RESOLUTION
BEMIS BAG BUILDING LANDMARK DESIGNATION
LANDMARK HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION

RESOLVED BY THE LANDMARKS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OMAHA:

WHEREAS, the rehabilitation and reutilization of the Bemis Bag Building, located at 11th and Jones Streets, is a part of the Burlington-Old Market Redevelopment Plan, approved by the City Council on November 2, 1976 and the City of Omaha Planning Board on September 22, 1976; and,

WHEREAS, the Burlington-Old Market Redevelopment Plan is a project of the City of Omaha Housing and Community Development Department, designed for that Department by the Planning Department; and,

WHEREAS, the Bemis Company, Inc. donated the Bemis Bag Building to the City of Omaha and the City acquired title to the Bemis Bag Building on December 8, 1977; and,

WHEREAS, the Housing and Community Development Department through the Planning Department of the City of Omaha prepared a "Request for Proposals for the Reuse of the Bemis Bag Building" and advertised for proposals in the Omaha World Herald and The Wall Street Journal in January of 1978; and,

WHEREAS, as a result of this advertising, three proposals were received for the redevelopment of the Bemis Bag Building and opened by the City Clerk on March 1, 1978; and,

WHEREAS, an Evaluation Committee consisting of the City Attorney, and the Directors of the Finance, Housing and Community Development, Parks, Recreation and Public Property, and Planning Department of the City of Omaha, as well as a representative from the Mayor's Office, reviewed all proposals in accordance with the procedure as set forth in the "Request for Proposals" and after interviewing representatives of the Warehaus Partnership and after appropriate consultation and discussion, the Evaluation Committee voted that the Warehaus Partnership submitted the best proposal; and,

WHEREAS, the Evaluation Committee recommended that the Warehaus Partnership be awarded the opportunity to redevelop the Bemis Bag Building; and,

WHEREAS, the Warehaus Partnership, as a major part of their overall redevelopment program, on June 1, 1978 requested that the Bemis Bag Building be designated as a Landmark under the City of Omaha's Landmarks Heritage Preservation Ordinance; and,
RESOLVED:

WHEREAS, the Bemis Bag Building possesses a historical relationship to the development of the Old Market and environs; and,

WHEREAS, the Bemis Bag Building is characteristic of the utilitarian warehouse architecture which developed during the 1880's and contains important design elements of the "Chicago School"; and,

WHEREAS, the Bemis Bag Building is a major work of the Omaha architectural firm of Mendelsohn and Lawrie; and,

WHEREAS, the Bemis Bag Building is geographically proximate to the Old Market and possesses elements which intensify the cohesiveness of the area.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LANDMARKS HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF OMaha:

THAT, the Bemis Bag Building, 11th and Jones Streets, be designated as a Landmark of the City of Omaha.
Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION

INSPECTION DATE
6-7-78

REQUEST
X Landmark Designation
_ Landmark Heritage
_ District Designation
_ Certificate of Approval to Perform Work

CATEGORY
X District
_ Building
_ Structure
_ Site
_ Object

APPLICANT
Richard Danner, Wayne Sweeney, Peter Stein Madison, Wisconsin

LOCATION OF PROPOSED DESIGNATION OR WORK
Lots 6,7,8 Block 175 Original City of Omaha (612-14 S. 11th Street)
(1112-14 Jones Street)

PRESENT USE
Vacant

CONFORMANCE WITH MASTER PLAN
In conformance.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER
Existing: Renovated, late 19th century jobbing houses and active, early 20th
century warehouses comprise the Old Market and its environs. These structures,
the continuous canopied sidewalks, the brick and cobblestone streets and their
contiguous landscaping, intertwined with the reminders of the railroad's
period of domination, produce a cohesive, concentrated commercial, industrial
Probable future effect on neighborhood if designation is granted or work is approved, and residential area.
The designation will provide the impetus for the stabilization of the
Old Market area through sensitive control of future exterior improvements.

PRESERVATION ADMINISTRATOR'S RECOMMENDATION
Approval

PLANNING DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION
Approval

ADDITIONAL DATA
Applicant proposes to convert structure to residential use spending in
excess of $3,000,000.
April 26, 1978

Mr. Alden Aust
Omaha/Douglas Civic Center
1819 Farnam
Omaha, NE 68102

Dear Alden:

As part of our overall redevelopment program for the old Bemis Building, it is necessary for the building to be registered as a historic site. Therefore, I am requesting that you place before the necessary committee an application on our behalf petitioning that the Bemis Building be designated a historic building and/or in a historical district.

If there are any specific forms that need to be filled out, please notify me. Otherwise, I will wait to hear from you for any further information. I kindly thank you for your help with this matter.

Sincerely,

Peter M. Stein

cc: Richard L. Danner
Wayne Sweeney
May 30, 1978

Mr. Robert Peters
City Planner
Omaha City Planning Department
Room 1110
Civic Center
1819 Farnam Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

RE: APPLICATION FOR LANDMARK OR LANDMARK HERITAGE DISTRICT DESIGNATION

Dear Mr. Peters:

Enclosed please find our Application for Landmark or Landmark Heritage District Designation for the Bemis Bag Building located at the northwest corner of 11th and Jones Streets.

Please be advised that after June 10, 1978, our new address and telephone number will be as follows:

212 East Washington Avenue, P.O. Box 2019
Madison, Wisconsin 53701

(608) 255-4131

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Peter M. Stein
Construction Supervisor

PMS: sji

Enclosure
Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission

APPLICATION FOR LANDMARK OR LANDMARK HERITAGE DISTRICT DESIGNATION

NAME OF STRUCTURE
Historic North American Bag Company
and/or Common Bemis Bag Building

LOCATION
Street and Number 612-14 South 11th Street 1112-14 Jones Street

CLASSIFICATION
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
<th>Phone Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Building(s)</td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>Occupied</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>608-255-4131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>Unoccupied</td>
<td>Commercial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site</td>
<td>Both</td>
<td>Work in Progress</td>
<td>Educational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Object</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>Accessible</td>
<td>Entertainment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In Process</td>
<td>Yes: Restricted</td>
<td>Government</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes: Unrestricted</td>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Military</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

OWNER OF PROPERTY
Name Richard Danner
Wayne Sweeney Peter Stein
Street and Number P. O. Box 2019, 212 E. Washington Avenue
City, State and Zip Code Madison, Wisconsin, 53701
Representative Peter Stein
Street and Number P. O. Box 2019, 212 E. Washington Avenue
City, State and Zip Code Madison, Wisconsin, 53701

LEGAL DESCRIPTION Lots 6, 7, 8, Block 175, Original City of Omaha.

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
Title Nebraska State Historical Society - Douglas County
Date March 1978
#1-32 Omaha Bemis Bag (1888-89), 1102-18 Jones (Over)
REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS (continued):
Omaha City Planning Department – Old Market Area
June 1975  X  Local
#1612,0000,03 (07-20-87) 612 South 11th Street
DESCRIPTION
Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance.

ATTACHED

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE
Specific Dates
Architect
Builder

ATTACHED
DESCRIPTION

Designed by the prominent Omaha architectural firm of Mendelssohn and Lawrie and constructed in 1887 by Harte and Lindsay, the Omaha Bemis Bag Company building originally occupied the northern half of two lots on the northwest corner of Eleventh and Jones Streets. This five-story structure with a frontage of 66 feet on Eleventh Street and 120 feet along the alley, stood seventy feet above the ground and cost about $40,000 to build. Having a straight front with a slight central projection and void of any ornamentation, the building represents an architecture which achieves a symbolic and aesthetic appropriateness and is Omaha's earliest example of the "Commercial Style" which developed in Chicago during the early 1880's.

A red brick structure with exterior walls of graduated solid masonry construction resting at ground level on rough stone piers, the Bemis Building has large, segmental-headed, regulated, rectangular windows on all floors with recessed, solid round brick arches over the fifth floor openings. All window levels employed a white limestone sill and cast iron support elements which aided in bringing a high level of natural light to the interior. The interior spaces were structured primarily of heavy timber (mill) construction with two tiers of timber posts on each floor producing approximately 12' x 22' bays. Vertical circulation was provided by two centrally located service elevators and two open stairways located on the east and south sides of the building.

Designed as a bag and sack factory and wholesale warehouse space, the building's original uses by floor were: basement—storage; first—bag making and bailing; second—main entrance via a pedestrian bridge from the Eleventh Street viaduct, business office and print shop; third—cutting and sewing; fourth—overall factory stove; fifth—tin shop.
In 1897, a brick boiler house was added to the building's west side, enlarging the alley frontage to 132 feet. Prior to 1900, owing to insufficient space and inadequate plant organization, an adjacent lot was purchased and a three-story, red brick building was constructed on the site, enlarging the alley frontage to 198 feet. Standing forty feet above the ground and having a frontage of 66 feet along Jones Street, the structure utilized the proportions and massing of the 1887 factory. The major departure from the detailing found in the original building was the replacement of the segmental-headed window opening with a limestone lintel, producing white horizontal bands across the facade. In the addition's interior, wood floors and joists were supported by cast iron columns on a 12' x 26' grid and an elevator located at the intersection of the two structures provided service to all levels.

Upon completion, the Bemis Company moved their sewing and cutting operations to the second floor of the addition and established a lunch room and gymnasium on the third floor. The third, fourth and fifth floors of the original structure were then leased to King and Smead, manufacturers of shirts, overalls and pants.

In May of 1902, the Bemis Company expanded again and erected a five-story brick structure, identical in detailing to the second addition, on the southern half of the two original lots producing a frontage of 132 feet along Eleventh Street and 198 feet along Jones Street. This final addition, designed by C. A. Tripp and erected at a cost of $36,000, retained the mill construction of the original building but with slightly smaller 10' x 20' bays.

This complex, containing 140,000 square feet, was occupied by the Omaha Bemis Bag Company until March, 1978 when the operations were moved to a new location.
THE BEMIS BAG COMPANY

During 1858, Judson M. Bemis (1833-1921) established his first bag factory in St. Louis under the title of "J. M. Bemis and Company, Bag Manufacturers". Originally, millers were the chief users of the company's bags, but as wooden barrels and boxes became increasingly expensive, a larger field of consumption developed for bags and sacks which were both cheaper and easier to handle. While this demand for flour bags steadily increased, the company's business in bags for other purposes also expanded.

The introduction of the chilled steel roll for the grinding of wheat into flour brought on "the milling revolution of 1882" which greatly increased the capacity of the mills and necessitated the expansion of the Bemis Company's production of bags. Later in the same year, Judson M. Bemis opened his first branch office in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Due to the growing export trade in flour for which the burlap bag was desirable, a second branch factory was established in Omaha, Nebraska in 1888. Surrounded by a large number of flour mills, Omaha possessed the railway connections and favorable rates for the economical and prompt distribution of goods to the nation's ports. Initially, the firm employed 60 persons in the manufacturing and printing of flour and other sacks and consumed more cloth annually than any two dry goods houses in the west.

The Omaha plant was constructed under the supervision of its first manager T. J. Stilwell, who shortly after it began operations was transferred to Chicago where the company had purchased a defunct factory. The Omaha branch proved successful but the Chicago factory did not meet expectations and was discontinued. In every instance, the plants built by the Bemis Company were of solid construction, equipped with the most modern and approved machinery and every known labor-saving device, notably in their sanitation and ventilation
and in providing for the health, comfort and convenience of the employees, and were in every respect models of their kind.

For years after they were established, the Minneapolis and Omaha branches maintained a certain autonomy in their operation. The financing and purchasing of the raw materials was attended to by the company but each manager took full charge of the local business and, in addition to his salary, received a certain share of the profits of his branch if any were made.

By the end of the nineteenth century the Bemis Company, with its six factories located at strategic points, was the largest concern of its kind in the world.
THE ARCHITECTS: Mendelssohn and Lawrie.

Mendelssohn. Louis Mendelssohn, born in Berlin, Germany in 1842, studied in New York City and practiced architecture for nine years in Detroit, Michigan prior to his arrival in Omaha in February, 1880. Here he engaged in business for a period of five years with A. R. Dufrere, designing the Academy of the Sacred Heart, the Omaha and Nebraska National Banks, the warehouses of Paxton, Gallagher and Co. and Parlin, Orendorf and Martin and two structures currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Christian Specht building and the Burlington Headquarters. After Dufrere left the firm, Mendelssohn associated with George L. Fisher for two additional years and designed the buildings of the Moline Plow Company, McCord and Brady, the Paddock building, the Board of Trade building, the Morrison building, the First National Bank, the Ramage block, the William A. Paxton building, the First Congregational Church and the residences of the Cahn, Pundt, Phillips, Colpetzer, McConnel and Monell families.

Lawrie. Harry Lawrie, after nine years professional experience in Glasgow and Edinburgh, Scotland, arrived in Chicago during 1883 and entered the office of Burnham and Root, the leading architects of the city. His abilities found ample scope for exercise and development through the designs of the W. L. Hal, Robert Straborn and A. E. Sprague mansions, the Phoenix Insurance office building, the Art Institute and the Trader's building. During Lawrie's last two years in Chicago he presided over the Chicago Architectural Sketch Club.

Mendelssohn and Lawrie. In January 1887, Fisher retired from the firm (only to return in 1888) and was succeeded by Harry Lawrie. This architectural firm is responsible for the design of the Barker building, the Sheeley building, the Great Paxton building, the Ramage, the Millard Hotel, the Knights of Pythias Temple, St. Peter's Catholic Parish, the Hotel Barker,
the warehouse of B. F. Smith and the North American Bag Company. Architecture Hall (Old University Library, 1891-95) on the University of Nebraska campus is the only building on the National Register designed by the firm of Mendelssohn, Fisher and Lawrie. Mendelssohn and Lawrie's original concept for the design of the Bemis Bag building reflects Harry Lawrie's previous involvement with the Chicago based architects Burnham and Root and his awareness of the design elements contained in Chicago's office and mercantile buildings of the 1880's, specifically William LeBaron Jenney's First Leiter Building of 1879. The requirements of commerce and the business principles of real estate owners during this period necessitated the development of a utilitarian or commercial style of architecture. "Light, space, air and strength were demanded by such requirements and principles as the first objects and exterior ornamentation as the second", elements which the Bemis building possesses. Chicago's "Commercial Style" buildings are of five to sixteen stories with straight fronts, or slight central projections, flat roofs and level skylines. The pattern of the facade is entirely regular punctuated by vary large, variously divided rectangular windows or in bearing-wall structures, segmental-headed. The 1887 Bemis Building employs these elements and maintains an even balance between its vertical and horizontal lines. Although the Bemis complex is composed of three structures, a consistant use of materials and detailing gives an impression of one total design.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Insurance Map of Omaha, Nebraska, N. Y.: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1890.


"Mendelsohn & Lawrie," The Omaha Herald, January 1, 1887.

"Mendelsohn & Lawrie, Omaha Architects." Omaha Daily Bee, Annual Review, January 1, 1888.


LHPC Case No. H1-78-1, APPLICANTS Richard Danner, Wayne Sweeney and Peter Stein request LANDMARK DESIGNATION for 612-14 South 11th Street (Bemis Bag Company Building). Area to be designated is not shaded.
ORDINANCE NO. 28477

AN ORDINANCE to designate the Bemis Bag Building, located at 11th and Jones Streets as a Landmark pursuant to the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance of the City of Omaha.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OMAHA:

Section 1. That the Bemis Bag Building is located at 11th and Jones Streets, which is legally described as follows:

Lots 6, 7 and 8, Block 175, Original City of Omaha, Douglas County, Nebraska.

Section 2. That for the reasons recited in Landmarks Heritage Preservation Commission Resolution attached hereto as Exhibit I, and made a part hereof as if fully set forth herein, the architectural characteristics of the Bemis Bag Building are hereby deemed significant and worthy of preservation.

Section 3. That the Bemis Bag Building is hereby designated pursuant to Section 4.16.080 of the Omaha Municipal Code, and hereby subject to all of the provisions of the Landmark Heritage Preservation Ordinance of the City of Omaha.

Section 4. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and take effect fifteen (15) days from and after the date of its passage.

INTRODUCED BY COUNCILMEMBER

[Signature]

PASSED SEP 12 1978 6-1

APPROVED

MAYOR OF THE CITY OF OMAHA DATE

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

CITY ATTORNEY