

MEMORIAL ARMORY  
(Wisconsin Rapids Armory)  
1710 Second Avenue South  
Wisconsin Rapids  
Wood County  
Wisconsin

HABS WI-380  
*HABS WI-380*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

### MEMORIAL ARMORY

(Wisconsin Rapids Army National Guard Armory)

- Location: 1710 Second Avenue South  
City of Wisconsin Rapids, Wood County, Wisconsin
- Wisconsin Rapids North Quadrangle (USGS), Universal Transverse Mercator  
Coordinates: Zone 16 Easting 273342 Northing 4917784
- Present Owner: Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs
- Present Use: National Guard Armory
- Significance: The Memorial Armory was the final armory in Wisconsin constructed without any federal or state funding. Financed through a municipal bond, unit association contributions and donations by the local American Legion post, the Memorial Armory represents a true community effort to support its National Guard unit.

### PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

#### A. Physical History:

1. Date of Erection: 1940-1941 (Dedicated 4 July 1941)
2. Architect: Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. Hengels

Born in McHenry, Illinois, in 1876, Henry C. Hengels studied architecture at Chicago's Armour Institute, as well as abroad. He eventually located in Milwaukee, where he became known as a specialist in reinforced concrete construction. Hengels enlisted in the Wisconsin Army National Guard in 1917. He was soon appointed to the position of State Military Architect and Engineer by Governor Emmanuel Philipp. Hengels held that position until his death in 1943. Utilizing a variety of styles during his tenure, he designed virtually all armories and other National Guard buildings constructed in Wisconsin between World War I and World War II. Three of his armory designs are listed in the National Register: The Mission-style Oconomowoc Armory (1922), the Twentieth-Century Revivalist Janesville Armory (1925) and the Late Gothic Revival-style Whitefish Bay Armory (1928), which is no longer extant.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>"Hengels Rites to the Military," *Milwaukee Journal*, 25 November 1943; "Colonel Hengels Dead at 67," *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 25 November 1943; "127<sup>th</sup> Regiment Infantry Company G, Oconomowoc National Guard Armory," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Prepared by Jean Lindsay Johnson and Elizabeth L. Miller (1984),

3. Original and subsequent owners:
  - City of Wisconsin Rapids
  - Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs
4. Builder or contractor: Dan Christensen Construction Company (Cedar Rapids, Iowa)
5. Alterations and additions: The chief alteration to the structure occurred in 1985 with the wholesale replacement of the original doors and multiple-paned windows. This renovation also included removing the headhouse parapet and endwall chimneys, as well as placing a light layer of stucco insulation board over the poured concrete foundation and the headhouse's northwest (rear) facade. Although several interior office spaces have been modernized, the drill floor, foyer, hallways and stairs remain largely intact.<sup>2</sup>

B. Historical Context:

**Wisconsin National Guard**

A state militia was active in Wisconsin in the early 1830s. It was, however, the Illinois Militia during the Black Hawk War. This activity notwithstanding, evidence of a Wisconsin Militia did not become apparent until the 1850s. Local militias may have been formed, but an 1858 state law officially permitted groups of forty or more to form a uniform company in the areas of artillery, light infantry or cavalry. Officers were selected by each unit and included one captain, one first lieutenant, one second or third lieutenant, four sergeants and four corporals, after which commissions, uniforms and arms were issued.<sup>3</sup>

The Wisconsin Militia terminated during the Civil War, although many of the state's

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Copy on file at the Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison, WI; National Register of Historic Places Inventory, Material online at [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org). None of the Hengels-designed armories listed in the National Register remain in use by the Wisconsin National Guard. The Whitefish Bay Armory was listed in the National Register in 2002 (after it was sold by the WIARNG) and razed in 2004.

<sup>2</sup>“Armory & O.M.S. Repairs, Wisconsin National Guard–Wisconsin Rapids,” State Project Number 8311-24 (2 August 1985), Architectural plans located at the Facilities Management Office, Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, Madison, WI.

<sup>3</sup>John K. Mahon, *History of the National Guard* (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1983), 86-87; “History of the Wisconsin National Guard,” *Wisconsin National Guard Review (WNGR)* 14:3 (May 1937):3; “Brief Sketch of [the] Wisconsin National Guard,” *WNGR* 24:5 (September 1947):12.

militiamen took part in the conflict. The initial demand upon Wisconsin by the federal government was 780 soldiers for the war, which were supplied by twenty-six of the state's fifty-one militia units. These men served, for instance, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry Regiment. Wisconsin soldiers were active in virtually all of the war's major campaigns, with a number of units belonging to the famed Iron Brigade.<sup>4</sup>

The state's militia reformed after the war. The Milwaukee Volunteer Corps, Lancaster Light Artillery and Richland Light Artillery were all established in 1867. The following year, the Milwaukee Light Guard, Milwaukee Zouaves, Alma Rifles, Manitowoc Volunteers and Monroe Light Battery were created. The Platteville Light Artillery, Beaver Dam Light Guards, Trojan Volunteer Battery, Merchant Zouaves of Milwaukee, Sheridan Guard of Milwaukee and the Delavan Volunteers joined the state militia in 1869. The arms provided for these militiamen included Springfield muskets, Springfield breech-loading rifles, Enfield rifles and cavalry carbines. It was thought that these organizations were more social clubs and parade groups than fighting units. Adjutant General Parkinson reported in 1874 that some of the companies formed were likely affected by the "parade and glitter of uniforms," after which they disbanded.<sup>5</sup>

Perhaps noting the tentative nature that motivated units to join the state's militia after the Civil War, Adjutant General James K. Proutfit recommended that the "...only proper and fair manner of supporting any number of efficient militia troops would be by providing by general taxation for funds in supporting first class, independent companies..." Proutfit suggested that \$10 per year be paid to each of the 2,000 men authorized for Wisconsin's twenty companies. This did not happen, but, in 1873, the state did start providing the militia with \$100 per unit per year to help pay for armory rent and repairs. A year later, the award per unit increased to \$300 annually.<sup>6</sup>

The militia was poised for change as the year 1880 approached. A significant alteration came in 1879 when the term "national guard" was used for the first time – instead of the word "militia." Additionally, the battalion method of organizing the

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<sup>4</sup>Mahon, *History of the National Guard*, 99-100, 104; "History of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:3 (May 1937): 3.

<sup>5</sup>"History of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:3 (May 1937):3 and 14:4 (July 1939): 3; "Brief Sketch of [the] Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:5 (September 1947):12.

<sup>6</sup>"History of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:3 (May 1937): 3; Mahon, *History of the National Guard*, 114.

Wisconsin Army National Guard (WIARNG) was first implemented in 1880.<sup>7</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion included the Beloit City Guard and the Janesville Guard, all under the command of Lieutenant Colonel W.B. Britton of Janesville. Also established in 1880 was Milwaukee's Light Horse Squadron, a predecessor of the 105<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment. Three more battalions were created in 1881. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion consisted of the Bay City Guard of Green Bay, Oshkosh Rifles, Evergreen Guard of Oshkosh and the Fond du Lac Guard. Meanwhile, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion included the Mauston Light Guard, Governor's Guard of La Crosse, Neillsville's Sherman Guard, La Crosse Light Guard and the Unity Guard. And finally, the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion claimed the Governor's Guard of Madison, Guppy Guard of Portage, Lake City Guard of Madison, Watertown Rifles and the Burchard Guard of Beaver Dam. Regiments were also established in the state in 1882. Battalions typically had three to seven companies, while a regiment had eight to twelve companies.<sup>8</sup>

The WIARNG experienced some major changes in the early 1880s. Legislation was passed that provided for all guard members to have common uniforms. A five dollar allowance was also offered to each company for each guard member that attended an annual inspection. It was intended to help manage the costs of uniforms and equipment.<sup>9</sup> The guard also saw labor-related duty in the state during the 1880s and 1890s. It responded in 1881, for example, to the Sawdust Riot in Eau Claire. Members who answered the call were paid one dollar per day, although they brought their own bedding, clothing and arms. Calls to respond to labor disputes also came from the governor in 1886, 1889, 1894 and 1898. Most of these actions were not overtly confrontational. But in 1886, when called to protect industrial facilities, the governor ordered the Guard to open fire if there were threats to the property. The guard ultimately killed seven strikers who the governor thought "...were foreigners infected with anarchistic propaganda..."<sup>10</sup>

Three regiments of the WIARNG, each with twelve companies, were called up for

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<sup>7</sup>Currently, a battalion typically is comprised of between three and five company-sized elements. A company consists of around 100 soldiers and is the unit typically supported by an individual community.

<sup>8</sup>"Brief Sketch of [the] History of [the] Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:4 (September 1947):12; "History of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:5 (September 1937): 3. A regiment, prior to World War II, typically consisted of between ten and fifteen companies. Once the common method of organizing combat-oriented units, the term now is used only for specialized elements.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.* Previously there had been variations in uniforms across the state, generally manifested in differing styles, colors, buttons, etc.

<sup>10</sup>"Brief Sketch of [the] History of [the] Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 24:5 (September 1947): 12; Mahon, *History of the National Guard*, 116-17.

service during the Spanish-American War. The units mobilized and trained at the Wisconsin State Fair grounds near Milwaukee. But questions were raised about the President's ability to call up guard units for service outside the country. This conundrum led all guard members to volunteer for federal service.<sup>11</sup>

The WIARNG reorganized in 1899, after the Spanish-American War. State strength was authorized at forty companies of infantry (consolidated into regiments and battalions), as well as a cavalry troop and a battery of light artillery. The state-provided appropriation for the WIARNG in 1903 was \$125,000.<sup>12</sup>

The WIARNG subsequently was called to active duty in 1916, when the United States was concerned about patrolling its common border with Mexico. It was also called upon in 1917 as the country entered World War I. This latter event was significant because it was the catalyst for the formation of the 32<sup>nd</sup> "Red Arrow" Division. The division served with such distinction that a French general called them "Les Terribles,"—meaning "The Terrible Ones"—which the division took for its nickname. The 32<sup>nd</sup> was known during World War I for always accomplishing its mission and its divisional insignia is that of an arrow piercing the enemy line. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Division's strength was 23,000 men, 15,000 of which came from the WIARNG. The rest were from Michigan. During this period, the designation of Wisconsin units changed as the U.S. Army adopted a uniform unit naming system for the entire National Guard. The 1<sup>st</sup> Artillery Regiment became the 121<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Regiment and the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Infantry regiments became the 127<sup>th</sup> and 128<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiments, respectively. Elements of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Infantry regiments were absorbed into the 127<sup>th</sup> and the 128<sup>th</sup>. And finally, the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry (originally the Light Horse Squadron of Milwaukee) was redesignated the 120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery due to the fact that the U.S. Army did not deploy National Guard horse cavalry during the war.<sup>13</sup>

The WIARNG was again reorganized after World War I. The guard's state appropriation had grown by 1923 to \$300,000 per year. An additional \$300,000 was also made available for the construction of armories and any needed repairs—if authorized by the governor. A loss of funding occurred thereafter, which led to the elimination of twenty units around the state. One of the funding problems

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<sup>11</sup>"Brief Sketch of [the] History of [the] Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 24:5 (September 1947): 12.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, "History of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 14:5 (September 1937): 3. Infantry units are the army's primary fighting element.

<sup>13</sup>"Brief Sketch of [the] History of [the] Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 24:5 (September 1947): 12; "History of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 15:4 (July 1938): 4.

encountered was the Great Depression, which caused the number of paid unit assemblies to drop for a time. But as relief programs were developed and implemented, the WIARNG benefitted. A substantial number of Depression-era relief program dollars, for example, were used to build new armories in Platteville, Whitewater and Sheboygan, in addition to providing for significant improvements to the WIARNG's annual encampment site at Camp Williams in Juneau County. By 1940, with World War II spreading across the globe, the WIARNG's strength was again increased.<sup>14</sup>

World War II was a dramatic struggle fought on the Atlantic Ocean and in Europe, as well as on the Pacific and those islands between Hawaii, Australia, the Philippines and Japan. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was a significant unit in the Pacific that saw action primarily in New Guinea and the Philippines, although several of its formations were detached and saw action in Europe. Also, Janesville's 32<sup>nd</sup> Tank Company was detached from the division and deployed to the Philippines in November 1941—where it lost 65 of its 100 members through combat, the Bataan Death March and subsequent imprisonment. The 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division served 654 days of combat during the war, which was the most of any army division. Numerous divisional sub-units received Presidential Unit Citations and eleven soldiers were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.<sup>15</sup>

The 1950s were a period of relative calm for the WIARNG. A new armory building program was undertaken in 1953 and continued for ten years—a span in which over thirty new armories were built around the state. In October 1961, the entire 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division was activated and sent to Fort Lewis, Washington, as part of the nation's response to the Berlin Crisis. The unit never deployed overseas and was released from active duty in August 1962. Activities around the state that required the use of the WIARNG continued. For instance, 3,000 soldiers were called up to maintain order in Milwaukee in August 1966 when white protestors started to challenge a group of black picketers at a judge's house. A number of other activations occurred in response to Vietnam anti-war events in Madison and Milwaukee. In 1978, the WIARNG was again placed on state active duty to fill in at state prisons where employees had gone on strike.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid.; “Tank Men off to Meet Gen. Wainwright,” *WNGR* 23:5 (September 1946): 5; “Medal of Honor Recipients,” Material online at [www.32nd-division.org](http://www.32nd-division.org).

<sup>16</sup>Mahon, *History of the National Guard*, 239, 258; “Organization of the 32<sup>nd</sup> ‘Red Arrow’ Infantry Division During the Berlin Crisis,” Material available at [www.32nd-division.org](http://www.32nd-division.org); State Active Duty Database, Located at the Wisconsin Army National Guard Historian's Office, Joint Force Headquarters, Madison, WI.

New international threats and events that required National Guard involvement also evolved in the 1990s and beyond. The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 inspired the United States to lead a coalition that liberated that Persian Gulf nation in 1991. The WIARNG provided 1,100 soldiers for the action, most of which were stationed in Saudi Arabia. The state subsequently furnished soldiers for military operations in the Balkans, as well as provided humanitarian and national-building assistance in Central America. With the 11 September 2001 attack on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, in New York City and Washington, D.C., respectively, Wisconsin's Guard members were assigned until May 2002 to security duty at the state's airports. Thereafter, National Guard troops backed up units assigned to, or were themselves ordered to, Afghanistan. The Iraq War and corresponding post-war efforts to build an independent government in that nation are the most recent deployments experienced by the WIARNG. As of 2008, over 7,000 Wisconsin soldiers have been called to active duty since 11 September 2001. The most recent domestic missions for Wisconsin guardsmen have included support for rescue efforts in New Orleans following Hurricane Katrina in 2005, as well as assisting U.S. Border Patrol with operations along the Mexican Border—a mission began in July 2006 and ended in July 2008. Within the state, the WIARNG in June 2008 responded to massive statewide flooding by activating 750 soldiers and airmen in support to local authorities.

### **Evolution of Armory Architecture**

Prior to the Civil War, only a small number of structures were constructed strictly for military purposes. The majority of individual militia units met in buildings designed for both military and non-military uses. Most often, volunteer companies rented rooms or entire upper levels of extant commercial buildings. The handful of armories that did exist were not built with the aspect of fortification in mind. Instead, the architecture of most of the pre-Civil War examples reflected that of contemporary popular styles. In 1863, Congress enacted the Armory Law, directing individual states to outfit their militia units with appropriate facilities in which to store weaponry and equipment. Very few states initially followed through with the decree and, among those that did, wartime initiatives often were not the primary motivation. Instead, armory construction frequently was prompted by fears of class warfare brought on by social upheaval. Anti-draft rioting during the Civil War and labor conflicts during the last quarter of the nineteenth century provided many states with the strongest impetus to build fortified armories.<sup>17</sup>

This is also the period in which the first formal design of armories was developed. Militia units historically met in one building and drilled in another. But the first post-

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<sup>17</sup>Dianna Everett, *Historic National Guard Armories: A Brief Illustrated Review of the Past Two Centuries* (Washington, D.C.: Historical Services Division, National Guard Bureau Office of Public Affairs, 1994), 13.

Civil War armory buildings were designed to include spaces for all activities. Likewise, their exterior appearance intended to express the facilities' military function. This was accomplished through the use of the castellated style, which was derived from medieval fortresses and included such features as towers or bartizans with battlements, crenellated parapets, machiolated galleries and round-arched sally ports. Beginning in New York in the 1870s, this design concept swept across the country and such structures were the most common type of armory built until the 1910s. Moreover, the overall armory configuration established during the period remained fairly consistent for decades to follow. Structures typically consisted of two primary elements—an administrative “headhouse” and a large drill hall. The former component included spaces for various offices and classrooms, a kitchen/dining area, club and/or recreation rooms, a weapons vault and locker rooms. Although the drill hall was already traditionally a substantial space, technological advances of the 1870s allowed for even larger areas, due to the development of steel, hinged-arched trusses.<sup>18</sup>

After the turn of the twentieth century, concerns about class warfare receded, particularly as labor unions and capitalists adopted less bellicose attitudes toward one another. Americans instead began to fear international warfare. The United States had become a world power by this time, but the Spanish-American War had amply demonstrated that the country was poorly prepared to defend itself. Mounting tensions in Europe, which eventually erupted into World War I, also proved that the United States could no longer hold itself aloof from international matters. The confluence of these two trends led to a shift in the National Guard's mission, from defense against domestic disturbances to defense against foreign incursions. No longer the security force for industrialists, the Guard developed a more overtly military role which was legislated by the Dick Act of 1903. Additionally, the reduction in the use of guardsmen as strikebreakers increased public trust and improved relations between local communities and guard units. Armories came to be perceived less as bastions of defense against mobs, but more as potential community centers as a result. Although the basic headhouse and drill hall configuration remained, their exteriors again began to reflect popular architectural styles such as Neoclassical and Beaux Arts Classicism.<sup>19</sup>

### **20<sup>th</sup> Century Armory Architecture in Wisconsin**

Wisconsin passed in 1919 the Armory Aid Act to assist in the construction of armories throughout the state. The act called for the local municipality to furnish the

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<sup>18</sup>Ibid., 13, 21-22.

<sup>19</sup>Robert M. Fogelson, *America's Armories* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 206-10.

site and at least one-half of the construction cost, while the state would cover the remaining half not to exceed \$20,000. The armory and land were to be in the state's name and the state was also to receive the income from rentals. The local municipality, however, was to be able to use the drill hall for free for public-oriented functions, except for the cost of heat and light. Due to the high cost of material and labor, no construction occurred until 1921. By the end of 1922, the State Armory Board had assisted in the construction of three armories in Oconomowoc, Clintonville and Abbotsford, as well as reconstructing old armories in five other locations. The Armory Aid Act was abolished in 1923. Records indicate that the state owned eight of the armories used by the WIARNG.<sup>20</sup>

The years 1928 and 1930 brought about the largest armory building program in the history of the WIARNG to that point. Thirteen individual armories were constructed during that three-year span, six of which were built in 1930 alone.<sup>21</sup> Efforts to build these armories utilized no state funding, except for the annual rent paid to unit associations and municipalities, and encompassed a wide variety of funding and ownership arrangements. For example, the Whitefish Bay and Jefferson armories were owned by their respective unit organizations, while soldiers in Fort Atkinson and Watertown shared a municipal building and a Turner Hall, respectively. With regard to methods of funding, the Jefferson Armory included a \$10,000 gift from the city, Milwaukee's Light Horse Squadron Armory came from the sale of its previous Shorewood location and the members of the Arcadia unit contributed half of their drill pay for two years to an armory fund. Other interesting initiatives included obtaining used paving brick for free by Kenosha's Troop E, 105<sup>th</sup> Cavalry, while the Rhinelander unit obtained subscriptions, received \$10,000 from the local American Legion post, as well as took out a loan. Of the thirteen armories constructed during this period, only the Light Horse Squadron Armory and the Chippewa Falls Armory (which is heavily altered) remain in use by the WIARNG.<sup>22</sup>

Two years after the dedication of Milwaukee's privately funded Light Horse Squadron Armory, the National Defense Act of 1933 clarified the status of the National Guard and increased its size to 190,000 soldiers nationwide. One way to procure facilities to house this increased number of troops was to utilize Depression-

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<sup>20</sup>*AG Reports*, [1922], 25, 31; [1924], 32; "Armories of the Wisconsin National Guard," *WNGR* 1:1 (January 1924): 33.

<sup>21</sup>Armories constructed during the period include Kenosha and Arcadia (1928); Jefferson, Whitefish Bay, Watertown, Oconto and Fort Atkinson (1929); and Madison, Milwaukee, Rhinelander, Janesville, Waupaca, and Chippewa Falls (1930).

<sup>22</sup>"Armory Building Record is Made," *WNGR* 17:6 (November 1930): 23 "Four New Armories are Opened," *WNGR* 6:2 (March 1929): 12; "New Armory Wave is Sweeping State," *WNGR* 5:1 (January 1928): 6-8.

era programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and Public Works Administration (PWA) to build armories. The initial legislation that created the WPA did not allow for armory construction. Such efforts were directed toward schools, hospitals and other community structures. In response, the National Guard Association, American Legion and other veterans' organizations lobbied intensely and the WPA developed a program to facilitate armory construction. Through the combined efforts of the WPA and PWA programs, hundreds of new armories were constructed, or existing ones renovated, across the country. Many of these armories were small and designed to house only one company-sized unit. The PWA initially undertook construction of most new armories, which were often large, multi-unit facilities. But by the mid-1930s, the WPA had assumed responsibility for the more numerous one-unit armories, while the PWA funded the construction of fifty-two armories nationwide at a cost of \$13 million. Meanwhile, the WPA (a larger program than the PWA) built more than 700 armories between 1935 and 1941.<sup>23</sup>

In Wisconsin, communities were charged with locating and procuring a site for an armory while the state and the WPA provided labor. Part of the justification for building military armories with WPA/PWA funding was that they would be utilized as community centers for sporting events and a variety of other social functions. Wisconsin constructed or augmented nine armories by the end of the program in 1942. Cities that received new armories as a result of the WPA were Platteville, Whitewater, Stoughton and Marshfield, while the PWA assisted with the construction of the Sheboygan Armory and Milwaukee's 126<sup>th</sup> Observation Squadron Armory (no longer extant). Cities with existing armories that were improved with WPA funds include Kenosha, Whitefish Bay, and Milwaukee, which received two vehicle storage buildings. Construction of unit cantonment areas at the WIARNG's Camp Williams was also undertaken by the WPA. Of the major facilities constructed by the WPA/PWA, only the structures at Camp Williams and Platteville remain in use by the WIARNG.<sup>24</sup>

After World War II, the WIARNG sought to end its long-standing practice of renting armory space in cities lacking a state-owned facility and embarked with the federal

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<sup>23</sup>Roy D. Keehn and the Illinois Armory Board, *The Illinois Armory Board Building Program: A Report Submitted to the Governor of Illinois and the 63<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly* (N.p.: 1934), 3-6; Works Progress Administration, *Report of the Progress of the WPA Program* (Washington, D.C.: WPA, various years/pages as follows): [1938] 70-71; [1939] 3-6, [1940] 80; Public Works Administration, *America Builds: The Record of the PWA* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939), 203.

<sup>24</sup>*Report of the Progress of the WPA Program*, [1938] 70-71, [1939] 3-6, [1940] 80; *America Builds*, 203; Fogelson, *America's Armories*, 196, 198; Everett, *Historic National Guard Armories*, 33-34; "Will Build 10 New Armories," *WNGR* (November 1935): 1; "Armory Construction Over Until After Duration," *WNGR* 19:4 (July 1942): 7.

government on a joint armory construction program. With the federal government picking up 75 percent of the cost, armories of two standard configurations were constructed in thirty-four Wisconsin cities between 1953 and 1963. Virtually all of these facilities remain in use today.<sup>25</sup>

### **Art Deco Style**

An international, twentieth-century, design movement, Art Deco emerged at the 1925 *L'Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes* in Paris. Self-consciously ahistorical, Art Deco departed from other popular styles such as Neoclassical and Beaux Arts Classicism, which incorporated Roman, Greek and Renaissance ideals in design. Art Deco instead drew inspiration from geometric and natural motifs. Ornamentation typically consisted of zigzags, chevrons, sunbursts, stepped arches and stylized floral and natural forms.<sup>26</sup>

Technological innovations exercised a profound influence on Art Deco design. New building materials such as Bakelite, Formica, glass block, carrera glass, glazed terra cotta tiles, cast stone and aluminum panels, became readily available through the mass production manufacturing process. These materials easily exhibited the sleek, clean lines that characterized Art Deco. The appearance and application of these materials diverged significantly from traditional architectural designs and provides Art Deco with its distinctive visual impact.<sup>27</sup>

Ornamentation figured prominently in the early period of Art Deco design (mid- to late-1920s), but, by the mid-1930s, its use had become much more austere. Art Moderne superseded Art Deco within a few years. Although very similar to Art Deco in its use of streamlining and modern materials, the Art Moderne style had a more horizontal emphasis. Grooves in the wall, or coping at the roofline, emphasized smooth wall surfaces, rounded corners and the overall horizontal massing of the building, while some vertical elements, such as piers, buttresses and window openings, offered variety. One architect to utilize the Art Deco style for armory construction was Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. Hengels of the WIARNG.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>“Historical and Architectural Survey of Selected Armories of the Wisconsin Army National Guard,” Prepared by Heritage Research, Ltd., Menomonee Falls, WI (September 2005), 30-31.

<sup>26</sup>Michael F. Crowe, *Deco by the Bay: Art Deco in the San Francisco Bay Area* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1995), 1, 3, 7.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 8, 10; Jonathon M. Woodham, *Twentieth Century Ornament* (New York: Viking Studio Books, 1995), 1, 3, 7.

<sup>28</sup>Everett, *Historic National Guard Armories*, 30-31; Crowe, *Deco by the Bay*, 8.

### **The Wisconsin National Guard in Wisconsin Rapids and the Memorial Armory**

The first known militia units in Wisconsin Rapids (known as Grand Rapids until 1922) were organized in 1861 for service in the Civil War. Local citizens organized the Pinery Rifles, the Grand Rapids Union Guard, the Evergreens and the Pinery Rangers, and were subsequently dispersed to the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry regiments. The next unit to drill in Wisconsin Rapids was Troop G, 1<sup>st</sup> Wisconsin Cavalry, which was activated for service in World War I. Upon its activation, the unit was promptly reorganized as Battery D, 120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment and was federally recognized on 18 April 1921. It drilled at a building on First North Street.<sup>29</sup>

In 1924, Battery E changed locations and purchased for \$17,000 a former amusement hall at 351 N. First Street to use as its armory. The structure burned to the ground in November 1939 and virtually all of the unit's equipment was destroyed. Within a few months, plans emerged for a new armory designed by State Military Architect Lieutenant Colonel Henry C. Hengels. The City of Wisconsin Rapids organized an Armory Committee and purchased the old armory site from the Battery E Business Association. The association then turned over those funds and money from its insurance payment to the city's armory fund, an amount totaling \$9,000. The city council approved a \$54,000 bond issue on March 1940 and the Charles Hagerstrom Post of the American Legion gained the ability to hold events at the facility. The construction contract was awarded in September to the Dan Christensen Construction Company of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Work began in November at the corner of Second Avenue South and Gaynor Avenue, which was a city-owned site large enough to accommodate parking for both "mechanized units" of the WIARNG, as well as civilians attending events at the armory. The structure was dedicated on 4 July 1941 as part of the community's Independence Day festivities, which included an armory dance. Built at a cost of \$63,500 – none of which was from the WPA or any state agency – the structure was dedicated as the Memorial Armory and the local newspaper described it as "A new symbol of American Freedom."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup>Dave Engel, *River City Memories #5* (N.p.: Locally Published, 1991), 25; "A Short History of Wisconsin Rapids Covering the Period Until About 1956," Material on-line at [www.mcmillanlibrary.org](http://www.mcmillanlibrary.org); *History of Wood County, Wisconsin* (Minneapolis: H.C. Cooper, Jr. & Co., 1923), 176. Federal recognition of a unit occurs when it meets standards outlined by the U.S. Army after a period of organization.

<sup>30</sup>Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps – Wisconsin Rapids* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1926), Sheet 4; "Remains of Wisconsin Rapids' Armory," *WNGR* 16:1 (January 1939): 1; "Wisconsin Rapids Has Plans for a New \$50,000 Armory," *WNGR* 16:4 (July 1939): 4; "More New Armories in Site," *WNGR* 17:3 (May 1940): 9; "Council Approves Bond Issue for Armory," *Wisconsin Rapids (WI) Daily Tribune*, 22 March 1940 (henceforth cited as *Daily Tribune*); "Common Council Committee Picks Site for Armory," *Daily Tribune*, 17 May 1940;

Battery E was disbanded after service in World War II and it was not until 1948 that a new unit – Battery C, 173<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery was organized, but that unit was renamed Company C, 126<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery by the next year. Prior to the organization of a unit in Wisconsin Rapids, the WIARNG constructed a 49' x 184' vehicle storage building in 1946 as part of its efforts to shelter the significant number of vehicles it was receiving from the U.S. Army. The community did utilize the armory also, but the extent of its use is not known beyond a local dance held in 1960.<sup>31</sup> By 1963, the WIARNG had stationed the Headquarters Battery and Battery B 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion 120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery in Wisconsin Rapids. A 1968 reorganization placed the headquarters battery of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion 120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery at the armory—a unit that remains stationed at the site. In 2005, the 1-120<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery deployed to Kuwait and Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom. The unit returned in the fall of 2006.<sup>32</sup>

## PART II: ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The Memorial Armory was completed in 1942. It is a large, two-story, brick building with restrained elements of the Art Deco style. The interior framework is structural steel while the foundation is poured concrete. It is a T-shaped building with a headhouse office block and a perpendicular drill hall wing. It is oriented on a northeast-southwest axis with the main facade facing southeast.
2. Condition of Fabric: The condition of the exterior fabric is good. The armory underwent a significant renovation in 1985 that applied 2" of stucco-covered insulation board to the exposed portions of the poured-concrete basement and the upper part of the headhouse's northwest (rear) facade. All windows (with the exception of several glass-block examples) and doors were replaced with

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“Council Awards Contract for New Armory,” *Daily Tribune*, 2 October 1940; “Several New Armories Appear to be Assured,” *WNGR* 17:7 (November 1940): 14; “\$63,500 Armory Dedicated July 4,” *WNGR* 18:6 (July 1941): 4; “Armory Construction Over Until After Duration,” *WNGR* 19:4 (July 1942): 7; Editorial Cartoon, *Daily Tribune*, 3 July 1941; “Wisconsin Rapids Dedicates New Armory,” *Daily Tribune*, 5 July 1941.

<sup>31</sup>Advertisement, *Daily Tribune*, 18 October 1960. This information was found via a search of a subscriber-only, online newspaper article database at the McMillan Library in Wisconsin Rapids. A search of this database did not reveal any other items related to community or social activities at the armory.

<sup>32</sup>“44 New Units Added to the W.N.G. Since July,” *WNGR* 26:6 (November 1948): 5, 16; “Initial Equipment to be Sent Without Written Authorization,” *WNGR* 23:5 (September 1946): 1, 12; “Simonson Appointed as Armory Custodian,” *Daily Tribune*, 21 February 1949; “Unit Stationing Plan,” *Badger Guardsman* 7:4 (February 1963): 2; “New Station Plan,” *Badger Guardsman* 11:5 (Nov-Dec 1967): 2.

modern units. The interior retains excellent integrity with regard to the lobby/foyer, hallways, stairwells and drill floor. In 1985, many office, supply, lavatory and storage spaces had their interior footprint changed by moving partition walls. These spaces also received replacement floor, wall and ceiling materials.<sup>33</sup>

B. Exterior Description:

1. General Description: Rising from on a poured-concrete foundation faced with 2½" thick stucco-covered insulation board, this brick armory is T-shaped and carries restrained elements of the Art Deco style. It is comprised of a two-story, flat-roof, headhouse block that faces Second Avenue South and a northwest (rear) projecting, drill floor wing topped with a shallow, arched roof. Single-story, shed-roof blocks that measure 17'-6" x 21'-10½" are situated at the juncture of the headhouse and the drill hall. The southeast (main) facade is defined by a prominent, central entry block that contains a third level that consists of a single room. Fenestration is symmetrical and the headhouse generally carries metal, one-over-one, double-hung, replacement sashes, while the drill hall features long, horizontal openings filled with original glass block. Capped wall chimneys are at each sidewall of the headhouse block while a taller, active chimney is situated in the north juncture with the drill hall wing. A buff-colored datestone carved with the year "1940" exists in the north corner of the headhouse block. It measures 15" x 25½".
2. Overall Dimensions: The armory is 106' x 101'-3". The headhouse block is 106' x 32'-6" and the perpendicular drill hall wing is 68'-9" x 62'-3".
3. Foundations: The foundation is poured concrete with the basement walls measuring between 14' and 18' thick. Footings, by and large, measure 4' wide and are 16" thick.
4. Walls: Five brick stretcher courses to one header course. The southeast (main) side features six 24" x 4" pilasters that rise to the roof. These pilasters are by and large placed on 10'-9" centers. The headhouse's southwest and northeast walls each carry three heavy 2'-9" x 2'-9" wall piers that rise to the roof and carry the steel roof truss system. They are generally spaced on 17'-6" centers. The southeast (rear) wall carries a thin pilaster at the center that

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<sup>33</sup>Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs, "Wisconsin Rapids Armory Repairs—State Project 8311-24," 3 February 1985, Architectural plans on file at the Wisconsin Department of Military Affairs Facilities Management Office, Madison, WI. Henceforth cited as Wisconsin Rapids Plans—1985.

risers to the roof. It is flanked by a pair of three-quarter height wall piers that resemble those on the drill halls's side walls. The piers are topped with sloped limestone caps that transition to thin pilasters and extend to the roofline.

5. Main Entrance: The southeast (main) elevation is defined by a large, central, tower-like entrance block that measures 26' wide and is served by a broad concrete stairway. The top of the entrance block exhibits four rows of multi-colored, corbeled header brick topped with a replacement metal parapet cap. The stairway extends the entire width of the entrance block and consists of thirteen steps that rise 7" and have an 18" tread. The stairs lead to a large, concrete apron that extends 8'-3" from the building. This apron covers an open space below that measures 41" wide and 70" high. Ironwork railings exist at each side of the staircase and apron, as well as at the center of the stairs. These railings are 36" high and comprised of 1¼" square posts connected by 1⅝" wide flatiron rails. The lower rail is 7" high while the upper rail is situated on top of the posts. The railing's stairway portion contains six panels, while the apron section features two additional panels. Each panel is filled with flatiron diagonals with a round metal pendant (3" in diameter) at the center.

The entrance block contains a 3' deep recessed entry space that is separated from the apron by two steps that measure 7" high with an 18½" tread. The back of this recess is completely occupied by three modern, plain, metal doors set within a modern, metal frame. The sidewalls contain 13" x 41" window openings that are now infilled with brick.

Positioned to either side of the recessed entrance are wide pilasters that are 74½" wide and project 12". Within these pilasters are buff-colored, stone panels that measures 30" wide x 48" tall. The southeast (left) is inscribed at the top with an eagle and a star, as well as a list of Wisconsin Rapids city officials and aldermen who were in office at the time of the building's construction.<sup>34</sup> The northeast (right) panel carries an identical eagle and star arrangement as well as the following inscription, "THIS ARMORY IS DEDICATED BY THE CITY OF WISCONSIN RAPIDS TO THOSE VALIANT SOLDIER-SONS WHO SERVE THEIR COUNTRY IN THE

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<sup>34</sup> The officials denoted on this panel are W.T. Nobles, Mayor; Carl A. Cajanus, City Engineer; Joe Norton, Treasurer; Nels M. Justeson, City Clerk; Harold D. Billmeyer, City Attorney; and the following Aldermen: John L. Johnson, Walter Parmeter, Charles V. Stark, W.E. Beadle, Herman Koth, William McGrogan, Henry C. Demitz, Rudolph Hahn, Reinhold Kroll, Van Kubisiak, Lawrence Behrend, Reinhard Knuth, Robert Sanger, Fred Duncan, J.A. Kenyon and Meade Reeves.

WISCONSIN NATIONAL GUARD AND THE ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES, RALPH M. IMMELL–THE ADJUTANT GENERAL, WIS., HENRY C. HENGELS–ARCHITECT”. Two metal discs (11" in diameter) are positioned 18" above each stone panel. The southeast disc carries the seal of the Wisconsin National Guard, while the northeast disc represents the seal of the United States. Modern lights are 11" above each disc. Three copper stars are affixed near the top of each pilaster, which also features four rows of header corbeled brick.

Located above the recessed entry on the second floor is a tripartite window arrangement that consists of a central, replacement casement window flanked by a three by five arrangement of original 12" glass block. These windows exist within a 12'-9" x 59" opening marked by a soldier brick header. Below the window is an ironwork balconet that is 27" high and mirrors the design of the stairway railings. The ends of the balconet's vertical members are scrolled. A tripartite flag holder rests at the center. A tall-and-narrow window opening filled with glass block (11 blocks by 2) pierces the entrance block's attic (third) level. The space between the second-floor window and the attic window is enhanced with vertical brick.

6. Openings: The window openings for the headhouse block on the first and second levels generally measure 4' high x 3'5" wide. Basement level openings measure 3'-1" high x 3'-2" wide. Windows that coincide with stairwell landings measure 4'-1½" high x 3'-5½" wide. Two window openings on the first floor of the northeast endwall are infilled with brick, while the remaining openings throughout are fitted with replacement, metal-framed, one-over-one, double-hung sashes. With the exception of those examples marking a stairway landing, all window openings are placed symmetrically. A standard-sized entrance resides on both the southwest and northwest sides of the headhouse.

Two entrances service the drill floor wing and both consist of a set of two modern metal doors fitted into openings that measure 6'-9¼" high x 7'-8½" wide. One set is positioned on the northwest facade at the west corner while the other is located on the northeast side at the north corner. Vehicle access to the basement is provided by a modern, overhead, metal garage door that is 8' high and 10' wide and located on southwest side. A 52' long concrete ramp services the doorway. Windows solely consist of long-and-narrow openings fitted with 12' x 12' glass block. These windows are situated high on the wall with three sets (two blocks high and ten wide) located on the southwest and northeast sides and two on the northwest facade (two blocks high and eight wide).

C. Interior Description:

1. General Description: The armory's original interior layout consisted on the headhouse's first floor of the current vestibule, lobby, hallways and stairwells. A storage room with a ticket window and 21'-6" x 36' American Legion hall were positioned to the northwest (right) of the lobby while the area to the southwest (left) featured a women's restroom, a wardrobe closet and the National Guard Memorial Room, which measured 12'-6" x 28'. The second level carried a 20' x 22' trophy room immediately above the lobby. The area to the northwest (right) served as a locker room that measured 21'-6" x 41'-6" and the space to the southwest (left) was divided between an orderly room, commander's office, supply room, cot closet and arms room all within an area that measured 21'-6" x 40'. The basement featured an enlisted men's room underneath the lobby area with the northwest space occupied entirely by the mess hall and the southwest area outfitted with a men's restroom and shower, field equipment storage room and a caretaker's room. The basement continues underneath the drill floor wing and was fitted with an 18' by approximately 60' shooting range, a boiler room with coal bin and a large storage/garage area served by the aforementioned vehicle door.
  - a. Headhouse Block: Elements of the headhouse that remain unchanged are the vestibule, lobby, hallways and stairwells. The former American Legion Hall located northwest (right) of the lobby has been subdivided into two vaults and two storage rooms. The former National Guard Memorial Room (southeast of the lobby) is subdivided into an orderly room and four small offices. On the second floor, the former locker room (northwest side) is now two office/classrooms, while the dimensions of the Trophy Room (now a conference room) and the space to the southeast (left) remains unchanged. Dimensions for rooms in the basement remain largely unchanged. The basement mess hall has been remodeled into a classroom and the indoor range into a locker/supply room.
  - b. Drill Hall Block: A set of three terrazzo steps descend from the entry foyer into the drill hall wing. Each step has a 4½" rise and 18½" run and is adorned with a 2" x ¾" lip. Two metal railings that mirror those of the outside front steps divide the steps into three sections. Flanking the steps are large, projecting utility vaults formed with glazed block. These vaults are 10'-7½" high, 7'-8" wide and 35" deep. They contain original ventilation units (100" x 50" x 39") manufactured by the Herman Nelson Corporation of Moline, Illinois. Three 10" metal stars adorn the top of each vault.

The gymnasium-style drill floor measures 70'-1" x 60'-1" and is made up of rows of 1½" x 12" boards. It is painted with basketball lines and has the "Red Arrow" insignia of the former 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division (currently the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Brigade) painted at center court. The walls contain both tan glazed block and common brick. The glazed block portion envelops the gym and rises to the height of the doorways. Each block measures 12" x 5". A course of three bands of brick with checker-board indentation sits atop the glazed block. The remainder of the wall is common brick laid in a five stretcher to one header ratio.

Positioned to either side of the drill floor is a former one-story gun shed block that measures 20'-11" x 16'-6". The northwest (right) block has been remodeled into a kitchen and is served by a standard doorway. The southeast (left) is unchanged and serves as a workout room. A large 11' x 6'-11" opening provides access.

2. Stairways: An open terrazzo staircase exists at the north and south ends of the headhouse block. From the basement, the stairs rise one-half story to the side entrance landing and continue another half-story to the first level. A second landing exists between the first and second floors. Each landing measures 8'-6" x 54". Each stair measures 49½" wide, rises 7" and has a 11" tread. The railings are metal and rise 36¾" and feature square 4" posts and square ½" balusters on 4" centers. The railings rest upon terrazzo edging that is 2" in height.
3. Hallways: The first floor foyer and hallway of the headhouse block consists of an entry that measures 10'-8" x 11'-7" and a foyer that measures 15' x 18'. A tripartite, metal doorway frame with three single-light transoms separates the entry from the foyer. The doors are no longer present. The foyer features ten courses of buff-colored glazed block (5" x 12") with the upper portion constructed of painted (white) block. A 10" cove marks the transition to the ceiling. The ceiling is plaster and the floors are several shades of dark and red terrazzo tiles.

The second-floor hallway measures 6'-9" wide and 61'-3" long. The floor consists of an 8½" dark terrazzo border with 4" high edging. The rest of the floor is formed with 28" x 35" red terrazzo panels. The hallway walls consist of nine rows of 5" x 12" buff-colored glazed tiles with the remainder of the wall comprised of white-painted tiles of the same dimension. The ceilings are plaster and feature modern fluorescent lights.

4. Flooring: Terrazzo covers the foyer, first- and second-floor hallways and staircases. Linoleum tile covers office spaces and storage areas. The drill floor is of wood.

5. Openings:

Doorways are generally replacement metal examples fitted into metal frames.

C. Setting:

The Memorial Armory is located on the southwest corner of Second Avenue South (State Highway 54) and Gaynor Avenue in the City of Wisconsin Rapids., Wood County, Wisconsin. The surrounding neighborhood is comprised of a large state office building, a recently built convenience store complex and housing ranging from modern apartments to circa-1920s residences. A park separates the armory from the Wisconsin River and the Second Avenue South-Gaynor Avenue intersection consists of a recently constructed roundabout. A modern, concrete-block retaining wall delineates the parcel's northeast corner. The property mostly is surrounded by a chain-link fence that forms a motor pool. Several mature trees exist in a grassy area to the immediate west (rear) of the armory.

### PART III: SOURCES OF INFORMATION

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#### PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored by the Wisconsin Army National Guard and undertaken by Heritage Research, Ltd., a historical/environmental consulting firm located in Menomonee Falls, Wisconsin. The project was directed by Dr. John N. Vogel, while significant editorial contributions were made by both Dr. Vogel and Ms. Traci E. Schnell, M.A. Dr. Vogel also accomplished the field photography and was assisted in that endeavor by Mr. Wayne Chandler of Mayfair Photography, Wauwatosa, Wisconsin. All photographs were archivally processed and printed by Mr. Chandler.