

The University Heights Historic District: A Walking Tour



A Madison Heritage Publication

**The University Heights
Historic District:
A Walking Tour**

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1987

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Cover photo: Harry D. and Elizabeth Tiemann house, 135 N. Prospect Avenue.

Historical Development

In March of 1893 Breese J. Stevens, the owner of the land that was to become University Heights, sold his 106-acre property then located just outside the western boundary of Madison to the newly formed University Heights Company for \$106,000, a huge sum for those days. Stevens was a prominent corporate lawyer as well as a former mayor of Madison and had owned this parcel along with considerable other acreage on the west side of Madison since 1856. During the winter of 1862 soldiers from the adjacent Civil War training ground of Camp Randall logged the east side of the property for firewood but otherwise the history of the land during Stevens' ownership was uneventful. The logged portion was used for pasture land until Stevens finally sold the property.

The timing of the sale reflected the convergence of two forces that were then beginning to transform Madison: the growing demand for suburban housing and the growth of a streetcar network to serve the new suburbs. The increasingly overcrowded conditions in the Capital Square area had raised land prices and building density to the point where citizens began looking to areas outside the corporate boundaries. Soon local businessmen began buying up farmlands adjacent to the city and platting them as residential suburbs. At the same time the newly electrified network of streetcar lines was being expanded to serve them. In a day when only the wealthy could afford their own horses or carriages, quick and reliable mass transit was a necessity if people were to get to and from their downtown work places.

In 1889 local builder and real estate promoter William T. Fish had created the suburb of Wingra Park just south of Stevens' land. By 1893 rumors were afloat that the street car lines were being extended out to Camp Randall and ultimately to Wingra Park, a route that took the tracks a block from Stevens' land. This, coupled with Stevens' knowledge as a member of the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents that the university was contemplating the purchase of Camp Randall for campus expansion, probably convinced him that conditions were ripe to develop his own property.

The University Heights Company consisted of an impressive group of wealthy Madisonians including William T. Fish, President, and Breese J. Stevens. They quickly adopted a topographically

sensitive curvilinear plat plan (Madison's first) for their new development designed by local surveyor and engineer McClellan Dodge. Replete with streets named after past university presidents, the plat was put on the market on May 14, 1893 and was an immediate success. By May 28, half the lots had been sold. Sales were only weakened by the news of regional bank failures heralding the financial panic of 1893 which was to have a chilling effect on both lot sales and construction for several years afterwards.

The location of the new suburb adjacent to the rapidly expanding University of Wisconsin campus virtually guaranteed a strong interest on the part of university faculty members. Indeed, tradition has it that the first lot sold was to Prof. Richard T. and Anna Ely who would later build one of the first seven houses in the new suburb (7). However, it was Madison attorney Charles E. Buell and his wife Martha whose home (16) became the first one built on the crown of the Heights. Their large Queen Anne style house was erected in 1894.

In the six year period that followed, six more large late Queen Anne and early colonial revival style houses were built on the east facing slope of the Heights. These houses were built for a socially and intellectually elite group of university faculty members and their families. It was their presence that helped attract similar people to the Heights when the period of retarded growth that was a legacy of the financial panic of 1893 finally ended. In 1903 the plat was officially annexed by the City of Madison. The advent of city services was the signal for the real growth of the Heights. Between 1900 and 1907 twenty-eight structures were built including the first portion of Randall School (22). The years 1908-1914 saw another eighty-six buildings added; 1915-1921, fifty; 1922-1928, one hundred and eighty-six; 1929-1935, seventeen; and 1936-1941, seven.

The single most important group of people associated with the growth and eventual maturity of the Heights was the large group of prominent University of Wisconsin faculty members who chose to make the Heights their home. Some idea of the number of University Heights residences having significant university associations can be gathered from the fact that of the three hundred and forty-

six single family residences within the district, one hundred and twenty were built and first occupied by senior university faculty members and administrators. This was so partly because the period of development of the Heights coincided with a period of tremendous growth for the university. In the years between 1900 and 1920 student enrollment climbed from 1977 to 7004, forty-six new buildings were erected on campus and campus size was increased from 479 to 1017 acres. This growth created a great need for new faculty members. Another factor of importance was the emerging eminence of the university in such fields of study as sociology, economics, political science, engineering, scientific agriculture, and the theoretical and applied sciences. The university's progressive reputation attracted many of the leading pioneers in these fields to Madison. The convenience of University Heights' location coupled with the beauty of its setting and the comfortable suburban life-style it offered caused many of these prominent men and women to build their homes here.

The homes this elite clientele built constitute one of the most important parts of Madison's architectural heritage. It was the Heights' great good fortune to be developed in a period that not only corresponded to the growth of the university, but also to the rise and fall of the seminal Midwestern architectural expression: the prairie style. The Heights is nationally known for its two outstanding buildings by the greatest Prairie School architects — Louis Sullivan (20) and Frank Lloyd Wright (14). It offers the visitor the opportunity to study these buildings - which represent the highest expression of the Prairie School style - within the context of outstanding regional expressions of the style designed by excellent local practitioners. But the architectural significance of the Heights lies as much in its intact preservation of an entire suburb built during this period as in its individual buildings. The Heights not only contains excellent examples of the Prairie School for which it is best known but of the other progressive styles such as the Craftsman and Bungalow. Here it is possible to see fine examples of the eclectic historicism of the Queen Anne style, which the Prairie School supplanted, next to outstanding works of the period revival styles which in turn supplanted the Prairie School. This experience is enhanced by the high degree of integrity exhibited by so many

buildings in the Heights, giving the district of today an appearance remarkably like the one it has always had. In recognition of this, the district was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1982 and was officially designated a City of Madison Historic District in 1985.

The Walking Tour

The tour is designed to originate at the First Congregational Church ① on the corner of Breese Terrace and University Avenue and then to follow a roughly circular path through the Heights before returning you to the point of origin. The numbers within circles used in the text are keyed to the map in the center of this booklet. You will encounter some steep hills on the tour, so comfortable walking shoes are advisable. Please be aware that all buildings on the tour, excepting only the First Congregational Church and Randall School, are private residences and are not open to the public. Your respect for the privacy of the residents is greatly appreciated. For more information on all buildings, contact Katherine Rankin, Preservation Planner, City of Madison, at (608)266-6552.

① *First Congregational Church*

1609 University Avenue
Kilham, Hopkins and Greely, architects
1928-1930



This imposing block long church, home to Madison's oldest congregation, was dedicated on January 20, 1930 and has been a prominent area landmark ever since. The church was expertly designed in the Georgian revival style and belongs to a stylistic subgroup often called "Wrenaissance" because of its heavy borrowings from the London church buildings designed by Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723).

Kilham, Hopkins and Greely was a distinguished Boston firm specializing in school, church and civic work. Its selection as the architect for the church may have been suggested by Dr. Hugh Greely, a University Heights resident and Congregational church member who was also the brother of William R. Greely, a principal of the firm. The supervising architect was the prominent Madison firm of Law, Law and Potter whose principal partners, James R. and Edward J. Law, were both University Heights residents. Their firm had designed the 1925 Georgian revival rectory for the Congregational church, located at 121 Bascom Place in the Heights.

② *Kahlenberg house*

234 Lathrop Street
1903



The earliest houses in the Heights illustrate the transition taking place at the turn of the century from the picturesque Queen Anne style to the more subdued and historically derived period revival styles that followed. The Kahlenberg house, with its essentially square plan, polygonal bay and oriel windows, and wood shingled upper stories, represents the last manifestation of the Queen Anne style. An uncommon feature of this design is the use of Gothic style elements such as the pointed arch windows in the upper floor and the paired front porch columns which have cushion capitals and rest on square plinths with quatrefoil pattern inset panels.

Prof. Louis Kahlenberg (1870-1941) was born in Two Rivers, Wisconsin, did his graduate work in physical chemistry at Madison and in Leipzig, Germany and returned to Madison to teach in 1895. A vigorous teacher and scientist, Kahlenberg published more than 150 research papers and several books during his long career and is recognized today as one of the American pioneers in the field of physical chemistry.

③ *Smith house*

1711 Kendall Avenue
1896



An unknown architect created this imposing early Georgian revival design for Prof. Charles F. Smith (1852-1931), a widower with five children. Smith came to Madison in 1894 as professor of Greek philology (an early term for linguistics) and taught here until his retirement, having served as both departmental chairman and as president of the American Philology Association (1903). He was also the founder of the University Heights Poetry Club, a respected and long-lived local literary society. In 1917 Smith sold the house to his friend Prof. Frederick Austin Ogg (1873-1951) and his wife Emma. Ogg was an internationally famous political scientist and author of seventeen major books, several of which (including the classic *Introduction to American Government*) became standard texts in the field. An inexhaustible worker, Ogg reputedly kept five desks in his home study, one for each phase of his work.

It is revealing to compare the Smith house with the similar but more historically accurate Ely house built a year earlier at 205 N. Prospect Avenue. Both combine the exuberant and oversized decoration of waning Victorian design with the symmetrical elevations and colonial features of the waxing Georgian revival.

④ **Knowlton house**

1717 Kendall Avenue
1895



The Queen Anne style Knowlton house was built in 1895 for \$5,500 and was one of the first dwellings built in the fledgling suburb. In that year Kendall Avenue was a dirt road whose north side was a cornfield that stretched downhill to University Avenue. The view from the house was unobstructed as far as University Bay and water was provided by a windmill "out back." This semi-rural existence was shared by Prof. Amos A. Knowlton with his wife Jennie and their five children. Knowlton taught English literature at the university and it was the prestige surrounding his and his neighbors' university affiliations that slowly legitimized the new development in the eyes of the rest of Madison. Knowlton died in 1906 and his widow remained in the house until 1921 by which time University Heights was one of Madison's best addresses. The second owners were State Supreme Court Justice Marvin B. Rosenberry and his wife Lois, who was the first president of the American Association of University Women.

⑤ **Moores house**

220 N. Prospect Avenue
Frank Riley, architect
1923



This fine Georgian revival style house is the work of Frank Riley, the best of those Madison architects who designed in the period revival styles fashionable between the World Wars. Riley, like most successful architects of that period, moved easily between Georgian, Tudor and French inspired styles as occasion and his clients demanded. What sets his work apart is a knowing use of traditional styles combined with a sense of proportion and finesse that gives his best work a dignity and balance historical accuracy alone seldom achieves.

The Moores house was commissioned by wealthy Madison attorney John M. Olin (13) for his nephew, Howard O. Moores. Riley's design features a symmetrical Georgian revival block having a massive chimney, segmental-arched French windows, a Robert Adam inspired entrance vestibule and a separate screened porch.

⑥ *Hillyer house*

1811 Kendall Avenue
1895



True shingle style houses are rare in Wisconsin and this excellent example, built in 1895 for University of Wisconsin chemistry professor Homer W. Hillyer and his wife, is the most representative illustration of this east coast style in Madison. Houses designed in the shingle style were built between 1880 and 1900 and are often confused with other houses of the same period that also had stained or unpainted wood shingles partially or completely covering the exterior walls. However, on genuine examples, such as the Hillyer house, wood shingles are used to create a taut, skin-like surface that unifies the exterior features of the house. Other styles, most notably the contemporary Queen Anne, more typically used wood shingles to accentuate picturesque aspects of the overall design or to emphasize the separation of one part of the house from another. The inspiration for the shingle style was two-fold: its simplicity was a conscious reaction to the complex and sometimes excessively decorative designs of the Victorian era, and its colonial details were a nostalgic reminder of what busy Victorians saw as the simpler, more peaceful life of their forebears.

⑦ *Ely house*

205 N. Prospect Avenue
Charles Sumner Frost, architect
1896



This textbook example of early Georgian revival style design was built for University of Wisconsin economics professor Richard T. Ely and his wife Anna in 1896. It was designed by the noted Chicago architect Charles Sumner Frost. When Ely died in 1943, the *New York Times* called him "the dean of American economics" and "one of the outstanding teachers of economics in modern times." This reputation was built in part on Ely's willingness to debate the *laissez faire* model that dominated American economic thought in the late nineteenth century. Ely's progressive stance brought him to Madison in 1892 to organize and direct the University's new School of Economics, Political Science and History. His controversial views soon caused him to be charged with teaching subversive and dangerous doctrines. In 1894 a committee of the Board of Regents investigated Ely. The results totally vindicated him and in their final report the Board of Regents expressed the now famous statement regarding academic freedom: "Whatsoever may be the limitations which trammel the freedom of inquiry elsewhere, we believe the great state of Wisconsin should ever encourage that fearless sifting and winnowing by which alone the truth can be found."

⑧ *Pence house*

168 N. Prospect Avenue
Claude and Starck, architects
1909



Faced with maintaining three full floors of living space plus a full attic and basement, more than one owner of this house has had occasion to regret the passing of a time when domestic help was commonplace. Many early residents of the Heights employed live-in domestic help who were often farm girls from the surrounding area. University of Wisconsin professor of railroad engineering William D. Pence and his wife employed two full-time maids in their new house as did their neighbors the Elys ② and the Buells ⑩ among others. Later, this house was occupied by Theta Xi fraternity and in 1933 it was bought by Arlie W. Schorger and his wife. Schorger lived here until his death in 1972 and managed to combine several successful careers including those of inventor and businessman, nationally known University of Wisconsin professor of wildlife ecology, and prize-winning natural history author.

This Tudor style house was designed by the Madison firm of Claude and Starck who were best known for their prairie style designs but whose work often incorporated Tudor revival elements.

⑨ *Jennings house*

1902 Arlington Place
John T. W. Jennings, architect
1903



SHSW WHuM49138

John T. W. Jennings was the supervising architect for the University of Wisconsin when he designed this large brick house for his wife and himself overlooking many of the buildings on the nearby campus he had helped design. Jennings graduated as an architect from New York University in 1877. In 1883 he went to Chicago and from 1885-1893 worked with the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad as its principal architect. From 1893 to 1899 he held the position of supervising architect at the university. In that capacity, he designed many buildings which still survive including Agricultural Hall, the Horticulture building, the Agriculture Engineering building, the Dairy Barn and the Stable Barn.

The house Jennings designed for himself is done in a style sometimes called "Chicago Progressive" for its place of origin and for its progressive mixing of modern and historically derived design elements. Buildings in this style are very uncommon outside the largest Midwestern cities. Palladian inspired dormers and symmetrical facades are common features to which Jennings added a tile roof and "Sullivan-esque" style terra cotta panels above the entrance.

⑩ *Whitson house*

1920 Arlington Place
Claude and Starck, architects
1905



Arlington Place is only a block long but it has the largest concentration of homes designed by the firm of Claude and Starck in Madison. These houses include the Stevens house (1901) 1908 Arlington; the Meyer house (1901) 1937 Arlington; the Pence house (1909) 168 N. Prospect (which completes the block) ⑧; and this fine house built for University of Wisconsin professor of soils Andrew Whitson and his wife in 1905. Studied together, this group is especially significant for the opportunity it affords of seeing the design evolution of the firm as it was developing its version of the prairie style, for which it is best known.

The Whitson house has stucco siding, grouped first floor windows, a wooden beltcourse separating the main floors, and a polygonal oriel window lighting the staircase to the side of the entrance door. It is the earliest of a group of several similar houses in Madison designed by Claude and Starck. Variants utilizing this design include the Genske house at 1004 Sherman Avenue and the Griswold house at 1158 Sherman Avenue.

⑪ *Ross house*

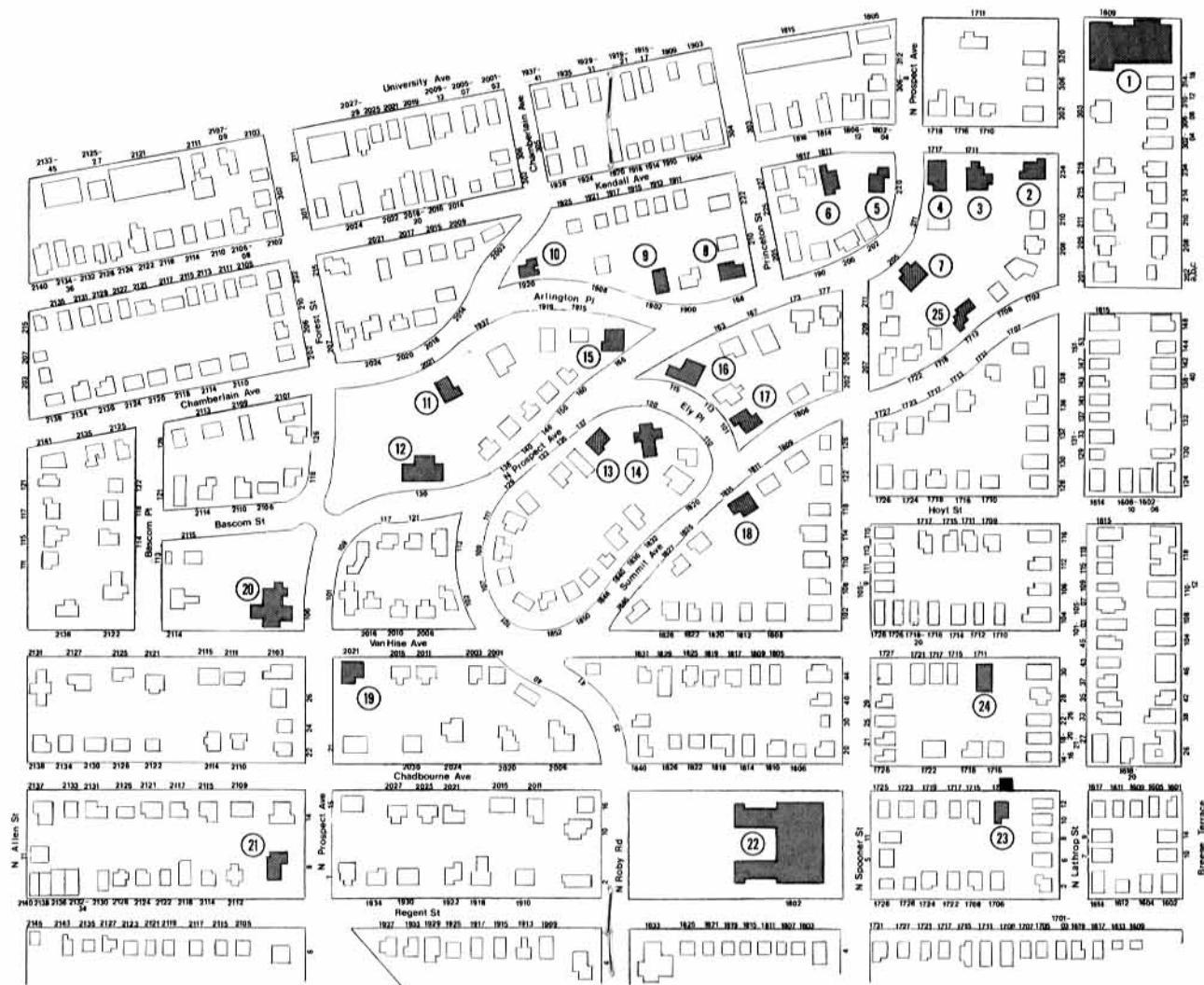
2021 Chamberlain Avenue
Claude and Starck, architects
1906



Many of the houses built in the Heights were constructed for university faculty members attracted to Madison because of its reputation as a center of progressive social activism. Prominent among this group was Prof. Edward A. Ross who was invited here in 1906 by Prof. Richard T. Ely ⑦ to head the newly formed Department of Sociology of the university. Ross was one of the founders of the study of social psychology and was a nationally known and sometimes controversial educator. He served as Departmental Chairman until his retirement in 1937 and was instrumental in making Wisconsin a national leader in the study of sociology.

University Heights Historic District Walking Tour

Map Legend



① Numbers within circles denote order in the text.

⑫ *Olin house*

130 N. Prospect Ave.
Ferry and Clas, architects
1911-1912



The first years of this century found members of Madison's professional, educational and social elite being crowded out of their traditional neighborhoods near the Capitol Square by an onslaught of new university students and faculty seeking housing adjoining the booming campus. John M. Olin and his wife Helen exemplified this trend. Olin was one of Madison's most successful attorneys and was a prominent local philanthropist. He is best known today as the prime mover behind the Madison Park and Pleasure Drive Association, a nationally known civic group that developed Madison's park system.

The Olins moved to University Heights in 1912 leaving behind their large frame Queen Anne style house located where the Wisconsin Union now stands. Olin, who had a poor opinion of local architects, chose the prominent Milwaukee firm of Ferry and Clas to design his new English style brick mansion set in beautifully landscaped grounds looking out towards the distant Lake Mendota. After Olin's death, the house and grounds were deeded to the University for use as the President's home.

⑬ *Elliott house*

137 N. Prospect Avenue
George W. Maher, architect
1910



George W. Maher was one of the first Chicago architects to develop a recognizable, personal style within the idiom now known as the prairie style. Maher began his career in the office of Chicago architect Joseph L. Silsbee in 1887, one of his coworkers there being the young Frank Lloyd Wright. By 1910 Maher had developed a mature style which owed as much to the great English Arts and Crafts architect Charles A. Voysey as it did to his Chicago colleagues.

The house he designed for University of Wisconsin education professor Edward C. Elliott and his wife in 1910 is typical of Maher's residential work of this period. The lines of the hip roof, with its wide overhanging eaves, are echoed by the slanting side walls of the house and the flared entrance door surround and serve to visually wed the house to the ground. The five beltcourses that encircle the second floor clearly emphasize the horizontality of the design in typical prairie style fashion. The house is also distinguished by the fine art glass side lights that flank the entrance door and have a distinctive lilac motif.

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Gilmore house

120 Ely Place

Frank Lloyd Wright, architect

1908



The only building built in Madison by Frank Lloyd Wright during his prairie style years is this internationally famous house designed for Prof. Eugene A. Gilmore and his wife in 1908. The site, located at the highest point in the Heights, offered Wright a magnificent opportunity. He positioned the house just below the crown of the hill and placed the principal living rooms on the second floor, providing the Gilmores with unrivalled panoramic views of Madison and the surrounding Four Lakes region. Copper roofed wings extend outward from the forward facing center pavilion with its triangular balcony. The resulting composition soon earned the building the local nickname of "the Airplane House."

Eugene A. Gilmore came to Madison with his family from Boston in 1902 having left his private law practice to join the University of Wisconsin law faculty. He quickly earned a national reputation as an educator and administrator. In 1922 he was appointed Vice-Governor of the Philippine Islands. In 1930, he returned to the U.S. to become the law school dean, and later President, of Iowa State University.

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Turneaure house

166 N. Prospect Avenue

1905



SHSW WH(M491)39

The challenge of designing houses appropriate to the sloping lots of University Heights led architects to respond with innovative and occasionally striking solutions. One of the most impressive is this eclectic period revival design that an unknown architect created for University of Wisconsin Prof. Frederick E. Turneaure and his wife. The steeply sloping triangular shaped corner lot has magnificent views of the nearby university campus and adjacent Lake Mendota. The house was designed so that all the principal rooms face north to capture this view. In addition, a very large full-width screened veranda covers the whole of the first floor of the north facade, creating an outdoor room from which the view could be enjoyed in the warmer months.

Prof. Turneaure came to Madison in 1892 as a professor of hydraulic and bridge engineering. He published several classic engineering texts in the following years and in 1904 was named Dean of the College of Mechanics and Engineering, a position he held until his retirement in 1937.

①6 **Buell house**

115 Ely Place
Conover and Porter, architects
1894



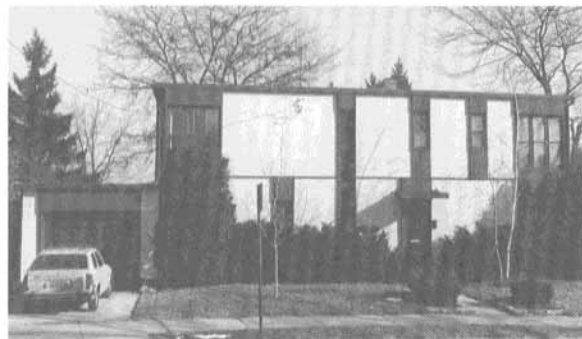
SHSW WH(M491)41

When prominent Madison attorney and real estate developer Charles E. Buell and his wife Martha built this imposing home for their family in 1894, it was the first one built on the crown of the Heights. The house was quickly dubbed "Buell's Folly" by local wags and the earliest pictures of the Heights, taken from Bascom Hall, show why. The house sat in solitary but highly conspicuous grandeur on a naked hillside outside of town in a location which did not seem to bode well for the future. It was Buell, however, who had the last laugh. When he died in 1938, his fine home was completely surrounded by the homes of Madison's elite, many of which rested on lots sold by Buell himself.

Buell's house was designed by the prominent local firm of Conover and Porter and is a fine example of a late Queen Anne style design deeply influenced by shingle style examples. Conover and Porter are best remembered today for their castle-like University of Wisconsin Armory next to the Wisconsin Memorial Union on Langdon Street.

①7 **Morehouse house**

101 Ely Place
Keck and Keck, architects
1936-1937



Even today, fifty years after it was constructed, the superb international style house built for State Public Service Commission economist Edward A. Morehouse and his wife Anna Ely Morehouse surprises the onlooker with the undiminished modernity of its design. The architect was George F. Keck, born in Watertown, Wisconsin in 1895 and trained first as a painter and later as an architect. Keck established his own practice in Chicago in 1920 and was joined by his brother William in 1931. Together they soon earned a lasting reputation for modern design of the highest quality.

Keck was greatly influenced by contemporary European design, especially the work associated with the Bauhaus School in Germany. Many of the design features developed by the Bauhaus became salient features of the international style and were incorporated into Keck's designs. These features include: flat roofs; wall surfaces treated as a thin skin punctured by windows and doors; minimal ornamentation; and the division of the main elevations into an abstract pattern of balanced design elements. All of these features are present in Keck's notable design for the Morehouses.

⑱ *Morris house*

1815 Summit Avenue
Alvan E. Small, architect
1911



Among the most important buildings in the Heights is the superb group of prairie style residences designed by Madison architect Alvan E. Small (1869-1932). Small was born in Sun Prairie and educated in Madison. Afterwards he entered the Madison offices of Conover and Porter, staying there until 1897. Following a period spent in the Chicago offices of Louis Sullivan, Small returned to Madison and formed a partnership with Lew F. Porter which lasted until 1907 when he went on his own. His subsequent Prairie School houses were essentially variations on a theme, consisting of a rectangular, side gabled block having at least partially stuccoed walls, wide overhanging eaves, grouped windows and simple wood trim. What distinguishes these houses are their superb proportions, careful siting, and the skillful way in which Small used a relatively small number of design elements to produce harmonious and individualized designs for his clients.

The house Small designed for prominent Madison businessman Thomas S. Morris and his wife Josephine is the finest of his Prairie School designs in the Heights. Others in this group include houses for the Allens, 2014 Chamberlain (1909); the Haens, 2017 Kendall Avenue (1915); the Johnsons, 1713 Chadbourne Avenue (1916) ⑲, and the Joneses, 1717 Summit Avenue (1912).

⑲ *Sellery house*

2021 Van Hise Avenue
Murphy and Cloyes, architects
1910



Relatively little is known about the firm of Murphy and Cloyes, the Chicago architects who designed this excellent Prairie School house for University of Wisconsin professor of history George C. Sellery and his wife. It is clear, however, that their design owes a considerable debt to the work of George Maher (see also Maher's design for the Elliots, ⑲). Indeed the design of the Sellery house is virtually identical to a house designed by Maher for Henry W. Schultz that was built in the Chicago suburb of Winnetka in 1907. Despite the gaps in the history, the Sellery house is one of the most individualistic Prairie School houses in the Heights and makes for an interesting comparison with houses designed in the same style by Madison architects.

George C. Sellery lived in this house from 1910 until his death, at the age of 90, in 1962. Sellery came to Wisconsin as an instructor in European history fresh out of graduate school in 1901. He rapidly rose to a full professor and in 1919 was named Dean of the College of Letters and Science, a position he held until his retirement in 1942. He also served a brief period as the acting president of the University of Wisconsin in 1937.

②① *Bradley house*

106 N. Prospect Avenue
Louis H. Sullivan, architect
1910



The Bradley house is one of the masterpieces of Prairie School design and is among Madison's most important architectural landmarks. It is one of the last works of the celebrated Chicago architect Louis H. Sullivan and is one of his very rare residential designs. Sullivan is best known today for his pioneering designs for skyscrapers, America's most famous contribution to the list of building types. All his work, however, reflected his belief that American architecture should develop a truly modern style unhampered by the historic precedents of the past.

Sullivan relied heavily on the work of his gifted chief assistant, George Elmslie, for this large T-plan residence. The house was a present from Chicago plumbing magnate Charles Crane to his daughter Josephine and her husband Dr. Harold C. Bradley, a professor of chemistry at the University Hospital. The Bradleys soon found their new house too large for their needs and sold it to the present owners, Sigma Phi Fraternity, in 1914. Following a disastrous fire in 1972, the house was meticulously rebuilt and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1976.

②① *Harris house*

8 N. Prospect Avenue
Frank Riley, architect
1923



Although buildings designed in the Tudor revival style generally shared a vocabulary of architectural elements which had as their source the architecture of the Tudor period, few built in Madison would have looked at ease in sixteenth century England. One exception is this outstanding example designed by Frank Riley for consulting engineer Ross W. Harris and his wife. Riley's sophisticated historicism is clearly evident in this knowledgeable adaptation of lesser Tudor examples. By projecting the large gable roofed pavilion forward from the taller hip roofed main block and then partially siding it with good false half-timber work, Riley was able to suggest a building built over a period of time as was true of many original examples. In addition, Riley made extensive use of authentic Tudor design elements. Such features as the massive chimneys with their elaborate caps and chimney pots, the large bay windows, the multi-paned leaded casement windows used throughout, the twisted copper downspouts, and the elaborate entrance vestibule with its excellent and accurate stonework, all contribute to making this house one of the best, and certainly the most authentic, examples of its style in Madison.

22 *Randall School*

1802 Regent Street
Lew F. Porter and Assoc., architects
1906



University Heights was annexed by the City of Madison in 1903 during a period that saw the annexation of many other nearby suburbs as well. The subsequent increase in the number of school age children led the City to commission a new school. Alvan E. Small of the Porter architecture firm was given the job of designing the building. The completed structure was finished in 1906 and was designed in a modified Tudor revival style. The simplified ornamentation, greatly increased window area and more suburban feeling were due to the influence of Arts and Crafts and Craftsman styles and heralded something new in school design in Madison. The original 1906 building is still visible as the center three bays of the Spooner St. facade of the school, now Madison's oldest in continuous operation. Subsequent additions were added to the north in 1912 and to the south in 1925. Both additions used the same design and materials as the original portion.

The adjacent playing field was donated by Burr W. Jones in 1907 and named "Olive Jones Field" in memory of his deceased daughter. Mr. Jones was a prominent Madison attorney and one of the original partners of the University Heights Co.

23 *Johnson house*

1713 Chadbourne Avenue
Alvan E. Small, architect
1916



The simplicity and geometric emphasis that characterized much Prairie School design is especially evident in this exceptionally well designed house by Madison architect Alvan E. Small, done in 1916 for University of Wisconsin professor of plant pathology Aaron G. Johnson and his wife. The design is notable for its economy. The overall shape of the house is a simple side-gabled two-story rectangle. Small took this elementary form and first emphasized its cubic solidity by using plain stucco walls to define the building volume. He then proceeded to emphasize the horizontal aspects of the design by having the walls rise from a base sided in horizontal clapboards and terminate under the wide overhanging eaves of the roof. He further stressed the horizontal by grouping all windows, highlighting those on the second floor by placing them within two thin parallel wooden beltcourses that circle the house, creating a banded appearance. The resulting house is to this day distinctively modern in appearance and is a testament to the quality of the work of its designer.

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Fett house

1711 Van Hise Avenue
1913



A frequently observed pattern in the occupancy history of many University Heights residences was a tendency among young homeowners who bought or built a house in the Heights to progress to larger houses within the district as their family needs and careers merited. This was an especially common occurrence among university faculty members, many of whom climbed the Heights (both literally as well as metaphorically) as they climbed the tenure ladder. Presumably this pattern evolved partly from practical considerations such as convenience of location relative to the work place and the construction of excellent public schools nearby. However, it is both unusual and instructive that a single suburb could cater to the changing aspirations and needs of young professionals and suggests that the Heights offered a way of life to its occupants that remained attractive even in the face of stiff competition from newer suburbs.

A representative example of this trend was the Fett family. George Fett was the corporate secretary of the Menges Pharmacy Co. and a pharmacist by profession who moved from his earlier house in the Heights at 45 Lathrop Street to this new house in the years following his assumption of the manager's position of a greatly expanded pharmacy at 901 University Avenue. His new house is one of the largest Bungalow style houses in Madison.

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Sloan house

1712 Summit Avenue
Law, Law, and Potter, architects
1927



The predominant architectural firm in Madison in the years between the World Wars was the firm of Law, Law and Potter. The founder, James R. Law (1895-1952), was born in Madison and worked in the offices of Claude and Starck before attending the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture. He started his own firm here in 1914 and was soon joined by his brother Edward and later, in 1925, by their senior draftsman Ellis C. Potter. Their practice was important both for its size and for its ability to adapt the various period revival styles to the widely varying needs of its clients. The thirty-nine identified Law, Law and Potter houses in University Heights constitute the largest group by a single firm and include the houses of both James and Edward Law (101 N. Prospect Ave., 111 N. Allen St.).

The dignified Tudor revival mansion the firm designed for consulting engineer W. F. Sloan in 1927 is one of the largest houses in the Heights. It was briefly rented by Nobel Prize winning author Sinclair Lewis, who taught at the university in 1940. Other excellent homes the firm designed in this style in the Heights include the Findorff house, 1832 Summit Avenue (1927); and the Winterble house, 2131 Van Hise Avenue (1930).

Madison Architects and University Heights

University Heights is best known today for its two outstanding houses designed by Louis Sullivan (20) and Frank Lloyd Wright (14). Sullivan and Wright, however, are only the most famous names on the long list of architects whose identified work constitutes more than one-fourth of all buildings in the Heights. The vast majority of these buildings were designed by leading Madison architects who created some of their best and most characteristic work for their University Heights clientele. The following are expanded lists of the University Heights projects completed by the Madison architects mentioned in the walking tour portion of the booklet. The lists are arranged chronologically to facilitate a better understanding of the stylistic progression of each architects' work.

Collectively the buildings on these lists form the core of Madison's most architecturally significant suburb. Individually they represent the fruit of a complex web of interconnecting professional relationships that link these architects both to each other and to several of the greatest architects of the period. Thus, the first major house built in the Heights, Conover and Porter's Queen Anne style Buell house (16), lies within half-a-block of three superb later designs, each by a man who received his early architectural training in Conover and Porter's Madison office: Alvan E. Small (Morris house (18)); Louis W. Claude (Tiemann house); and Frank Lloyd Wright (Gilmore house (14)). One block further west is the superb Bradley house (20) of Louis Sullivan in whose Chicago office Small, Claude and Wright each continued their training after leaving Conover and Porter. It is the opportunity of seeing the products of such relationships in close proximity that constitutes one of the greatest legacies of the Heights.

Claude and Starck

Meyer house, 1937 Arlington, 1901
Stevens house, 1908 Arlington, 1901
Giese house, 1707 Summit, 1904
Skinner house, 210 Lathrop, 1905
Whitson house, 1920 Arlington, 1905 (10)
Ross house, 2021 Chamberlain, 1906 (11)
Parkinson house, 303 Lathrop, 1906
Pence house, 168 N. Prospect, 1909 (8)
Tiemann house, 135 N. Prospect, 1910

Alvan E. Small

Randall School, 1802 Regent, 1906, with additions in 1912 and 1925 (22)
Allen house, 2014 Chamberlain, 1909
Morris house, 1815 Summit, 1911 (18)
Jones house, 1717 Summit, 1912
Hean house, 2017 Kendall, 1915
Johnson house, 1713 Chadbourne, 1916 (23)
Loft house, 2121 Kendall, 1923
Atwood house, 2016 Van Hise, 1924

Frank Riley

Metz house, 1722 Summit, 1923
Weaver house, 126 N. Spooner, 1923
Moore house, 220 N. Prospect, 1923 (5)
Harris house, 8 N. Prospect, 1923 (21)
Perry house, 1900 Arlington, 1923
Gillette house, 1850 Summit, 1924
Haley house, 2114 Bascom, 1924
Second Haley house, 2118 Chamberlain, 1925
Moon house, 1917 Kendall, 1925
Koen house, 2130 Chamberlain, 1925

Law, Law and Potter

Roe house, 2015 Van Hise, 1915
J. Law house, 2011 Van Hise, 1915 (later remodelled for Prof. E. A. Birge)
Montgomery house, 121 N. Prospect, 1916
Larson house, 211 Lathrop, 1916
Smith house, 101 N. Roby, 1916
Frey house, 2101 Chamberlain, 1921
Law house, 111 N. Allen, 1921
Tenney house, 2110 Chadbourne, 1922
Bull house, 118 Bascom, 1923
Sweet house, 1806 Summit, 1923
Ryan house, 2006 Van Hise, 1924
Huegel house, 1840 Summit, 1924
Delta Sigma Pi Fraternity, 132 Breese, 1924
McMullen house, 2110 Bascom, 1924
Congregational Church parish house, 121 Bascom, 1925
Second J. Law house, 101 N. Prospect, 1925
Mowry house, 140 N. Prospect, 1925
Terwilliger house, 1723 Chadbourne, 1926
Marling house, 1845 Summit, 1926
Second Huegel house, 1836 Summit, 1927
Findorff house, 1832 Summit, 1927
Sloan house, 1712 Summit, 1927 (25)
Winterble house, 2131 Van Hise, 1930
Wingert house, 117 N. Prospect, 1935