

Hart Block (Hildebrand Block)
728 W. Main Street
Louisville
Jefferson County
Kentucky

HABS No. KY-120

HABS,
KY.
56-LOUVI,
106-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Architectural and Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20243

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HART BLOCK
(Hildebrand Block)

HABS No. KY-120

Location: 728 W. Main Street, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky.

Present Owner: Hilco Enterprises, Incorporated.

Present Occupant: Salas Furniture Company.

Present Use: Warehouse.

Significance: An excellent example of the late phase of cast-iron commercial facades, the Hart Block remains essentially as constructed, a testimony to the durability of cast-iron when properly maintained. It is also one of the most elaborate cast-iron facades remaining in the nation.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection: 1884. This date, found on iron plates attached to the bases of the building's piers, coincides with deed dates.
2. Architect: Charles D. Meyer. The son of John C. Meyer, a Louisville architect from 1872 to his death in 1878, Charles Meyer was born in Germany. Following his graduation from the Technische Hochschule von Deutschland in 1871 he emigrated with his family to Louisville where his father established his practice, taking on his son as an apprentice. Following his father's death, Charles gained primacy in the firm. His work was primarily executed for the large German population in Louisville at the time. His major buildings are as follow:

Schurman Block
 Walling Block, Fifth Street
 Frank Fehr Brewing Co., ice plant
 Schaefer-Myer Brewing Co., brewery
 Falls City Market Hall
 Normal School
 Store of Mrs. Fannie Sternau, Market near Shelby
 Charles Rosenheim Store, east of Hart Block
 German Insurance Bank
 Germania Safety Vault and Trust Co.
 The Ohio Falls and Leather Co., tannery
 German Reform Church,, Huntingburg, Ind.
 Masonic Home Chapel
 Residence of Albert Reutlinger, cashier of German National Bank

Residence of Henry Stegman, First Street near Lee Street
Residence of Frank Menne, Broadway
Residence of J. E. Kellner, Broadway near Floyd Street

3. Original and subsequent owners: The Hart Block is built on lot 136 of block 14-D in the City of Louisville. The following references to the title of these lots are found in the Jefferson County, Kentucky Deed Books.

1883 Deed, October 1, 1883, recorded in Deed Book 265, page 102. L. Leonard, trustee, W. H. Fox, Virginia E. Fox, and W. R. Fox sold a lot approximately 20'x 210' with existing storehouse to L. W. F. Hart for \$6,000.

1883 Deed, October 2, 1883 recorded in Deed Book 265, page 105. Susa T. Green sold the second of three lots composing the site of the building to L. W. F. Hart for \$7,000.

1883 Deed, October 29, 1883, recorded in Deed Book 265, page 312. Jane M. Dobbin, Leonard D. Dobbin and Julia Dobbin, James F. Dobbin and Alice Dobbin, and Rosalie D. Armistead and Louis C. Armistead, all by John S. Miller, Commissioner of the Louisville Chancery Court, sold the third lot composing the site of the building to L. W. F. Hart for 7,000.

1952 Deed, September 27, 1952, recorded in Deed Book 2938, page 450. Robert N. Hart and Virginia Hart, Ada Louise Hart Ross and Charles D. Ross, Mary C. Hart Woolsey and Harold Woolsey, and Gertrude D. Hart Hillerich and John A. Hillerich, Jr., heirs of L. W. F. Hart, sold the building to Jacob A. Hilderbrand, Lee Hildebrand, and Sidney Hildebrand, partners in the firm of Hildebrand and Co.

1956 Deed, October 11, 1956, recorded in Deed Book 3416, page 101. Jacob Hildebrand, Lee Hildebrand, and Sidney Hildebrand, partner in the firm of Hildebrand and Co. conveyed the property to Hilco Enterprises, Incorporated.

4. Builder, contractor, suppliers: The Merz Architectural Ironworks Company of Louisville cast the iron facade.
5. Alterations and additions: The interior of the Hart block has been altered and remodeled numerous times. However, its original function as warehouse has been maintained, thereby retaining a basic integrity to the interior. The exterior, with the exception of paint color, remains as constructed. The only major change in the exterior facade occurred in 1890 when the tornado demolished a large sheet metal false pediment which read, "Hart Block 1884," and was located above the central major pavilion.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

General description:

Classical treatment is employed on the cast-iron facade. All five floors of the building have slender columns with modified Corinthian capitals, which are placed between windows. Lintels, vertical piers and horizontal bands with various floral and leaf designs add further ornamentation to the facade. All windows have transoms of various sizes and shapes.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Early Views:

Old photograph of Hart Block in Louisville Illustrated. H.R. Page and Co., Louisville, 1889.

B. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed Books located in the Clerk's Office, Jefferson County Courthouse, Louisville, Kentucky.

C. Secondary and published sources:

Biography of Charles D. Meyer in Illustrated Louisville, Kentucky's Metropolis, Acme Publishing and Engraving Co., Chicago, 1891, p. 97.

Prepared by: David Arbogast
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
August 1974
and
Susan McCown
Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
Spring 1981

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance of Louisville and Jefferson County, Inc. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the HABS Field Office in Louisville by Prof. John Haggard, (Syracuse University), Project Supervisor; David Arbogast (Columbia University), Project Historian; Mary Oehrlein, Project Foreman; Bayer Lee (City College of New York), Architect; and Mary M. Herd (University of Tennessee) and Charles Raith (University of Cincinnati), student assistant architects. Susan McCown, a HABS staff historian in the Washington, D.C. office, edited the written descriptive data in the spring of 1981, for transmittal to the Library of Congress. HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher took the photographs of the structures in 1979.

ADDENDUM TO
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