

To Whom It May Concern:

Because of my relationship with the old "Stark Bldg" on the corner of W. Mifflin and Fairchild, I have often been asked about my feelings concerning the Frautschi Foundation's "100 Block" renovation plan". I'm in favor of it. What the Frautschis have done and are willing to do for our city, is a wonderful example of how many of our successful private sector people have unselfishly helped to make Madison a beautiful and economically viable city. The great majority of Madisonians (and visitors) have benefited greatly from their largess, and it pains me that we, as a city, can't show our appreciation for their gifts by encouraging them to do more, not less. As I see it, a beautiful plan is in jeopardy because of two old buildings. There must be hundreds of historic buildings in Madison, many more worthy of saving than these. I ask the question, how many historic buildings do we need?

I will deal directly with my feelings about the "Stark Building". This building was built in 1925 and 26 by my father, Paul E. Stark, and Harry French. The Paul E. Stark Company occupied the first floor, and Harry French and his Northwestern Life Insurance Agency occupied the second. Although I was often in the building as a boy, I never worked there (our company moved to 1 W. Main St. in the early 1940's). I have some emotional attachment to the building, but nothing more -- certainly nothing that should stand in the way of much needed beautification. The east side of that block on Fairchild Street, taken as a whole, is maybe the ugliest in downtown Madison -- and worst of all, it constitutes a great share of the view from the Overture. I like the idea of a small park on the site, and I would not want our old building standing in the middle of it (being thought of by most people as a monument to nothing more than obstructionism).

I call your attention to the demolition of the Madison Gas and Electric building (directly across the street from our building) to make way for the Overture Center. That building had more architectural appeal than our building. I know of no one who mourns its loss, especially in light of what we now have in its stead, our beautiful Overture Center.

Lets get on with it!

Phil Stark