

## Bailey, Heather

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**From:** Kurt Stege <kurt.stege@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 28, 2023 6:09 PM  
**To:** Bailey, Heather; Ekberg, Meri Rose  
**Subject:** Materials for preservation file on the Carroll Block and the Vroman Block  
**Attachments:** Carroll St doc FINAL.pdf

Caution: This email was sent from an external source. Avoid unknown links and attachments.

I was behind the times in terms of the May 15 Landmarks Commission meeting and didn't even think that I might have materials (in this case prepared by the SHS for its own use and shared with the Madison Trust) relevant to the history of these two buildings.

I may have some other materials, as well. If they appear, I'll pass them along.

My recollection is there's a biography of Prof. C. H. Slichter that includes references to the construction of that building.

Kurt Stege

# 18-20 and 22-24 N. CARROLL STREET MADISON, WISCONSIN

Prepared Nov. 16, 2021



State Historic Preservation Office, staff photo

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)**  
**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)**

**Overview**

When the Carroll Block and the Vroman Block were built in the early 1900s they filled some of the last available parcels on the capitol square. Business blocks with first-floor retail and offices above were a common building type. Designed by the same architects and erected simultaneously, the Carroll and Vroman blocks employed popular styles of the period. In the 120 years since their construction, both buildings have seen frequent modifications at street level as business demands and consumer tastes have changed. At the same time, the second- and third-story facades are have remained largely unaltered.

Interior spaces have been significantly changed over the years, and little of the original plan, materials, or finishes remain. Street-level alterations reflect the rise and decline of retail on the square. The tenants on the upper floors have changed too, from an early mix of tradespeople (dressmaker, bookbinder, photographer) and professionals (lawyer, dentist, engineer) to a narrow range of mostly professional tenants (lawyer, consultant, advocacy organizations). While several well-known individuals and organizations have occupied the buildings over the years, their presence is not associated with significant events or people.

**Architecture**

The Carroll Block and the Vroman Block are early-20th-century commercial buildings designed by the same architecture firm. The two buildings have much in common. Their street fronts are the same width. Both are three stories high with retail space at ground level and professional office spaces above. They are faced in brick with stone trim. Despite the change in the facades at street level, the windows are aligned across both buildings. The ground floor entrances to the upper floors are side-by-side where the two buildings share a common wall.

Nonetheless, the buildings are very different at the upper stories. The Carroll Block (18-20 N. Carroll St.) exhibits the influence of the Queen Anne style, but with a symmetrical façade. It features four generously proportioned bay windows that span the entire the second story. Four large windows on the third story are positioned directly above the bay windows. Because the Carroll Block was built in stages, the cornice is divided in two. The Vroman Block (24 N. Carroll St.) has Neoclassical detailing. Seven narrow, sash windows are evenly spaced across the second and third stories with stone bands providing continuous lintels across the width of the façade. The projecting cornice is uninterrupted.

Both buildings were designed by the firm of Gordon and Paunack. James O. Gordon arrived in Madison from western New York in 1857, established his architectural firm in 1890, and continued in practice for 27 years, alone and with others. Early in 1892, Gordon formed a partnership with Madison native Frederick W. Paunack, who apprenticed with architects in Madison and elsewhere. Gordon and Paunack practiced together until about 1903, shortly before Paunack's untimely death.

Halle Steensland House (1896)  
NRHP 1982  
moved to 15 W. Gorham St.



AHI 73316

Curtis-Kittleston House (1901)  
NRHP 1980  
1102 Spaight St.



AHI 16666

Fess Hotel (1901)  
NRHP 1978  
123 E. Doty St.



AHI 17004

Wisconsin Building (1900)  
100 State St.



AHI 75751

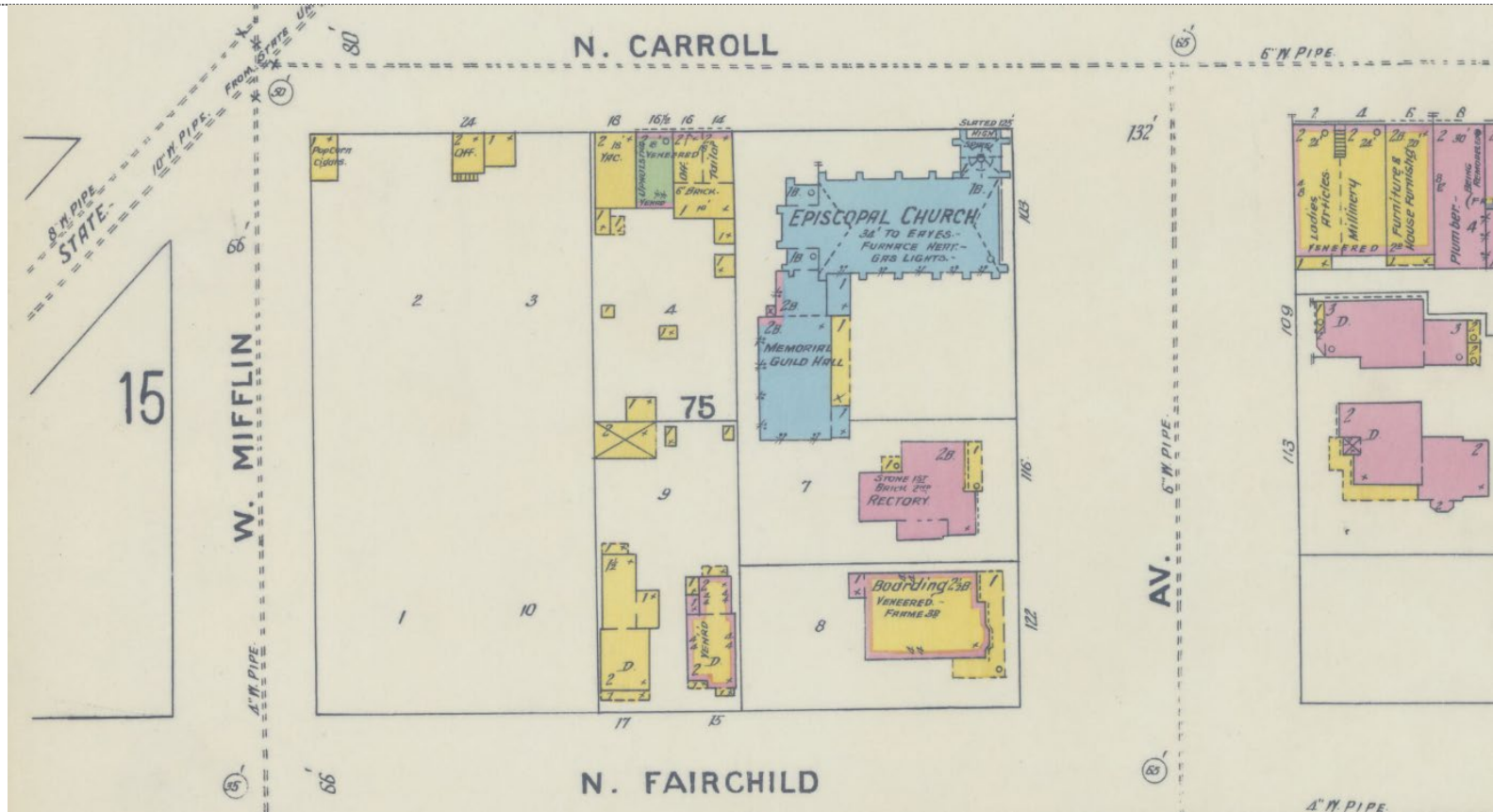
Gordon and Paunack were “one of Madison’s most successful architectural firms during the boom growth period at the turn-of-the-century,” according to Katherine Rankin and Timothy Hegglund (Madison Intensive Survey, pp. 395, 411-415, 527). They designed several Madison school buildings, as well as public schools in other communities. Their residential work included many houses in the Queen Anne style and were typically eclectic and somewhat old-fashioned, but with an abundance of finely executed decorative details in brick, wood and glass. (Halle Steensland House, *National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form*. 1982. Page 8.1)

In these two commercial blocks, Gordon and Paunack used styles that were popular at the beginning of the 20th century. The Queen Anne style also appears in another of their commercial designs, the Fess Hotel (1901). It’s in their residential designs that the firm demonstrated its mastery of Queen Anne design, notably the Halle Steensland House (1896) and the Curtis-Kittleston House (1901). The Neoclassical language of the Vroman Block is a style Gordon and Paunack turned to for several commercial buildings in downtown Madison. Their most prominent Neoclassical design is the four-story Wisconsin Building (1900) at the intersection of Carroll, Mifflin and State Streets.

Gordon and Paunack are represented in the National Register of Historic Places by three Queen Anne designs: the Steensland House, the Curtis-Kittleston House, and the Fess Hotel. All three are also locally designated landmarks.

# History Timeline

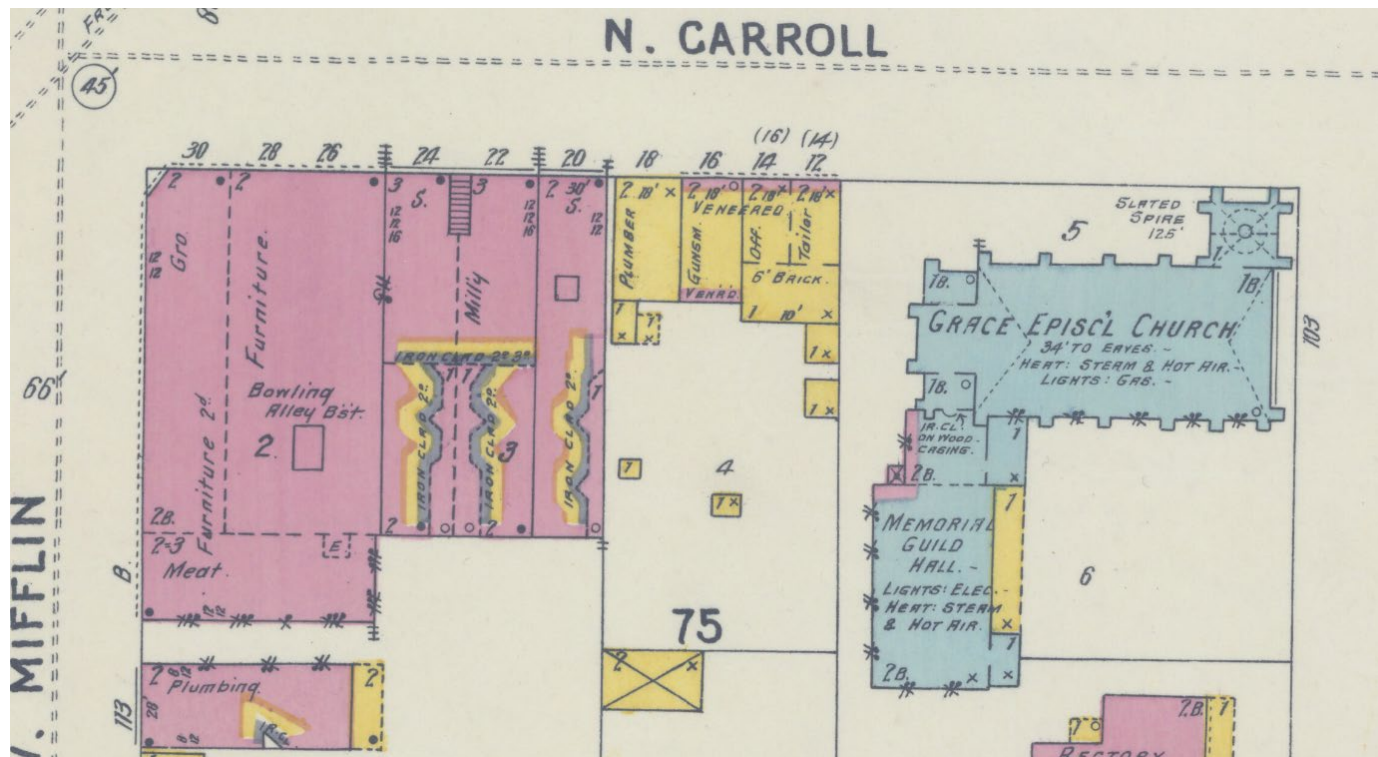
1898-1899



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1898

**Before Construction** — A Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows small frame structures on the future site of the Carroll and Vroman blocks. The property was home to the Brittingham & Hixon Lumber Company. (Madison City Directory 1898-1899)

1900  
1902



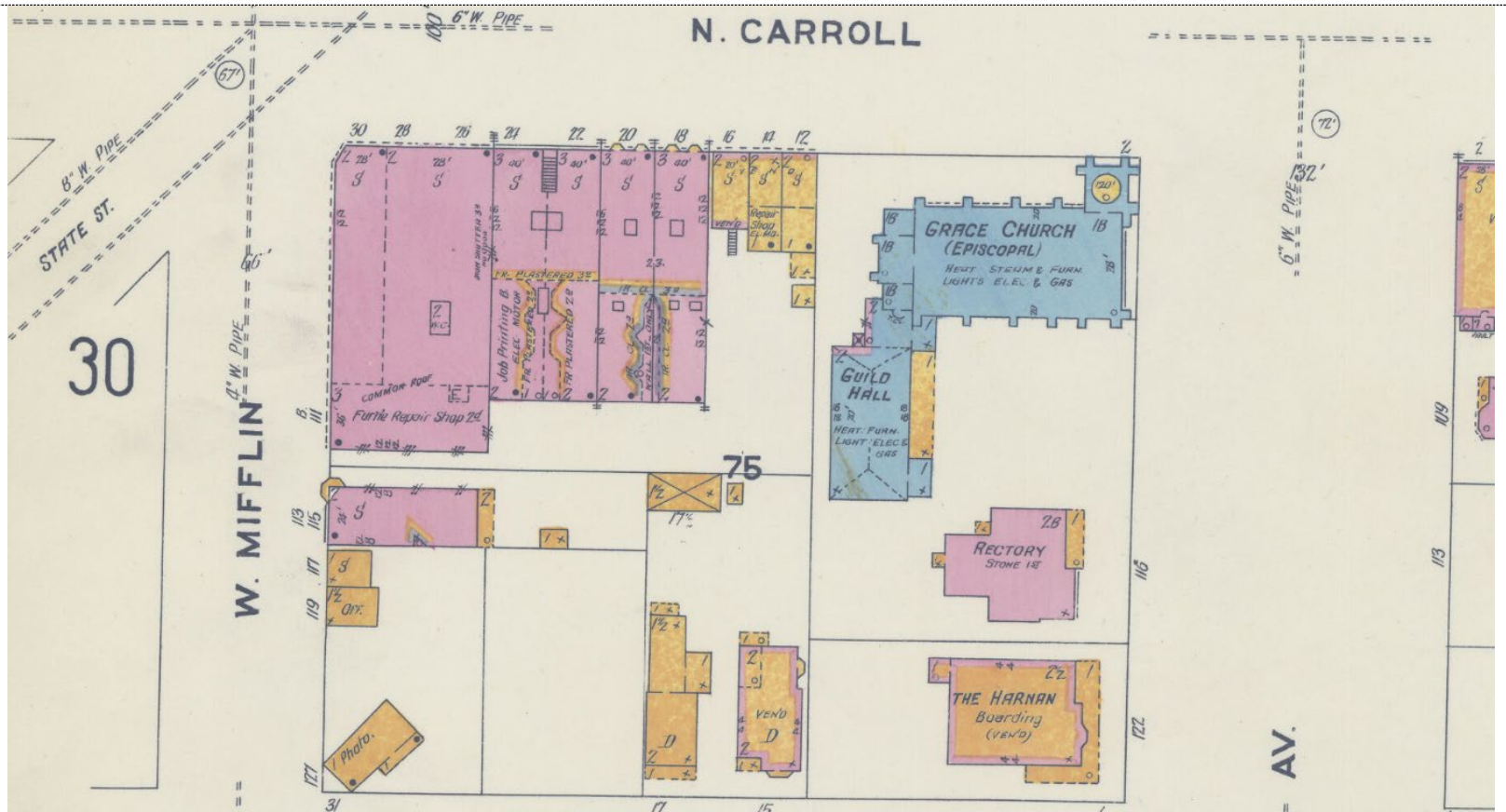
Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1902

**Buildings Underway** — The *Wisconsin State Journal* reported that, “Prof. C. H. Slichter is just now finishing his block, and the breaking of ground for the Vroman estate block...will soon be completed, and masons set to work.” The 1900 census showed Madison with a population of 19,164. (*Wisconsin State Journal* Oct. 10, 1900)

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — The Carroll block was built in two stages, and the 1902 fire insurance map shows the frame building still standing at 18 N. Carroll; a plumbing company was on the first floor with a residence above. The Park Dry Goods Store was in the storefront of the new masonry building at 20 N. Carroll and B.B. Clarke published *The American Thresherman* from an office above. (*Madison City Directory* 1900-1901)

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)** — Parsons Printing & Stationery occupied a street-level shop. Occupants of the second and third stories included a milliner, manicurist, bookbinder, lawyer, engineer, real estate investor, two dentists, and the office of the Madison Base Ball Club. (*Madison City Directory* 1900-1901)

1908



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map 1908

**Buildings Completed** — The second phase of the Carroll Block at 18 N. Carroll St. was finished in 1905-06. The 1908 the fire insurance map shows the completed side-by-side Carroll and Vroman blocks. The frame buildings at 12-16 were replaced by the Gay Building in 1915. The map shows the Haswell Furniture Company building at the corner of N. Carroll and Mifflin. (Intensive Survey Form 1983; Wisconsin State Journal June 16, 1953)

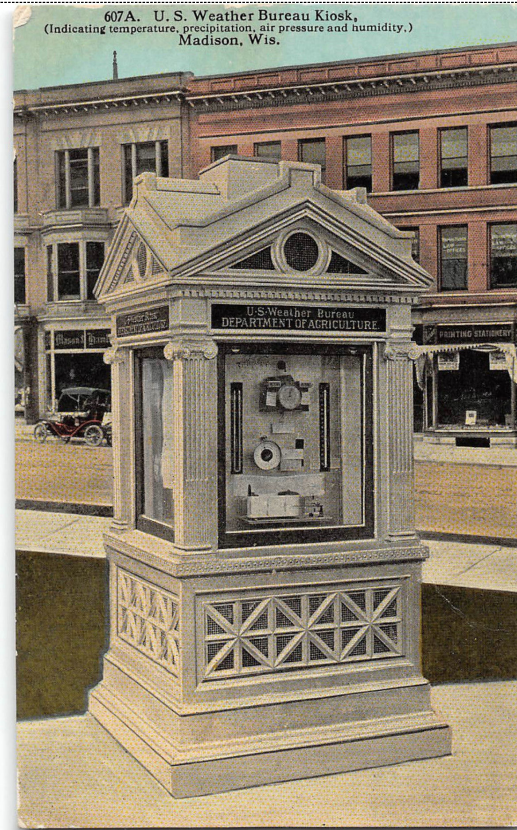
**1911** **18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — By this time, John Grinde was selling men’s clothing and furnishings here, a tradition that would continue for 75 years with men’s stores in both the Carroll and Vroman blocks. (Madison City Directory 1911)

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)** — Parsons Printing & Stationery occupied a street-level shop. Occupants of the second and third stories included a milliner, manicurist, bookbinder, lawyer, engineer, real estate investor, two dentists, and the office of the Madison Base Ball Club. (Madison City Directory 1911)

**1917 ca.** **Early Image** — A postcard of a U.S. Weather Bureau kiosk at the western corner of the State Capitol grounds also shows parts of the N. Carroll Street buildings the background. The kiosk was erected in 1912 and removed in 1919. (*Wisconsin State Journal* June 10, 1912; *The Capital Times* Nov. 3, 1969)

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)**  
A window sign for Mason & Hamlin Pianos identifies the street-level shop of Albert E. Smith in the building on the left. He sold not only pianos, but “talking machines” (phonographs) as well. (Madison City Directory 1917)

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)**  
A sign for [Parsons] Printing & Stationery is visible over a shop window to the right of the kiosk and second-floor windows identify the Vroman Mason law office. Mason was the grandson of William Vroman who, by 1871, was operating a lumber and hardware business on this site. The Vroman estate developed the Vroman Block. (Madison City Directory 1917; *Wisconsin State Journal* May 12, 1871; Sept. 1, 1888; Jan. 9, 1889)



Published by E.A. Bishop, Racine; private collection





Detail (cropped) from Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 45317

**Buildings in Context** — This 1918 panorama photo shows the three-story Carroll and Vroman Blocks after the nine-story Leonard W. Gay Building was erected. The Haswell Furniture Company, the two-story building in the foreground at the corner of Carroll and Main, was replaced in 1953 by the Wolff, Kubly & Hirsig Store which later became the Wisconsin Historical Museum. (*Wisconsin State Journal* June 16, 1953)

1920s

**New Retail** — In 1920 the U.S. census counted 38,378 Madison residents, doubling the population from 1900. The capitol square was becoming the heart of Madison's retail district.

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)** — On March 23, 1922, "Thousands of people thronged the downtown streets ... to celebrate Madison's formal spring opening." It also marked the opening of Karstens, a store selling men's clothing and furnishings as well as children's clothes. (*Wisconsin State Journal* March 24, 1922)

In 1929, occupants of the second and third story offices included a dressmaker, salesman, dentist, architect, engineer, and a physicians' group. (Madison City Directory 1929)

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — On March 12, 1927, Charles Anderes and Erwin Spoo took over the Grinde clothing store. Anderes & Spoo, which specialized in men's clothing, installed new show windows for their store, which occupied half of the ground floor of the Carroll Block. (*Wisconsin State Journal* March 10, 1922, and Sept. 21, 1922)

In 1929, other occupants of the building included Douglass China, a fruit vendor, typewriter repair service, insurance agent, architect, and physician. (Madison City Directory 1929)

In Step with Madison's Rapid Progress

Anderes & Spoo

18 N. Carroll St.  
Next to Gay Bldg.

*Madison's Smartest Show Windows*

Recently completed for the new firm of Anderes and Spoo, the owners of the Men's Clothes Shop conducted for the past 21 years by Mr. John Grinde.

Fall Exposition Featuring  
Hickey-Freeman Customized Clothes

This Fall Exposition marks the complete showing of America's finest Men's Clothes ready to put on—known so well by the discriminating men of this community.

ACCESSORIES OF LIKE HIGH QUALITY.

We Invite Your Inspection.

*Anderes & Spoo*

MADISON  
18 N. CARROLL ST.  
Successors to John Grinde

*The Capital Times* Sept. 21, 1927

1934

**Carroll Block Display Windows** — In 1934 Angus McVicar photographed the Spoo & Stephan storefront with its prominent cornice above the store sign. The “arcaded front” with large plate-glass windows and a recessed entry became increasingly popular among retailers in the 1920s. Partially visible next door is the General Air Conditioning store. (David Smiley. *Pedestrian Modern: Shopping and American Architecture 1925-1956*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013; Madison City Directory 1935)



Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 16576

1934  
1932

**Vroman Block Display Windows**— In 1934, Angus McVicar also photographed the Karstens storefront which stretched across the entire ground level of the Vroman Block. The central window was an “island display” with glass on all four sides with the store entry behind the vitrine-like case. Upstairs tenants included a dressmaker, credit bureau, art school, and beauty shop. (David Smiley. *Pedestrian Modern: Shopping and American Architecture 1925-1956*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013; Madison City Directory 1935)

McVicar’s 1932 photo of show girls from a travelling troupe gives more detail on how the Karstens windows were dressed.



Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 16422



Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 17852

1944

**Modernized Storefront** — Karstens had updated its store signage by 1944 when Angus McVicar shot this nighttime photo. The window displays have also been modernized with little or no drapery.



Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 13368

1947

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — By this time the men's clothing store was known as Spoo & Sons, the name by which it was known until it closed. Other occupants of the Carroll Block included a dentist, fish broker, commercial photographer, loan company, and U.S. Department of Agriculture office for the soil Conservation Service. (Madison City Directory 1947)

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)** — Karstens continued to occupy the first floor of the Vroman Block. Upstairs tenants included a dressmaker, beauty shop, engineer, art school and credit bureau. (Madison City Directory 1947)

1957

**Karstens Updated Again** — Apart from documenting a Buick that rolled from a parking spot on Carroll Street, this photo by Edwin Stein shows changes to the Karstens storefront. The sign was updated from the 1944 photo above. More significant was the replacement of the rectilinear display windows, including the island display, with long sweeps of glass that drew shoppers off the congested sidewalk, eliminated obstacles, and directed them toward the store entrance. (David Smiley. *Pedestrian Modern: Shopping and American Architecture 1925-1956*. University of Minnesota Press, 2013)



Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID 137815

1959

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — In addition to Spoo & Sons, the Carroll Block was home to two lawyers, a commercial photographer, publisher, and loan company. (Madison City Directory 1959)

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)** — Above the Karstens store the Vroman block was occupied by a growing credit bureau, art school, and the Madison Business Protective Association. (Madison City Directory 1959)

1966-1967

**Columns Covered** — Iron columns at 18 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block) that have been visible since at least 1927 when the ground level facade was updated. The columns, visible to the right of the store front in the illustration, were masked as part of a new sign installation for Spoo & Sons. (Madison Board of Public Works resolution Oct. 25, 1966 et al.)



Detail *The Capital Times* ad Sept. 21, 1927

1971

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — A shoe store had joined Spoo & Sons at street level. Upstairs offices housed lawyers, landscape architects, and a mortgage company. (Madison City Directory 1971)


**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)** — Three credits bureau offices, perhaps related, were the only occupants on the second and third floors. Kartstens continued to sell men's and children's clothing on the ground floor. (Madison City Directory 1971)

1974

**18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)** — This 1974 photo shows Spoo & sons now occupied the entire ground level of the Carroll Block. They had not significantly updated their display windows; the plastic-and-metal store sign was installed in 1967. The second- and third-story facades are essentially unchanged since construction in 1900. The sash windows in the second-story bays were replaced with undivided plate glass at an unknown date.



Architecture & History Inventory 95297

<p><b>1974 cont.</b></p>	<p><b>22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)</b> — This photo was taken about 18 months before Karstens would close its doors. The street level looks much as it did in 1957 while the second- and third-story facades are unchanged since construction in 1900.</p>	<p>Dane Co. 0095299 Madison 24 N. Carroll St. 1974</p>  <p>Architecture &amp; History Inventory 95299</p>
<p><b>1975</b></p>	<p><b>Karstens Closes</b> — In the summer of 1975, Karstens announced it would close its store on N. Carroll Street in October. Adolph Kocher, president of the company, explained the decision: “We hate to go out of business, but with the [Capitol Concourse-State Street] mall construction, shopping centers, and our age and health, it’s the best thing to do.” (<i>Wisconsin State Journal</i> Aug. 18, 1975)</p>	
<p><b>1982</b></p>	<p><b>18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)</b> — Spoo &amp; Sons continued to do business on the first floor. Upstairs offices were filled by offices offering professional services—law, investing, real estate, consulting—as well as two trade associations. (Madison City Directory 1982)</p> <p><b>22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)</b> — Karstens had vacated the first floor and a jeweler took over at least part of their space. Offices on the second and third floors were home to a collection bureau, investment firm and real estate company. (Madison City Directory 1982)</p>	
<p><b>1986-1987</b></p>	<p><b>Spoo &amp; Sons Closes</b> — After 59 years, Spoo &amp; Sons announced they would go out of business in October of 1986. According to Doug Dyer, one of the owners, “Business, sales, parking, [and] the death of a partner earlier this year” all contributed to the decision. A clothing store had been at this address for eighty years, beginning when John Grinde opened his shop in 1906. A permit for non-structural demolition of the retail interior was issued in 1987. (<i>Wisconsin State Journal</i> Oct. 22, 1986; building permit Oct. 9, 1987)</p> <p>The 1980s saw a spate of business closings on the capitol square. In addition to Spoo &amp; Sons, other businesses that closed or moved from the square included Manchester’s department store (1981), J. C. Penney (1983), Woldenberg’s women’s apparel (1984), the Emporium department store and Cecil’s Boot Ranch (1985), Kresge’s (1986), and Security Savings &amp; Loan (1987). (<i>Wisconsin State Journal</i> Jan. 23, 1987)</p>	



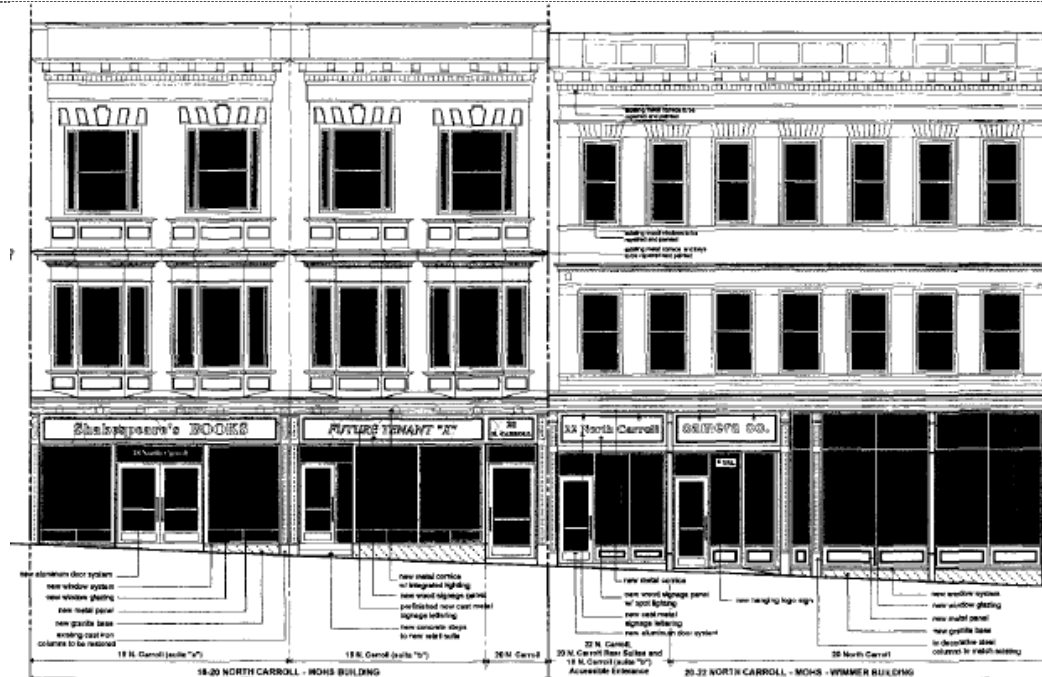
1989

**Changing Uses** — Former retail space had been converted to the Tea Room restaurant at 18 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block). A retractable awning stretches across the entire façade. (*The Capital Times* Feb. 22, 1989)




*The Capital Times* Feb. 22, 1989

1998



Architecture Network Inc., Urban Design Commission application, June 3, 1998

<p><b>1998 cont.</b></p>	<p><b>Storefronts Updated</b> — In 1989, the owner proposed changes to the ground floor facade as illustrated above. According to the application to the city’s Urban Design Commission, “The intention is to restore the storefronts to be in character with the architecture of the upper stories of the Building.” Some original elements of the facade at 18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block) — including iron columns — were restored while the storefront at 22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block) was entirely new, including decorative steel duplicates of the structural iron columns.</p> <p>The update created a continuous, unified appearance at street level with a dentilled cornice over panels for store signage. Granite was used below the windows at the Carroll Block, as seen on the foreground of the photo to the right. Panels filled the space under the windows on the Vroman Block.</p>	
<p><b>1991-1992</b></p>	<p><b>18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)</b> — The first floor was now home to Shakespeare’s Books, a used bookstore that opened in 1991. The upper stories were occupied by two law firms. (Madison City Directory 1992)</p> <p><b>22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)</b> — The building is occupied by lawyers, lobbyists, a technical college association, and the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra. (Madison City Directory 1992)</p>	
<p><b>2002</b></p>	<p><b>18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)</b> — Shakespeare’s Books continued selling used books on the ground floor and law offices occupied the office space above. (Madison City Directory 2002)</p> <p><b>22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)</b> — The Camera Co. had set up business at ground level while upstairs offices were home to lawyers, consultants, professional organizations, and nonprofits. (Madison City Directory 2002)</p>	
<p><b>2021</b></p>	<p><b>18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)</b> — Graft restaurant, which opened in 2015, occupied occupy the ground level while law offices were above.</p> <p><b>22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)</b> — The street level retail space was vacant. Other occupants included a technical college association, consultants, business offices for a local restaurant chain, and a data services company.</p>	

## The Buildings Today

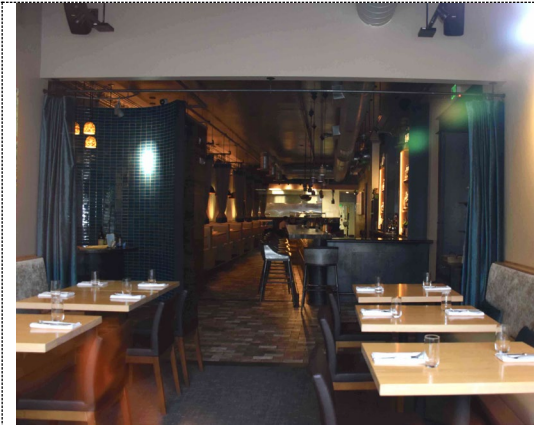
Over more than 100 years of continuous use the buildings have been frequently remodeled at the street level so that only fragments of original exterior materials remain. The exterior of the upper stories of the street facades are largely unaltered. The interior plan of both buildings has been modified several times, and the current configuration is the result of an extensive overhaul of interior spaces on all floors of both buildings. Original interior finishes have been removed or hidden under modern materials.

### 18-20 N. Carroll St. (Carroll Block)

Graft restaurant, which opened in 2015, continues to occupy the ground level while law offices are above. (SHPO staff photos)



Street view



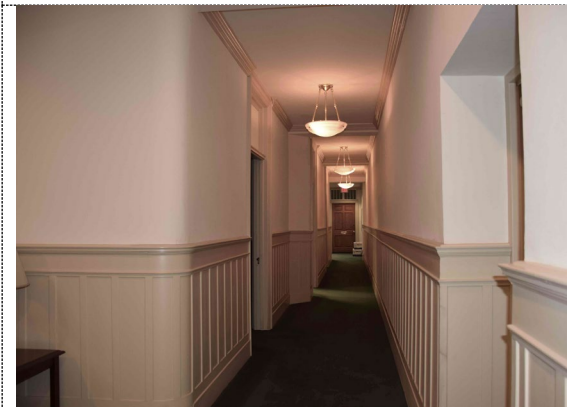
First floor restaurant



Second floor law office



Second floor law office



Second floor law office

**22-24 N. Carroll St. (Vroman Block)**

The street-level retail space is vacant. Other occupants included a technical college association, consultants/lobbyists, business offices for a local restaurant chain, and a data services company. (SHPO staff photos)



Street view



Ground floor retail space



Second floor offices



Third floor office



Third floor office