

Name of Building or Site

Common Name: Alano Society House
Historic Name: Willett S. and Jennie Main House



Location

Street Address: 511 N Carroll Street
Aldermanic District: District 2

Classification

Type of Property: Building
Zoning District: R6
Original Use: Residential
Present Use: Social/Clubhouse

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

Name(s): Alano Society
Street Address: 511 N Carroll Street, Madison, WI 53703

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)

Parcel Number: 0709-144-0806-2
Legal Description: Original Plat, Blk 79, NW 59 Ft of Lot 10 and NW 59 Ft of SW ½ of Lot 9.

Condition of Property

Physical Condition: Good
Altered/Unaltered: Some Alterations
Moved or Original Site: Original Site
Wall Construction: Brick Masonry

Historical Data

Original Owner: Willett S. and Jennie Main
Original Use: Residential
Architect or Builder: Unknown
Architectural Style: Italianate
Date of Construction: 1858¹
Indigenous Materials Used: Unknown

List of Bibliographical References Used

City and State Archives:

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Rankin, K and T. Heggland. *Madison Intensive Survey Report, 2 Volumes.* For the City of Madison and the Historic Preservation Division of the State Historic Preservation Office, Wisconsin Historical Society, 1994.
Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps: 1885, 1892, 1898, 1902, 1908, 1942.
Survey Form. City of Madison Intensive Survey. City Planning Department Historic Preservation files.

Periodicals, pamphlets, and websites:

www.cityofmadison.com/assessor/property/index.cfm
www.wisconsinhistory.org/ahi/detailrecord.asp Wisconsin Architecture & History Inventory.

Books:

Atwood, David. *Madison, Past and Present, Being a Souvenir volume to Celebrate the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Establishment of the Wisconsin State Journal 1852-1902.*
Harris, Cyril M. *American Architecture an Illustrated Encyclopedia.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998.
Levitan, Stuart D. *Madison: The Illustrated Sesquicentennial History, Vol 1 1856-1931.* Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006.
McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses.* New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992.
Mollenhoff, David V. *Madison: A History of the Formative Years. 2nd Ed.* Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982, 2003.9

Other:

Articles of Incorporation for the Alano Society. Secretary of State, State of Wisconsin, September 27, 1943.
Baas, Alexius. "Willett Main Home, Built In Pioneer Days, Still Has 'Strangely Youthful Appearance' ". Capital Times, 07/18/1948.
City of Madison Landmarks Nomination Form. "The Willett S. Main Building." City of Madison, 1995.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission

Dane County Register of Deeds, Room 110 City County Building, Madison. (Copies of deed documents in the archives of the Alano Society)

Jones, Rick. *"A Short Early History of the Alano Society and the Clubhouse at 511 N Carroll Street"*. Unpublished organizational history, 2003.

National Historic Landmark Nomination Form. "Dr. Robert and Anne Smith House". National Park Service, 2012.

National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form. "Mansion Hill Historic District." National Park Service, 1995.

Personal Communication: Jim McKiernan, December 2012; Jeff Vercauteren, Phil Saunders and Rick Jones, February 2013.

Form Prepared By

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Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance

The Willett S. and Jennie Main House, currently known as the Alano Society House at 511 N Carroll Street, is a two story Gabled Ell in the Italianate style constructed in 1858. The house is in good condition with medium integrity having retained enough features of the Italianate style to make it identifiable, but having lost some features of the original house.

Gabled Ell and the Italianate Style

The Gabled Ell is an American vernacular building form defined by its footprint and massing. The Gabled Ell (also known as Gable-Front & Wing) is characterized by its rectangular massing, having a front gable and a wing at right angles at a uniform roof height², and with an open front porch. This housing form was quite popular across Wisconsin from the mid-nineteenth through the early twentieth centuries and was easily adaptable allowing builders to apply ornamental stylistic details of a variety of architectural styles including the Greek Revival, Italianate, Gothic Revival, and Queen Anne styles.

The Main/Alano house exhibits decorative features of the Italianate style which was popular nationally between 1840 and 1890 and locally popular between 1850 and 1880. Details include paired modillions under the eaves, tall one-over-one windows and simplified projecting window hoods. The window hoods are subtly triangular over the front second-story windows and the window hoods are straight over the rest of the windows.

Exterior Description

The house is located on N. Carroll Street which is oriented in a northwest-southeast direction; the street is perpendicular to, and dead ends directly at, the southeast shore of Lake Mendota. The house is located on the east side of the street, both sides of which are residential. The front (primary) façade faces west on the gently sloping lot. The grade rises toward the rear of the property. The main massing of the house is three bays wide and the footprint is L-shaped.

The house is made up of the primary L-shape originally having a full-width front porch, a bay at the side ell, a two-story wing at the rear and an open porch at the back of the house. Extending from the rear wing was a one-story frame room, the same location where the garage sits today. This wood-framed room shows up on the 1892 Sanborn map and although it is not labeled, may have been used as a horse barn. Sometime around 1900, the Main family constructed a wood-frame screened porch at the side ell, the porch oriented to face the street. While not original, this porch has become an important historical feature of the house. By 1942, the rear barn is labeled on a Sanborn map as a garage.

The house is of solid brick masonry construction with wood floor and roof framing. The slightly raised foundation is of sandstone and the house is two stories tall. The brick walls have been painted. The

cornice and the projecting, open eaves are of wood. The roof form is varied. The main massing and the ell of the house have a gabled roof with a moderately steep pitch. The rear wing has a hipped roof. The front porch roof is gabled, the rear porch roof is flat, the garage roof is gabled and the bay roof is hipped. The roofing material is asphalt shingles. The house has one extant brick chimney, located at the exterior wall of the ell. The interior chimney for the living room fireplace in the main part of the house is not visible above the roofline.

The house retains its original front door, which is of wood and also retains its original transom. The front door is located inside a non-original, enclosed entrance vestibule. Concrete steps ascend to the vestibule and are sheltered by a projecting gabled roof.

The house has paired modillions under the eaves and tall one-over-one windows which are replacement windows in the original openings. The windows have wide stone lintels and sills. At the front façade, the second floor window openings have Italianate style triangular pediments.

Alterations

Some alterations have been made to the house which has resulted in the house having medium integrity. The most noticeable change was the removal of the full-width open front porch that was replaced with an enclosed entrance vestibule, concrete steps and a gabled overhang to shield the front door. Based on photographic evidence, this alteration was made sometime after 1971. Fortunately a restoration of the porch can easily be achieved; there are many historic and contemporary images of the house with the original front porch that document its appearance. Additionally, some of the original porch columns are currently located in the enclosed side porch. These existing porch columns can be returned to the front of the house as part of a porch restoration and can be used as a model for reproducing the columns that are missing. Restoring the full-width front porch will improve the architectural integrity of the house.

The removal of the front porch left a significant “ghost” on the brick façade. It is therefore likely that the house was painted at this time to conceal this ghosting and to give the front façade a uniform look.

Many, but not all, of the original windows have been replaced. According to permit records, windows were replaced in 1995 and 2001.

The side porch, originally screened, was enclosed with lower wood panels and windows above, at an unknown date. This change is easily reversible. The footprint and height of the porch has not changed so a restoration can be achieved by returning the half-wall/window configuration to full-height screened panels.

Permit records reveal that the garage was replaced in 1979. A wood framed garage was constructed in the same location and with the same footprint as the original barn/garage.

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria

Summary

The Main/Alano House is being nominated as a City of Madison Landmark under Criterion 1 of Section 33.19(4) of the City of Madison General Ordinances. Under Criterion 1, the building contributes to the broad cultural and social history of the community. The building is significant to the 20th century social history of Madison as the oldest, still active, dedicated clubhouse of the Alano Society, an organization devoted to the service of aiding community members recovering from alcohol dependence. The Alano Society, at this clubhouse, has helped many thousands of Madisonians through their struggles with addiction and over the years has been a place of refuge for many more short-term visitors to the City.

The house is also being nominated for landmark designation under Criterion 2 of Section 33.19(4): being identified with historic personages in local history, for its association with Willett S. Main. Willett S. Main, an early Madison resident, store owner, businessman, real estate developer, public servant and politician is an important personage in the early developmental history of Madison. Main lived in this house during the period of time when his activities contributed to Madison's early history. Main is associated with the construction of six buildings in Madison: two commercial and four residential buildings. All were constructed between 1855 and 1894, all are extant and the four houses are located within the Mansion Hill historic district. One of the houses (the subject property) was his home, the others were investment properties. These buildings are noteworthy as representative examples of architecture from Madison's earliest period of development. Main is significant for his role in the developmental history of early Madison and his association with these buildings illustrates the impact one person had on the landscape of a newly and rapidly developing city. Main was a prominent member of society; he served his community as Dane County sheriff, as a Chief Deputy United States Marshal and was a State Senator.

Criterion 1: Cultural and Social History

The Alano Society

The house is significant to the social history of Madison for its association with the Alano Society, a non-profit social organization which provides support services for individuals recovering from alcohol addiction. Throughout the history of alcohol addiction recovery, treatment options were predominantly limited to hospitalization or institutionalization in sanitariums. The Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) model was developed in the summer of 1935 and eventually was codified into a workable program in 1939. It uses social support in a community setting with other alcoholics as the mechanism which fosters recovery. "In the hands of AA members, the personal experience of being an alcoholic rather than the prognoses of the medical field or religious establishment became the expertise that validated the

method AA put forward about the ailment and strategies for recovery.”³ The AA model is in turn supported by The Alano Society which provides the social setting for recovery group meetings. According to an analysis of data from the Madison Intensive Survey, The Alano Society is the only social organization in Madison exclusively dedicated to the mission of providing support services for recovering alcoholics and its clubhouse on N Carroll Street is the oldest, continuously operating Alano Society in Madison. The Alano Society owns and operates the clubhouse, whose space can be rented by various substance abuse recovery groups to hold their meetings and social events. The house at 511 N Carroll Street has served as the Alano Society’s clubhouse since 1948.

The Alano Society is an organization completely independent of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) or any other substance abuse recovery program; AA does not finance or lend its name to any outside organization. All recovery meetings held at the Alano Clubhouse are conducted by an autonomous group, and each group pays rent to Alano to help cover expenses. There is membership in the Alano Society that is also independent of membership in any of the various organizations who use the Clubhouse facilities for their meetings.

Organizational Structure

Alano Societies exist in every state in the United States and in many foreign countries. There is no central office, each Society being independent. The only thing they share is the Alano name and mission. Although independent from each other, Alano and AA (and other recovery groups) are intricately linked. Members of AA always meet in donated or rented space because the AA organization prohibits the organization from acquiring property. When the size of a recovery group becomes large enough that more permanent meeting space is desired or becomes necessary, members of AA (and other recovery groups) can elect to join together to form an Alano Society. The Alano Society, managed by a Board of Directors, is therefore made up of AA and Alanon members willing to make the obligation of their time, management skills and money to acquire and manage property. The Alano Society exists for the benefit of AA and Alanon, but as a separate entity.

The Alano Society in Madison was incorporated September 27, 1943, and was made up of members of the first AA group founded in Madison.⁴ The original Articles of Incorporation state:

This corporation is formed for charitable and benevolent purposes and especially: to cultivate social intercourse among its members and assist in improving moral and social conditions of its beneficiaries; to provide for the relief of distressed members, the visitation of the sick, the burial of the dead, and such other benevolent and worthy purposes and objects as affects the members of the corporation; to purchase and own such real estate and other property as may be necessary for the purpose of the society; and for the purpose above specified, to receive donations, to receive, manage, take and hold real and personal property, by gift, grant, devise or bequest.⁵

The Alano Society is appropriately categorized under “Social Organizations” because although its mission is to assist those recovering from substance abuse, it is not a medical facility; it does not offer

treatment, therapy, counseling or any other medically related services. As a social organization, the Alano Society supports the AA model of addiction recovery, providing the means for the social and interpersonal support of fellow alcoholics that is necessary to the AA program. Historically in Wisconsin in the early 20th century, people seeking treatment for alcohol or drug dependence were treated at hospitals or sanitariums. Results from the Madison Intensive Survey identify seven hospitals dating from the early twentieth century, although none of them were specifically known for alcohol or drug treatment.

According to historical files at the Alano Society, in the 1940s and 50s there were very few hospitals that offered treatment to an alcoholic. Those hospitals that accepted patients diagnosed as alcoholic included the Milwaukee County Dispensary and Emergency Hospital on Wisconsin Avenue and St. Michael's Hospital in Stevens Point. The Milwaukee County hospital provided treatment and mental observation. Counseling was offered at St. Michael's where the staff was knowledgeable about alcoholism and AA volunteers were present every day.

The Madison Intensive Survey also identifies extant buildings associated with two sanitariums out of the four known to have operated in Madison. Sanitariums were further broken out into two categories: spa-like facilities that treated people for nervous or stress disorders and facilities designed to treat medical conditions, particularly tuberculosis. Of the two extant sanitariums, neither was specifically known for alcohol or drug treatment. The arrival of Alcoholics Anonymous to Madison in 1941 introduced a viable treatment option beyond hospitalization.

Social Organizations in Madison

The history of social organizations in Madison is as old as the City itself. Social organizations including political, religious, cultural and athletic clubs were an integral means of interaction among members of the community. Representative clubs included the Women's Club, the Madison Club, the Madison Improvement Association, and the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association. Fine arts, literary and debate clubs were represented by organizations such as the Madison Literary Club, and the Town and Gown Club. Social reform societies were also popular; the Women's Christian Temperance Union was active in Madison, but among the social organizations and societies from the mid-1800s through the mid-1900s, no other social organization paralleled the mission and purpose of the Alano Society. Results from the Madison Intensive Survey and the Survey Report do not identify any other property associated with social clubs for substance abuse recovery.

Other Alano Society Clubhouses in Madison

There have been other Alano groups in Madison that have since disbanded; the Badger Group, as an example, disbanded before 1970. Currently, there is one other Alano Society clubhouse in Madison which is located on the north side that has been active since 1983. The Alano Society clubhouse on N Carroll Street is the oldest, continuously operating Alano organization in Madison. There is no other comparable social organization in Madison that fulfills the mission to which the Alano Society is dedicated.⁶

The History of 511 N Carroll Street

The house was originally constructed by Willett S. and Jennie Main in 1858. The home stayed in the Main family until 1926 when it was sold to Carl R. Fish and his wife Jeanne l'Hommedieu Fish. In 1948 the estate of Jeanne l'Hommedieu Fish sold the house to Harry B. Haley acting as an agent for the Alano Society. The Alano Society is only the third owner of the house and has occupied the house since 1948.

Historic Context

Madison was incorporated as a village in 1846 and became a city in 1856. When Willett S. Main constructed his commercial block across the street from the Capitol Building in 1855-56 and his house on N Carroll Street in 1858, he was contributing to the built environment during the earliest phase of Madison's history. This first phase of development was concentrated around the Capitol area as growth generally occurred within a reasonable walking distance to work and the Capitol was the commercial and civic center of the city. The Main/Alano house is five blocks away from the Capitol square and is a physical representation of the geographic placement of housing from this era. The house is an excellent example of housing that illustrates the residential settlement patterns of Madison in the mid-nineteenth century and exemplifies the housing types and building traditions of the middle and upper-middle class in Madison from that era.

Criterion 2: Identified With Historic Personages in Local History

The Mains

511 N Carroll Street was constructed by Willett S. and Jennie Main. The Mains were residents of Madison and were both active and prominent members of the Madison community. Willett was born in 1828 and came to Madison in 1847. In 1855-56 he constructed a commercial block for his mercantile business, the sandstone building that is known historically as the Willett S. Main Building, 101-105 State Street, and is a designated Madison local landmark. The Mains built their house two years later. Willett served in numerous public positions including Town Clerk (1855); Dane County Sheriff (1852-54, 1860, 1865-66, 1869-70); Deputy US Marshall (1871-1880, 1893-95); and State Senator (1888-1893). Jennie was also active in her community as evidenced in her service as President of the Women's Club of Madison.

Willett's contributions to his community were varied. He served in many public positions, ultimately becoming a State Senator. But he also helped shape the built environment of a young and rapidly growing city.

His and Jennie's home on N Carroll is representative of the homes and building traditions of businessmen and professionals in the community. The significance is interconnected: the houses help to tell the story of their inhabitants as physical representations of their social and economic standing in the community. In turn, the inhabitants help to tell the story of the houses exemplifying tastes, building

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traditions, and stylistic preferences. The houses associated with middle class families, such as the Mains, play an important role in representing the historic look of the Madison residential landscape.

Willett died in 1902 and Jennie continued to live in the house. In 1926 Jennie sold the house to Carl R. Fish and his wife Jeanne l'Hommedieu Fish.

Other Inhabitants of 511 N Carroll Street

The Fish Family

Carl R. and Jeanne l'Hommedieu Fish purchased the house in 1926. Carl Fish completed both his masters and PhD degrees at Harvard University and immediately after graduation, began his teaching career at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. Carl was a popular and successful professor of History. When he died suddenly from pneumonia in July of 1932, it was a shock to his family, colleagues and students. Jeanne continued to live in the house through the end of her life. After she died in 1948, her estate sold the house to the Alano Society.

The Alano Society

In 1948 the estate of Jeanne l'Hommedieu Fish sold the house to Harry B. Haley for \$1.00. Harry B. Haley deeded the property to the Alano Society within days. In 1948 John B. Haley was President of the Alano Society. It is presumed Harry and John were related but to date no additional information has been found about them to substantiate this connection. Furthermore, it is currently unknown why Jeanne l'Hommedieu Fish chose to donate her home to the Alano Society. Without discovery of personal communications from Jeanne Fish, Harry B. Haley or John B. Haley, it is difficult to find these answers. Research on an issue like this is complicated by the fact that alcohol addiction, especially in the 1940s, was a very private affair. The donation of the property to the Alano Society would not have been publicized or covered in the newspapers, nor would the participants have wanted publicity surrounding their actions on behalf of the Alano Society.

Other Designations

The Main/Alano House is located within the existing Mansion Hill (Local) Historic District which is also an Historic District of the same name listed in the National Register of Historic Places. As a result of the extensive research conducted in the preparation of the National Register nomination, the Main/Alano House was identified as a contributing resource representing the period of significance and the architectural character of the district.



¹ Research conducted during the 1991 comprehensive survey included an examination of tax records which provided this date of construction.

² The vernacular form of the Gable-Front-&-Wing, or Gabled Ell is distinguished from the similar Upright-and-Wing by the height of the wing. Gable-Front-&-Wing houses have a uniform roof height; the lower height of the side wing defines the Upright-and-Wing form.

³ National Historic Landmark Nomination Form, “ Dr. Robert and Anne Smith House”. National Park Service, 2012, pg17.

⁴ Jones, Rick. “*A Short Early History of the Alano Society and the Clubhouse at 511 N Carroll Street*”. Unpublished history, 2003

⁵ Original Articles of Incorporation, 1943. Located in the organizational archives of the Alano Society.

⁶ Information regarding the history of the Alano Society organization was compiled from in-depth conversations with current Alano members including current members of its Board of Directors. The history and impact of the Alano Society in Madison has not been formally studied. There are no books or other references to turn to in order to learn about the organizational framework, history and influence of Alano. Furthermore, because of the “anonymous” nature of the organization, members names weren’t publicized, Alano’s activities and achievements weren’t heralded in the newspapers and broad attention was not sought. Therefore, primary sources, interviews in particular, were essential to garnering an understanding of the organization and its significance in the community.