

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

Name of Building or Site:

Common Name

Historic Name (if applicable)

Frederick & Sophia Festner House

Location:

Street Address

126 South Hancock Street

Aldermanic District

Sixth

Classification:

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

Single-family residence

Zoning District

R5

Present Use

Single-Family Residence

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

Name(s)

Timothy Wedeward & Robyn Davis

Street Address

126 South Hancock Street

Telephone Number

256-0707

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

Parcel Number

0709-133-2606-7

Legal Description

NW ½ Lot 5, Block 114, Original Plat

Condition of Property:

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

Excellent

Altered or Unaltered?

Mostly Unaltered

Moved or Original Site?

Original site

Wall Construction

Masonry (brick)

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

Historical Data:

Original Owner

Frederick & Sophia Festner

Original Use

Single-Family Residence

Architect or Builder

Unknown

Architectural Style

Front Gable

Date of Construction

1862

Indigenous Materials Used

Local brick

List of Bibliographical References Used:

Davis, Robyn. Current owner. Personal communication, March 1, 2001.

Madison Building Permits. Madison Department of Planning and Development.

Madison City Directory. Madison: G.R. Angell and Company, 1914 and 1916.

Madison City Directory. Milwaukee: Wright Directory Company, 1921 and 1925.

Madison City Directory: 1883. Madison: W.F. Curtis & Co., 1883.

Madison Tax Rolls. Madison Department of Planning and Development.

Map of Madison. Pelham, New York: Sanborn Publishing Company, 1885; 1892; 1898; 1902; 1908.

Mollenhoff, David V. *Madison: A history of the Formative Years*. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Co., 1982.

Morrissey & Bunn's Madison City Director: 1880-81. Madison: Morrissey & Bunn, 1880.

Pryor's Madison City Directory: 1877-78. Madison: Pryor & Co., 1877.

Rankin, Katherine H. *Intensive Survey of the Historic Resources of Madison*, prepared for the Madison Department of Planning and Development and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1994.

Wright's Madison City Directory. Milwaukee: Wright Directory Company, 1931; 1937; 1943; 1947; 1951; 1954 and 1960.

Wright's Madison City Directory. St. Paul, Minnesota: Wright Directory Company, 1966; and 1980.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

Form Prepared By:

Name and Title

Elizabeth L. Miller, Historic Preservation Consultant

Organization Represented (if any)

City of Madison, Department of Planning and Development

Address

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
Madison, WI 53701

Telephone Number

266-6552

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

March, 2001

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The Frederick and Sophia Festner House is two-story, Front Gable house of load-bearing brick construction. A one-story, gabled brick addition is attached to the rear of the main block. The Festner House is located southeast of the Capitol Square in a neighborhood that mixes mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century residences with commercial and institutional structures from mid-to-late twentieth century. A concrete driveway runs along the south side of the house.

Erected in 1862¹, the Festner House is set on a fieldstone rubble basement, which has been stuccoed. The roof is finished with asphalt shingles. The house is enriched on all facades with a raking cornice featuring dentils and paired brackets, imparting an Italianate flair. The addition is thought to date from the 1920s and houses the kitchen².

The Festner House faces east. The front façade is three bays wide and displays an off-center door accented with a fanlight. Wood, double-hung sash windows in a six-over-six configuration appear in the two openings north of the door and in the three openings at the second story. These windows likely are original. The lintels and sills are stone. An oculus appears in the gable end. A flat-roofed porch extends across the front façade. According to the Sanborn *Map of Madison*, a wood porch extended across the front façade, from at least 1885 until 1957. In 1957, the existing porch was constructed with brick piers, a concrete floor, and wrought iron posts and rail.³ The brick extends into the front yard, creating raised flowerbeds on either side of the central walkway.

¹ Tax Rolls, City of Madison, on file, Department of Planning and Development.

² Robyn Davis, Current Owner, Personal Communication, March 1, 2001.

³ Building permit, City of Madison, on file, Department of Planning and Development.

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On the north-facing façade, a broad, eight-over-eight window with a brick sill is set toward the front of the house on the first floor. This window matches those on the addition, suggesting it dates from the same era. Toward the back of the house, the first story exhibits a one-over-one window in an original opening (with stone lintel and sill) and a small, one-over-one window with brick lintel and sill. At the second story, one window appears. Two boarded openings can be found in the basement.

The south-facing façade shows two, round-arched openings at basement level (one of which is boarded), a pair of one-over-one windows with stone lintel and sill at the first story, and a one-over-one window and a multi-pane casement window at the second story. These latter windows also display stone lintels and sills.

The west-facing (rear) façade is dominated by the addition. Each of the south and west faces of the addition exhibit one broad, eight-over-eight window. The south face also has a door. A pair of eight-over-eight windows appears on the north face. On the west-facing façade of the 1862 section, a one-over-one window and a door with a wrought iron balcony can be seen above the addition.

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Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The Festner House is eligible for Madison Landmark designation because it meets criterion 3 of the Landmarks and Landmarks Sites Designation Criteria (see Madison Ordinances Sec. 33.01(4)(a)). Specifically, it is a good and intact example of a Front Gable house, a vernacular form with few early intact brick examples remaining in Madison. Although the front porch is not original, it does not compromise the integrity of the Festner House.

Architectural Significance

The Front Gable form was built between about 1840 and 1925. It is rectangular in plan with a gable roof, the gable end of which faces toward the street. Residential examples are typically small or medium in size and display simple ornamentation. For early examples (that is, prior to 1890), plain cornices are typical while later examples may exhibit shingling in the gable ends and a cottage window with a leaded glass header on the front-facing façade. Earlier examples tend to be taller and narrower than later Front Gable houses. The intensive survey of Madison identified 100 Front Gable residences erected prior to 1890, 19 of them brick. The Festner House is one of the most intact of these. As one of the best and most intact early examples of a brick, Front Gable house, the Festner House is eligible for designation as a Madison Landmark. It is also one of the oldest houses remaining in downtown Madison.

History of the Property

The house was built for Frederick and Sophia Festner in 1862. Frederick Festner had served as alderman of the Third Ward in 1860 and was city treasurer in 1861.⁴ The Festners sold the property to Samuel and Amanda Bean in 1867.⁵ In 1884, Thomas and Kate Morgan purchased in from the Beans.⁶ Frederick Meng acquired it in 1895.⁷ In 1901-02, Gabriel Clifgard owned the property. John and Elsie Engesether were the owners from 1903 until at least 1915. They were succeeded by Elmer and Ole Wigdahl around 1917. By 1924, Karl and Taleta Kropf had bought the house. Karl Kropf was an officer in the Madison Tent and Awning Company. The Kropfs sold the property to Carroll F. and Margaret Kennedy around 1938. Carroll Kennedy was the assistant chief engineer at the City Water Department. He died around 1942 and Mrs. Kennedy continued to live in the house until at least 1949. Emery H. and Dorothea MacMillan acquired the house around 1950. Mr. MacMillan was a musician and worked for the Ward-Brodt Music

⁴ Historic Preservation file, City of Madison, Department of Planning and Development.

⁵ Dane County Mortgages, 38:80.

⁶ Dane County Mortgages, 127:530.

⁷ Tax rolls.

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Company during the early 1960s.⁸ The MacMillan family owned the house until at least 1980.⁹ By 1981, Thomas R. Goff had bought the property. He sold it the same year to Kip Erzinger and Susan Mudd-Erzinger. In 1984, the house was a two-unit and the Erzingers were in residence. Building permits indicate that the house was returned to single-family use in 1997, by then-owners Todd McGrath and Jerome Pasdo.¹⁰ The current owners, Timothy Wedeward and Robyn Davis, bought the home in 1999.¹¹

8 Building permits; and *Wright's Madison City Directory*, (Milwaukee: Wright Directory Company, 1937; 1939; 1943; 1947; 1951; 1954; and 1960).

9 *Wright's Madison City Directory*, (St. Paul, Minnesota: Wright Directory Company, 1966 and 1980.)

10 Building permits.

11 Davis.

126 S HANCOCK ST



100 0 100 Feet



