



United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Erlanger Buildings

and/or common Inner Harbor Lofts II

2. Location

street & number 519-531 West Pratt Street _____ not for publication

city, town Baltimore _____ vicinity of _____ congressional district Third

state Maryland code 24 county Baltimore City code 510

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: VACANT

4. Owner of Property

name Inner Harbor Lofts, Associates

street & number 36-38 South Paca Street

city, town Baltimore _____ vicinity of _____ state Maryland 21201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Records Office Room 601

street & number Baltimore City Courthouse

city, town Baltimore _____ state Maryland 21202

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Commission for Historicak and Architectural Preservation
has this property been determined eligible? _____ yes _____ no

date 1979 _____ federal _____ state _____ county local

depository for survey records CHAP, Room 601, City Hall

city, town Baltimore _____ state Maryland 21202

7. Description

B-1075

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Erlanger Buildings consist of a four-structure turn-of-the-century loft complex. The buildings are located in the City's old warehouse district adjacent to the University of Maryland professional schools. Highly visible from Russell Street or the Baltimore-Washington Parkway, the buildings take up a good portion of one city block.

The easternmost buildings, 519-525 West Pratt Street, is nine bays wide and six stories high. It is constructed of stretcher bond brick with iron storefronts and stone detailing. Four brick piers ending in pyramidal pinnacles and ball finials divide the facade into three sections. The central bay contains the entrance: on the first floor is a tripartite iron storefront divided in three by stylized columns capped by brackets above which is a cornice with circular floral motifs. In each section is a large transom above double doors of glass and wood. On the second floor is a panel of fine basket weave curved brick below a tripartite fully arched window. A terra cotta archway with decorative spandrel, billet molding, and keystone embellished with a bearded head contains the fully arched window.

The end bays have storefronts identical to that containing the central entrance. The east storefront has a single door and two windows, while the west one has three windows. On the second floor on either side of the semicircular arch) are decorative cast-iron panels below three segmental arched windows with 1/1 sash. The third floor of each building section has three 1/1 sash windows. The central windows are flat, while those in the end bays are segmentally arched with triple header brick lintels. All of the windows on the fourth floor are flat arched with 1/1 light sash. The fifth story carries three windows grouping imilar to the second floor central bay; the arches lack the keystone of the second floor, but terminate in small heads, and there is a transom above the central window of each group. This floor also boasts a corbelled brick cornice with stone molding above and pilasters with vertical notching that continue to the roof. Above this cornice is an arcade of twelve 1/1 light sash. The building's corbelled brick and brownstone roofline is thrust up into a central pediment.

Adjoining this building, at 527 West Pratt Street, is a three-bay, seven-story addition. The first floor consists of two wood paneled and glass double doors with a boarded storefront between. A stone cornice with egg and dart molding divides the first and second floors. The upper floors are defined by four brick piers which support three brick arches on the sixth floor. Three 2/2 sash windows with stone sills and lintels punctuate each floor until the sixth floor. The sixth floor has three fully arched windows. A stone cornice divides the sixth and seventh floors. Similar to the original building, the final floor features an arcade of six narrow 1/1 sash windows. The building is capped by a deteriorating notched cornice.

The third building of the complex, at 529 West Pratt Street, is a small two-story, three-bay brick structure. It has two entrances and a store window on the first floor and three large 2/2 sash windows on the second floor. The structure ends with a simple cornice and battlemented parapet. A five-story tower rises behind and above the west bay of this structure. The uppermost bay of the tower is open.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #1.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

FOR HCRS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Inner Harbor Lofts II (Erlanger Buildings)
Baltimore City
Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

DESCRIPTION, continued

The westernmost building of the complex is four bays wide and four stories high. The windows are tripartite with 1/1 sash and a three-light transom. Each window has stone sills and brick lintels. There are no entrances on the front facade of this building. Corbelled brickwork is featured on the first and fourth floor of each bay. The building ends in a stepped roof line. It is connected to the seven-story structure by metal bridges set back from the front facade.

The side and rear facades of the complex are constructed in common bond brick. All of the windows are segmentally arched with 2/2 light sash and triple header brick lintels. The west facade of the complex is fourteen bays wide and four stories high. A single entrance and elevator access to the building are in the southernmost bays. A loading dock has been punched into the rear building wall of the westernmost building. This rear wall has four windows, all on the fourth floor. To the rear of the two-story structure is a three-story, three-bay rear addition which projects further than the rear of the end buildings. All of the rear windows and the single rear entrance have metal fire shutters. The rear of the seven-story structure is flush with the adjoining building. This building has a single entrance and fire escapes, as well as fire shutters on the basement, first, and second floors. A loading dock and fire escapes were added to the rear of the easternmost building. Fire shutters protect second floor windows. Just south of this rear facade is an immense iron water tower rising above the roof lines of the complex. A second roof structure stands on the seven story building; it may once have held a water tank. The east side has windows identical to those on the west and south facades. Fire shutters protect the windows on the second level. An adjacent building abuts the first level of this facade.

The interiors of the buildings have large open floor plans, which were needed for industrial use. Two rows of simple columns support each level of the easternmost building. The first floor columns are iron, while upper levels are of wood construction. Often the east side of this building was divided into small offices for the manufacturer's interests. The westernmost building has a single row of thirteen columns on each floor. The remaining structures have narrow spaces which did not require the use of columns in their construction. Most of the maple flooring in the buildings is original. A boiler room is housed in the small two-story structure. All of the buildings have elevator access. Interior illumination is provided by fluorescent lights.

8. Significance

B-1075

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below		
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) FASHION

Specific dates circa 1892, 1899, c. 1905 **Builder/Architect** John E. Lafferty and others

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

SIGNIFICANCE

The Erlanger buildings are significant as examples of the loft industrial architecture in Baltimore from 1890-1910. Within the four-building complex are a variety of architectural styles from Victorian-era loft buildings with fine details and cast-iron columns to later structures, characterized primarily by large windows, representing the Commercial Style. Historically the buildings are significant as the home of the Erlanger Manufacturing Company, which produced BVD brand underwear. Charles Erlanger, a co-founder of the company, is credited with making major advances in the design of underwear which revolutionized the industry. The name BVD has become a world-wide synonym for underwear.

The West Pratt Street complex of four buildings illustrates the evolution of loft structures from ornate buildings of the Victorian era to "modern" designs of straight fronts, little ornamentation, and large rectangular windows. The easternmost building, which dates from circa 1892, is an excellent example of the earlier type of loft building. Its large round-arched windows, pedimented roof line, cast-iron store front, and decorative keystone above the central arch provide the building with a distinguish appearance in an area which abounds with fine loft structures. The narrow building, 527 West Pratt Street, adjacent to the earlier Victorian-era structure, was erected in 1899. It was designed by John Edward Lafferty, a local architect who practiced in Baltimore between 1895 and 1925. Lafferty also designed several municipal structures for the City such as School #112 in West Baltimore. (Little information could be found on Lafferty, and the architects of the other buildings are unknown. The building was designed to conform to the early structure; however, it lacks the high style and flair of the circa 1892 building. It represents a move toward more modern industrial architecture. At the time, it was said to be "equipped with all the modern conveniences."¹ The westernmost building dates from circa 1905. It is representative of early 20th century industrial structures which can be characterized as belonging to the Commercial Style. It has little ornamentation and features a skeletal appearance because windows comprise a large amount of the total wall space. Together, the buildings present a diverse mixture of turn-of-the-century loft buildings and are an integral part of Baltimore's old warehouse district.

HISTORY

The Erlanger buildings housed warehouse and factory operations of the Erlanger underwear manufacturing enterprises. In the late 19th century, Charles Erlanger, his brother Abraham, and a brother-in-law, Herman Bonheim, founded a wholesale jobbing business in Baltimore under the name of Erlanger, Bonheim and Company. This firm was succeeded by an overall and work shirt manufacturing venture called Erlanger Brothers. The brothers soon acquired the firm of Bradley, Vorhees and Day and began producing underwear under the BVD brand. The initials, BVD, apparently stand for Bradley, Vorhees and Day; however, there are many other claims to the initials. One is that it stands for "Best Ventilated Drawers." There is also a discrepancy over the location of the firm, Bradley, Vorhees and Day. One source indicates it was a Baltimore firm, although it could not be located in Baltimore City Directories. Other sources indicate a New York or California origin.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #2.

(11/78)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

B-1075

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Inner Harbor Lofts II (Erlanger Buildings)

Baltimore City

Maryland

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2

SIGNIFICANCE, continued

While engaged in the underwear manufacturing business, Charles Erlanger conceived the novel idea of the knee length drawer, making underwear most comfortable, a marked improvement over the old-fashioned bulky underwear of the day. This idea revolutionized the underwear business in America. Erlanger was, however, somewhat modest about the significance of his discovery. Harold J. Jonas, a relative of the Erlangers, relates that Charles Erlanger once silenced his son who was speaking of the importance of the BVD Company by saying, "Let's stop that line. All we ever really did was to cut drawers shorter."² Nevertheless, The BVD brand became world famous.

The corporate headquarters of the BVD Company was in New York, but BVD Brand underwear was produced on West Pratt Street for nearly fifty years. The company grew in the first decades of the 20th century with the acquisition of many related manufacturing interests.

In 1914 a model village was built outside Lexington, North Carolina to house workers of the Erlanger Cotton Mills. Many companies, such as the Sealpax Company of Baltimore, the Piqua (Ohio) Hosiery Company, the Langerre Sales Company of New York and the Yadkin Finishing Company of North Carolina, were purchased by the Erlangers. In 1929 the BVD corporation was established as a holding company to coordinate all the BVD interests. Eventually the firm branched out to produce pajamas, hosiery, sportswear, and robes, as well as underwear. BVD was instrumental in the development of men's topless swimming trunks and women's one-piece bathing suits. At the company's peak in the mid-1920s, an estimated 7,200,000 pairs of underwear were sold in a year.

In 1951 the BVD Corporation was sold, and operations on West Pratt Street soon ended. Until recently the Erlanger buildings have housed a wide variety of small industrial interests; however, within the past year, the buildings were sold to the Inner Harbor Lofts, Associates for development as loft apartments. The exterior of the buildings will be preserved, while the interiors are to be modernized for residential use. The Erlanger Buildings, which are historically important as the original home of BVD underwear and the manufacturing plant for the brand from 1908 to 1951, will once again have a viable use in downtown Baltimore.

¹Baltimore Daily News, June 17, 1899.

²Correspondence with J. Jonas, October 1979.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

B-1075

- National Cyclopedia of American Biography, 1937, v. 26, p. 278.
- Time Magazine, August 13, 1951.
- Underwear and Hosiery Review, February 1919.
- Baltimore Daily Record, June 17, 1899.
- Correspondences with Howard J. Jonas and Michael Erlanger in September and October 1979.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .659 acre
 Quadrangle name Baltimore East Quad Quadrangle scale 1:24000
 UMT References

A	<u>18</u>	<u>360040</u>	<u>4349560</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET #3.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Fred B. Shoken, Assistant Research Analyst
 organization Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation date October, 1979
 street & number City Hall, 100 N. Holliday Street telephone (301)396-4866
 city or town Baltimore state Maryland 21202

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *J. P. H.* 12-28-79
 title STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER date

For HCRS use only
 I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register
 date
 keeper of the National Register
 Attest: _____ date
 Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

Inner Harbor Lofts II (Erlanger Buildings)

Baltimore City

CONTINUATION SHEET

Maryland

ITEM NUMBER

10

PAGE

3

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Known as Lots 4-10 in Block 677 in Baltimore City Tax Records. Beginning at the southwest corner of S. Greene and West Pratt Streets; thence, easterly 183+' intersect the partition line between Lots 3 and 4 in Block 677; thence, south 158+' to intersect Dover Street; thence, west 183+' to intersect S. Greene Street; thence, north 158+' to the place of beginning, containing .659 acre.