

**City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)**

***Name of Building or Site***

*Common Name*

*Historic Name (if applicable)*

Gisholt Machine Company  
Manufacturing Complex

same

***Location***

*Street Address*

*Aldermanic District*

1245-1301 E. Washington Avenue

sixth

***Classification***

*Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)*

buildings

***Zoning District***

*Present Use*

M1

industrial/office

***Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's Office)***

*Name(s)*

Yahara Square Associates LLP  
c/o Mr. Bradley C. Mullins

*Street Address*

*Telephone Number*

401 N. Carroll Street 53703

257-0681

***Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)***

*Parcel Number*

*Legal Description*

1245 E. Washington Avenue  
0709-131-0107-1

Original Plat, aka Farwells Replat, Nely 65.7 ft of lots 5 & 14, blk 197, all of lots 6 thru 13, block 197, also the nw 1/2 of vac e main st. adjacent the properties in blk 197 on the se, exc part of vac e main st in sd blk 197 desc as fol: com n cor sd blk 197, th s 45°2'10" e 351.04 ft to pob, th cont sd brg 3.91 ft, th s 44°57'15" w 329.70 ft, th n 45°01'42" w 6.44 ft, th n 45°23'38" e 329.71 ft to pob.

1301 E. Washington Avenue  
0709-131-0101-3

Original Plat, aka Farwells Replat, Block  
215-216 lying wly of the wly r/w c&nw rr, blk  
214 lying wly of sd rr, also all of vac e main st  
between properties of blks 215-215 and 214 wly  
of sd rr, also incl prt of rr row in blk 216  
containing 5,408 sq ft per 1988 sale vol 11438  
page 52.

***Condition of Property***

*Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)*

good

*Altered or Unaltered?*

altered

*Moved or Original Site?*

original site

*Wall Construction*

brick

**City of Madison**

**LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)**

*Historical Data*

*Original Owner*

*Original Use*

Gisholt Manufacturing Company

industrial

*Architect or Builder*

*Architectural Style*

unknown

vernacular and neoclassical revival

*Date of Construction*

*Indigenous Materials Used*

1899-1901, 1911, 1946

not applicable

*List of Bibliographical References Used*

Bradley, Betsy Hunter. *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

"A Brief History of the Gisholt Machine Company" (1952). Located in the George Hopkins Johnson Papers, Box 3, Folder 7, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

Brown, Edgar A. "Gisholt Company Supplies World With Specialized Machinery," *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison, WI), 13 February 1927.

"Gilman Engineering & Manufacturing Co., LLC." Material online available at [www.gilmanassembly.com/history.html](http://www.gilmanassembly.com/history.html). Accessed on 31 August 2001.

Herman Landscaping Photo Collection, photographs of Gisholt office complex dated Jan. 6, 1948, Parks Division, City of Madison.

Individual site files for 1245-1301 E. Washington Avenue. Available at the City of Madison Planning Department, Madison, WI.

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Mollenhoff, David. *Madison: A History of the Formative Years*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993.

*National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation.*

Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1997.

Rankin, Katherine H. and Timothy Heggland. *Madison Intensive Survey*. Prepared for the City of Madison and the Division of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society of Wisconsin (1995).

Rankin, Katherine H. and Elizabeth Miller. *The Historic Resources of Downtown Madison*. Prepared for the City of Madison (1998).

Rupp, Helen Matheson. "Marquip Plays Important Part in Neighborhood," *Wisconsin State Journal*, 25 October 1989.

*Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps--Madison, Wisconsin*. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1902, 1908, 1942.

Skogen, Dennis D. Former Gisholt Machine Company engineer. Telephone interview with Brian J. Faltinson, 12 September 2001. Notes on file at Heritage Research, Ltd., Menomonee Falls, WI.

Wyatt, Barbara, ed. *Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin*. 3 vols. Madison, WI: Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1986.

***Form Prepared By***  
*Name and Title*

Brian Faltinson, consultant, and Katherine Rankin, Preservation Planner

*Organization Represented (if any)*

Madison Landmarks Commission

*Address*

215 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.

*Telephone Number*

608-266-6552

*Date Nomination Form Was Prepared*

September, 2002

## **Landmarks Commission**

### **LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)**

#### *Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.*

The former Gisholt Machine Company manufacturing complex is situated along the southeast side of E. Washington Avenue (a facility that runs southwest/northeast) and occupies a significant portion of the 1200 block and all of the 1300 block. While the surrounding neighborhood retains its historic industrial and commercial character, the majority of the neighboring buildings have been significantly altered with additions as well as modern sidings and fenestration. The office building in the 1200 block and the main factory building in the 1300 block are connected by a modern skywalk crossing over S. Baldwin Street.

#### **Office Building, 1251 E. Washington Avenue (1911)**

The office structure at the southwest corner of Washington and Baldwin was constructed in 1911 as the main Gisholt Company office. It is Neoclassical revival in style with some Craftsman details.

The building is constructed of cream colored brick. It is three stories tall and is crowned by a hipped roof, formerly of green tile. The roof was covered with a standing seam metal roof during the rehabilitation of the complex by Marquip, Inc. ca. 1987. The building is two stories high with a raised basement level. The facade is divided into seven bays, separated by brick pilasters. The pilasters appear to support the classically inspired limestone cornice, which includes several bands of molding and a line of large dentil blocks. The Craftsman details come in the form of an applied cartouche at the top of each pilaster and a parapet above the cornice trimmed with abstract triangular elements in place of a central pediment and corner acroteria. Each of the seven bays is filled mostly with glass windows divided by very thin metal muntins in the Moderne style. These windows were added when the adjoining Engineering Building was constructed to match those on the new building. The original windows were groups of three double-hung units. The spandrel between the first and second stories is trimmed with square blocks of raised brick further embellished with limestone corner blocks and a limestone diamond in the middle of each square, another Craftsman abstraction. A limestone water table serves as the base for the columns beneath which are evenly spaced basement windows. The central bay used to be the main entrance and originally had a shallow porch with brick columns and limestone trim, reflecting that on the rest of the building. This entrance was removed, probably when the engineering building was constructed next door with a new main entrance, but the thicker brick pilasters and pediment remain to show where the central doorway used to be. The basic design scheme continues on the eastern and southern sides of the building. On the east side is a ca. 1970 concrete and plate-glass skywalk, which connects the facility to the factory building located at 1301 E. Washington Avenue. The skywalk is of no historic significance and the Landmarks Commission will not oppose demolition in the future.

**Engineering Building, 1251 E. Washington Avenue (1946)<sup>1</sup>**

Attached to the right (west) of the main office building is a flat-roofed block, built to house the engineering department in 1946. It is the same height as the original office building and is essentially a modernized version of the design of the original structure. The design repeats the rhythm of brick pilasters, separating seven evenly sized groups of tripartite windows, all resting on a limestone water table. The two stories of windows align with the windows of the main block. In the new section, the original design was flattened and abstracted, with shallower pilasters trimmed only with narrow bands of limestone, a plain cornice trimmed with a tiny band of dentils, and flat spandrels between the stories that appear to be metal and are divided into three with a very shallow rectangular motif in the center of each section. In the end bay next to the main block is the relocated main entrance to the facility. It consists of the original plate-glass doors and windows set within a marble surround. "Marquip, Inc." and the building address "1245" appear on the surround in raised, metal lettering. A pair of ten-light windows within a grooved stone surround is positioned above the entry.

The building's rear (south) elevation has the same general makeup as the main facade. A small elevator head house topped with a pyramid roof was added ca. 1987 and is not historically significant. The Landmarks Commission will not oppose demolition of this elevator section in the future.

Before the Engineering Building was erected, a series of one-story additions existed all along the east side of the ordinance factory to the west. When the Engineering Building was constructed those one-story sections that were in the way were demolished and a concrete and metal connector section was added between the new Engineering Building at the old ordinance factory. This connector and the existing one-story additions to the ordinance plant are not historically significant and the Landmarks Commission will not oppose demolition in the future.

**Factory Building, 1301 E. Washington Avenue (1899-1900 and ca. 1911)<sup>2</sup>**

According to Sanborn maps, this expansive brick structure represents numerous distinct periods of construction built around an original (1899-1900) ell-shaped block. The block-long E. Washington Ave. (north) facade is roughly divided into two sections with a parapeted end wall of the original section marking the approximate center. The section at the corner of E. Washington Ave. and Baldwin St. was built in 1911. It is Neoclassical revival in style, rises two-stories and has a roof pierced by seven sawtooth roofs. The wall surface is formed by a series of brick pilasters that create large bays on each level. Ornamentation is most noticeable in the west corner where a denticulated parapet is highlighted with limestone corner and pilaster accents and

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<sup>1</sup>Individual site files for 1245-1301 E. Washington Avenue.

<sup>2</sup>Individual site file for 1245-1301 E. Washington Avenue.

*Description – page 3*

a limestone cap, repeating the design motifs on the main office building. Other ornamentation throughout the addition consists of rectangular, raised-brick designs fitted between each level of fenestration.<sup>3</sup>

The centrally located end wall and the left (east) half of the main facade dates to the original construction of the building (1899-1900). The end wall portion exhibits limited Neoclassical detailing consisting of a stone beltcourse underlined with dentils and rectangular ornaments executed in raised brick and highlighted with limestone accents. Limestone cartouches are also evident on each of the brick corner pilasters. Fenestration consists of regularly spaced, plate-glass windows. The left-hand ell portion of the facade is comprised of a two-story core flanked by one-story wings. The gambrel roof is topped by a monitor. The walls of the structure are filled with closely spaced, segmentally arched window openings. In the 1987 Marquip remodeling, the extensive skylights were covered with raised metal roofing and the original industrial style metal windows were replaced with larger panes of plate glass.

The west elevation of the factory faces S. Baldwin Street and has a two-story, brick wall that is the sidewall of the 1911 addition. Like the aforementioned portion on the main facade, it contains Neoclassical styling and is divided by brick pilasters into window bays with modern plate glass sash. To the rear (south) end of the facility are two more modern additions, both post-dating 1942 (Sanborn maps). Neither of these additions is of historic value and the Landmarks Commission will not oppose demolition in the future. The two additions are constructed of different materials than the original factory buildings and are utilitarian in design. They are devoid of historical significance and retain little integrity. The Landmarks Commission will not oppose future demolition.

Please note that an examination of the interior was not possible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Sanborn Map Company, *Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps--Madison, Wisconsin* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1902, 1908, 1942).

<sup>4</sup>An investigation of the interior was not undertaken because there was no response to a letter requesting a site visit or the return of telephone messages.

**City of Madison Landmarks Commission**  
**LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)**

*Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria.*

The Gisholt Machine Company Manufacturing Complex was a vital catalyst in the overall development of the city's east side, which has a distinctive character apart from the rest of the community.<sup>5</sup>

The Wisconsin Territorial Legislature in 1836 selected the recently platted town site of Madison as the location of the new state capital. Despite its selection, the settlement grew slowly until entrepreneur Leonard Farwell and the arrival of the Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad sparked significant commercial and residential development. Other railroads soon followed and the village became a rail hub. The settlement incorporated in 1856 as the City of Madison. Throughout the nineteenth century, Madison remained a quiet city that relied on local farmers, state government offices and the University of Wisconsin to fuel the local economy. However, by the turn of the century, the city began to experience industrial growth. The city's factories were limited to a previously undeveloped district next to East Washington Avenue and adjacent to a number of railroad facilities. Generally, these factories used highly skilled artisans to produce farm-related equipment and heavy machinery.<sup>6</sup>

One of the largest of these factories was the Gisholt Machine Company, which was founded in 1885 by John A. Johnson. Johnson was born in Norway in 1832 and emigrated with his family to Wisconsin in 1844. Ten years later, Johnson purchased a farm in Dane County's Town of Pleasant Prairie and served in several township government positions. In 1857, he was elected to the Wisconsin State Assembly and, in 1860, was elected as the Dane County Clerk, which required him to move to Madison. In 1869, Johnson left his position as clerk and joined the firm of Fuller & Williams as a salesman of agricultural implements. Fluent in three languages (Norwegian, English and German), Johnson excelled as a salesman in the upper Midwest, which was largely farmed by German and Scandinavian immigrants. In 1873, he became a full partner in the company and it was renamed Fuller & Johnson. In the meantime, the energetic Johnson was elected to the Wisconsin State Senate in 1872, where he concentrated on the issues of railroad regulation and women's rights. In 1880, Fuller & Johnson purchased a plow factory and began to manufacture its own implements. Two years later, Johnson became company president and under his direction the Fuller & Johnson Manufacturing Company became Madison's largest employer.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Due to its impact upon the city's industrial development, the Gisholt Machine Company Manufacturing Complex has been recommended eligible for local landmark status by the City of Madison's Downtown Historic Preservation Plan; see Katherine H. Rankin and Elizabeth Miller, *The Historic Resources of Downtown Madison*, prepared for the City of Madison (1998), 39.

<sup>6</sup>David Mollenhoff, *Madison: A History of the Formative Years* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982), 49, 124-27, 178, 180-83, 195, 264-68; Rankin and Miller, *The Historic Resources of Downtown Madison*, 38.

<sup>7</sup>Mollenhoff, *Madison*, 183-91. Other activities pursued by John A. Johnson included being part owner



## *Significance – page 2*

In 1885, Johnson, ever the entrepreneur, pondered the idea of beginning a second company that would manufacture machine tools, or tools used in the manufacturing process. His reasoning was two-fold. First he recognized that the farm implement industry would eventually be dominated by a few national concerns and that these companies would require a tremendous number of machine tools to meet production demands. And secondly, he wanted to create a company that his four sons eventually could take over since positions were limited at Fuller & Johnson. In order to make his company a reality, Johnson hired the talented engineer Conrad M. Conradson from the E.P. Allis Company in Milwaukee to design machine tools. In 1889, Johnson incorporated his enterprise, named it the Gisholt Machine Company and built a small, frame factory building at the corner of E. Mifflin and N. Dickinson streets (extant, but not intact). The company's primary product was the turret lathe.<sup>8</sup> Business was very slow for the first few years and a disagreement forced Johnson to fire Conradson. The company finally received a break when its turret lathes received a bronze medal for design at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Such good international exposure allowed the company to gain European customers and, by 1895, Gisholt showed its first profit.<sup>9</sup>

By 1899, Gisholt had outgrown its original facility and constructed a \$75,000 factory on E. Washington Avenue (which is a portion of the structure currently located at 1301 E. Washington Avenue). The next year, the firm's products won a gold medal at the World's Fair in Paris. In 1901, Johnson died and two of his sons, Carl and Hobart, took over the firm. Growth continued under the new leadership and a large addition to the factory as well as a new office building (1251 E. Washington) were constructed in 1911-1912. By this time, the company employed nearly 800 people, which made it one of the largest private employers in the city.<sup>10</sup>

During World War I, the company created machines used to produce artillery shells and manufacture heavy weaponry. Growth continued at a steady pace and in 1946, the company remodeled the office building and constructed the adjacent engineering building. By 1952, the firm had a net worth of \$10 million and employed 1,600 people. Its sales and distribution

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between 1872 and 1876 of the largest Scandinavian newspaper in the United States, *Skandinavianen*; establishing the Madison-based Hekla Fire Insurance Company in 1871; helping found the Evangelical Lutheran Immanuel Church, which later became the Bethel Lutheran Church and is today the second largest Lutheran church in the United States. As a state senator, Johnson attempted but failed to pass a railroad regulation bill; however, his bill became a model for successful regulation in other states and finally in Wisconsin in 1904. Other legislation initiated by Johnson included a bill that allowed married women to own property and conduct business, which was passed.

<sup>8</sup>A turret lathe is a device that rotates a piece of steel and mechanically applies various cutting tools to the steel in order to shape, inscribe and smooth it. The manufacturing of such machines requires a high degree of precision, accuracy and skill. Dennis D. Skogen, former Gisholt Machine Company engineer, telephone interview with Brian J. Faltinson, 12 September 2001, notes on file at Heritage Research, Ltd., Menomonee Falls, WI.

<sup>9</sup>Mollenhoff, *Madison*, 185, 188.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*; Edgar A. Brown, "Gisholt Company Supplies World with Specialized Machinery," *Wisconsin State Journal* (Madison, WI), 13 February 1927.

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network covered the entire United States and most of the world's industrialized nations. Besides turret lathes, Gisholt manufactured precision balancing and super finishing machines. The company also had an iron foundry where it did specialty forgings of steel.<sup>11</sup>

In 1966, Gisholt was purchased by machine tool manufacturer Giddings & Lewis of Fond du Lac. Four years later, Giddings & Lewis closed the Gisholt facility and sold portions of it to the City of Madison while other parts were operated as a foundry.<sup>12</sup> In the early 1980s, the Marquip Corporation rented factory space in the facility. Based in Phillips, Wisconsin, Marquip manufactured box making equipment and other paper processing machines. In 1987, Marquip purchased all three buildings of the subject complex and renovated each building, which included replacing all windows and covering the roofs with sheet metal. As well, small portions of the factory building were torn down while other sections received new additions. In 2001, Marquip ended its Madison operations and sold the complex to the Mullins Group, a property management concern. While a few government offices and small businesses utilize some of the office space, the vast majority of the complex is currently vacant.<sup>13</sup>

The evolution of industrial architecture is discussed in Bradley's *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (1999). With regard to late nineteenth and early twentieth century industrial buildings, brick was the primary element used for construction. It was economical, fireproof, flexible and strong. Indeed, strength was a key component since industrial machines exerted a variety of powerful forces upon a building. The result was that brick walls were formed into a series of piers that absorbed these forces. With mechanical forces distributed to the piers, the space between each could carry large and numerous windows. With electric lighting and ventilation systems in their infancy, natural light and air flow were the best and cheapest ways to illuminate and ventilate the work space. In fact, the roofs of many industrial buildings were designed to include either skylights or sawtooth windows intended to promote interior lighting. Meanwhile, the walls carried long banks of multi-pane windows. The ornamentation for most turn-of-the-century industrial buildings was austere. The primary architectural features were a building's mass, as well its regular arrangement of piers and fenestration. When properly combined, these elements united to convey a sense of technological and organizational mastery. The use of brick allowed for some additional ornamentation at a low

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<sup>11</sup>"A Brief History of the Gisholt Machine Company" (1952), located in George Hopkins Johnson Papers, Box 3, Folder 7, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI; Skogen, telephone interview with Faltinson.

<sup>12</sup>The City of Madison purchased a portion of the Gisholt complex located at the corner of E. Washington Avenue and S. Ingersoll Streets and adjacent to the subject complex. Currently used by the Madison Metro Transit, the facility has been extensively altered to the point that the facility has lost its connection to the remainder of the Gisholt complex and, therefore, was not considered in this evaluation.

<sup>13</sup>"Gilman Engineering & Manufacturing Co., LLC." Material online available at [www.gilmanassembly.com/history.html](http://www.gilmanassembly.com/history.html). Accessed on 31 August 2001; Skogen, telephone interview with Faltinson; Helen Matheson Rupp, "Marquip Plays Important Part in Neighborhood," *Wisconsin State Journal*, 25 October 1989.

## *Significance – page 4*

cost. Specifically, the material could be use to construct parapets, corbeling, cornices and window arches. One style that fit well this use of material was the Neoclassical, which became popular after its use at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. It is characterized by columns, symmetrically balanced, multi-pane fenestration, and ornate pediments and cornices.<sup>14</sup>

The brickwork exhibited in the walls, the general shape of the windows and the impact of the roofs quite likely make the factory a recognizable entity today. Indeed, an entity so recognizable that those who historically worked in it could presently stand before it and recognize the complex.

To summarize, the Gisholt Machine Company was a significant employer in the City of Madison, and had a crucial role in the development of the east side and the bringing of many Scandinavian immigrants to Madison. In the historic period, it was a nationally prominent manufacturer of machine tools that were distributed worldwide.

### **Important Note**

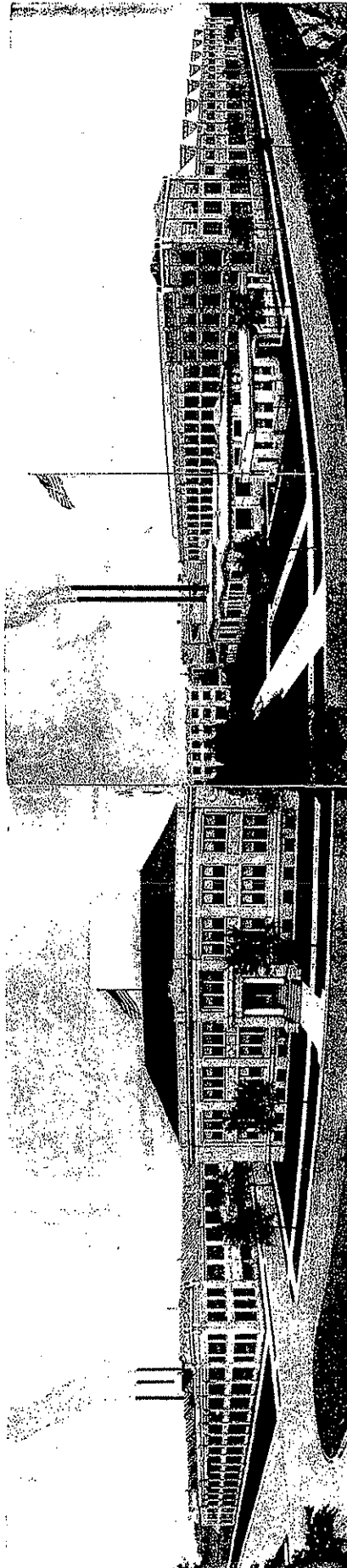
**Although the parcels on which these buildings sit are nominated as a Madison Landmark in their entirety, the intent of the nomination is to protect only the historically significant sections of the buildings. A request for demolition of the following structures will not require approval by the Landmarks Commission:**

- 1. Skywalk, ca. 1970, over Baldwin Street.**
- 2. Elevator head house, ca. 1987, behind the 1911 office building at 1251 E. Washington Ave.**
- 3. One-story factory additions, dates unknown, behind Engineering Building at 1251 E. Washington Ave.**
- 4. One-story connector section, ca. 1946, between engineering building and ordinance factory to the west.**
- 5. Two modern additions, post-1942, to south of historic factory facility at 1301 E. Washington Ave.**

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<sup>14</sup>Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 109-12, 134-36, 161-63, 203, 209, 234; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1993), 342-44; Barbara Wyatt, ed. *Cultural Resources Management in Wisconsin*, 3 vols. (Madison, WI: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Historic Preservation, 1986), Vol. 2: Architecture, 2/18.

APPENDIX A: Gisholt Machine Company (Gisholt Products Catalog--circa 1920).



Northern Works, Madison, Wis.

We invite you to visit our plant at Madison and become acquainted with our organization, our facilities and how we can help you with your machining problems. We promise you a hearty welcome and an interesting visit.



Warren Works, Warren, Pa.

Location: Gisholt Machine Company, 1245-1301 East Washington Avenue

