HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
February 2014

I. NAME

Historic: Germania Building

Common Name: Germania Building / Brumder Building

II. LOCATION 135 West Wells Street

Legal Description - Tax Key No. 3920001121
Denison & Martin's Subd of Lots 1-2-3 BLK 59 NE ¼ 29-7-22
LOTS 1-2-3 & 8 thru 12
BID #21

III. CLASSIFICATION Site

IV. OWNER The Equitable Bank SSB
2290 North Mayfair Road
Milwaukee, WI 53226

ALDERMAN Ald. Robert Bauman 4th Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR Ald. Robert Bauman

V. YEAR BUILT 1896 (permit dated May 29, 1896)

ARCHITECT: Schnetzky & Liebert (permit dated May 29, 1896, drawings)

NOTE: The Germania Building is a contributing property in the Plankinton, Wells, Water Streets National Register Historic District (listed June 13, 1986). The non-profit group, Historic Milwaukee Inc., holds a façade easement on the building. The Germania Building was given local historic Designation on September 27, 1983. The designation was rescinded on June 16, 1987.

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

THE AREA

The Germania Building is located in the heart of downtown Milwaukee, just one block west of the Milwaukee River, in an area referred to as Kilbourntown. The building fronts three major

thoroughfares, West Wells Street, North Plankinton Avenue (originally West Water Street) and North Second Street. The 1876 Rascher Fire Insurance Atlas shows that the future Germania site was already built up with masonry buildings, some frame buildings and a few dwellings. Businesses included blacksmiths, a furniture manufacturer, a manufacturer of truss hoops and cooper tools and a lithography firm. The rest of the block bounded by West Wells Street, North Plankinton Avenue, North Second Street and West Wisconsin Avenue was likewise built up. A masonry stable and car house for the Milwaukee City Railway was located south of the alley. Fronting on West Wisconsin Avenue (then Grand Avenue) was a druggist, a couple of shoe factories, a sewing machine dealer, an oyster house, the Dime Museum, Riverside Printing, a photo gallery and another lithography company. Adjacent blocks showed much of the same kind of commerce. A number of furniture manufacturers, sewing machine companies, a suspender factory, and wholesale liquor businesses were among the variety of enterprises occupying the long and narrow buildings. Rascher 1876 Vol. 1 part 2 page 44)

Over time, manufacturing gave way to more retail and entertainment establishments. The smaller structures were replaced by ever larger buildings. The Crystal Theater and the multi-story Toy Building (1910) occupied frontage along North Second Street south of the Germania. Much of Kilbourntown's appearance was set by the late 1920s and construction stalled during the Great Depression and World War II. Following the war, new construction took a back seat to demolition in the core commercial area and shopping and entertainment declined. Numerous surface parking lots replaced buildings in the vicinity of the Germania. A city-owned, multi-story parking ramp was constructed behind the Germania in the middle of the block in 1961 and stands where the Crystal Theater and Toy Building once stood. The Germania Building has been a survivor and remains one of the largest structures in Kilbourntown commercial district.

DESCRIPTION

The Germania Building is a large masonry commercial/office block located in the city's Westside commercial business district. It is eight stories tall and is in the shape of a pentagon. There are three principal elevations, fronting on West Wells Street, North Plankinton Avenue and North Second Street. The other two sides conform to the lot lines perpendicular to Plankinton Avenue and Second Street. The five sides surround a multi-story light court of comparable configuration.

The building is constructed of steel and reinforced concrete frame with exterior bearing walls clad with blue Bedford limestone on the first two stories and tan colored pressed brick on the upper six stories. The flat roof is concealed by a highly detailed cornice featuring modillions, dentils, and rosettes. It is said to project out more than four feet from the building. The cornice is surmounted by a tall, paneled parapet.

Within the broad scope of the Classical revival, the design is dominated by elements of German-influenced Beaux-Arts Classicism. Like many of the German-inspired buildings of the 1890s in Milwaukee such as City Hall, the Pabst Theater and the Pabst Building (no longer extant) the building is constructed of tan brick, rather than the local cream colored brick. It is accented liberally with terra cotta of the same hue and the terra cotta here was used for the lintels, belt courses, and sculptural figures in one of the two tympani of the Wells Street facade. This is a significant shift in the architectural evolution of Milwaukee as many of Milwaukee's future buildings would embrace the all white classicism made popular by the White City, the home of the Columbian World's Fair in 1893. This period of German Ethnic Architecture flourished in the 1890s and came to a halt in World War I.

Following a centuries-long tradition of designing buildings with a base, a shaft or center, and a cap, the first two stories of the Brumder Building are treated as the base and differentiated from the upper floors by the pale limestone blocks cut into thin penciled rustication. The upper five floors of the building form the shaft and have a uniform tan appearance in brick and trim. The

eighth story functions as an attic. Embellishment is concentrated at the roofline and forms the picturesque cap of the structure.

The Wells Street facade features the main entrance and it is on this facade that most of the ornament is concentrated. The main entrance on Wells Street is located within monumental two-story arch. Original metal doors (probably bronze) with transom have been replaced with frameless glass doors.

The arch is flanked by pairs of two-story, Tuscan style, stone columns that support a stone entablature with triglyphs. In the center of the entablature was once carved the name of the building, Germania. Gilded metal letters were installed in this location in the early 1980s. Above this entablature in an open balcony framed with columns and paneled posts. The balcony is crowned with a large stone pediment. The tympanum features foliated scrolls and two putti or cherubs flanking a central wreath. To either side of the pediment is a seated stone lion. At the apex of the pediment once stood the three-ton, ten-foot-tall bronze statue of "Germania" copied from the 'Germania" figure at the Niederwald Denkmal (German National Monument) that had been built in Germany in 1870-1871 to commemorate the German victory over Napoleon III in the Franco-Prussian War. This statue was removed in 1918 due to anti-German fervor during the First World War. A similar, but not identical, statue was placed on the Germania Building in Cincinnati in 1877 (still extant) so it was a popular symbol among the German communities in America. Milwaukee's "Germania" has not been replaced. A search for its whereabouts has been unsuccessful.

At the cornice line is a large central pediment with a large terra cotta cartouche bearing the date 1896 and it is supported by two oversized cherubs. One is reading a book and the other reads a newspaper, a nod to the enterprises of George Brumder. The apex of this pediment is crowned by an anthemion.

The four main corners of the roof feature copper domes with spike finials. Much has been written of the domes' resemblance to the helmet worn by Germany's Iron Chancellor, Otto von Bismark. This has led to the nickname "Kaiser's helmets." As originally built, the domes were flanked with large eagles perched on spheres. The same kind of motif can be found on Milwaukee's Central Library where the eagles are still extant. It is not known when the eagles were removed from the Germania.

Floors three through seven have fenestration grouped uniformly across the three principal facades. Paired one-over-one sash are stacked at the corners, embellished by a projecting terra cotta lintel with a Greek key design at the sixth floor. The triple windows at the seventh floor feature a terra cotta lintel with cartouche flanked by putti and surmounted by a broken pediment. Windows at the center of the facades are grouped into vertical bays between pilasters that support arcades. There are four bays of such windows on the Wells Street and North Plankinton Avenue facades and the windows are set into projecting, three-sided bay windows. The seven bays along North Second Street do not feature these projecting bay windows. At the attic or eighth story paired windows with center colonettes are distributed evenly across the facades and each window pair is separated by pilasters.

The south façade of the Germania one abutted neighboring buildings, now gone. It is utilitarian in character with windows placed to meet interior needs.

The Germania Building is a sophisticated design that combines Beaux Arts design, picturesque German ethnic detail and some of the latest features of American commercial buildings. Beaux Arts features include the building's monumentality and its advancing and receding planes and the use of orbs or spheres surmounted by eagles at the roofline. One need only compare Milwaukee's Central Library, a beautiful example of Classical Beaux Arts design, also built in the 1890s, to see how the Germania embodies an Old World Germanic character. The addition of sculpture to the building and the plentiful use of buff or tan colored terra cotta is something that is

seen in many German buildings and is different from the more highly contrasting palettes seen in other countries. Likewise, the specific references to German symbols such as the German statue of Germania and the helmet-like domes make the building stand out from other Milwaukee office buildings of its time. Interestingly, the Pabst office building (1892) also referenced Germanic tradition but made use of the shaped gabled that harkened back to medieval German precedents. It appears that the Germania wanted to differentiate itself from that model yet still display its German ties.

There can also be no denial of the influence of American architects H. H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan on the Germania design. The use of the large arched entry portal can be traced to Richardson. The grouping of windows under a running arcade was also a feature that quickly passed from the Richardson's Marshall Field Warehouse (1885-1887) into popular design. The entry portal topped by on open balcony can be seen in Sullivan's Auditorium Building (1887-1889). The Germania's first rendition in 1892 was reported to have been inspired by The World Building in New York City (1889); itself the symbol of Pulitzer's publishing business, yet still paying homage to Richardson.

Alterations to the exterior have been few and have been primarily confined to repairs and replacement of entrance doorways, the removal of the "Germania" statue in 1917and the loss of the eagles from the roof at an unknown date. The third floor balcony was reopened in 1983 during John Conlan's rehabilitation of the building. Entry doors were cut into North Second Street side of the building in 1937. Entrances were cut into the Plankinton Avenue façade in 1950, 1962 and 1964. (Permit records dated May 4, 1937; June 21, 1950; October 1, 1962 and April 4, 1964)

HISTORY OF GEORGE BRUMDER May 24, 1839 - May 9, 1910

This study report is not intended to include an all-encompassing biography of George Brumder but to summarize his life and accomplishments in Milwaukee. His story is chronicled in at least ten histories of Milwaukee and histories of important Wisconsin persons. Brumder's significance was recognized both during his lifetime and after his death. He left us a visible legacy that remains with us today in the building known as the Germania.

George Brumder was born on May 24, 1839 in Breuschwickersheim in the province of Alsace-Lorraine, land that has alternately been part of Germany and France over the centuries. He was the fifteenth of sixteen children. The family was of German origins. George's father, George Brumder, Sr. was a respected educator. George's mother was Christena Noeppel. At the age of 18 George came to Wisconsin accompanying an elder sister who was to marry a Lutheran minister, Gottlieb Reim in Helenville, Jefferson County, Wisconsin. George originally worked as a woodsman then set out for Milwaukee in the fall of 1858. Another sister, Maria Eva had married Reverend William Streissguth and was living in Milwaukee. George lived with them and found work laying the first street car tracks in the city. He then worked as a carpenter and built houses. (Flower 1881 page 1546; Bruce Vol. 2 page 71; Sharon M. Mallman, "The Brumders of Milwaukee," Milwaukee History, Volume 3, Autumn 1980 No. 3, pages 66-67)

George Brumder met his wife Henrietta Brandhorst at Grace Lutheran Church where they were both members. After their marriage on July 16, 1864, they opened a modest book store and George published a small weekly magazine, Der Familienfreund with his brother-in-law Reverend Streissguth. They also did book-binding, published German Lutheran hymnals, bibles, and other religious texts. (Usher Vol. 4 page 630, 632; Mallman, page 67)

German publications flourished during this time in Milwaukee owing to the large German American population. Many were sponsored by secular German immigrants who supported republican ideals but were antagonistic to religion. Those who adhered to their religious upbringing wanted to counter the influence of the secular press and formed the Protestant Publishing Company in 1870 [some sources say 1872 or 1873]. They called their newspaper the Germania. When the investors encountered financial difficulties they turned to George

Brumder. The business was reorganized as the Germania Publishing Company and George Brumder took over the presidency and management. For a number of years the business was on uncertain footing but Brumder eventually acquired the company and the continued growth of the German American community provided a steady and lucrative readership.

To accommodate the expanding business, Brumder erected a three story building at the northeast corner of today's Plankinton and Kilbourn Avenues in 1876. A fourth story was added in 1886 in the form of a mansard roof. This building is no longer extant; a widened Kilbourn Avenue and Pere Marquette Park are now in this location. (Bruce, Vol. 2 page 71)

Trusted by his Protestant, mostly Lutheran readership, and gifted with keen business acumen, Brumder was able to acquire additional papers and print other religious publications. He declined to run for public office, although asked, and felt an obligation to his readers to promote American values. He also recognized the power of the press to influence public opinion and policies. Although allied mostly with the Republican Party, the Germania was an independent voice that would disagree with party and governmental policies. (Bruce, Vol. 2 page 72) "Die Germania became the recognized authority of the German Protestant circles of the west, and in time became probably the most influential German newspaper in the entire United States, its circulation having been extended to the most diverse sections of the country." (Usher, Vol. 4 page 631)

Despite the economic recession in the early 1890s, Brumder was able to expand significantly both in his personal life and through developing other businesses. He constructed a new headquarters in 1896-1897, boldly identified as the Germania, located on an odd shaped parcel bounded by today's North Plankinton Avenue, North 2nd Street and West Wells Street. This was only a block south from his prior building. Significantly, Brumder retained his allegiance to Kilbourntown, west of the Milwaukee River and the hub of most German American activity. In the manner of most large commercial structures of the time, the new building housed not only his various printing and publishing activities but provided top notch office space to other professionals. Brumder chose the architectural firm of Schnetzky and Liebert to design the building. It stands as a monument of his success to this day.

In their private lives, the Brumders were also successful and the biographies paint a portrait of a happy union between George and Henrietta. The couple had eleven children, a number of whom died in infancy. Three daughters and four sons survived to adulthood. Daughter Amalia married George P. Mayer. Daughter Ida married a mister Merker/Maercker. A third daughter, Emma, lived on with her parents. There were four sons, William C.; George F. Herman O. and Herbert P. William C. Brumder was educated at Grace Lutheran School, the University of Wisconsin and attended universities in Germany. He succeeded his father in the publishing and banking business and as president and director of the Concordia Fire Insurance Company. He died in 1929. Son George F. took over as bank and publishing head. Son Herman O. was president of Pressed Steel Tank. Son Herbert P. was president of Blackhawk Manufacturing Company. (Gregory, Vol. 4 page 444-445)

For a good part of their marriage, the Brumders had lived above their business. In the early 1880s they moved to a house at Tenth and Wells Streets. In 1891 the Brumder's moved from their 10th Street home to a palatial residence at 1728 West Wisconsin Avenue (northeast corner of North 18th Street and West Wisconsin Avenue). The three story structure had been built in 1885 by John W. Cary, general counsel for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. The Brumder's extensively remodeled the exterior, giving it a German Renaissance Revival character, complete with scrolled gables. They also added elaborate woodwork to the interior. George lived here until his death in 1910; his widow Henrietta retained the mansion until her death on April 19, 1924. The Brumders also purchased property on Pine Lake in Waukesha County in 1892 and built a retreat called Villa Henriette where they spent a good deal of time. (Mallman, pages 70-71)

Besides the Germania and other publications, George Brumder was the head of the Concordia Fire Insurance Company of Milwaukee (established 1870), and from 1904 through his death he was president of the Germania National Bank, later known as the National Bank of Commerce which merged into the First Wisconsin National Bank in 1932. The bank had been established by Brumder in 1903 with eight leading German Americans. It was part of Brumder's diversification strategy in recognition that German American publications would wane with the Americanization of second generation Germans. The bank and insurance company both had offices in the Germania Building. Brumder is also said to have fostered many other corporations including the Cream City Cement Company (1889-1894); he had ownership of the American League Baseball Club in Boston (1903-1904), and acquired American Standard Steel Fitting Corporation which combined with the Pressed Steel Tank Company of West Allis in 1905.

Much was said about George Brumder upon his death on May 9, 1910. He was almost 71 years of age. It was acknowledged that he owned the "most extensive line of newspapers published in the German language in the America." (Bruce Vol. 2 page 71) He was remembered as a man generous with charities who made many contributions to worthy causes. He was "a man of fine mental powers, [with a] broad and exact knowledge of public affairs and mature judgment concerning matters of economic and governmental relations." (Usher, Vol. 4 pages 631-632) The words industry, perseverance, integrity and faith were also used to describe him. (Bruce, Vol. 2 page 68) "He died, respected and honored by the community and beloved by his employees. A greater tribute than this comes to no man." (Bruce, Vol. 2 page 68-71) It was also brought up that three presidents had consulted with him in his lifetime, President William McKinley, President Theodore Roosevelt, and President Taft. The governor of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin senators and the President of the United States as well as the German ambassador all sent condolences upon his death. (Bruce, Vol. 2 page 72; Usher, Vol. 4 page 632) Brumder never lived to see the rapid decline of the German-language printing business and the anti-German sentiment that leveled hostility at his building during the First World War.

An impressive paragraph can be found in Usher's Wisconsin Its Story and Biography 1848-1913

> If the city of Milwaukee had wished to express through the character of one citizen its best ideals of thought and action during the second half of the nineteenth century, no one man could have represented those ideals so broadly and fully as the late George Brumder. His death on May 9, 1910, marked the passing of a citizen of remarkable character and activities, and a great benefactor. As a journalist he was without peer of any of his contemporaries in not only that state but the nation. He also had business ability of an exceptional type, and through his long career acquired both wealth and influence, which he wisely diverted and applied for the benefit of his fellow citizens. …His name looms large in connection with the civic and business history of Milwaukee, and the state of Wisconsin, where he established his home in pioneer days, and where he rose through his ability and efforts to a pace of commanding influence, and where he held secure vantage ground in popular confidence, esteem and admiration. In the domain of newspaper publication and editorial control, Mr. Brumder was long one of the most prominent and influential figures in Wisconsin, and he stood as a noble type of the self-made man." (Usher Vol. 4 page 629)

After George's death, the Brumder sons carried on the family businesses and widow Henrietta continued to live in the Wisconsin Avenue mansion with her daughter Emma. When Henrietta died at the age of 83 in 1924, the Brumder children all had houses of their own, many in the North Point neighborhood, and West Wisconsin Avenue was losing its fashionable cache. The residence then became a rooming house for Marquette University medical students, the fate of many a mansion near that institution. Children's Hospital, already located at the east end of the block, razed the Brumder house for expansion in 1944. After a long fundraising campaign from

1944 through 1957, a new building was constructed on the site in 1959. (West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey; September, 1984, Chapter 5 Health and Social Services page 16; Chapter 13 Notable Persons/Entrepreneurs George Brumder)

GERMAN PUBLISHING IN MILWAUKEE

Much of the following is taken from the chapter on Information Services, authored by Carlen Hatala, as part of the Central Business District Historic Resources Survey, March 1986.

Milwaukee's nineteenth century press was a lively and energetic medium. The city's first publication, the Milwaukee Advertiser, began during territorial days in 1836. For the most part, early newspapers were established as vehicles for political propaganda and particular philosophical views and were seen as a means to influence their readership rather than to serve as objective information publications. As a result, numerous short-lived papers were begun in response to the varying political issues of the day from abolition to socialism. Ultimately, these either merged with their stronger competitors or suspended publication once the political or business climate had changed. Changes in ownership and political affiliation were frequent, often confusing the contemporary reader as well as today's historian.

Milwaukee's early pioneer population supported a relatively wide range of diverse publications. For example, in 1855 there were seven dailies (three German) with a circulation of 6,000; nine weeklies with a combined circulation of 15,000 and five tri-weeklies with a circulation of 2,500.

Until 1870, the number of dailies did not exceed nine. Four were in English (Sentinel, Evening Wisconsin, News, and The Commercial Times). Five were in German (Herold, Seebote, Banner, Germania, and Socialist). (Milwaukee Illustrated, p. 118; Knoche, "The German Immigrant Press in Milwaukee," p. 48)

In the mid-1870s, the number of weeklies and monthlies blossomed so that there were twenty-six total publications being printed in 1875 compared to only six a decade earlier.

By 1880 the number had increased to forty-seven and by 1885 to fifty-three. By 1907 this number of publications had burgeoned to an all time high of 123 with some eleven dailies, forty-three weeklies, and fifty-six monthlies. Of these, eighty-two were English language publications and thirty-three were German. The bulk of these, some thirty-one, were general news and political publications while twenty-one were devoted to religious subjects, fourteen to literature and family-oriented subjects while the remainder covered such topics as business, agriculture and science. (Watrous, Memoirs, pp. 457-458; Milwaukee City Directory) Out of this plethora of dailies, three dominant English language papers emerged, the Journal, the Sentinel and the Evening Wisconsin. Today the combined Journal/Sentinel remains as the sole daily paper. Of the numerous German language publications, the Herold and the Germania were the most prominent. Neither exists today.

Milwaukee's publishing center was concentrated in the Central Business District. Through the 1860s most publishers were located along North Water Street, between Mason and Clybourn Streets. Eventually there was a concentration on or in the vicinity of Mason Street and the area was known as Printers' Row. By the 1870s some printing began to be done west of the Milwaukee River. In the 1890s a West Side publishing center developed along North Plankinton Avenue and in the Germania Building at 135 West Wells Street. With the absorption of the smaller papers, and the decline of the German press following World War I, the once strong East Side printing center completely dispersed. The two surviving and now combined papers, the Journal and the Sentinel, both relocated to the west side at Fourth Street.

Contemporary with the proliferation of English-language papers, Milwaukee's substantial German population supported a flourishing German language press. The height of circulation and prominence occurred in the period from 1890 to World War I. Like the English press, there

were a variety of dailies, weeklies, monthlies, and semi-monthlies that were offered to the readers. The German press, however, was more diversified and produced agricultural journals, literary and religious publications, scientific journals and numerous publications representing the viewpoints of a multitude of German philosophical and labor organizations. The most important publications were the Herold and Germania. Eventually, most of the major independent German publications were absorbed by the giant Germania Publishing Company and the Germania Herold Association both of which had nationwide distributions. Ultimately, the Americanization of second and third generation German descendants, the strong anti-German sentiment during and after World War I, and new immigrant quotas all resulted in a decline of circulation that spelled the end of the powerful German press by the early 1920s.

THE GERMANIA

The Germania was begun in 1873 by the German Protestant Printing Association which had been formed to counteract the influence of the liberal Herold (established 1860) and the Catholic Seeboth (established 1851). A weekly publication, the paper had a circulation over 5,000 and was supported by twenty local Lutheran churches. The paper's immediate success led to the publication of a daily edition beginning in November of 1873 as well as a farm publication, Der Hausfreund, which contained literature, poetry and hints on farming and home economics.

During the troubled economic times of 1874, George Brumder, one of the original founders, began purchasing the assets and liabilities of the German Protestant Printing Association and ultimately became sole owner of the Germania and Der Hausfreund. By the end of 1874, the weekly paper alone had a circulation of 20,000 copies. In 1876, the paper moved to a new three-story brick building at the northeast corner of Plankinton and Kilbourn Avenues, a half block south of its first home. Financial stability was elusive despite the fact that Brumder offered special inducements to readers such as free books for prepaid Germania subscriptions and added a women's column to the Germania similar in content to the popular Hausfreund. In 1878 Brumder discontinued the Germania's daily edition. By 1881 he had 60 employees as well as traveling salesmen in various parts of the country. (Flower 1881, page 1546) In 1886 a fourth story mansard roof was added to the building so it can be assumed that publication was seeing an improvement. By 1888 the Germania had a circulation of 94,500. (Mallman, page 69) The business also did other publishing, book-binding and book selling. Graduate student Gerhard Becker and the staff of UW-Milwaukee's Golda Meir Library have completed a bibliography of some 526 book titles published by the company. (Milwaukee County Historical Society Newsletter, "Brumder Book", 2001)

The Germania resumed semi-weekly publication in 1889 but by then, it was just one of number of other monthlies and quarterlies published by the firm. Brumder took advantage of the Bennett Law controversy in 1890 to resume daily publication of the Germania. The law made English language mandatory in elementary schools, which the German population saw as an attack upon their culture and their parochial schools. Ultimately, the law's Republican supporters were defeated for reelection and the bill was repealed.

The Germania was now in a superior position to the other German dailies and the 1890s were a period of expansion. By 1895 the weekly had the largest circulation of any German-language edition in the country. In 1896 the monumental, eight story Germania Building was constructed at 135 West Wells Street to house the firm's bookshop, presses, typesetting and job printing equipment. The heavy equipment was housed in the basement and the upper floors were rented as office space.

In 1897 the Germania bought out one of its competitors Die Abendpost and began a Sunday edition. The weekly Germania was now circulated throughout the northwest, west and southern states. The daily edition was renamed the Germania-Abendpost and the Sunday edition was known as the Germania Sontags Post. Acquisition continued as the Germania acquired the

Lincoln Freie Press in Lincoln, Nebraska in 1904 and the Milwaukee Herold in 1906. Brumder then formed the Union Press Company to publish the Herold-Seebote, Germania-Abendpost and the Sunday paper the Milwaukee Sontags Post. By 1910, Sheboygan's German daily had been acquired (Sheboygan Zeitung) as well as a daily and weekly in Buffalo, New York and three large weeklies in Chicago, Illinois. The Union Press Company then became the Germania Herold Association while the Germania Publishing Company handled the business of other publications in addition to running a bookstore, printing firm and bindery. By the time of Brumder's death in 1910 the Germania Publishing Company controlled all of Milwaukee's German papers and published others in Chicago, Illinois, Lincoln, Nebraska, and several small towns in Wisconsin. It published German calendars, almanacs, books and other materials.

In 1913 the names of the morning Herold-Seebote and the evening Germania-Abendpost were both changed to the Germania-Herold. Responding to World War I anti-German sentiment, the names were changed again to the Milwaukee Herold. The weekly Germania became the Milwaukee America and the Germania Herold Association took on the old name of Union Press Company while the Germania Publishing Company was renamed the North American Press. The building itself was now renamed the Brumder Building and the statue of Germania was removed and subsequently lost. The name Germania was also chiseled off the building.

In 1924, the Brumder family consolidated their weeklies in a new headquarters at Winona, Minnesota and moved out of the Brumder Building. Sons George and Herman continued to publish the daily Milwaukee Herold and the Milwaukee Sontags Post until 1932. The daily completely ceased publication in 1932 and the Sunday paper was relocated to Winona. The Brumder Building was sold by the family to the Plankinton & Wells Company on October 6, 1946. Sam Rosen was president of the latter company. (Notes included with City Building Permits for 135 West Water Street)

The North American Press continued to operate under sons George E. and William C. Brumder out of headquarters at 728 North 7th Street which it had occupied since the mid-1920s.

By the 1940s North American Press was one of the nation's leading job printers and by the 1950s was the country's largest producer of wholesale hardware catalogues and did printing for other businesses and advertising agencies. In 1964 it merged with the lithography firm of Dosie and Johnson and became known as NAPCO Graphics Art Center in New Berlin, Wisconsin.

THE GERMANIA BUILDING

In a period that featured many stories about large building projects, such as City Hall, and the Pabst Theater, the Sentinel devoted four columns to the Germania Building on Sunday April 4, 1897. The writer said that such buildings as the Germania were more fitting monuments to prominent men than any "costly marble shaft" and that a building of this type, "useful as well as ornamental" would be an "enduring relic of his personality and memento of his business sagacity" long after Brumder would pass away. The writer's forecast has proven correct.

The building was something that George Brumder had been planning for some time. He began buying up the properties on the parcel bounded by West Wells Street, North Plankinton Avenue and North Second Street before 1892. Most of them were masonry buildings that housed a variety of businesses from lithographers to a manufacturer of truss hoops and cooper tools as well as saloons. H. Russell Zimmermann wrote that the purchases were made secretly to keep the prices down. The purchases amounted to some $200,000 and included sixteen units. (Zimmermann, "Germania once ruled local skies," Milwaukee Journal, Home Section, Sunday April 26, 1981, page 2)

An unnamed article at the Milwaukee County Historical Society dated February 28, 1896 stated that Brumder chose Schnetzky and Liebert to design the building after looking at a number of

competitive plans. It is not clear whether there had been a formal competition for the Germania.

It had earlier been announced in 1892 that Brumder's new building would be ten stories high and resemble the New York World Building in New York City, built by publisher Joseph Pulitzer in 1889. It stood at 26 stories and was the tallest structure in New York at that time. A watercolor rendering of the Germania proposal survives and shows similarities. Both feature a rusticated base, windows grouped under arcades, a monumental arched entry and a dome, but the Germania proposal was only ten stories tall. The watercolor rendering of the proposal had been prepared by Eugene Liebert and Schnetzky & Liebert is identified on the drawing.

The financial panic of 1893 led to many bank closings and ruined fortunes and set back the economy for several years. Building projects came to halt. It is thought this happened to the Germania. When the project was resumed, the dome had been eliminated from the building and the building was reduced to eight stories. The permit to construct the building was issued on May 29, 1896 and the cost was estimated to be $300,000. Charles Kieckhefer Jr. was the contractor. Schnetzky & Liebert remained the architects. Zimmermann indicates that Eugene Liebert was the primary designer of the partnership. His training in Germany made him popular among Milwaukee's German American businessmen and he would later do many residential projects for them.

The building's style was called "renaissance" at that time and today we would refer to it as a German form of Beaux Arts design. The materials were substantial and meant to last. They included blue Bedford limestone for the first two stories, pressed brick for the main superstructure and terra cotta trimming. It featured a projecting cornice that extended out 4-1/2 feet supported with iron and a stone balcony with stone gable and Doric [Tuscan] columns. A heroic statue of Germania surmounted this gable. It is interesting to note that the once popular cream brick was not used on the structure. Instead, a tan brick was selected. This change in tonality was widespread in Milwaukee in the 1890s, especially in the buildings designed in the German Renaissance Revival form. The Pabst Theater, the Pabst Mansion, and City Hall are among the projects where this is most evident.

As attractive as was the exterior, Germania's interior was given a lot of attention as well. The building was constructed of steel with "porous tile arches being used to support the floors." The Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows the building was made of "steel with reinforced concrete". (Sanborn 1910-1926, Vol. 3 part 4 page 330)

Small vitreous hexagonal tiles covered the floors in the hall, toilet rooms and stairways. The halls were clad with 4 foot high Tennessee marble wainscoting and the toilet rooms were clad with six feet of Tennessee marble wainscoting. The interior featured the finest quality of polished white oak and the hall doors were bronze. The Evening Wisconsin added that the building also featured a "three-cornered light shaft." (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897; Evening Wisconsin, Saturday May 23, 1896 page 8)

The Sentinel went on extol the building's fireproof qualities, its excellent lighting and heating and "perfection of its sanitary arrangements." Much was made of the fact that this was a modern building with a lot of technological amenities. It was not merely a beautiful art object but a highly functioning machine that had to incorporated power, heating and lighting, as well as fireproofing.

"In this really elegant, commodious and altogether up-to-date structure The Germania Publishing company will occupy the basement as well as the first, seventh and eighth floors. The rest of the building has been done off into offices suited to all kinds and conditions of business. Still be they en suite or but a single apartment the same care is evidenced in the general arrangement of the apartment and character and quality of the interior finish which those who have already inspected them pronounced to be among the best and most

convenient they have ever seen." Brumder's own office was located at the northwest corner of the first floor. The publishing company occupied the North Second Street side of the first floor and at the seventh and eighth floors were the editorial, job printing, composing rooms and typesetting operations. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897; Zimmerman, "Germania once ruled local skies" Milwaukee Journal April 26, 1981)

The Hilgen Manufacturing Company furnished the woodwork said to be of the type one would find in a residence. The job cost $15,000 and took about 6 months to complete. The wainscoting, casings, jambs, bases, sash, doors and wardrobes were all of seasoned oak with a natural finish. "All of the work was fitted and finished at the company's factory, and with such nicety that but few trivial alterations had to be made when it was finally placed in the building." Hilgen Manufacturing was "one of the best known and most substantial of its kind in the Northwest." It made a specialty of woodwork for both residential and commercial buildings and employed about 130 men. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

The new building's fireproof qualities were attributed to its steel frame and the use of metal lath and a type of plaster known as adamant. The fire-proof partitions were made "by the use of small channel iron, to which is laced metal lath. On this adamant is laid to the desired thickness, which is usually from one and one-half to two inches. After curing this material becomes as hard as sawed stone and is fully as durable. Still another desirable in the use of this material is the fact that it saves a floor space of fully four inches on every partition, which in a ten-story building for instance, means fully half a floor gained." The material was likewise cheaper than tile and was "a support and not a dead weight." In the Germania Building it was given a float or sand finish, making it easy to paint. Adamant was also prized for its "elasticity, non-absorbent qualities, imperviousness to heat or cold and many other qualities." Over 8,000 barrels of adamant were used in the building. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

The Germania's elevator system was also explained in detail. The building was equipped with seven elevators. Five were run by a hydraulic compression tank system (three freight and two passenger). Two were run by electricity (freight). The passenger elevators ran from the first to top story at a speed of 400-500 feet a minute. One of the three hydraulic freight elevators was a high speed model, moving one thousand feet per minute. It ran from the composing and book rooms to the press room below. The other two hydraulic elevators ran only from the basement to the first floor. The two electric freight elevators ran from the basement to the top floor and were for general use. The A. Kieckhefer Elevator company supplied the elevators. They had also supplied the elevators for Milwaukee City Hall, known for being "noiseless, rapid and absolutely safe." (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

The electrical work was noteworthy and engineered by A. M. Patitz. It had the "distinction of being the first printing establishment to be operated entirely by electricity with directly connected motors without belts. These motors, which are conveniently geared to each press and so placed as to be hardly visible, are equipped with a speed controlling mechanism, so that the speed of the presses can be varied 10 per cent in either direction. There are twenty-three motors in all, which are driven by three large dynamos aggregating 185 kilowatts, which is equivalent to 250 horsepower; the entire engine power available amounts to 300 horsepower." (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

P. Petersen & Sons did all of the finishing, polishing, painting and decorating as well as supplied the glass. The colors of paint were principally white and cream. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

The Joseph Shaver Granite and Marble Company supplied the 12 cars of materials for the building including ten cars of Tennessee marble, one car of Italian marble and one car of Vermont marble. The marble contract was $13,000. Italian marble was used for the "vestibule, main staircase, banisters, pillars and caps." The wainscoting and bases on each floor were of

gray Tennessee marble. The toilet rooms and the large barber shop in the basement were furnished in gray marble. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

The Wollaeger Manufacturing Co. supplied the office interiors. The main office featured a base of marble and panels of wainscoting of quarter-sawed white oak finished in a "light antique." There was also ornamental screen work above the desk. Wollaeger was chosen to provide the fixtures for Brumder's new book store as well. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

Northern Electrical Manufacturing Company of Madison, Wisconsin provided the steel, spherical electric motors and one dynamo that ran the presses, elevators, book-binding and other machinery in the Germania. This direct electric drive connected each motor to its press or machine and did away with the shafts, belts and pulleys and attendant power losses. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

Crawley & Co. supplied the steam jacket feed water heater. The Fred M. Prescott Steam Pump Co. of Milwaukee supplied the four pumps for the building, used to pump the boiler, and hydraulic elevators. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

"All of the locks furnished for the Brumder building, are of the celebrated "Niles" make, the design of the plates and escutcheons being in what is known as the "Empire" ornamentation and manufactured by the Chicago Hardware. Mfg. Co. Philip Gross hardware of Milwaukee did the installation. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

Rohn & Meyer supplied the 42 vaults and 75 vault safes for the building as well as the vault fixtures. (Milwaukee Sentinel, April 4, 1897)

The Evening Wisconsin reported that building inspectors found no flaw in the construction. The paper also stated that two aldermen got work on the building; John Weiher of the 18th Ward was awarded the excavating and Charles Kieckhefer of the Sixth Ward "got an important part of the construction." (Evening Wisconsin, Saturday May 23, 1896 page 8)

Both Gregory (Vol. 4 page 444) and Bruce (Vol. 2 page 71) describe the Germania Building as the largest office building in the city. "Not only was this structure the largest office building in Milwaukee at the time of its erection, but it is yet the largest building housing German newspaper interests in the world." (Usher Vol. 4 page 631)

CONDITION

The building has remained in almost original condition since its completion. Of the numerous permits taken out in the building's one hundred and sixteen year history, most have to do with alterations to the interior as would be typical in a building with numerous tenants Surprisingly, alterations began occurring not long after the building was constructed.

Concrete and stone was added to the foundation for the printing press in 1902. (Permit dated June 6, 1902) The seventh floor was completely re-arranged in 1905. (Permit dated ? 4, 1905) The bookstore was replaced by the expansion of the Germania National Bank in 1906. (Permit dated August 7, 1906) Partition walls were altered on the 6th and 7th floors in 1908 for the Wisconsin Central Railway Company. (Permit dated April ?, 1908) The two hydraulic elevators were completely overhauled in 1908. (Permit dated September 22, 1908) Partitions were altered on the second story in 1911. (Permit dated May 3, 1911) The fourth floor was altered in 1936 and a Postal Sub Station went into the building in 1937. It was for the Postal Sub Station that an entrance was cut into the exterior on the 2nd Street side of the building that year. (Permit dated May 4, 1937) An entrance on Plankinton Avenue was cut into the building in 1950. (Permit dated June 21, 1950) Another opening was cut into the exterior wall along Plankinton Avenue for an entrance to the Army and Navy Recruiting office. (Permit dated October 1, 1962) A permit for another door along Plankinton Avenue is dated April 4, 1964.

The once elegant building saw many unsympathetic changes in the 1960. Dropped ceilings, and new partition walls were frequently installed.. There are also references in the 1960s and 1970s of small fires that were confined to selected offices. The building codes required enclosure of the main staircase in the mid-1970s. A leaking roof was repaired in 1979 and the 8th floor ceiling was removed and repaired. All of these changes incrementally diminished the luster of the once prime office building.

Much of the early work was reversed when John Conlan took ownership in 1980. In 1983 he formed the Germania Building Corporation. The foundations were repaired, the sidewalk vaults were fixed, brick was repointed, the front balcony was reopened, and all lavatories and offices were remodeled in the 1980s. Working with designer H. Russell Zimmermann, John Conlan brought back the building to a semblance of its former elegance. Conlan held a grand reopening party on Thursday November 14, 1984. ("Reopening party is set for Germania Building," Milwaukee Journal, November 14, 1984)

A host of architects worked on the building over the last century and most were tenants in the Germania when hired to reconfigure spaces in the building. Original architect Herman P. Schnetzky formed a new partnership with his son as Schnetzky and Son and had offices in the Germania. All the alterations to the building in the early years were handled by Schnetzky until his death in 1916. Later architects working on the building included Leiser & Holst, Peter Brust, Peter Renner, Mark F. Pfaller II, and HGA.

No permit records survive to document the conversion of the basement into an underground parking facility but it was documented in the press in 1927. No permit records survive to document the removal of the sculpture of Germania but it is known to have been removed in 1918. Several attempts were made to track down the piece over the decades but it has not been found. It is not known when the eagles were removed from the globes at each of the principal corners. The sphere or orb and eagle motif was popular in Beaux Arts design and can be seen at the Milwaukee Central Library at North 8th Street and West Wisconsin Avenue.

OWNERSHIP

The Germania Building had a succession of owners once the George Brumder Estate sold the property. The Plankinton & Wells Company had ownership of the Germania Building from 1946 until purchased by John Conlan in 1981. A limited partnership was formed and Joseph Czerwinski also had ownership interest along with John Conlan.

Foreclosure action was begun in February, 1989 at the request of Mid America Federal Savings & Loan. Mid America subsequently owned the property from 1990 to 1994.

Germania Ltd Liability Co. was the next owner from 1994 to 2013. Partners included Sonny Bando, brothers Mark and Matt Chmura and Timothy Olson.

The current owner, Equitable Bank, took over the building through a sheriff's foreclosure sale in 2013. Equitable had filed a foreclosure suit in 2012 because the owners were in default on a loan, a situation made more complex by the bankruptcy of another partner, Timothy Olson. Equitable Bank is currently seeking a buyer for the property.

Milwaukee based Endeavor Corp. working with local developer Vangard Group LLC has proposed purchasing the building and converting it to affordable housing. ("Germania Building nears foreclosure," David Staats, Milwaukee Sentinel September 9, 1989; "Germania Building owners file for reorganization," Marilynn Marchione, Milwaukee Journal, October 16, 1989; "Equitable Bank seeks buyer for Germania office in Milwaukee", Sean Ryan, www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee July 24, 2013, update July 26, 2013; "Germania Building owners face foreclosure," Rich Kirchen, www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee . April 20, 2012;

"Apartments proposed for downtown Germania Building," Tom Daykin, Journal Sentinel, January 14, 2014)

OCCUPANTS

There is no question that the Germania Building was constructed not only to house a publishing business but to attract a wide variety of professionals. The earliest tenants in 1898 included accountants, architects (Nicholas Monshausen; Wiskocil & Schutz); barbers; investment and stock brokers; court commissioners; dentists, insurance agents (7), land and investment companies (7), lawyers (10), loan agents, mining companies, physicians (5), real estate agents (6) and even a tailor. This mix continued. In 1921 there were 27 lawyers, 14 real estate brokers, 7 insurance agents, and 9 medical offices. There were 6 architectural/engineering offices (Leiser & Holst; Sylvester J. Oswald, Schnetzky & Son; H. M. Hinez engineer, Sidney M. Siesel civil and construction engineer). Some 32 other businesses also leased space including the Concordia Fire Insurance Company, the Milwaukee Brewers Association, Waukesha Beach Amusement Company and Manfred Gross Theatricals among others. City occupancy permits show a different mix of tenants by the 1970s. There was a commercial photo studio, The Milwaukee Council on Alcoholism, Milwaukee County Labor Council AFL-CIO, Milwaukee Law Center, Palate Pleasers (a restaurant) the Milwaukee Press Club and United Technical Institute among others.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Germania Building is significant for its architecture, its architects and its owner and his business.

The Germania is an excellent example of ethnic architecture in Milwaukee and is also the largest example of such design in the city. The owner selected his architects, Schnetzky and Liebert, based on their skills at interpreting the latest design trends in Germany. Those design skills used classical motifs and mixed them with the Germanic love of sculptural ornament and a tonality that was subdued yet rich in detail. Tan brick, tan terra cotta ornament, tan terra cotta sculpture, and multiple domes are hallmarks of this building. The four copper domes with spiky finials are unlike anything seen elsewhere. Their intended or unintended resemblance to a pickelhaube helmet, as seen worn by German chancellor Otto von Bismark, has resulted in the nickname "Kaiser's helmet." Architects Schnetzky and Liebert produced some of Milwaukee's most memorable buildings, together in partnership and as solo architects including the Henry Harnischfeger House and

The Germania was also intended to be the public face of an extraordinarily success publishing and printing business. In addition to the Germania, other German language papers and publications were produced there. The building is tangible reminder of the importance that the ethnic press had in the lives of immigrant Americans; it not only helped the transition into American life but kept the immigrant informed of development in their homeland. The Germania Building was the center of the German press in American and was recognized as such in the 19th century,

The Germania is a testament also to the character and business acumen of immigrant George Brumder. He was well respected in the business community and among his employees and was known as being a fair, honest, industrious person. As a journalist he was said to be without peer, and he believed in editorial independence. He is responsible for creating the largest German language printing company in the United States and put Milwaukee on the map as its headquarters.

VIII. THE ARCHITECT

Although associated since 1884, the formal architectural partnership of Schnetzky & Liebert lasted a brief six years from 1892 through 1897, but left an indelible stamp on the city of Milwaukee. From churches to residences and commercial buildings, the partnership gave Milwaukee some of its most European looking buildings, all influenced by current design trends in Germany. We refer to this European-inspired work as ethnic architecture.

Herman Paul Schnetzky (1850 - February 21, 1916) was born in Wriezen, Germany and came to Milwaukee in 1868. The extent of his education in Germany is not known. The 1869 Milwaukee city directory listed him as a draftsman for the architects Mygatt and Koch. Koch had been an apprentice to Mygatt before becoming partner around 1866. George Mygatt was one of Milwaukee's first architects, but his direct influence on Schnetzky was probably minimal because the firm dissolved in 1870 about a year after Schnetzky was hired. Mygatt and Koch then each opened individual offices. Koch started a new partnership with Julius Hess in 1870 and is thought to have hired Schnetzky as a draftsman. By 1872 Schnetzky had become partner and the firm name became H.C. Koch & Co. The firm was known for its design of public and institutional buildings, but also produced residential, industrial and ecclesiastical buildings. Schnetzky had by this time become Koch's brother-in-law. (Flower, 1881 History p. 1500-1501; Milwaukee City Directories)

H. C. Koch & Co. hired an 18-year old immigrant draftsman, Eugene Liebert in 1884 and he became part of the eight to ten person staff. Liebert had arrived in Milwaukee the previous year from Germany. Liebert worked and trained in the Koch & Co. office until 1887 when Herman Schnetzky left to start his own practice. Schnetzky took Liebert with him and the young man worked as draftsman and foremen for Schnetzky. (Industrial History of Milwaukee 1886, p. 1221)

It was during this period that St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church at 804 West Vliet Street was designed and built. Some of Schnetzky's other commissions at this time included the National Register-listed St. Martini Lutheran Church (1887), 1520 South 16th Street (now Chavez Drive); St. Lucas Evangelical Lutheran Church (1888), 2605 S. Kinnickinnic Avenue; the McGeogh Building (1890), 322 East Michigan Street; and the Blatz Brewing Company Office Building (1890), 1120 North Broadway. Schnetzky specialized in designing churches for German congregations that were based on Old World German Gothic prototypes which featured tall soaring spires that were surrounded by clusters of spiky turrets.

Church commissions continued to be a substantial part of the firm when Schnetzky and Liebert went into partnership in 1892. Some of their collaborative design work includes St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church at 1453 North 24th Street (1892), St. John Evangelical Lutheran Church of Root Creek at 6802 West Forest Home Avenue (1896), and Trinity Evangelical and Reformed Church at 2375 North 4th Street (1892), Holy Trinity Church rectory (1892), and Saint Stephen's Lutheran School (1892).

The firm's most memorable secular commissions are those that expressed the ethnicity of their clients and include the Ernst Pommer House at 3035 West Kilbourn Avenue (1895), The Germania Building for publisher George Brumder at 135 West Wells Street (1896), and a large residence with a German domed tower at 2742 West State Street for Charles Gezelschad (1892).

The partnership dissolved in 1897, and Schnetzky and Liebert each continued their own separate practices. Schnetzky later formed another partnership with his son Hugo and together they designed commercial buildings in the city's Central Business District including the large Manufacturer's Home Building (1909) at 104 East Mason Street, the Breslauer & Company Building #3 at 220 North Broadway (1913), and the Ziegler Candy Company Building at 403 West Florida Street (1907). Schnetzky died on February 21, 1916 at the age of 66.

Eugene Liebert (1866 - April 27, 1945)

Eugene Liebert was born in Berlin, Germany in 1866, the son of builder Theodore Liebert. His mother was a member of the Gallun family, members of which had already established themselves in the Milwaukee tanning industry. . In 1883 the Liebert family relocated to Milwaukee. Eugene was first employed by the Trostel & Gallun Tannery, thanks to his mother's family ties to the Gallun family. The tannery recognized Eugene's talents and got him placed as a draftsman at the office of H. C. Koch & Co. where he started in 1884. Liebert followed Herman Schnetzky when the latter left his partnership with Koch, and Liebert worked as a foreman (1887, 1888) and then as a draftsman (1889, 1890) for Schnetzky. The two men formed a partnership in 1891/1892. Walter Liebert, Eugene's oldest son, related to H. Russell Zimmerman that Liebert was the designer end of the partnership and produced most of the drawings. Schnetzky was "the business half, the salesman, the club man and socializer, the getter of jobs…not as much of an architect." (Zimmerman, The Architecture of Eugene Liebert. Teutonic Style in the American Midwest. page. 9)

During the collaboration of Schnetzky and Liebert, they designed the McGeogh Building (1890, 1894) at 322 East Michigan Street and the J. P. Kissinger Block at 330 North Water Street (1893) among other structures. They even submitted a design for City Hall (submitted 1891-1892) when Milwaukee was accepting proposals for the new building. The firm's most memorable commissions are those that expressed the ethnicity of their clients as mentioned above.

Liebert went into practice on his own in 1897 and had offices in a number of downtown buildings including the Colby-Abbot Building. His later commissions included the additions to the Red Star Yeast Plant (1899-the 1930s), the Concordia College Administration Building on West State Street (1900) and the Fred Kraus Residence (1902) at 1521 North Prospect Avenue as well as a residence for Adolph Logemann, a member of his wife's family, (1912) at 2337 East Park Place.

Many of Liebert's clients were prominent local German-Americans, and his work reflected German stylistic influence including the A. O. Trostel residence (1907-1908, razed) Lake Drive, the Moritz Meissner House at 925 North 29th Street (1897), and the Henry Harnischfeger House at 3424 West Wisconsin Avenue (1905).

Two of Liebert's four sons, Walter F. and Carl, worked with him at different times during his career; Carl worked with his father during the latter's final years. Eugene Liebert was active until his death on April 27, 1945. For most of his adult life Liebert occupied the house at 1948 North Holton Street, which he built in 1887 when he was 21 years of age.

While Schnetzky and Liebert were not the only architects producing the buildings inspired by the styles in late 19th century Germany, they were among the best. The large and prosperous population of German Americans in Milwaukee led to a flowering of German-inspired culture that included the written and performing arts, an emphasis on education, and desire to publicly display their achievement through architecture. The German American architects in Milwaukee, some of whom were trained or at least traveled to Germany or had collections of books on German architecture as did Liebert, produced some of the city's most memorable buildings. City Hall still remains, the Pabst Building was razed; the Pabst Theater still stands. Many smaller commercial examples are known to us only through historic photos. Large commercial office buildings with ethnic influence were never common. With the demolition of the multi-story Pabst Building,(Solon S. Beman, 1892) the Germania Building remains as the sole surviving example in the Central Business District. In

SOURCES

Aikens, Andrew J. and Proctor, Lewis A., edits. Men of Progress. Wisconsin. Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Co., 1897

Bruce, William George, ed. History of Milwaukee City and County. 3 volumes. Milwaukee: S. J. Clarke publishing Company, 1922.

Central Business District Historic Resources Survey. City of Milwaukee. March 1986.

"Equitable Bank seeks buyer for Germania office in Milwaukee." www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee July 24, 2013, updated July 26, 2013

Flower, Frank A. editor. History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1881.

"Germania Building owners face foreclosure." Rich Kirchen. www.bizjournals.com/milwaukee . April 20, 2012)

"Germania Building owners file for reorganization." Marilynn Marchione. Milwaukee Journal, October 16, 1989;

"Germania Building nears foreclosure." David Staats. Milwaukee Sentinel September 9, 1989

Gregory, John G., ed. History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. 4 volumes. Milwaukee: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1931.

Industrial History of Milwaukee. Milwaukee: E. E. Barton, 1886.

Knoche, Carl Heinz. "The German Immigrant Press in Milwaukee." Unpublished PhD dissertation, Ohio State University, 1969.

Mallman, Sharon M. "The Brumders of Milwaukee," Milwaukee History. Volume 3, Autumn 1980 No. 3

Milwaukee City Building Permits. 135 West Wells Street.

Milwaukee Illustrated. Milwaukee: W. W. Coleman, 1877.

Milwaukee Sentinel.

Rascher's Fire Insurance Maps of the City of Milwaukee. Chicago: Rascher Fire Map Company, 1876, 1888.

"Reopening party is set for Germania Building." Milwaukee Journal. November 14, 1984.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1894, 1910, 1910-1926, 1910-1961.

Usher, Ellis Baker. Wisconsin Its Story and Biography 1848-1913. Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1914.

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

West Side Neighborhood Historic Resources Survey. City of Milwaukee. September, 1984.

Zimmermann, H. Russell. Germania Building. Milwaukee: Plankinton & Wells Company, 1982.

_____ "Germania once ruled local skies." Milwaukee Journal. April 26. 1981.

_____ The Architecture of Eugene Liebert. Teutonic Style in the American Midwest. La Crosse, Wisconsin: Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, 2006.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Germania Building located at 135 West Wells Street be given historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-3 and e-5 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

NOTE: The Germania Building is a contributing property in the Plankinton, Wells, Water Streets National Register Historic District (listed June 13, 1986). The non-profit group, Historic Milwaukee Inc., holds a façade easement on the building. The Germania Building was given Local Historic Designation on September 27, 1983. The designation was rescinded on June 16, 1987.

e-1 Its exemplification and development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the city, state of Wisconsin or the United States.

Rationale: The Germania Building is one of several buildings that symbolize the ascendance of the German-American culture in Milwaukee in the 1890s. The Pabst Building (razed), the Pabst Theater and City Hall in addition to the Germania Building display an Old World character that was important to German-Americans who had come into their own economically, politically as well as culturally. No where else in the United States did the German American community express itself as fully as in Milwaukee. The Germania housed the headquarters of the country's largest German-American publisher

e-3 Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the city of Milwaukee

Rationale: George Brumder was a giant figure in the history of Milwaukee. He was described as a man of "fine mental powers", a "great benefactor," a man who was knowledgeable of public affairs, industrious, faithful, generous, and a man of integrity. He had no peer as a journalist. He held the confidence, esteem and admiration of the public. He built up a small paper into a national publication, the Germania, and put Milwaukee on the map as the center of the German language press. He bought up many regional papers and continued to print them as well as publish and print German language books, religious tracts, calendars and almanacs among other materials. Brumder pulled together investors to form the Germania Bank, later known as the National Bank of Commerce which later merged into the First Wisconsin National Bank in 1932. There are at least ten published biographical sketches of Brumder, some written during his lifetime, some after.

Ellis Baker Usher writing three years after George Brumder's death summarizes him as follows: "if the city of Milwaukee had wished to express through the character of one citizen its best ideals of thought and action during the second half of the nineteenth century, no one man could have represented those ideals so broadly and fully as the late George Brumder…Mr. Brumder was long one of the most prominent and influential figures in Wisconsin, and he stood as a noble type of the self-made man."

None of Brumder's earlier commercial buildings survive and none of his Milwaukee residences are extant. The Germania Building stands as a tangible symbol of his achievement.

e-5. Its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

Rationale: The Germania Building was once described as "the most perfect, complete, and most comfortable office building erected of late in this city….Commanding light all over, it can be called the "Gem" of all office structures." (Milwaukee A Half Century's Progress p. 218). The Germania Building is without question the largest and most flamboyant of the extant German-influenced buildings in Milwaukee. This ethnic architecture is not seen in other cities and reflects the convergence of a wealthy and educated German-American clientele with architects who had training in Germany. The use of tan brick, tan terra cotta, sculpture, and domes all tie in to contemporary design trends then popular in Germany. It was a way to convey ethnicity through architecture, not is the rustic form of the early immigrants building agricultural buildings, but as high style works of art of the type seen in the burgeoning urban centers of Germany.

Preservation Guidelines for the Germania Building

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the historic designation of the Germania Building at 135 West Wells Street. The intent of the commission is to preserve the historic, existing exterior features of the building.

Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. Any exterior changes including repair of ornamental trim but exclusive of routine painting will require a certificate of appropriateness. Most certificates are issued on a staff-approved basis and only major new construction or alteration requests typically will go before the Historic Preservation commission. The Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. The installation of skylights where they would be visible from the street are not permitted as they would have a negative impact on the building. Skylights however may be added to the roof if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. No changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, the roofline or its pitch. Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible at all from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. If the building gets re-roofed, consultation with historic preservation staff is required to review and approve the new roofing material, flashing, drainage and gutters. Should a satellite dish be installed it should be placed where it is not visible from the street, preferably at the rear, away from the copper domes. No rooftop construction or addition is allowed, as this would have a negative impact on the historic character and proportions of the building. The construction of other rooftop features requires review by Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness. The copper domes and orbs are not to be removed or altered as they are character-defining features of the building.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

   a. Unpainted brick or stone or terra cotta must not be painted or covered. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, etc.) is not allowed.

   b. Re-point defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width. See the masonry chapters in the books, As Good As New or Good For Business for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. Using much harder, contemporary Portland cement mortar will not make a lasting repair and can damage the historic brick and stone and terra cotta. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Do not use mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any re-pointing.

   c. In the future should masonry cleaning be necessary it should be done only with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (baking soda, nut shells, dry ice, etc.) on limestone, terra cotta, pressed brick or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. The use of accepted chemical products to clean masonry is allowed and a test panel is required before general commencement of the work. Work should be done by experienced individuals as the chemical cleaning process can have a negative impact on the masonry. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before any cleaning would begin. .

   d. Repair or replace deteriorated masonry with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. The use of EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems) which is synthetic stucco is not permitted. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry

2. Wood/Metal

   a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Do not remove architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance.

   b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated elements is encouraged rather than complete removal

and replication. Structural wood epoxies are suggested for the lasting repair of damaged or decays areas of wood trim. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and material of the originals. Changes to or removal of fire escapes require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore them to the original condition. Do not make additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Do not change the size or configuration of the original window panes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. The use of structural wood epoxies is strongly encouraged to repair any minor damage or decay to wood windows.

2. Most of the windows currently visible on the building appear to be one-over-one sash. First and second story windows consist of large plate glass panes with transoms. At some point in time window sash on the seventh floor on the Second Street façade were changed out and replaced with tined and reflective low-e glass. Preservation of the historic windows is essential to this building's character and restoration is the accepted method of repair. In the event any windows need to be replaced, however, consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to determine appropriate glazing patterns. Tinted low-e glass is not acceptable. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. New windows must be made of wood. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Glass block is permitted in basement windows on the rear elevation where they are not visible form the street Do not use modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

   Any original windows on the building must be retained and repaired if at all possible. Vinyl, vinyl clad, metal, and metal-clad or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted. Wood combination/storm screen units or fixed storm windows that fit the shape of the original opening are permitted. The front, all glass entry doors date to the 1980s. These may be replaced with doors that are closer in appearance to the originals. Any replacement doors must be appropriate to the historic period of the building. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed where they are visible from the street. If permitted, the doors or grates must be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for this type of installation.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing historic trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. A replacement feature must match the original member in terms of scale, design, color, appearance and wood species. Existing historic trim in the form of terra cotta belt courses, trim and sculpture must not be removed unless it is for the purpose of repair. Spot repair is preferable to wholesale replacement of details. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the Wells Street, Plankinton Avenue or North Second Street elevations as this would greatly alter the character of the building. Any rear addition requires the approval of the Commission. Ideally an addition should either compliment or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of window proportion and placement, building height, roof configuration, scale, design, color, and materials, Additions must be smaller than the original building and not obscure the historic building.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture on the building shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to assist in the selection of exterior fixtures. Plastic internally illuminated box signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted. The current letters spelling out Germania above the entrance may remain as well as the signs at the corners along Wells Street.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, and fencing shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building. Should the owner want to replace the current railing along the building, consultation is required with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is necessary. At grade windows must not be removed. Any alterations to the paving, plant materials, or rear surface condition of the property require a consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. It is unlikely that the property can support small-scale accessory structures, like a gazebo, garage or fountain. If zoning codes would allow for any of these types of structures, they may be permitted depending on their size, scale and form and the property's ability to accommodate such a structure. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required.

1. Site work

New construction must respect the historic site and location of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure. Any new construction would be located to the rear since the lot lines and character defining features of the building would prevent any construction at the side or front elevations.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the building. New construction is to be smaller in size and shorter in height than the historic building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the building as a freestanding structure.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic building should be compatible with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained and materials not available when the building was constructed should be avoided.

I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair. This would generally be in case of a major fire or a natural catastrophe.

2. Importance

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building or portion of it contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

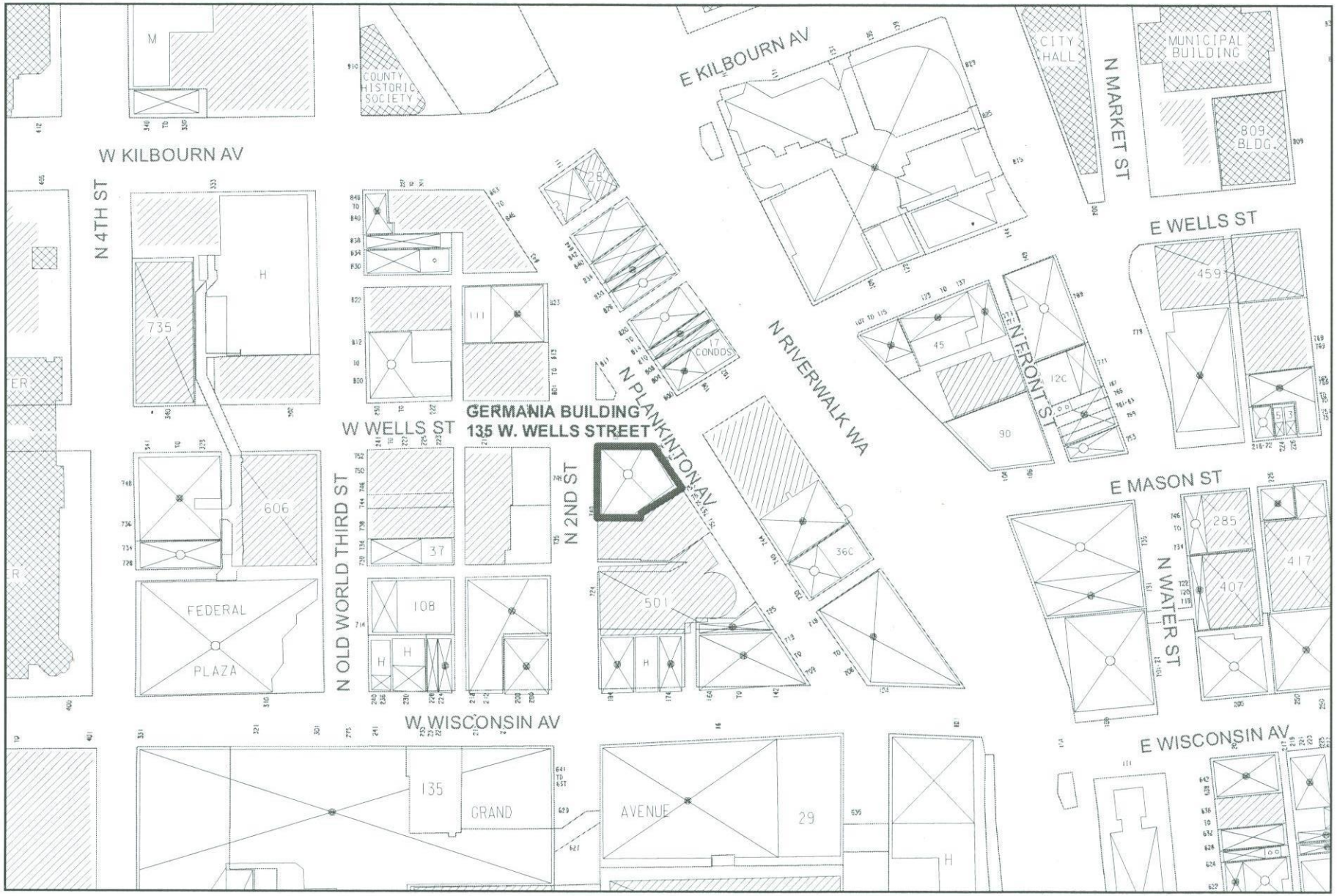
4. Potential for Restoration

Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character. On the Germania Building there is really no part of the building that would be a candidate for demolition based on this criterion.

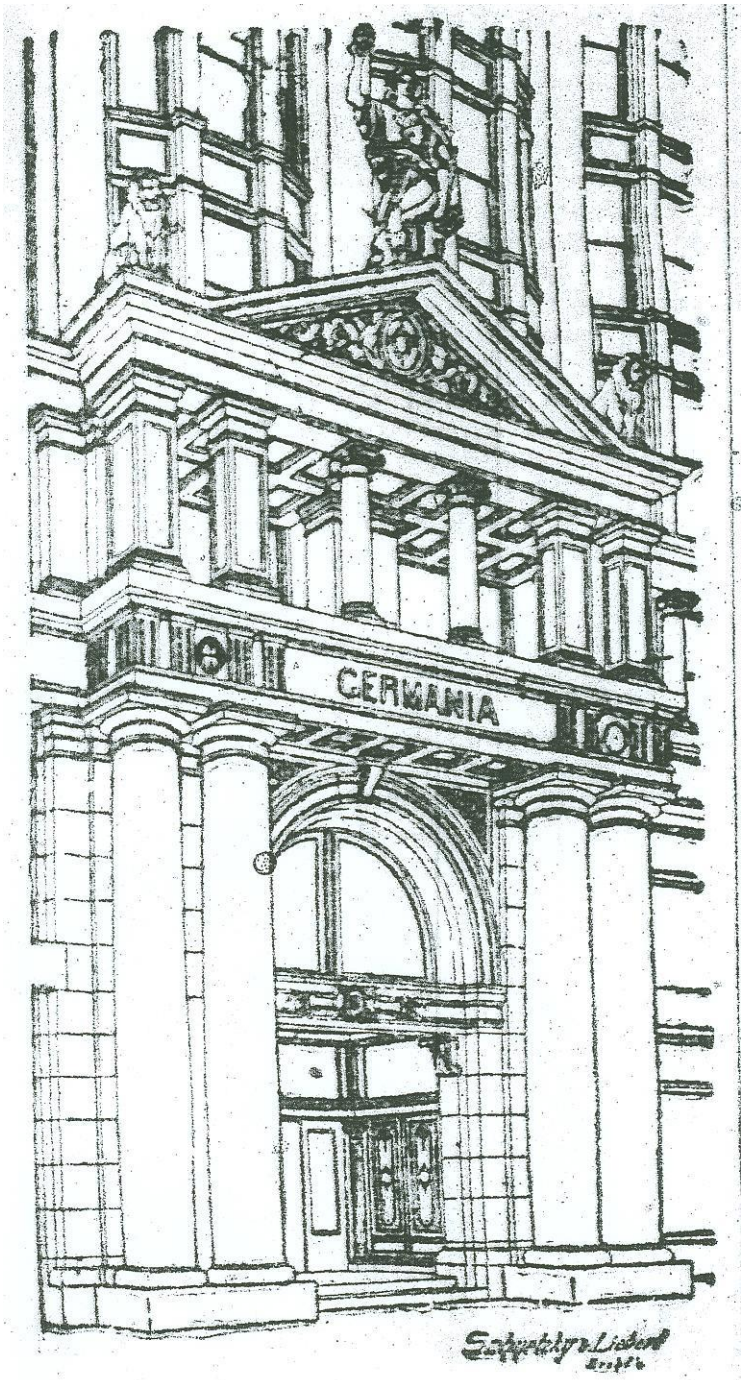
PROPOSED HISTORIC DESIGNATION
GERMANIA BUILDING - 135 W. WELLS STREET



0 100 200 400 Feet

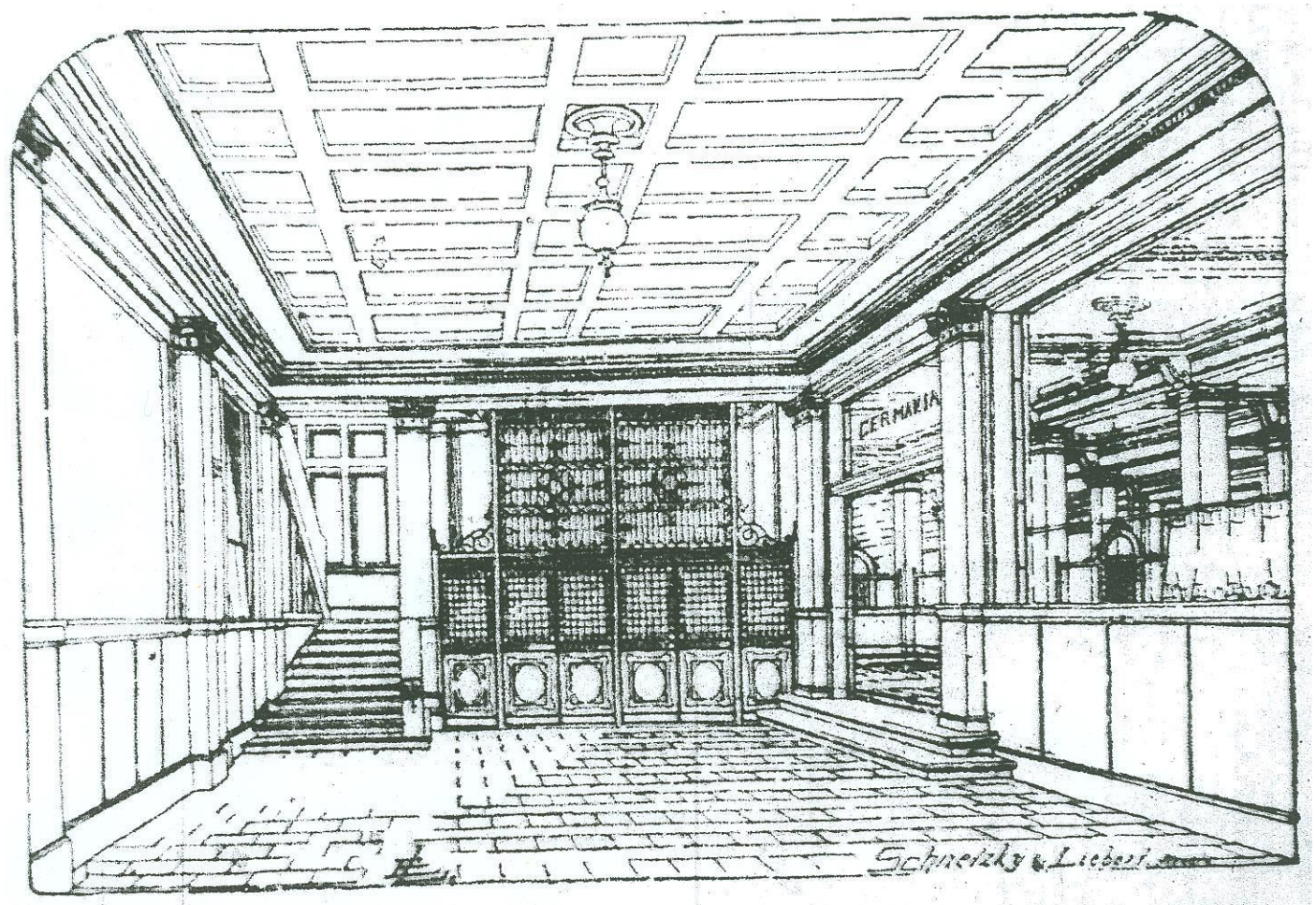
N

City of Milwaukee, 1-21-2014
150992.mxd, JDO



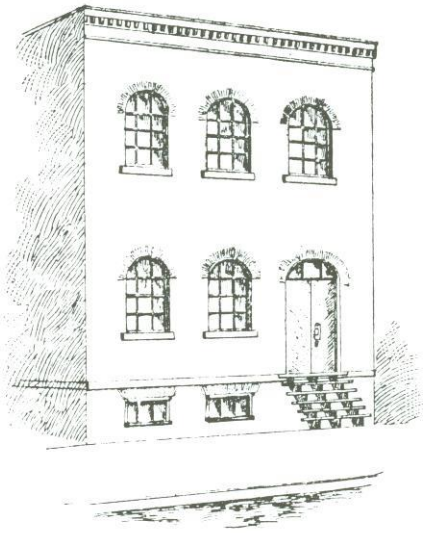
Exterior of Main Entrance to New Germania Building.

Milwaukee Sentinel, Sunday April 4, 1897



Interior of Main Entrance to New Germania Building.

Milwaukee Sentinel, Sunday April 4, 1897



Brumder's first location

Brumder's second location 1875-1895

Chancellor Otto von Bismark

Original Main Entrance Germania Building