

COMMISSION FOR HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PRESERVATION

Baltimore City Landmark Designation

Hansa Haus

11 South Charles Street
Baltimore, Maryland

September 9, 2008

Listed as a contributing structure located in the Business and Government Center National Register historic district, the 2 ½ story **Hansa Haus** was designed and built in

1911 by the architectural firm of Parker, Thomas & Rice, for The Savings Bank of Baltimore, and their German tenant Albert Schumacher & Co., shipping agents for the North German Lloyd Steamship Company, headquartered in Hamburg and Bremen, Germany.

A. Schumacher & Co. was one of Baltimore's oldest businesses, and, together with the North German Lloyd Co. in 1867 forged a partnership with John Work Garrett and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad that produced the famous "ship-to-rail" movement of European immigrants, coming to Baltimore from Bremerhaven, Hamburg, Liverpool, Southampton, and LeHavre. North German Lloyd agents would be located throughout the German states, selling complete "travel packages" to Baltimore to prospective emigrants, complete with train tickets to the Middle West and other locations

in North America. Of the over 1.2 million immigrants coming to Baltimore, the majority

would continue their travels, and board B&O trains waiting next to the Locust Point piers.

Although Baltimore has had historically a large and prominent German population, the Hansa Haus is considered to be the only early Germanic style building in the city and is in excellent, near original condition, except for aluminum frame windows and doors, and a later non-contributing wood-frame 2-story addition at the Redwood Street side.

Originally a separate lot, with 6 E. Redwood Street as the address, this addition was a replacement for a previous 6-story building called the "Phoenix" building, built after the Baltimore Fire in 1904. In 1959, the upper floors of the building were removed, and the first two floors were re-modeled, with the first floor still reflecting the window arrangement of the "Phoenix" building. Eddie Jacobs Clothier was the tenant; Mr. Jacobs was an important Baltimore born tennis player of the early 20th century.

Located at North Charles and Redwood [formerly German] Streets, the Hansa Haus is architecturally significant for its medieval revival style which is found throughout Germany. It was, as advertised by the North German Lloyd Company at the time of its completion, "the newest-oldest, most unique building in Baltimore, in fact, the only building of its kind in America"!

The Hansa Haus is a 2 ½ story, poured concrete structure with a deeply pitched gabled, clay tile roof, punctuated by pediment dormers and triangular vents. Built as "fireproof", with brick siding that include decorative triangular patterns above the first and second story, the building is framed by vertical and horizontal painted concrete beams,

echoing half-timbered medieval building style found throughout Germany

It is nine bays wide on Redwood Street and a single bay wide on Charles Street. The first story features large arched, arcade like openings. The retail store entrance to the building is on Charles Street, and the original main entrance is at Redwood Street.

The Charles Street façade at the gabled roof level features a vented window , and decorative tile work, depicting the Hanseatic League logo, which is a sailing vessel with fully set sails. A large exterior clock at the second level, on the corner of Charles and Redwood Streets, has been installed there a few years ago.

The building's design was based on specifications provided by Paul Hilken, an officer of the shipping agency, and modeled after a mediaeval courthouse in Halberstadt, Germany. The building was symbolically named "Hansa Haus" in honor of the Hanseatic League or "German Hansa", a medieval trade confederation of independent German city-states. The coats of arms of the "Hanseatic League" cities were painted on the building in regular intervals, above the first story level. By the mid 1950s, they had become so dirty and faded that they could hardly be recognized. Fortunately, a Mrs. Berquist called the owners to let them know that she had in her possession the original drawings and designs for the 37 coats of arms, as designed by the Baltimore artist William Frederick Hiltz. Based on those designs, plaques were produced of all of the images, painted in enamel on primed aluminum, at the cost of \$ 25.—for each. After ownership changed in the 1980s, the painted plaques were taken down and displayed inside, in a small conference room. A short time later, they had seemingly disappeared but actually were loaned to Zion Church, where they currently are displayed in the "Adlersaal" (parish hall), for all to enjoy.

In addition to the North German Lloyd Steamship Company, where travelers to and from Europe could book their voyages and receive assistance in planning their trips, other tenants in the Hansa Haus included the Imperial German Consulate and the Royal Swedish Vice-Consulate, located on the second floor. The entrance of the US into World War I in 1914 interrupted the Baltimore to Bremen passenger service severely for several years, but was resumed in 1926. By that time "German" Street had been renamed "Redwood" Street, in honor of the first Marylander killed in France during WW I. The offices of the North German Lloyd and the Swedish consulate had moved elsewhere; the German Consulate remained in the Hansa Haus through the 1930s. .

After 1945 there were a series of different tenants - The Savings Bank of Baltimore still being the owner. Demolition was considered in the early 1970s, due to the limited income the small building was able to generate. A new owner, First Maryland Bank decided to keep and restore it and use it as the office of their President and Personnel Department. Other tenants in the 1980s and 1990s included a W. Bell & Company retail outlet, and the "Tres Bon Bakery Café", as well as a satellite gallery for the BMA. The current tenant is the "Kinkos" printing and office service company.

CHAP Criteria for Landmark designation

Staff recommends landmark designation based on the following findings:

The Hansa Haus is one of the most unique structures in the Business and Government Center historic district, and in Baltimore in general, and reflective of the German heritage; it therefore meets CHAP criteria # 1, 2, 4, and 5 for landmark designation:

- 1. dates from a particular period having significant character, interest, and value, as part of the development, heritage, especially the German heritage and immigration history, and culture of the City of Baltimore –**
- 2. is associated with the life of an outstanding person and business – Albert Schumacher and the North German Lloyd Steamship Co. –**
- 4. is significant of the architectural period in which it was built, having distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style and method of construction, and**
- 5. contributes information of historical, cultural and social importance relating to the heritage of the community.**