of fraternal groups in the state. Fraternal organizations played a particularly significant role in the social life of late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrant neighborhoods such as the near south side. Membership in such organizations offered the rewards of social recognition and peer acceptance, which were so important at the time to achieving success and upward mobility. Membership in the Pythians conveyed the added benefit of providing affordable insurance benefits for wage-earning members before commercial insurance companies commonly offered such coverage. Although Milwaukee had more than one hundred different fraternal organizations in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, few of these groups actually managed to build their own structures, as did the

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Pythians. The Castle Lodge is an excellent example of a well-preserved lodge hall built during the heyday of the fraternal organization movement in the U.S. It is important in the context of the south side neighborhood and the city of Milwaukee in which it is being evaluated as one of the finest of the few non-Masonic fraternal lodge halls to survive today. The Castle Lodge is the largest Pythian lodge hall ever built in Wisconsin. The period of significance is the date of construction of the lodge, 1927, through the late 1930s, the years in which the Pythian Order reached its Zenith in Milwaukee.

Historical Background

The near South Side is defined as the section of the City of Milwaukee that lies south of the Menomonee River Valley between Lake Michigan and the Village of West Milwaukee north of Burnham Street. The oldest settled portion is the eastern third known as the Walker's Point plat, much of which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Walker's Point Historic District on December 19, 1978. The nominated structure is located directly west of the old Walker's Point plat in a later developed area commonly known as West Walker's Point or simply as the near South Side. This area was always a modest working class neighborhood of small, detached, frame, worker's cottages. Its original residents were almost entirely European immigrants who worked in the heavily industrialized Menomonee Valley or maintained small commercial establishments. To a large extent, that is still true today. National Avenue is the principal traffic artery and commercial street in the area. Because of the modest character of the housing, churches, fraternal lodge halls and institutions are the principal architectural monuments on the near South Side.

The near South Side has always been one of Milwaukee's most dynamic melting pot neighborhoods. First settled by a mixture of German immigrants and Yankees from New York and New England in the early 1850s, the neighborhood evolved over the years into one of the most ethnically mixed areas of the city. Eventually communities of Irish, Swedes, Norwegians, Poles and Serbians came to occupy the compact area as well. Although the Germans remained the dominant group for years, the other minorities each developed their own religious and social institutions. The important wave of post World War II immigration from Eastern and Central Europe renewed Milwaukee's nationally known, but by then fading, multi-ethnic old world character by bringing significant numbers of European immigrants into the city. Many of the immigrants settled on the near South Side reviving its multi-ethnic character. The neighborhood has continued its historical role as the city's most important melting pot, but today is becoming home to Hispanic and Southeast Asian minorities rather than European immigrants.

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History of the Pythian Castle Lodge

The Knights of Pythias is an American fraternal organization founded in 1864 in Washington, D.C. by Justice Henry Rathbone.³ He based the group on the themes of friendship, bravery, honor, justice and loyalty which were exemplified in the legendary story of Damon and Pythias. In the story, which was dramatized by early nineteenth century Irish author John Banim, Damon was sentenced to death and Pythias offered himself as a hostage so that his friend could see his loved ones for the last time. Damon kept faith with his friend and overcame incredible obstacles to return to his execution, at which he was fully pardoned because of his fidelity to Pythias. Based on this story, the Knights of Pythias were formed with 13 charter members. It was the first American fraternal group to be incorporated by an Act of Congress.⁴ By the 1920s, heyday of the organization it had grown into the third largest fraternal group in the western world with over 850,000 members in 6,072 lodges and assets of about \$25 million.⁵ In the 1920s the Pythians donated about \$2 million per year to various charities including orphanages and homes for the indigent and aged. Their charity work was similar in nature to that of the well-known Shriner's, a Masonic group. The Knights of Pythias served a dual purpose as both a fraternal insurance group and as a social club that included a military or uniformed rank and two auxiliaries, the Pythian Sisters and Knights of Korassan, all of whom practiced some type of established ritual. The organization lost much of its membership during the Great Depression of the 1930s and has continued to decline in numbers ever since. In 1960 there were 80 Pythian lodges in Wisconsin with 5,019 members, but by 1976 statewide membership had dropped to about 3,000 with only 35 active lodges.⁶ The number has undoubtedly declined substantially since that time.

The Pythians were first established in Milwaukee in 1870 and, like many late nineteenth century fraternal organizations, they formed about one new lodge in the city each year. The first Pythian lodge met in the central business district, but by the 1890s there were four south side lodges: Schiller Lodge No. 3, Taylor Lodge No. 93, Walker Lodge, No. 123, and National Lodge, No. 141. Two women's auxiliaries were formed later: the Rathbone Sisters Star Temple No. 8 and the Pythian Sisters Purity Temple No. 26. The south side groups banded together in 1909 to lease the still extant Reik's Hall on the corner of South 5th and West Walker Streets. In 1915 some of the Pythians moved to new quarters at 1215-1220 South 16th Street and in 1921 plans were made to build a new south side lodge hall that could be used by all the south side Pythians. In 1922 the Pythians purchased a lot on the southeast corner of South 20th and West National Avenue and subsequently began

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a fund-raising campaign for a new building.⁸ Finally in 1927 they secured a building permit for a \$90,000 building called the Castle Lodge designed by Milwaukee architect Richard E. Oberst.⁹ Unlike the Masons, who would allow only Masonic groups to use their private lodge building, the Pythians rented their facilities to numerous groups and about 22 labor groups met in the Castle Lodge during the 1950s in addition to eight Pythian groups.¹⁰ The Pythians sold the Castle Lodge in 1976 because of declining membership.¹⁰ Now called the Crystal Palace, the building is used as a restaurant and rental hall. Except for the Grand Lodge at 1006 South 47th Street, there are currently no Pythian Lodges in Milwaukee.

Although the Pythian Lodges that occupied the Castle Lodge have disbanded, the groups that built the hall have a long history. The earliest south side Pythian group was Schiller Lodge No. 3, which was founded on January 28, 1871 in the city's central business district.¹¹ When the group refused to pay a special tax imposed by the grand lodge in 1876, they were suspended, but reorganized on July 17, 1878 on the south side and became the first Pythian lodge in that part of the city. They originally met at Meier's Hall at South 2nd and West Oregon Streets (razed). Due to a loss of members in the late 1880s the group relocated to less expensive quarters at Tabberts Hall on the southwest corner of South Eleventh Street and West Greenfield Avenue (razed). Membership picked up again and in 1889 Schiller Lodge moved to the Burnham Block Hall located at 907-911 West National Avenue. They dropped their German ritual for an English one in 1892. Schiller Lodge moved in 1904 to Bell's Hall at the southeast corner of South 8th Street and West National Avenue, but in 1909 they moved again to Reik's Hall at the corner of South 5th and West Walker Streets where they were joined by several other Pythian groups. Schiller moved with the other Pythians in 1915 to the newly constructed Rock's Hall at 1216-1220 South 16th Street until the Castle Lodge on West National Avenue was ready for occupancy in 1927.

Another south side Pythian group, Taylor Lodge No. 93 was instituted on October 16, 1891 as the first English-speaking Pythian lodge on the south side and was named after its founder, L.J. Taylor.¹² The group remained small, despite a renewal of membership interest in 1902, because they had to pay out substantial sickness and death benefits. They remained in a fragile financial condition until after World War I. Bohn's Hall on South 2nd Street and West National Avenue was the site of their early meetings and subsequent relocations included Duester's Hall on the northeast corner of South 2nd and West National, Harmonie Hall at the corner of South 6th and West Mineral Streets, and Burnham's Hall at 907-911 West National Avenue. They moved to

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Reik's Hall on the corner of South 5th and West Walker Streets in 1909 with the other Pythian groups, but later returned to Deuster's Hall and then moved to Moose Hall on South 5th Street in 1917. During the early 1920s they rented the Juneau Theater Hall at South Sixth and West Mitchell Streets, but later joined with the other south side Pythians to construct the Castle Lodge at 1925 West National. They remained active into the 1960s, but disbanded sometime before 1970.

A third Pythian group on the south side was Walker Lodge No. 123 formed in 1894 by a group of south siders.¹³ They named their lodge after south side pioneer Colonel George Walker and originally met in a hall at the southwest corner of South 8th Street and West National Avenue. The Walker Lodge enjoyed relative prosperity, unlike some of the other south side Pythians, and by 1922 they boasted a membership of more than 500. Other meeting halls used by the Walker Lodge include those at the southeast corner of South 5th Street and West National Avenue and Burnham's Block, 907-911 West National Avenue. In 1909 they, too, moved to Reik's Hall at South 5th and West Walker Street and then moved with the other Pythians to 1216-1220 South 16th Street in 1915. Walker Lodge subsequently moved to the Castle Lodge in 1927, but disbanded in the 1970s.

National Lodge No. 141 was founded by Otto Preusser Sr., who was a member of Pythian of Wisconsin Lodge No. 89 and wanted to establish a new south side lodge in 1897 that would not compete with existing lodges. They were instituted on July 10, 1897 with 23 members at Deuster's Hall on the northeast corner of South 2nd and West National Avenue. By 1922 it had become the south side's largest Pythian lodge. Their many meeting places over the years included: Burnham's Hall at 907-911 West National Avenue, Davis' Hall at South 5th Street and West National Avenue, Reik's Hall at South 5th and West Walker, and Van der Fiven's Hall between South 9th and South 10th Streets on West National Avenue. In 1915 they moved to Rock's Hall on South 16th Street and they moved to the new Castle Lodge at 1925 West National Avenue in 1927. They remained there until disbanding in the 1970s.

The Pythian Sisters Purity Temple No. 26, as the name implies, was founded as a women's auxiliary in 1909 and they helped to finance the construction of the Castle Lodge and moved there in 1927 before disbanding in the late 1970s. Nationally the group was founded in 1888 in Warsaw, Indiana and they also admitted male members. By 1922 the Pythian Sisters had grown to have 2,467 temples. They concentrated on community service activities that included outings for the poor, entertainment for shut-ins, providing nursing care for the needy and furthering the education of children.

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Most of the charter members of the early south side Pythians groups were drawn from Milwaukee's large German-American population. Only Taylor Lodge No. 93, the first English-speaking south side Pythian lodge founded in 1891, had charter members with predominantly Anglican surnames. By the early 1920s the roster of south side Pythian Lodge officials still overwhelmingly consisted of individuals with German surnames although by that time all of the Pythian groups had adopted the English language.

Social History

The Pythian Castle Lodge is historically significant for its role in the development of the once important Knights of Pythias Fraternal Order in Milwaukee and as an important meeting place throughout its history for other social, political and labor organizations on the near south side. Not only does the building by its size and opulence stand as a monument to the mid 1920's zenith of the Pythians as the western world's third largest fraternal group, but it has also served an important role down to the present as a rental hall used by numerous organizations. In this respect, it has carried on the time-honored role of the public hall as a social center in the ethnic working class neighborhood. It has continued the tradition begun by an earlier generation of now defunct public halls, such as Burnham's Hall at 907-11 West National Avenue, as meeting places for all types of organizations, particularly the labor groups so important to safeguarding and improving the welfare of the immigrant factory workers who populated neighborhoods like the near south side, and as the scene of important social events.

Unlike other fraternal groups such as the Masons, the Pythians allowed many outside groups to rent their lodge building. In the 1950s the the Pythian Castle Lodge became a favorite meeting place of Milwaukee labor groups as well as several civic groups. Some of the labor groups that met there in the 1950s were: Order of Railroad Engineers Local No. 405, Railroad Conductors Local No. 246, Railroad Firemen and Engineers, Harvester Tool Makers, Painters and Varnishers Local No. 579, Firefighters Local No. 215, Hatters Local No. 50, Die Sinkers Union and Wisconsin Motor Local 283. A few of the civic groups that met in the Castle Lodge in the 1950s were: The Squirrel Club, the South Side Civic Association, and the Navy Fathers. It is possible that some of the Pythians were also members of the labor or civic groups meeting at the lodge. The Pythian Castle was one of the most active south side meeting locations and its popularity probably prompted the construction of the tavern addition to the east side of the building in 1955. By the 1960s however, the Castle Lodge evidently lost favor with outside groups and only the Pythians met in the building for most of the decade according to the city directory.

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Although research has revealed little about exact membership figures for the Milwaukee Pythian lodges, the 1922 membership for Walker Lodge No. 123 was about 500.¹⁴ Another Pythian group, Damon Lodge No. 102, had about 425 members in the 1922.¹⁵ Because those membership figures were apparently about average for Pythian lodges at the time, the Castle lodge at its peak in the 1920s and 1930s probably served 2,000 or more Pythians who belonged to the six lodges that met there.

Architecture

The Pythian Castle Lodge is architecturally significant as a fine example of a 1920's Mediterranean style fraternal lodge hall. The Mediterranean style enjoyed a limited popularity in Milwaukee in the teens and twenties for small commercial buildings and residential structures. Eclectically incorporating elements of the Spanish and Italian Renaissance styles, the Mediterranean mode satisfied the desire for an ornamented architectural style with romantic associations that because of its flexible massing could be adapted to a wide variety of building types and site conditions. It also fulfilled the longing on the part of some designers and building owners for a light, fresh-looking alternative to the ponderous classical and medieval-inspired styles that had dominated much of Milwaukee's residential and commercial architecture since the turn-of-the-century. Popularized by the land boom in Florida and the growing influence of California design through publications and the movies, the Mediterranean mode with its Baroque decorative motifs, light colored brick or stucco cladding, Spanish tile roofs, arched fenestration and liberal use of iron work and mosaic tile was employed mostly in Milwaukee for residences, apartment buildings, minor commercial structures and especially for funeral homes. The Pythian Castle Lodge is a unique adaptation of the style in Milwaukee to a large club house structure.

Its architect, Richard E. Oberst, was typical of the versatile period revival architects working in Milwaukee in the teens and twenties. Facile in a variety of styles and constantly adapting to changing architectural trends, Oberst and his colleagues were responsible for the great body of commercial and residential structures being built in the newly developing sections of the rapidly expanding city and its redeveloping commercial strips.

Oberst was born in either 1885 or 1886 and was a lifelong Milwaukee resident. His father was a grading contractor, which undoubtedly contributed to his early exposure to the building trades. The family home was at 3019 West Lincoln Avenue on Milwaukee's south side and Oberst first appeared in the 1902 Milwaukee city directory as a laborer when he was about 16 years old. In

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1903 and 1904 he still lived at the family house, but his occupation had changed to student. Presumably he went to technical school or at least finished high school, because in 1905 he had become a draftsman according to the city directory.

Oberst continued to work as a draftsman until 1910 when he is first listed as an architect in partnership with Albert Jewett. Their office was located at 152 West Wisconsin Avenue. Little is known about Jewett. He first appeared in the Milwaukee city directory in 1909 as an instructor at the Milwaukee School of Trades which was located at 226-228 South First Street. It is possible that Oberst was enrolled there and that he subsequently met Jewett. In 1911 the partnership dissolved and both Jewett and Oberst began separate practices. Oberst remained in the West Wisconsin Avenue office. Jewett appears for the last time in the 1912 city directory and his career might have been floundering because his occupation had reverted to draftsman. It does not appear that Oberst served as an apprentice under Jewett before they formed their partnership, so it is more likely that Jewett was also just beginning to establish himself as an architect when the two became partners.

Oberst was very active during the booming 1920s when many American cities, including Milwaukee, were experiencing rapid growth and high levels of building activity. His known major works include the Excelsior Masonic Temple (1922) 2422 West National Avenue; the Oddfellows Lodge (1917, razed) 745 North 10th Street; Anderson Funeral Home (1924) 2427 West National Avenue; the Louis McNally residence (1925) 2535 North Terrace Avenue; the Pythian Castle Lodge (1927) 1925 West National Avenue; an early apartment building (1913) 1022 South 11th Street; and numerous residences and small commercial structures.

In the 1920s Oberst moved to 2474 North Lake Drive. The Tudor style house dates from the 1920s and could have been designed by Oberst, but, unfortunately, no building permit can be found to confirm a designer. His office at that time was located nearby at 1821 North Farwell Avenue. He favored various period revival and modern styles for his 1920s and 1930s buildings.

Oberst was a member of the Tripoli Shrine Masonic Temple at 3000 West Wisconsin Avenue at the time of his death at the age 86 in 1972.¹⁶ He was a 32nd degree Mason, which is the second highest possible rank in the Order. Most likely it was his fraternal affiliations that helped him win the commissions for the Excelsior Masonic Temple, the Pythian Castle Lodge, and the Oddfellows Lodge.

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Beginning in the late 1930s Oberst continuously maintained an office at 2659 North 27th street almost up until his death. He was listed as an architect in city directories until 1972. Oberst became one of Wisconsin's first registered architects in 1917 when the American Institute of Architects became a regulatory body that enforced professional standards.¹⁷

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FOOTNOTES

¹City of Milwaukee building permit #24041, dated September 12, 1927 and filed at the the city building inspection office under the building address 1925 West National Avenue.

²Ibid.

³C.H. Wenzel (Ed.), Pythian Review of Milwaukee County (Milwaukee: Owen Publishing Co., 1922), second page of Foreword.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Milwaukee Journal, August 8, 1976, clipping from the Milwaukee County Historical Society, page unidentified.

⁷History of Milwaukee (Western Historical Society, 1881), p. 970.

⁸Wenzel, Pythian Review, p. 28.

⁹City of Milwaukee building permit #24041.

¹⁰Milwaukee Journal, August 8, 1976.

¹¹Wenzel, Pythian Review, p. 13.

¹²Wenzel, p. 28.

¹³Wenzel, p. 31.

¹⁴Wenzel, p. 34.

¹⁵Wenzel, p. 30.

¹⁶Milwaukee Journal, April 9, 1972, clipping from file of death notices cataloged in the Local History Room of the Milwaukee Public Library, p. 127.

¹⁷Ibid.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

X See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:
X State Historic preservation office
Other State agency
Federal agency
X Local government
University
Other

Specify repository:
Historic Preservation Division
Milwaukee, WI 53202

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 1/6 4/2/3/6/2/0 4/7/6/3/5/2/0 B / / / / / / / / / / / /
Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
C / / / / / / / / / / / / D / / / / / / / / / / / /

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Clark Shepardson's Subd in SE 1/4 SEC 31-7-22 Block 1 Lots 24 thru 28 & Lot 29 exc (S 3.22' of E 15') & W 20.36' of vac alley adj in the City of Milwaukee

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries include only the land upon which the Pythian Castle Lodge stands.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Les Vollmert/Paul Jakubovich
organization Dept. of City Development Date May 29, 1987
street & number 809 North Broadway telephone (414) 223-5705
city or town Milwaukee state WI zip code 53202

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Number 9 Page 1 Pythian Castle Lodge
Milwaukee, Milwaukee, WI

Books

Conard, Howard Louis, (Ed.). History of Milwaukee County From its First Settlement to the Year 1895. Chicago: American Biographical Publishing Company, c. 1895.

History of Milwaukee. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881.

Schmidt, Alvin J. Fraternal Organizations. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1980.

Wenzel, C.H., (Ed.). Pythian Review of Milwaukee County. Milwaukee: Owen Publishing Co., 1922.

Periodicals

Directory of Milwaukee. 1900-1980 (all years).

Milwaukee Journal. 9 April 1972; 8 August 1976.

Milwaukee Sentinel. 9 April 1972.

Miscellaneous Sources

City of Milwaukee building permit #24041, dated September 12, 1927, and permit #138161A, dated November 30, 1955. Both are filed at the city building inspection office under the building address, 1925 West National Avenue.

Obituary clippings catalogued in the Local History Room of the Milwaukee Public Library, Richard E. Oberst, April 9, 1972, p. 127.