Henry Hummel Building
Downtown Boscobel
925 Wisconsin Avenue
Boscobel
Grant County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WI-335

HABS
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22-BOSC,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80255

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

Henry Hummel Building
Downtown Boscobel

HABS No: WI-335

Location: 925 Wisconsin Avenue
Boscobel, Grant Co., Wisconsin
Block 40, Original Plat of the Village (now City) of Boscobel, North Half of lot No. 8.

USGS Boscobel Quadrangle
UTM coordinates: 16.686620.4778150

Present Owner: Boscobel State Bank

Present Occupant: Vacant

Present Use: Vacant. The building is slated for demolition in the spring of 1993, and it is to be replaced by a new bank building that is to be occupied by the owner.

Significance: The Henry Hummel Building is one of eleven two and three -story stone-clad commercial buildings that line the length of Wisconsin Avenue in Boscobel. These buildings were built between 1867 and 1904, and the earliest of them are vernacular examples of the Italianate Commercial style. The two-story Hummel Building is a fine, simple, representative example of these earlier buildings and it is unusual in still retaining most of its historic storefront. In addition, there is also a large two-story stone outbuilding in the rear that is now attached to the main building by a later one-story hyphen.

The Henry Hummel Building is considered to be a contributing resource in the proposed Boscobel Downtown Historic District. See HABS No. WI-333 for the historic and architectural context of Downtown Boscobel and HABS No. WI-334 for information on the S. E. Mattison Building, 921 Wisconsin Avenue.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date(s) of erection: Village of Boscobel tax records suggest that the Henry Hummel Building and its outbuilding were erected between 1869 and 1870. Sanborn-Perris fire insurance maps for Boscobel show both that buildings were extant in 1884.

2. Original and subsequent owners: According to Boscobel Property Tax Records the original owner was Henry Hummel, who owned the property from 1869 until at least 1910. The 1870 Census lists Hummel (aka Hummell) as a butcher and the Sanborn-Perris maps show that the building was used as meat market

from 1884 (the date of earliest such map) until sometime between 1904 and 1912. Between 1895 and 1906, Hummel's partner in this business was Philip J. Hof, who subsequently started his own business in the building next door (No. 921 Wisconsin Ave., HABS No. WI-334).

In 1912, Hummel's main building was used as a place to show moving pictures. By 1927, it housed Brainerd's Store, an electric shop, and the outbuilding was used to warehouse electrical equipment. In recent years the building housed Genthe's Jewel Box, a jewelry store. During this century, at least, the second story has housed an apartment.

3. Original plans and construction: No accounts of the construction of the Hummel Building and its outbuilding have been found, but the 1884 Sanborn-Perris map shows that the building was essentially identical to the present one, being rectilinear in plan, two-stories in height, and of stone construction. The building then measured 25'-0" x 50'-0", its first story walls were 21"-thick, its second-story walls were 18"-thick, the front facade was 28'-0" in height, and the north and south sides had no openings. No historic photos have been found that document the original appearance of this building.

   In 1884, the outbuilding behind was also two-stories in height, rectilinear in plan and was of stone construction. The walls of this building were also 21"-thick, there were no openings on the north side, and the building measured 22'-0" x 45'-0". At this time there was also a small 10'-0" x 12'-0" one-story smoke house and a large iron boiling kettle attached to the west-facing side of the outbuilding as well.

4. Alterations and additions: So far as is known, both the Hummel Building and its outbuilding remained essentially unchanged until sometime between 1912 and 1927, when a 6'-deep two-story wood frame porch was added across the full width of the rear of the main building. During the same period, the smokehouse and the boiling kettle were also removed from the west side of the outbuilding.

   Minor alterations have also been made to the storefront of the main building. This storefront is four-bays-wide and the bays are separated by the original panelled cast iron posts. The windows in the two left bays now each consist

of single large lights, which are probably replacements for the original ones. The single light main entrance door in the third bay and the similar door leading to the second story in the fourth bay are also later additions. In addition, the original coursed ashlar stone that covers the front facade has now been completely covered with stucco that has been scored to replicate the joints of the original stone work. The date of this alteration is not known.

The most significant change to the exterior of the Hummel building occurred in the post-World War II period, when the space between the two buildings was filled with a one-story irregular plan shed-roofed hyphen whose walls are constructed out of concrete block. The construction of this hyphen resulted in the removal of the first story of the Hummel Building's frame construction rear porch addition. In addition, the windows in the outbuilding have all been removed and the openings filled with plywood or concrete block.

B. Historical Context: The coming of the railroad to Boscobel in 1855 resulted in the first platting of the settlement in 1856, and the street now known as Wisconsin Avenue was laid out through what was then a corn field. In the following decade, the village's first commercial buildings began to appear along this street. These were mostly small wood frame one and two-story vernacular form buildings. By the middle of the 1860s, larger buildings constructed out of stone also began to appear on the street as well and historic photos of Boscobel show that nearly all of these buildings still survive. The earliest examples were designed in the Italianate style and the Hummel Building is one of the oldest and most intact of these. Eventually, nearly all of the early frame buildings were replaced by larger, more modern brick or stone-clad buildings.

Nearly all of the commercial buildings on Wisconsin Avenue predate 1923, and they form a continuous streetscape that still serves as the commercial core of the city.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Hummel Building is a fine representative example of a simply designed Italianate style-influenced

commercial vernacular building. The Hummel building's stone-clad front facade consists of a simple cast-iron four-bay-wide storefront that is surmounted by four second story windows, each of which has a simple dressed stone sill and lintel. The facade is then crowned by a distinctive Italianate style overhanging cornice that is supported by five pairs of sandwich brackets. Although simple in design, the overall appearance is typical of its time and the later stuccoing of the facade has not altered its appearance significantly.

2. Condition of fabric: The fabric of the Hummel Building is in very good condition. The fabric of the outbuilding is in less good condition, there being large patched cracks in the side walls, deterioration around the cornices, and evidence of some settling.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: The overall dimension of the main block is 25'-0" x 50'-0". This rectilinear plan block is two stories in height and the building has a basement story. The four-bay-wide main facade consists of a storefront that is surmounted by four second story windows and a cornice that hides the gently sloping roof. A modern one-story ell measuring approximately 25'-0" x 25'-0" connects the main building to a two-story outbuilding in the rear of the lot.

2. Foundations: The foundation walls of the main portion of the Hummel Building are of rubble stone, 21"-thick. These walls enclose a full basement story, which now has a poured concrete floor, sheetrock-covered walls, and modern partitioning.

3. Walls: The first story of the west-facing main facade consists of a cast-iron four-bay-wide storefront. The storefront is divided into bays by cast-iron elements consisting of thin panelled pilasters that support a full-width cast-iron lintel, which has a thin-cut stone stringcourse just above it. The storefront is then flanked by broad pilasters clad in regular-coursed dressed ashlar stone. These pilasters have been covered with a later coating of stucco that has been scored to imitate the joints of the stone beneath, and the same material has also been used to cover the original stone that covers the second story of the facade. The facade is then surmounted by a broad over-hanging wooden cornice.

The north and south sides of the building were originally hidden by buildings on either side and they have no openings. These walls are sided in small random-coursed quarry-faced stone and the tops of the walls form sloping parapets surmounted by stone coping.

The first story of the rear of the original building is now hidden by the modern concrete block hyphen that connects it to the outbuilding. The second story is covered by a frame construction full-width shed-roofed porch that still shelters the stucco-covered wall surface.

4. Structural system, framing: So far as is known, the building uses a conventional wooden frame to support the solid stone

exterior walls. This frame is constructed out of milled lumber. A 6" x 10" beam runs down the center of the basement ceiling and it is supported by square wood posts.

5. Porches, stoops, balconies, bulkheads: The building's only porch is the surviving remnant of the two-story porch that once covered the whole of the rear of the building. This porch was approximately six-feet-deep, was sided in clapboards, and each story featured an encircling band of one-over-one-light double-hung wooden sash. Each of these windows was then surmounted by a two-light transom and the porch was then sheltered by a shed roof with overhanging eaves. The second-story and the roof of this porch are still intact, but the first story was demolished when the cement-block hyphen was built.

The wall surface below the windows in the interior of the porch's second story features vertical wainscot boards.

6. Chimneys: No chimneys are now visible. A hole in the north wall of the second-story kitchen suggests that there is (or was) a chimney in this area.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance in the third bay from the left of the storefront contains a deeply recessed one-light entrance door. The less-wide fourth bay contains a single light entrance door surmounted by a now boarded up transom light that gives access to the second story. There are no doors on the north and south sides. The location of the

original first-story rear door opening is conjectural, but it might have been located in the same place as the existing one, which now opens into the hyphen. A later second-story rear door replaced an original window opening and it opens onto the second story porch.

There are also two door openings set into the south-facing side of the hyphen. These openings contain metal doors.

b. Windows and shutters: The two left-hand bays of the storefront feature large single-light display windows set in wood frames. The canted side wall of the entranceway consists of a less-wide angled display window. The second story of the front facade features four identical symmetrically disposed flat-arched window openings that each contain a single one -over-one-light wood sash double-hung window. These windows are probably not original to the building.

Four identical window openings originally spanned the second story of the rear wall. The three left-hand openings each contain the same type of window as the openings on the front facade. The fourth opening has been converted into a door opening, probably at the same time the porch was built.

8. Roof:

a. Shape, covering: The main block has a gently eastward-sloping shed roof that is covered in poured asphalt. This roof is hidden from view by sloping parapets on the sides and the cornice on the front.

b. Cornice, eaves: The overhanging cornice that crowns the front facade is constructed of wood and is supported by five pairs of solid sandwich brackets.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

a. Describe floors: Originally, the first story of the interior of the Hummel Building consisted of a single large room. This room still survives. The original layout and use of the second story is not known, but this story was either converted into an apartment in the first two decades of this century or an existing apartment was modernized during that period. This apartment now has a living room, kitchen, bathroom, and two rooms that were probably used as bedrooms.

There is also a full basement story that has had two small rooms created near the center of its length, the north one of which houses the furnace. The building has no attic.

2. Stairways: A straight flight of enclosed stairs rises along the south wall of the building and leads to the second story. This stairway is accessed from the front facade and it has nineteen steps. A second staircase descends from the porch to the first story of the hyphen, and a third staircase descends from the hyphen to the basement, cutting through the rear foundation wall of the Hummel building in the process.

3. Flooring: Both stories of the building are now carpeted.

4. Wall and ceiling finishes: The original first story walls are now largely covered with modern walls that are built out from the original walls and covered in plasterboard. Two small fragments of painted vertical board wainscotting can still be seen in this room and they probably once encircled it, but whether they are original to the room or date from a later remodeling is conjectural. The first story now has a dropped ceiling.

   The second story has plaster walls and ceiling.

5. Openings:

   a. Doorways and doors: The first story's only interior door leads to the hyphen. It is solid wood and has one-over-two panels and modern hardware. The solid wood second-story doors have a three-over-three panel design and they are believed to date from the early twentieth-century remodeling.

6. Decorative features and trim: The only trim in the first story is modern crown molding. The second story has simple varnished wooden baseboards and door and window casings, all of which are believed to date from the early twentieth century remodeling.

7. Mechanical equipment:

   a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: There are cast-iron radiators throughout the building that may date from the early part of this century. The hot water furnace in the basement is modern.

b. Lighting: The first story is lit by fluorescent lights set into the dropped ceiling.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The Hummel Building is located on flat land in the center of the Boscobel Downtown Historic District (proposed). The building faces west onto the north-south running Wisconsin Avenue, the principal commercial thoroughfare of Boscobel. It is placed immediately adjacent to a one-story commercial buildings (No. 921 Wisconsin Avenue), and only its second story has a north exposure. The south side originally was also hidden by an adjacent building which has since been demolished. This side now faces onto a partially grassed and partially paved lot. The front facade is flush with those of the other buildings on the block, all of which abut the paved sidewalk. The rear of the building's rectangular 25'-0" x 125'-0" lot is largely covered by the outbuilding, whose east-facing wall faces onto a paved alley that runs down the center of the block.

2. Historic landscape design: The front of the building is believed to have always abutted a sidewalk, which is now made of poured concrete. Historically, the rear yard consisted of an unknown surface and various outbuildings.

3. Outbuildings: The outbuilding consists of a two-story stone construction rectilinear plan building whose historic use during Hummel's ownership is uncertain. The rough, coursed stone walls of this building have irregular stone quoins at the corners, the walls are 21"-thick, and the building measures 22'-0" x 45'-0". There are no openings on the north side and the west side is now almost completely covered over by the modern hyphen. The south side has four irregularly placed openings, all now filled with plywood. The east-facing rear wall faces an alley and its first story features a large two-door opening flanked by a window opening. A second window opening is centered on the second story. All of these openings feature massive dressed stone lintels. The outbuilding has no basement and it is sheltered by a shed roof that slopes gently to the south. The building is in only fair condition structurally and large patched cracks are visible on the south wall.

The interior is divided into two unequal size spaces. The smaller westerly space is a later modification that consists

of a room with plastered walls and a flat plastered ceiling. This room has a concrete floor covered in linoleum tiles that is raised 2'-6" above the floor level of the other space. A wooden stairs ascends to an attic space above this room. The easterly space has a later concrete floor and its stone walls are the interior surfaces of the outside walls. This room is open up to the roof decking and it has simple wooden framing made of milled lumber.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Grant County Property Tax Rolls. Area Records Center, Elton S. Karrmann Library, University of Wisconsin-Platteville, Platteville, Wisconsin

2. Secondary and published sources:

Sanborn-Perris Map Co. Fire Insurance Maps of Boscobel, Wisconsin. New York: 1884, 1892, 1899, 1904, 1917, 1927.

Wagner, Karen P. Grant County, Wisconsin: 1870 Census. Glen Haven, WI: 1985.

C. Likely Sources not yet investigated: Hummel family descendents.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

Prepared by: Timothy F. Heggland
Project Director
May 15, 1993

This documentation project was sponsored by the Boscobel State Bank. It was initiated as part of a mitigation proceeding agreement between the Boscobel State Bank, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) of Wisconsin, The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and The Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. The SHPO number for this project is SHSW# 92-0712/GT. Other related HABS projects are: Downtown Boscobel (HABS No. WI-333), and the S. E. Mattison Building (HABS No. WI-334). The photographs were taken by Jim Larkosh of Boscobel, and the historical and architectural documentation sections were written by Timothy F. Heggland, the project historian. Plans call for the demolition of the Hummel Building and the Mattison Building in the spring of 1993.