

City Hall
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee
Milwaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-254

HABS
WIS
40-MILWA,
17-

ADDENDUM
FOLLOWS...

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

CITY HALL

HABS
WIS,
40-MILWA

Location: 200 East Wells Street (City Hall occupies the site bounded by East Wells, North Water, and North Market streets and West Kilbourn Avenue), Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin 17-

Present Owner: City of Milwaukee

Present Occupants: Various departments of city government, including the Mayor's Office, City Treasurer, City Attorney, Harbor Commission, Board of Purchases, City Comptroller, Tax Commissioner, Personnel Office, Municipal Reference Library, Common Council, City Clerk, and Election Commission.

Present Use: Offices

Statement of Significance: By virtue of its function, monumental size, and prominent downtown location, City Hall is Milwaukee's principal landmark.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1893-95. The site was chosen in 1890, the architect two years later. Construction began in the spring of 1893; the cornerstone was laid early the following year; and when City Hall was dedicated in December, 1895, the basement and six of the eight floors were finished. Completion of the seventh floor followed in 1896-97, the eighth floor still later. Total expenditures for the building and its furnishings came to more than \$1,000,000.
2. Architect: Henry C. Koch and Co. of Milwaukee.
3. Original and subsequent owners: City Hall was built for and remains the property of the city of Milwaukee.
4. Builders and suppliers: The contract for excavating, pilings, and filling went to C. H. Starke and the main contracts for the building to Paul Riesen of Milwaukee. The Hawley Down Draft Furnace Co. supplied the furnaces. As construction progressed, many revisions and additions were made, and as a result, still other contracts were awarded, including: Grant Marble Co., extra marble

work and mosaic tile flooring; J. G. Wagner, railing and skylight in the attic; Johnson Electric Service Co., tower clock and heat regulating apparatus; Van Kannel Revolving Door Co., seven revolving entrance doors; Runkel Automatic Door Co., elevator doors; Cassidy and Sons Manufacturing Co., gas and light fixtures; Rohn and Meyer, elevator annunciators; Western Electric Co., additional wiring, engine, and dynamo; Cutler Manufacturing Co., mail chute; George F. Rohn, steel lining in the City Treasurer's vault; Geuder and Paeschke Manufacturing Co., metallic vault fixtures; National Blower Co., ventilating apparatus; Adamant Manufacturing Co., extra plaster work; Northwestern Tile Co., extra tiling; Biersach and Niedermeyer, extra galvanized iron work; F. Sprinkman, extra plumbing; Stowager Automatic Telephone Exchange, telephone system; Hoffman and Baur, extra tin work; F. H. Kratzer, caulking and weather stripping; George Campbell, Centennial Bell Foundry, tower bell; Henry Ferge, finishing rooms on the seventh floor; and Interior Woodwork Co., extra woodwork. Most of the furnishings, designed for the building by the architect, were manufactured by the Northwestern Furniture Co. of Milwaukee. Stark Bros. of Milwaukee supplied the carpeting and shades.

5. Original plans: The original perspective drawing by H. C. Koch is preserved at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, 311 Municipal Building, Milwaukee. It was published in the Illustrated News Annual: Milwaukee 1892-93, Milwaukee, 1892, 4, and by Richard W. E. Perrin in Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee, 1968, 34. H. C. Koch and Co. plans, elevations, sections, and details are on file at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, as are eleven sheets on the structural steel and iron work, prepared in 1894 by the Ransome and Smith Co.
6. Alterations and additions:
 - a. On the exterior, City Hall has been changed very little since its dedication in 1895. In 1914 a fire escape, from C. Hennecke Co., was installed on the east wall. In October, 1929, the upper portion of the tower was badly damaged by fire (caused by defective wiring) and was rebuilt at the cost of \$40,000. A number of basement windows were bricked up during the present decade; and at unspecified dates the decorative iron railings along the roof were removed; the peaks of the large dormer gables on the east and west elevation were truncated; and most of the stone railing along the

third story was removed. Finally, the exterior has been repaired and the wooden trim repainted on several occasions.

- b. On the interior, City Hall has been significantly altered through the years. Today only the central section comprising the main floor lobby, light shaft, basement corridor and the corridors around the light well on the upper floors, and the Common Council Chamber retain anything of their original character. In the public areas the original iron railings, posts, and trim, the mosaic floors, and much of the oak woodwork and marble wainscot survive. However, the public areas have not gone unchanged. Wire screening has been put in place above the railings along the light shaft; the elaborate light fixtures have been removed, as has the illuminated glass floor in the main lobby; the original open cage elevators have been replaced and the iron stairway immediately behind them (on the west) enclosed. The Common Council Chamber has also been remodelled. Other areas of City Hall have seen even more extensive alteration--new flooring, new partitions, lowered ceilings, and the like. Scarcely a year has passed since 1900 without some sort of remodelling project, whether major or minor, but it appears that the most significant ones were as follows:

- 1) 1904-05: Changes in the fifth, sixth, and seventh floors to accommodate the Municipal Court, Clerk of the Courts, and offices of the District Attorney and School Board.
- 2) 1907-11: The illuminated glass floor in the main lobby was replaced by tile (1907). A fourth elevator was installed, and the eighth and ninth floors were remodelled, with new partitions put in on both floors and an iron stairway connecting these floors installed.
- 3) 1931-32: A \$200,000 remodelling project was carried out at the time the courts' suites in City Hall were vacated (on completion of the Milwaukee County Court House), and it included remodelling and redecorating the Common Council Chamber.
- 4) 1950 to present: Continuing remodelling, much of it carried out after completion (1960) of the new Municipal Building nearby, has involved

lowering the ceilings, installation of new partitions in many offices, vinyl flooring, fluorescent lighting, air conditioning, and a new heating system. City Hall was provided with new elevators, and the elevator shaft was enclosed.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. The competition held in 1891 to select an architect for City Hall attracted eleven entries and sparked heated debate in the Common Council before the commission finally went to H. C. Koch and Co. The black and white perspective rendering submitted by Koch survives, and, as noted, is displayed at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings. Drawings were also entered by James Douglas and Co., Schnetzky and Liebert, W. A. Holbrook, Van Ryn, Andree and Lesser, and Rau and Kirsch--all of Milwaukee, Fred Vogel of Cleveland, Henry Ives Cobb of Chicago, P. I. Kiegharn of New York, C. Reed Dewey of St. Paul, and Morrison and McEwen of Boston.
2. The ten-ton bell in City Hall's tower bears this inscription:

"When I sound the hour of day
From this grand, and lofty steeple
Deem it a reminder, pray
To be honest with the people."

Installed in 1896, it first tolled the arrival of the year 1897. Thereafter it marked the hours until 1925, when it was found that the vibrations were adversely affecting the tower. Since then the bell has sounded only on July 4 and occasions of civic celebration.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: There are several early twentieth century photographs in the collection of the Local History Room of the Milwaukee Public Library. The photographic collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society includes various views of the exterior at the turn of the century, a clipping showing the building under construction, a fine early view of the interior, as well as photos of the bell and of exterior details. The Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings is said to have a collection of photos, but at this writing, it has not been located. A view of City Hall as construction neared completion was published in Art Work of Milwaukee, Chicago, 1895, Fig. 70.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

"City Hall, 200 E. Wells Street", compiled by the Work Projects Administration, 1939-40. This includes all relevant Common Council proceedings, accounts of expenditures and alterations, and an inventory of all drawings then on file. Two copies of this study are kept at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, 311 Municipal Building.

Inspection of City Hall, July 21 and 29, 1969.

Interviews with James Boerner and John Zirwes, Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, July 21, 23, and 24, 1969.

b. Secondary and published sources:

Annual Reports of the City Comptroller, Police, Fire and Health Departments, Park Commissioners and Board of Public Works of the City of Milwaukee, For the Year Ending December 31st, 1896, Milwaukee, 1897.

Art Work of Milwaukee, Chicago, 1895, Fig. 70.

Illustrated News Annual: Milwaukee 1892-93, Milwaukee, 1892, 4-5.

Koch, H. C. and Co., Specifications of the Material and Labor to be Used and Employed in the Erection of a City Hall to be Built for the City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee, n.d.

Perrin, Richard W. E., Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee, 1968, 33-36.

Tesensky, C. J., "So You Will Know ...," The Bay View Observer, November 16, 1950, 1-2.

Unidentified clippings in the collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society.

Prepared by Mary Ellen Wietczykowski
1111 North Astor Street
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
August 5, 1969

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: City Hall, an eclectic variation of elaborate Romanesque and Renaissance patterns, is strongly reminiscent of Flemish and German prototypes and bears a marked resemblance to nineteenth-century German Rathaus of the same period. The building is a tall, narrow, masonry structure crowned with a tower, spire, and cupola on the south (front) facade and a smaller spire and cupola on its north end. The east and west sides of the building are divided into a five-part composition. The three bays of the central pavilion and the three bays of the end pavilions project slightly from the wall plane, while the five bays on either side of the central pavilion are slightly recessed. The south entry is marked by three massive stone arches that completely pierce the base of the 350-foot tower.
2. Condition of fabric: Very good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure is an asymmetrical, wedge-shaped building, eight stories high. The front width at the base of the tower is 57 feet 6 inches. It measures 315 feet 4- $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (nineteen bays including tower) on the short or North Market Street side and 327 feet 9 inches (nineteen bays including tower) on the long or North Water Street side. At the widest point of the back it is 112 feet 1- $\frac{1}{2}$ inches (six-bays). The northwest corner is rounded -- an unusual feature.
2. Foundation: Below grade, Wauwatosa limestone foundations rest upon what has been described as literally a forest of wooden piles driven down into the reclaimed marshland.
3. Wall construction: Above the foundation of limestone a 20-foot band of black granite projects a few feet above grade. From this point to the string course of the third-floor window sills, a height of 43 feet, the wall is constructed of Berea sandstone -- now almost black. Above this point the walls of the building and

those of the tower are of the St. Louis Hydraulic Pressed Brick Company's No. 509 brick. Originally described as pink, the brick has weathered to a black-red. The decorative trim is terra cotta.

At the base of the tower are three large stone arches, 31 feet 6 inches wide at the springing line of the arches and rising to a height of 17 feet 6 inches above this point, forming a protective entryway. Each face of the tower has three bays, while the sides of the building (now including the tower) have sixteen bays, with an unusual convex bulge to the last three bays on the west facade (northwest corner). The back (north) of the building has six bays. A fire escape was added to the east wall in 1914.

4. Framing: Masonry-bearing wall construction
5. Porches: None
6. Chimneys: One large circular brick stack, 10 feet 8 inches in diameter, services the boiler room.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main (south) entry is set in a large arch within the tower. The original doors have been replaced with a modern metal and glass revolving door and adjacent glass doors. The only entry on the east facade is a wooden panelled door with a single light set in a triple-arched portal. There is also a triple-arched portal on the west; the two outside arches have paired panelled wooden doors with single lights, while the center arch has a revolving door (not original). The north entrance has been altered -- a single wood and glass door (not original) is used as a fire exit only.
 - b. Windows: Most windows are wooden, double-hung units with one-over-one lights. The fenestration of the east and west facades is arcaded. A lower arcade of coursed and dressed stone contains the first and second story windows, all of which have six lights. In addition, the first story windows have transom units with three lights. Above the lower arcade is a four-story arcade formed by giant pilasters with ornamental capitals. There are decorative spandrels between the third and sixth story windows on the projecting central and rear pavilions and on the tower.

The arcade pattern is altered in the central pavilion of the eastern facade and the two north pavilions, where the lower arches are only one story in height. Above each arch are two single window units, separated from each other by a colonnette. The pattern is also altered in the tower, where flat lintels have been substituted for arches on the sixth floor windows so that the vertical thrust of the tower will not be interrupted. Unlike the rest of the building, there is an additional ninth story in the tower that is enclosed by windows.

On the seventh floor, the windows, framed by a string course below and a cornice above, are separated by pilasters into groups of three units, with the individual units being separated by colonnettes. The windows of the eighth floor are dormers set in picturesque curved gables of Flemish and German design. There are large multi-story gables with additional rows of windows above the central and rear pavilions. Decorative wrought-iron grills cover the small windows in the apex of these gables as well as the basement window openings, many of which have been bricked in as space needs in the building have changed. The two-story Common Council Room which occupies the third and fourth floors at the north end of the building has three, square, stained-glass windows with nine lights above tall, narrow, double-hung windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape: The 350' north tower which dominates the building contains an arcaded belfry. It is heavily ornamented with Romanesque details and is topped by a spire with a small cupola. Around the top of the tower there are four clocks set in false gables which face the four points of the compass, and on each corner there is a small pinnacle that repeats the shape of the cupola. The central portion of the building is covered with a steeply pitched, truncated gable roof containing a central skylight. The original cresting along both sides of this section has been removed. Running east-west and intersecting the central roof is the hipped roof of the northern or rear pavilion. Another cupola resting upon a small square base rises from the center of this roof. There are small, shaped gables above the windows on the east and west sides of the building, and multi-storied gables above the central and rear pavilions.

- b. Framing: Steel-trussed construction
- c. Covering: Black slate for the main roof, glass for the skylight, copper for the spires and cupolas.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The building consists of eight floors above the ground level, which is partially below grade. Basically all floor areas, as far as the public spaces are concerned, are similar. Each floor has an inner-ring corridor, running along the building's north-south axis. This corridor encircles and overlooks the central light shaft that extends the full height of the building, from ground level to the skylight above the eighth floor. Today many of these corridors on the upper floors have been converted into office space.

The north end of the first floor corridor has been taken over by the City Treasurer's office and access to this floor by the north entrance is sealed off.

The light shaft, an elongated hexagon, dominates the interior of the building. Cast-iron columns are spaced along the wall and the balcony edge. The balcony columns are placed on all floors from the second through the eighth and are actually hung from the structure in the attic. On each floor, a heavy wire screen encloses the space between the balcony railings and the floor above -- a safety feature, not original. The light shaft has a flat structural glass ceiling at the attic level. At each of the outside corners of the corridors is a large marble column with a pseudo-Ionic capital and accompanying ornate decorative features.

It is important to note that many remodellings have altered the offices considerably. In the early 1960's ceilings were lowered, and new lighting, flooring, partitions, etc. were installed. Also, some functions once housed here have either gone out of existence (for example, the fire alarm telegraph department and its battery room, once located in the basement), or have been moved elsewhere. A new Municipal Building, equally as tall as the City Hall, is located across the street. A tunnel now connects the two buildings, thus altering the basement area.

The mayor's office is still on the second floor in the tower area, but it has been extensively remodelled. Of

note is the two-story Common Council Chambers occupying the north end of the third floor. The room has undergone some changes. The gallery above (fourth floor) has been enclosed and gallery space expanded on the east side of the Council Chambers. A beautifully carved-wood railing separates the galleries and the council floor.

The original two-story chamber for the school board, located on the fifth and sixth floors above the Common Council Chambers, no longer exists, nor are the offices of the school board now in this building.

At the time of construction, part of the sixth floor, most of the seventh floor, and almost all of the eighth floor were left unfinished.

2. Stairways: The stairs are built around the two elevator shafts on the west side of the light shaft to give access from ground level to the attic.
3. Flooring: The public areas have mosaic tile floor. The other floor areas were maple and have since been mostly covered by either carpeting or vinyl.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wainscoting in the public areas, halls and rotunda is of Tennessee marble. Marble was also used originally for the base shoe in the offices. The walls are plaster, as were the original ceilings.
5. Doors and doorways: The doors are panelled, red oak with a single light. Of note are the etched-glass doors of the Common Council Chambers and the rest rooms. Modern glass doors and wood doors designate the remodelled office spaces.
6. Trim: Simple rectangular trim of red oak
7. Hardware: Cast iron. Most locks and knobs and escutcheon plates have been replaced.
8. Lighting: Electric -- considerably altered
9. Heating: Steam

D. Site:

The building occupies the full block and is located in the apex of a "Y" formed by North Water Street (in the front and on the west side of the building) and North Market Street on

the east side. East Kilbourn Avenue frames the north. Wide sidewalks surround the building -- there are no trees or lawn.

Prepared by John N. DeHaas, Jr.
Supervisory Architect
National Park Service
July, 1969

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records were made during the 1969 Milwaukee Project which was sponsored by the Historic American Buildings Survey, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, and the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission of the City of Milwaukee, Richard W. E. Perrin, Chairman. The project was done under the direction of James C. Massey, then Chief of HABS, and the team members included architect John N. DeHaas, Jr. (Montana State University), Project Supervisor, Mary Ellen Wietczykowski--now Mary Ellen Young--(Milwaukee Landmarks Commission), Project Historian, and student architects Larry Hermsen (Iowa State University), Roger Little (Kansas University), Thomas Sanford (Washington State University), and Donna Woodrum (Virginia Polytechnic Institute). The data was prepared for transmittal to the Library of Congress by HABS editors Carolyn R. Heath, Mary Farrell, Candace Reed and Philip Hamp. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack Boucher.

HABS
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City Hall
200 East Wells Street
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Milwaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WI-254

P H O T O G R A P H S

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

ADDENDUM TO:
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HABS No. WI-254

page 12

HABS
NO. WI-254
200 East Wells Street
MILWAUKEE

Name: Milwaukee City Hall

Location:

200 East Wells Street (City Hall occupies the site bounded by East Wells, North Water, and North Market Streets and West Kilbourn Avenue), Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin.

Present owner:

City of Milwaukee

Present Occupants:

Various departments of city government, including the Mayor's Office, City Treasurer, City Attorney, Harbor Commission, Board of Purchases, City Comptroller, Tax Commissioner, Personnel Office, Municipal Reference Library, Common Council, City Clerk and Election Commission.

Present Use:

Offices

Statement of Significance:

By virtue of its function, monumental size and unique architecture, Milwaukee's City Hall is the keystone of local landmarks. Located in the heart of the central business district its lofty tower is the signature of the downtown skyline. From the time of its completion it has been the long standing symbol of well managed government.

PART I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

1. Date of erection:

1890: Site chosen¹

1893-1895: Dates of erection²

1894: Cornerstone laid³

1895: Dedicated⁴

1896-1897: Seventh and eighth floors completed (interiors)⁵

1896-1897: Bell hung⁶

Sources:

¹Milwaukee Sentinel, February 25, 1890, p. 5, col. 1

²Building Permits
Historic American Buildings Survey Report

³Ibid.

⁴Milwaukee Sentinel, October 16, 1895, p. 1, 3

Milwaukee Sentinel, October 17, 1895, p. 1

Milwaukee Sentinel, December 24, 1895, p. 1, col. 7

⁵Historic American Buildings Survey Report

⁶Milwaukee Sentinel, September 29, 1896

Milwaukee Sentinel, October 18, 1896

Milwaukee Sentinel, November 26, 1896

Milwaukee Sentinel, November 27, 1896

Milwaukee Sentinel, January 1, 1897

2. Architect: Henry C. Koch and Co. of Milwaukee

The original perspective drawing by H. C. Koch is preserved at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, 311 Municipal Building, Milwaukee. It was published in the Illustrated News Annual: Milwaukee 1892-93, Milwaukee, 1892, p. 4; and by Richard W. E. Perrin in Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee, 1968, p. 34. H. C. Koch and Co. plans, elevations, sections and details are on file at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, as are eleven sheets on the structural steel and iron work, prepared in 1894 by the Ransome and Smith Company.

Henry C. Koch was born in Celle, Hanover, Germany on March 30, 1841. He was brought to Milwaukee as an infant by his father's family in 1842. Koch was educated at Milwaukee's German-English Academy and entered as an apprentice in 1856 with G. W. Mygatt, the city's meritorious pre-Civil War architect. In 1862 Koch enlisted with the Wisconsin Infantry and served as a topographical engineer on the staff of General Philip M. Sheridan. He remained in this capacity until the end of 1865 when he returned to Milwaukee and formed a partnership with his former employer, Mygatt. The partnership ceased in 1870 and Koch developed the firm into one of the leading concerns of the old Northwest specializing in public and assembly buildings. His other significant works extant in Milwaukee are Calvary Presbyterian Church, Soldier's Home Hospital, County Insane Asylum and all the school buildings constructed between 1873 and 1881. His designs were built in every state of the region and in 1880 he was awarded a third place premium in a national competition for school building design. To have received this honor established Koch as an architect of national merit. His design of the Milwaukee City Hall climaxed an already successful career and has placed him as one of the city's foremost architects of all time.

3. Builder: Paul Riesen

A native of Elbing, West Prussia he had contracts for both the Pabst Theatre and the Goldsmith Building (both extant) and was identified with large building construction in Milwaukee.

Suppliers:

Stone: black granite, Berea sandstone, P. Schmidt & Co., Milwaukee

Brick: St. Louis Hydraulic Pressed Brick Company

Terra cotta: Winkle Terra Cotta Company, St. Louis

Woodwork: Wisconsin oak, Ferge & Keipper Company, Milwaukee

Plasterwork: Adamant Manufacturing Company, Milwaukee

Structural & ornamental iron work: Wagner Iron Works, Milwaukee
Marbelwork and mosaic tile: Grant Marbel Co.
Excavating, pilings & filing: C.M. Starke
Furnaces: Hanley Down Draft Furnace Co.
Tower clock and heat regulators: Johnson Electric Service Co.
Revolving entrance doors: Van Kannel Revolving Door Co.
Elevator doors: Runkel Automatic Door Co.
Gas and light fixtures: Cassidy and Sons Manufacturing
Tower bell: Centennial Bell Foundry
Furniture: Northwestern Furniture Co., Milwaukee

4. Original plans and construction:

City Hall was constructed to near exact specification of Henry C. Koch's plans. As it appears today very little has changed in its exterior appearance. All alterations are noted in the section below. When the building was dedicated in 1895 the Milwaukee Sentinel, October 16, 1895 made the following observations:

"...the symmetrical tower and picturesque edifice now approaching completion is a revelation like of the progress of the city and the development of the art of modern construction. To the sojourner within our gates and to the observant citizen who look upon the county courthouse building as a gloomy apotheosis of clumsiness and bad taste the graceful lines of the new city hall are a thing of beauty and a joy forever. To the practical artisan the massive walls, the strength of structural steel and the durability of imperishable material are a source of wonder and commendation."

"Approaching from the south...the tower conceals the perspective of the building and rises with a bold front like a lone obelisk, tapering at the top until its graceful outline seems to pierce the clouds against which floats the bright colors of the national flag."

"It ranks among the highest structures of masonry in the world. In this country it is exceeded by the Washington monument and the spire of the new municipal building of Philadelphia."

"The ample interior space is a surprise to all who receive from the exterior aspect an impression that it is inconveniently narrow from east to west."

5. Alterations and additions:

- a. On the exterior, City Hall has been changed very little since its dedication in 1895. In 1914 a fire escape, from C. Hennecke Co., was installed on the east wall. In October, 1929, the upper portion of the tower was badly damaged by fire (caused by defective wiring) and was rebuilt at

the cost of \$40,000. A number of basement windows were bricked up during the 1960's; and at unspecified dates the decorative iron railings along the roof were removed; the peaks of the large dormer gables on the east and west elevation were truncated; and most of the stone railing along the third story was removed. The exterior has been repaired and the wooden trim repainted on several occasions. During the 1970's an extensive cleaning of the masonry was conducted which resulted in a rejuvenated City Hall.

- b. On the interior, City Hall has been significantly altered through the years. Today only the central section comprising the main floor lobby, light shaft, basement corridor and the corridors around the light well on the upper floors, and the Common Council Chamber retain anything of their original character. In the public areas the original iron railings, posts, and trim, the mosaic floors, and much of the oak woodwork and marble wainscot survive. However, the public areas have not gone unchanged. Wire screening has been put in place above the railings along the light shaft; the elaborate light fixtures have been removed, as has the illuminated glass floor in the main lobby; the original open cage elevators have been replaced and the iron stairway immediately behind them (on the west) enclosed. The Common Council Chamber has also been remodelled. Other areas of City Hall have seen even more extensive alteration--new flooring, new partitions, lowered ceilings, and the like. Scarcely a year has passed since 1900 without some sort of remodelling project, whether major or minor, but it appears that the most significant ones were as follows:

- 1) 1904-05: Changes in the fifth, sixth, and seventh floors to accommodate the Municipal Court, Clerk of the Courts, and offices of the District Attorney and School Board.
- 2) 1907-11: The illuminated glass floor in the main lobby was replaced by tile (1907). A fourth elevator was installed, and the eighth and ninth floors were remodelled, with new partitions put in on both floors and an iron stairway connecting these floors installed.
- 3) 1931-32: A \$200,000 remodelling project was carried out at the time the courts' suites in City Hall were vacated (on completion of the Milwaukee County Court House), and it included remodelling and redecorating the Common Council Chamber.

- 4) 1950 to 1969: Continuing remodelling, much of it carried out after completion (1960) of the new Municipal Building nearby, has involved lowering the ceilings, installation of new partitions in many offices, vinyl flooring, florescent lighting, air condition, and a new heating system. City Hall was provided with new elevators, and the elevator shaft was enclosed.

B. Historical Context

Originally a swamp the site was platted in 1835 by Solomon Juneau and Morgan L. Martin. A triangular parcel it remained virtually undeveloped until the city purchased lots five and six in 1851 from David and Belinda Ward. In the same year Common Council had approved the creation of a market house and in 1852 private interests from the first and seventh wards (eastside) erected a cream brick edifice of Italianate design on the site. The second floor was leased starting in 1853 to the German Theatre who produced theatricals and music programs.

Milwaukee's Common Council had been meeting in various loaned and leased rooms since its organization in 1846. After disastrous fires in 1850 and 1859 which destroyed valuable records, Council voted on November 2, 1859 to obtain the Market House and remodel it into offices. The first floor was used for administration and the second floor for a court room. The move was made in 1861. By 1870 these quarters were deemed insufficient and the east wing of the recently completed County Court House was leased for city offices.

On February 20, 1882, Alderman August Kiekhefer introduced a resolution to Council for \$350,000 in bonds for the purchase of a site and construction of a new city hall. The debate over this issue which would last eight years reflected the deep sectional rivalry which existed in Milwaukee. (The city was settled as three distinct settlements: Juneautown, eastside; Kilbourntown, westside; and Walker's Point, southside.) At that time each ward was represented by three aldermen and shortly thereafter by two. The westside had 16 aldermen, the eastside had 8 aldermen and the southside had 12 aldermen. A vote of 19 was required to pass a measure in Council. Since the southside was an inconvenient distance from the central business district it was unlikely that a site would be approved there. However there were southsiders desirous of having the new city hall in their area and in the ensuing debates sectional block voting killed all proposals. By the end of 1882 Mayor John M. Stowell had gone on record against a new city hall period and the issue was dead.

Debate on the site did not resume until September of 1888 and was quickly denounced by the press as the "old scheme" of unnecessary public expenditure combined with the eastside's offer of a free site. A year later the debate was continued and the westsiders announced the claim to the new city hall was rightfully theirs under a tacit agreement with the eastside that the proposed new federal building and post office would be constructed on their side of downtown. The eastside aldermen quickly demounced this claim and the debate continued. In the sbusequent weeks a myriad of proposals were presented to Council from all three sections. A special committee of nine aldermen were selected to review the sites and make a recommendation to the full Council. Their study recommended that block 55, located on the eastside and the site of the old City Hall, be selected because of its central location, principal street car lines give access to the entire city and the cost of acquiring the site would be the lowest. As the debate turned in favor of block 55 all parties concerned were distributing pamphlets along Wisconsin Avenue extolling the benefits of their particular site. The panicky westsiders were in a fury of meetings with the southside aldermen requesting their support in return they (westside) would favor the new library and museum on the southside. On February 25, 1890 a compromise was reached in Council. After four hours and 29 ballots a coalition of east, west and south aldermen voted by simple majority to accept block 55 as the site. The westside would receive the new library and museum and the southside lost out completely in their bid for public buildings.

On August 29, 1891 a resolution was adopted by Council to hold a nationwide design competition for the City Hall. Plans were received from 11 firms including 6 major firms from Milwaukee. (See Council proceedings for the specific rules for the competion.) The competition was not without controversy and Richard W. E. Perrin in his book, Milwaukee Landmarks, recalls in exact detail the events which lead to the selection of an architect. In brief a majority report of Council recommended the plans of Henry Ives Cobb of Chicago. A minority report found 57 reasons why the Cobb plans were insufficient and recommended the plans of Henry C. Koch. The majority counter-acted with 86 deficiencies in the Koch plan. A compromise was proposed where the Koch plan would be used for the exterior and a plan by W. A. Holbrook would be used for the interior. The compromise failed and Council accepted the entire Koch plan which ended the competition in a bitter dispute.

A ceiling of \$600,000 was appropriated by Council as the total cost of the new building; less the site and excavation and piling costs. However the lowest bid was closer to \$700,000 and in another heated dispute the contract was let to Milwaukeean Paul Riesen. Construction proceeded smoothly, but Council continued to authorize additional funds for extra contract work despite public protest. As the new City Hall neared its completion the cost had risen (including site and excavation work) to over one million dollars.

The official dedication was held on October 16, 1895 in conjunction with the city's semi-centennial celebration. Though occupancy was not expected until January, 1896 and the fiftieth anniversary was technically not until January 31, 1896; city officials determined that the autumn weather was more conducive to outdoor celebrations of this type. At the close of the activities on October 17, 75,000 people gathered in Juneau Park to witness a spectacular fireworks show which included a giant ground display with the new City Hall outlined in a fiery blaze of lights.

The inaugural ceremonies were held December 23, 1895. The Milwaukee Sentinel reported on December 24 that:

"Promptly at 4 o'clock yesterday afternoon the municipal officers and many of those who have served the people in days gone by, marched to the sound of martial music, under the Roman arches of the southern portal of the new city hall, along the marble corridors and into the great council chambers,..."

The last official act of the City Hall construction was the casting and hanging of the tower bell. In the fall of 1896 from September through October, three castings were made at the Centennial Foundry in Milwaukee before a perfect bell was produced. The third largest bell in the United States by weight it measured 10¼ tons with a diameter of eight feet, two inches and a height of eight feet, eight inches. It was inscribed with:

"When I sound the hour of the day,
From this grand and lofty steeple,
Deem it a reminder, pray,
To be honest with the people."

In a flurry of fanfare and pomp it was hoisted to its perch on November 27, 1896. It was first sounded at midnight, January 1, 1897. This event marked 16 years and 7 mayoral administrations for the inception and completion of the new City Hall.

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: City Hall, an eclectic variation of elaborate Romanesque and Renaissance patterns, is strongly reminiscent of Flemish and German prototypes and bears a marked resemblance to nineteenth-century German Rathaus of the same period. The building is a tall, narrow, masonry structure crowned with a tower, spire, and cupola on the south (front) facade and a smaller spire and cupola on its north end. The east and west sides of the buildings are divided into a five-part composition. The three bays of the central pavilion and the three bays of the end pavilions project slightly from the wall plane, while the five bays on either side

of the central pavilion are slightly recessed. The south entry is marked by three massive stone arches that completely pierce the base of the 350 foot tower.

2. Condition of fabric: Very good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The structure is an asymmetrical, wedge-shaped building, eight stories high. The front width at the base of the tower is 57 feet 6 inches. It measures 315 feet 4½ inches (nineteen bays including tower) on the short or North Market Street side and 327 feet 9 inches (ninetteen bays including tower) on the long or North Water Street side. At the widest point of the back it is 112 feet 1½ inches (six-bays). The northwest corner is rounded -- an unusual feature.
2. Foundation: Below grade, Wauwatosa limestone foundations rest upon what has been described as literally a forest of wooded piles driven down into the reclaimed marshland.
3. Wall construction: Above the foundation of limestone a 20 foot band of black granite projects a few feet above grade. From this point to the string course of the third-floor window sills, a height of 43 feet, the wall is constructed of Berea sandstone.

Above this point the walls of the building and those of the tower are of the St. Louis Hydraulic Pressed Brick Company's No. 509 brick. Originally described as pink, the brick has weathered to a light maroon. The decorative trim is terra-cotta.

At the base of the tower are three large stone arches, 31 feet 6 inches wide at the springing line of the arches and rising to a height of 17 feet 6 inches above this point, forming a protective entryway. Each face of the tower has three bays, while the sides of the building (now including the tower) have sixteen bays, with an unusual convex bulge to the last three bays on the west facade (northwest corner). The back (north) of the building has six bays. A fire escape was added to the east wall in 1914.

4. Framing: Masonry-bearing wall construction.
5. Porches: None.
6. Chimneys: One large circular brick stack, 10 feet 8 inches in diameter, services the boiler room.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main (south) entry is set in a large arch within the tower. The original

doors have been replaced with a modern metal and glass revolving door and adjacent glass doors. The only entry on the east facade is a wooden panelled door with a single light set in a triple-arched portal. There is also a triple-arched portal on the west; the two outside arches have paired panelled wooden doors with single lights, while the center arch has a revolving door (not original). The north entrance has been altered -- a single wood and glass door (not original) is used as a fire exit only.

- b. Windows: Most windows are wooden, double-hung units with one-over-one lights. The fenestration of the east and west facades is arcaded. A lower arcade of coursed and dressed stone contains the first and secondary story windows, all of which have six lights. In addition, the first story windows have transom units with three lights. Above the lower arcade is a four-story arcade formed by giant pilasters with ornamental capitals. There are decorative spandrels between the third and sixth story windows on the projecting central and rear pavilions and on the tower.

The arcade pattern is altered in the central pavilion of the eastern facade and the two north pavilions, where the lower arches are only one story in height. Above each arch are two single window units, separated from each other by a colonnette. The pattern is also altered in the tower, where flat lintels have been substituted for arches on the sixth floor windows so that the vertical thrust of the tower will not be interrupted. Unlike the rest of the building, there is an additional ninth story in the tower that is enclosed by windows.

On the seventh floor, the windows, framed by a string course below and a cornice above, are separated by pilasters into groups of three units, with the individual units being separated by colonnettes. The windows of the eighth floor are dormers set in picturesque curved gables of Flemish and German design. There are large multi-story gables with additional rows of windows above the central and rear pavilions. Decorative wrought-iron grills cover the small windows in the apex of these gables as well as the basement window openings, many of which have been bricked in as space needs in the building have changed. The two-story Common Council Room which occupies the third and fourth floors at the north end of the building has three, square, stained-glass windows with nine lights above tall, narrow, double-hung windows.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape: The 350' north tower which dominates the building contains an arcaded belfry. It is heavily ornamented with Romanesque details and is topped by a spire with a small cupola. Around the top of the tower there are four clocks set in false gables which face the four points of the compass, and on each corner there is a small pinnacle that repeats the shape of the cupola. The central portion of the building is covered with a steeply pitched, truncated gable roof containing a central skylight. The original cresting along both sides of this section has been removed. Running east-west and intersecting the central roof is the hipped roof of the northern or rear pavilion. Another cupola resting upon a small square base rises from the center of this roof. There are small, shaped gables above the windows on the east and west sides of the building, and multi-storied gables above the central and rear pavilions.
- b. Framing: Steel-trussed construction
- c. Covering: Black slate for the main roof, glass for the skylight, copper for the spires and cupolas.

C. Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: The building consists of eight floors above the ground level, which is partially below grade. Basically all floor areas, as far as the public spaces are concerned, are similar. Each floor has an inner-ring corridor, running along the building's north-south axis. This corridor encircles and overlooks the central light shaft that extends the full height of the building, from ground level to the skylight above the eighth floor. Today many of these corridors on the upper floors have been converted into office space.

The north end of the first-floor corridor has been taken over by the City Treasurer's office and access to this floor by the north entrance is sealed off.

The light shaft, and elongated hexagon, dominates the interior of the building. Cast-iron columns are spaced along the wall and the balcony edge. The balcony columns are placed on all floors from the second through the eighth and are actually hung from the structure in the attic. On each floor, a heavy wire screen encloses the space between the balcony railings and the floor above -- a safety feature, no original. The light shaft has a flat structural glass ceiling at the attic level. At

each of the outside corners of the corridors is a large marble column with a pseudo-Ionic capital and accompanying ornate decorative features.

It is important to note that many remodellings have altered the offices considerably. In the early 1960's ceilings were lowered, and new lighting, flooring, partitions, etc. were installed. Also, some functions once housed here have either gone out of existence (for example, the fire alarm telegraph department and its battery room, once located in the basement), or have been moved elsewhere. A new Municipal Building, equally as tall as the City Hall, is located across the street. A tunnel now connects the two buildings, thus altering the basement area.

The Mayor's office is still on the second floor in the tower area, but it has been extensively remodelled. Of note is the two-story Common Council Chambers occupying the north end of the third floor. The room has undergone some changes. The gallery above (fourth floor) has been enclosed and gallery space expanded on the east side of the Council Chambers. A beautifully carved-wood railing separates the galleries and the council floor.

The original two-story chamber for the school board, located on the fifth and sixth floors above the Common Council Chambers, no longer exists, nor are the offices of the school board now in this building.

At the time of construction, part of the sixth floor, most of the seventh floor, and almost all of the eighth floor were left unfinished.

2. Stairways: The stairs are built around the two elevator shafts on the west side of the light shaft to give access from ground level to the attic.
3. Flooring: The public areas have mosaic tile floor. The other floor areas were maple and have since been mostly covered by either carpeting or vinyl.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wainscoting in the public areas, halls and rotunda is of Tennessee marble. Marble was also used originally for the base shoe in the offices. The walls are plaster, as were the original ceilings.
5. Doors and doorways: The doors are panelled, red oak with a single light. Of note are the etched-glass doors of the Common Council Chambers and the rest rooms. Modern glass doors and wood doors designate the remodelled office spaces.

- 6. Trim: Simple rectangular trim of red oak
- 7. Hardware: Cast iron. Most locks and knobs and escutcheon plates have been replaced,
- 8. Lighting: Electric -- considerably altered
- 9. Heating: Steam

D. Site:

The building occupies the full block and is located in the apex of a "y" formed by North Water Street (in the front and on the west side of the building) and North Market Street on the east side. East Kilbourn Avenue frames the north. Wide sidewalks surround the building -- there are no trees or lawn.

Part III. Sources of Information

A. Architectural Drawing:

The original perspective drawing, plans, elevations, sections and details are on file at the Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings, 311 Municipal Building, Milwaukee, dated, 1892.

B. Early Views:

There are several early twentieth century photographs in the collection of the Local History Room of the Milwaukee Public Library. The photographic collection of the Milwaukee County Historical Society includes various views of the exterior at the turn of the century, a clipping showing the building under construction, a fine early view of the interior, as well as photos of the bell and of exterior details. The Bureau of Bridges and Public Buildings is said to have a collection of photos, but at this writing, it has not been located. A view of City Hall as construction neared completion was published in Art Work of Milwaukee, Chicago, 1895, Fig. 70.

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ADDENDUM TO:
CITY HALL
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee
Milwaukee County
Wisconsin

HABS WI-254
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PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
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