

WILLIAMSON STREET

MADISON, WISCONSIN



c.1902. photo: Mickey Niebuhr.



For more information:
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An Historical Survey and Walking Tour Guide



c.1912. 1442 Williamson Street. Theodore Pierce in his new toy automobile with his mother and the Kronenberg children. photo: Theodore Pierce.

Dedicated in sincere appreciation to all of those whose various contributions helped to make this publication a reality.

Cover: c.1936-1940. The 600 block of Williamson Street from S. Blair Street. photo: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Harold Hone, photographer.



c.1978. photo: Gary Tipler.

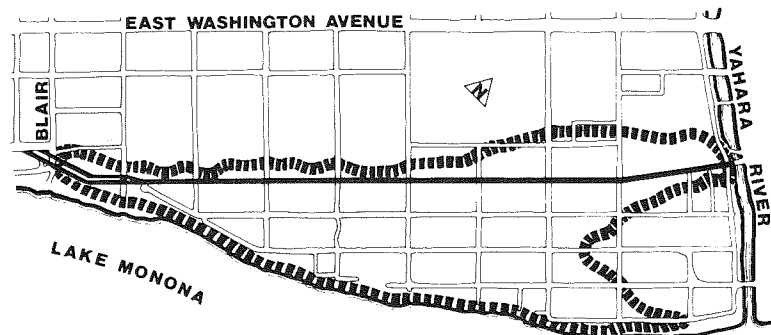
Williamson Street today is lined with a heterogeneous assortment of industrial, commercial, institutional, and residential buildings punctuated with parking lots, manicured lawns, and weedy overgrown vacant lots. They remind us of the flurry of activities staged on the street in times past. Quiet are the rails, factories, and warehouses. Gone are the brewery, blacksmith's shanties, boat liveries, ice houses, depots, and many of the shops. No longer will the soot from scores of rumbling trains each day darken the laundry hung out to dry, nor will the smell of manure on the streets and the bustle of farm wagons irritate the resident. Memories dim and the years of wear and neglect have gradually transformed the reminders of the past.

The current denizens of this street are a hardy mixture of students, young families, blue collar workers, and elderly people many of whom were born and raised in the area. Some of them live in the family home or work in the family business and have interesting stories of their own to tell about the history of the area.

The purpose of this guide is to acquaint the reader with Williamson Street, to foster an understanding of the many facets of its inherent character, and to stimulate interest in the planning for its improvement. The guide consists of a history of the development of the street and the vicinity with descriptions of specific buildings and sites which illustrate the various phases of its historic development and growth.

PRE-SETTLEMENT TIMES

Williamson Street was named on the original Doty Plat of Madison in 1836 for Hugh Williamson, a signer of the United States Constitution. It roughly bordered the edge of the marsh at the interior of the isthmus and the glacial moraine referred to as the Third Lake Ridge from the approximate area of Blount Street to Few Street. The Third Lake, Lake Monona, was numbered by the federal survey team as they worked their way northward to the Four Lakes region in 1834.



Williamson Street and the approximated boundaries of the Third Lake Ridge.

Williamson Street's function as a major isthmus traffic route parallels the patterns of Indian movement which predated settlement of the present City of Madison by white men. Previous to settlement, the meanderings of the Catfish Creek (Yahara River) prevented easy access through the isthmus except along the ridge. Crossing the marshy areas at either end of the ridge, the Indian trail was part of the trade route between the Mississippi River and a Winnebago camp at the site of the present City of Milwaukee on Lake Michigan.¹

Early accounts reveal the development of trails leading to the proposed capitol site which was chosen during the first Wisconsin Territorial legislative session in Belmont in October, 1836. About the first of May, 1837, or two weeks after the first pioneer family had arrived, August A. Bird, an acting commissioner for constructing the capitol, arrived via Janesville "accompanied by hired hands (fifteen men altogether) whose work had consisted in blazing and preparing a road by which other workmen and supplies would follow."² Several weeks later, on the tenth of June, Bird returned with a party of thirty-six workmen. "There was no road at that time from Milwaukee to the capital, and the party was compelled to make one for their teams and wagons as they came along."³ The party must have followed, for the most part, the Indian trail from the vicinity of Lake Mills west to the capitol site.⁴

THE FARWELL BOOM AND EARLY GROWTH

With the admission of the state into the Union in 1848, the ratification of the location of the capital in Madison by the State Constitutional Convention, and the selection of Madison as the site of the university, investors were encouraged to invest their money locally.

One such man, Leonard J. Farwell, of Milwaukee, was attracted to Madison in 1847 by the natural beauty of the area and by its potential as a business center. He made extensive purchases of real estate, including the unimproved water power between Lakes Mendota and Monona. During the following winter he began the improvement of it which included the cutting of a straight canal, thereby eliminating the circuitous channel of the Yahara and rendering a water power then reputed to be "one of the best in the State."⁵ In 1850, he opened Williamson Street and the Fort Winnebago and Milwaukee Road, now Winnebago Street, across the Yahara. Farwell's Replat of a Part of the Village of Madison in 1853 officially realigned Williamson Street between Dickinson Street and the Yahara, which was probably a more direct route to the crossing at the Yahara than the previously assigned right-of-way of Doty's Plat.

Farwell participated in attracting immigrants to Madison in no small way. He produced publications proclaiming the virtues of locating in the new capital city, personally greeted newcomers urging them to make Madison their home and work place, and presumably aided entrepreneurs in the financing of their lands and buildings.

During the boom period of the mid 1850's, construction on the near east side and in the city as a whole proceeded at a frantic pace. The immigrant carpenters, cabinet makers, stone cutters and masons, tanners, and blacksmiths supplied the skills and labor in the construction of several public buildings, commercial blocks, and hundreds of residences ranging from modest rental dwellings to palatial stone mansions. Farwell's own stone octagonal home was constructed near the foot of Brearly Street on Lake Monona in 1855. The modest homes and workshops of several of these craftsmen were and still are found on or near Williamson and lower Jenifer Streets.

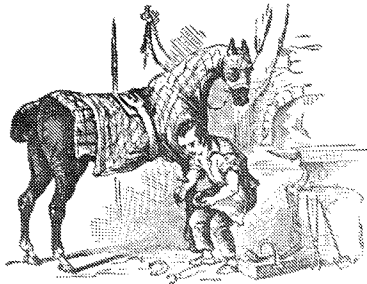
As Madison developed as a trade center, railroads were built to the Village linking it to the cities in the east. The Milwaukee & Mississippi Railroad, an ancestor of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, & Pacific Railroad, made its appearance in May of 1854. The railroad provided an inexpensive means for shipping coal and other raw materials. The coal fueled steam powered equipment for local production plants and prompted the construction of the Madison Gas Light & Coke Company plant on East Main Street near Livingston Street in 1855. It was in August, 1854 that James Dawson's woolen mill was advertised on the lake side of Williamson at the Yahara.

In April of 1856, the Village of Madison became a city. In the latter half of the following year, the financial panic that crippled the nation cata-

pulted Farwell from the throne of his financial empire, the impact of which resulted in a slump in development, particularly of the near east side where his investments were many.

The 1860's saw a gradual growth of the community on Williamson Street and the Third Lake Ridge. Wagon traffic on the street must have increased greatly during the war period because some saw fit to move further away from the dust, smell, and noise. For example, Henry Foster, a produce merchant, built a frame house on Jenifer Street in 1863-4 behind his fine 1853-4 red brick home at 939 Williamson which he later sold.

As farming of the surrounding countryside intensified, more businesses catered to the farmers' needs for supplies, farm wagons, and blacksmithing. Wagonmakers on Williamson Street enjoyed a growing market until the opening of the Wisconsin Wagon Company on Blair Street in 1883. The competition must have been great enough to cause George Vogel, who opened a wagon works at 917 Williamson in the same year to shift to construction a short time later, and for other wagonmakers to go out of business.



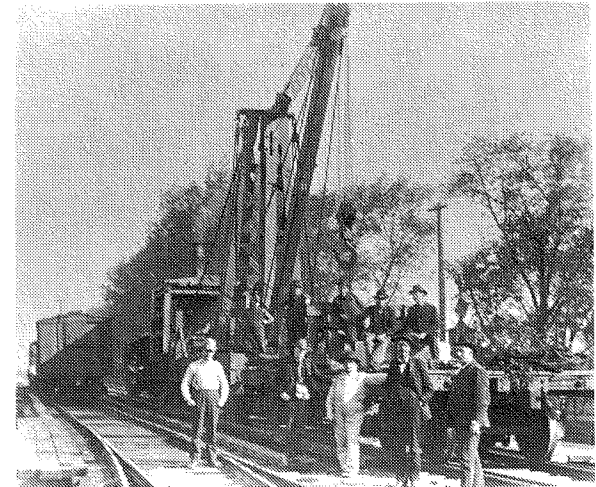
courtesy:
State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

INDUSTRIAL EXPANSION AND TECHNOLOGICAL GROWTH

Growth of rail service, technological developments in industrial manufacturing and agricultural production, and changes in marketing techniques had a complex cumulative impact on the development of Madison illustrated by the great changes in the vicinity of Williamson Street during the period from the early 1880's until World War I. The expansion of rail service to the east side of Madison followed the completion of the Chicago & North Western Road in August of 1864 and of the Madison, Sun Prairie, & Watertown Road, a branch of the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad in 1869.⁶

The eventual construction of nine rails fanning out from Madison greatly expedited the growth of the city as a regional trade center. The depots of "East Madison" were a stimulus to the development of the railyards and adjacent land for industrial and large scale marketing operations involving the sale and manufacture of wagons, agricultural

implements and supplies, the production of beer, the processing and storage of leaf tobacco, and the production of electric dynamos and motors.

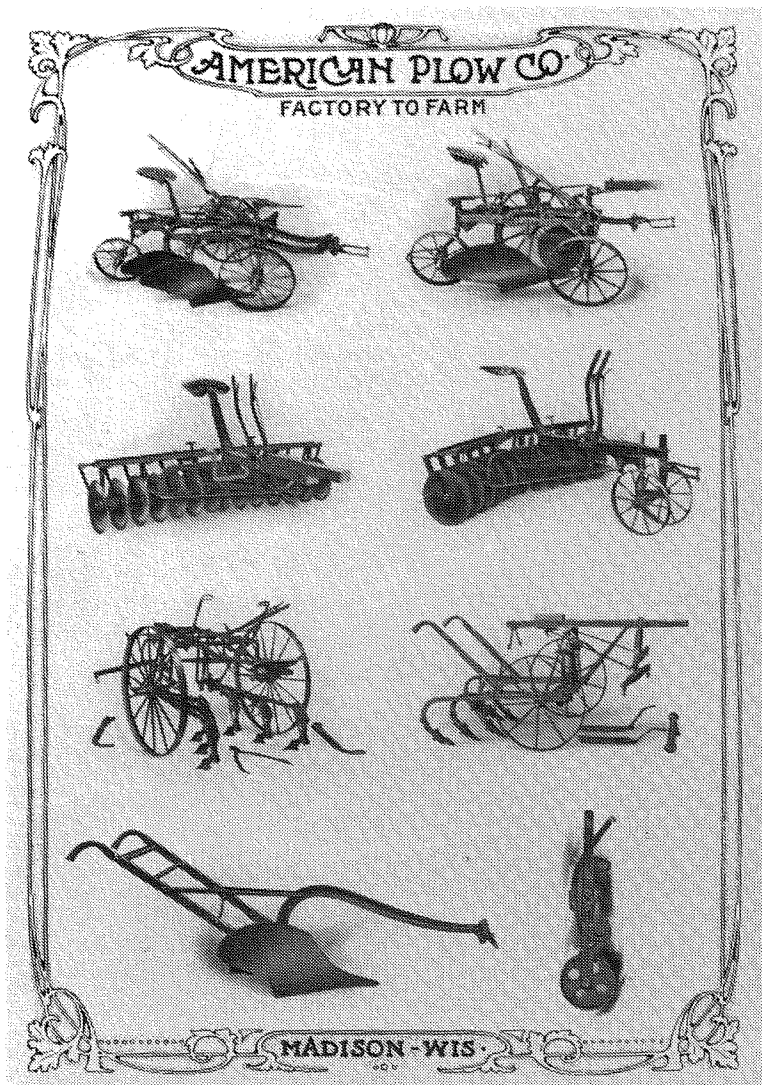


c.1900? The bridge crew of the Chicago & North Western Railroad. photo: Robert Jaquish.

IMPLEMENT ROW

Beginning as a single small enterprise in the late 1880's, the manufacture and sale of farm implements boomed, as was evidenced in 1902 by the existence of no less than thirty implement sales offices, showrooms, and warehouses.⁷ They were found on the 500 through the 700 blocks of Williamson, also referred to as "Stoney Island Avenue"⁸ or more commonly "machinery row," and on Wilson, Railroad, and nearby streets. Located in the same area were the related businesses of various agricultural suppliers. The area was dubbed "Implement Row." The marketing region covered by the Madison agencies extended throughout Wisconsin and neighboring states.

The local boom in implement sales and manufacture lasted until World War I when changes in marketing and in farming technology and scale became apparent. Vast tracts in the western plains states became more attractive for wheat production, while in Wisconsin dairy farming became more profitable. Dealers gradually left Implement Row or diversified. The Wisconsin Wagon Company, for example, was among the first three automobile dealers listed in city directories in 1907.

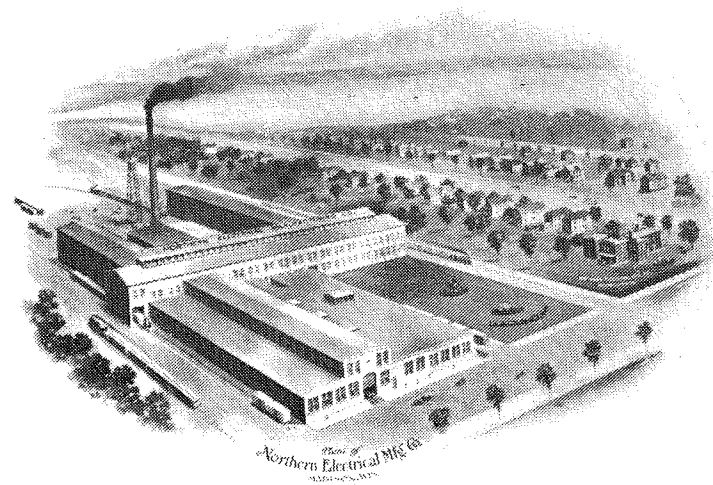


c.1909 Illustration from a manufacturer's catalog.
courtesy: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

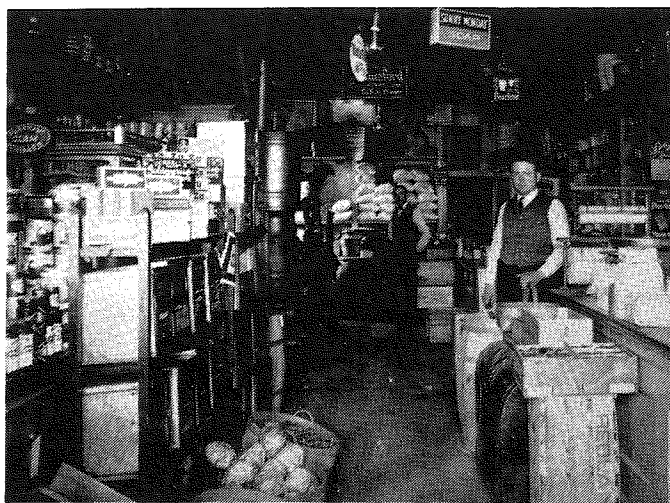
MAJOR INDUSTRIES AND URBANIZATION

Major employers aside from the railroads who were instrumental in attracting a laboring population to the near east side of Madison included: the Fuller & Johnson Company, a leading manufacturer of farm implements in the United States,⁹ which commenced operations of the plant at East Washington Avenue and Dickinson Street in 1882; the Gisholt Machine Company, an outgrowth of Fuller & Johnson, organized in 1885 for the purpose of manufacturing machine tools; and the Northern Electric Company, whose production of electric dynamos and motors was begun in a plant on South Dickinson Street at East Wilson Street in 1895.

Subsequently, on the Third Lake Ridge there was a boom in housing for the waves of immigrants, laborers, salesmen, managers, and owners of local businesses. During this period there were remarkable changes in the scale of functions and the appearance of Williamson Street with the erection of numerous dwellings, commercial blocks, and warehouses, many of which replaced earlier buildings, primarily modest residences. The greatest number of the buildings in the area standing today were erected during the approximate period from 1890 to 1920 by many fledgling construction and contracting firms.¹⁰ Some, such as the Vogel Brothers Building Company, are still serving the community.¹¹ They were provided with building materials by a host of local supply shops and plants fed by the rails.¹²



c.1902. Birdseye view of the Northern Electric Manufacturing Company, Williamson Street, and the Yahara River. courtesy: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.



c.1905. The Breitenbach grocery. photo: Otto Breitenbach, Jr.

TRADE AND COMMERCIAL SERVICES

Concurrent with the expansion of industry and regional marketing interests on and near Williamson Street, the growth of surrounding farming communities, and the housing boom on the Third Lake Ridge and outlying lands, Williamson Street developed to some extent as a commercial-service strip. The street, for some time being the major thoroughfare to points north, east and southeast, was the likely location for the suppliers of goods and services for the daily wants and needs of the neighborhood residents and for the visiting farmers. Baked goods, groceries, fresh meat, sausage, produce, ice, dry goods, house plants, boots and shoes, cigars, livestock feed, seed, hardware, coal and oil were offered in the many shops, as well as the services of the blacksmith, butcher, barber, cobbler, saloonkeeper, innkeeper, and the boat liveryman. Many buildings were erected expressly for commercial enterprises whose proprietors had achieved some degree of success after having been, for several years, apprenticed in their lines of work, involved in partnerships, or building up businesses in rented quarters. These buildings often housed the proprietors' families in addition to their businesses. Many of these businesses were a part of the Williamson Street scene for several generations, and this is true of a few of them today. Although no examples of the retail commercial-residential buildings remain on the street from the earliest years of its settlement, the buildings at 852 and at 851-53 Williamson housed, respectively, the residence of J.C. Wicker and his stove and coal business (1867), and Charles Biederstadt's grocery and residence (1868, 1874). Examples of the commercial service-residential buildings include Mathias Schmidt's

barbershop and residence at 735 Williamson and the blacksmith shop and residence at 811 Williamson.

The transient-housing businesses — the hotels and boarding houses — played an important role in providing shelter for the salesman, farmer, legislator, soldier, laborer, student, bachelor, and newly arrived immigrant. In the early years of Madison's history, housing was generally in short supply, and most rooms of a typically modest dwelling in the Williamson Street area often sufficed as sleeping quarters for the owner's family, occasional boarders, and guests. Among the first of the public houses in the locality to accommodate the transient were: the Hyer's Hotel, opened in 1854, and known as the Jaquish Hotel from 1857 to 1874, at 854 Jenifer Street, which catered to the laborer, farmer, soldier, and student; Caspar Hauk's Hotel at 134 South Blair Street from the 1850's until 1910-11, which likely housed the laborer and the railroad worker; and Eliphalet Fuller's Hotel on the north side of Williamson at Water Street (now Thornton Avenue) from about 1855 until 1867. The construction of the Madison East Depot of the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad in 1869 and the Chicago & North Western Railroad depot in the 1870's stimulated the construction of several hotels on East Wilson Street, beginning with August Ramthun's East Madison House on the Wilson Hotel site in 1873.¹³ Elsewhere on Williamson, the Yahara Hotel opened in 1902, at the site formerly occupied by Fuller's Hotel, and was a boarding house for machinists employed nearby. In 1902, the Atlas Hotel opened at 221-23 South Baldwin Street, a boarding house for



c.1889. The Madison East depot of the Chicago, Milwaukee, & St. Paul Railroad. courtesy: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

employees of the Northern Electric Company. In 1909, the completion of the Cardinal Hotel, at 424 East Wilson Street, marked the end of hotel construction in the East Madison depot vicinity. Larger hotels were later built closer to the financial and governmental institutions and businesses of the Capitol Square.



c.1905. An outing in Fred Stephen's boat on the Yahara River.
photo: Mickey Niebuhr.

POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT

The residents of Williamson Street, the Third Lake Ridge, and Madison enjoyed the gratifying release from long working days and six-day work weeks in the social, cultural, and recreational entertainment provided by horse racing, circuses and parades, boating, gymnastics, opera, vaudeville, "moving pictures" and "photo plays", music making, dancing, and, of course, conversation and the imbibing of locally brewed concoctions.

During the 1850's, horseracing "on the mile stretch between the Catfish and the foot of King Street" was a popular sport as evidenced by the account of a Wednesday afternoon in February, 1855; "...the Legislature adjourned and nearly the whole town turning out to be spectators of the sport. Every horse in town, every sleigh, cutter, pung and jumper, besides sundry wheeled vehicles, 'of high and low degree,' were out filled with witnesses of the sight."¹⁴

The circuses have always been colorful attractions when they have made their annual appearances. For many years before the construction

of the old Marquette School on the block on which the Eagle's Club now stands, they set up, not far from the rails which transported them daily from one community to the next. Later they set up on Soelch's marsh near the present Marquette School grounds where troops of wide-eyed children would watch the "razorbacks"¹⁵ bathe the elephants on the shore of Lake Monona. Years later when the encampment was near First Street and East Washington Avenue, the circuses continued to parade to the Capitol Square via Williamson Street until the improvement of the Avenue.

Aside from their refreshing breezes and aesthetic attractions, the lakes offered recreation in the forms of fishing, sailing, and ice boating. By the 1890's, boathouses and shanties lined the shore of Lake Monona between Blair and Hancock Streets. Liveries and launches were the scenes of bustling activity on Sunday afternoons as families and friends escaped to woodsy picnic grounds, camps, resorts, and cottages across the lake. The popularity of boating was indicated by the proliferation of boat liveries and the establishment of several boat building businesses in the Williamson-Blair-Hancock area by the mid-to-late 1880's active until the mid 1930's.¹⁶

The cultural ethnicity of the locality was reflected in its organizations and establishments. The long established choral groups, the German Männerchor and the Norwegian Grieg Club remain, as well as the Turners or Turnverein, a German fitness and gymnastics club. Local saloons, the majority of which were originally established by individuals of German heritage, were a popular meeting place for kinsmen, friends, and fellow workers. Outstanding among them was the Tivoli Gardens, later known as the German Garden, at 1252 Williamson, which had in addition to the saloon an outdoor "Biergarten" and a dance hall, from the 1890's until the prohibition.



c.1902. Max Gaertner's Tivoli Gardens saloon at 1254 Williamson Street. photo: Mickey Niebuhr.

MISSIONS AND BENEVOLENT ORGANIZATIONS

Beginning in the 1870's, older established congregations and organizations in Madison and other cities, fathoming the social and physical needs of the booming population of the Third Lake Ridge, organized and founded new congregations and home missions. The Pilgrim Chapel, organized in 1885, was among the first of the missions on the ridge. Later organized as the Pilgrim Congregational Church, it enlarged in 1914 the chapel structure now housing the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center. A mission sent by the Salem Free Church of Chicago led to the founding in 1906 of the Bethany Evangelical Free Church to serve Norwegian residents.

Other missions and charitable organizations have been and still are found in the vicinity. The chapel and facilities of the Volunteers of America were located at 412 South Baldwin and nearby buildings from about 1904 until the 1950's. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul which has had a salvage and resale outlet in the old Volunteers' building at 407-09 South Baldwin since 1943-43, remodeled 412 South Baldwin in 1972 to provide for the functions of a child development center and in 1977 remodeled 221 South Baldwin to provide housing for men. Similarly, the Wisconsin Rescue Mission, at 1345 Williamson, in offering charitable services for the underprivileged and for transients, has continued a tradition which has been characteristic of the Williamson Street area for over seventy years.

URBAN SERVICES AND IMPROVEMENTS

Contemporary with the urbanization of the Third Lake Ridge and the movement for social reform were the concerted efforts on the part of the local citizenry to upgrade the basic city services and to improve the urban environment. Heated debates, inaction, and experimental failures characterized the issue of providing a public hospital which involved buildings and sites on the Third Lake Ridge, while the needs for schools, public transportation, and fire protection were gradually fulfilled with excellent if not exceptional facilities and systems.

One of the first major steps taken toward the provision of a public transportation system was on November 15, 1884, when the first mule drawn street cars of the Madison City Street Railway Company made their trial runs on tracks laid from Brearly Street on Jenifer to Park Street on University Avenue. The rapid urbanization of the Third Lake Ridge and tracts in the vicinity of Fair Oaks was marked by the further extension of street car lines and the improvement of service.

The growing concern for the condition of the urban environment during that period, eventually led to the provision of more public open space and to the improvement of public access to waterways. The Madison Parks and Pleasure Drives Association was founded in 1896 and among its many achievements was the purchase and improvement of the parkway paralleling the Yahara River from Tenney Park to Lake Monona.



c.1902. 1217 Williamson. Firemen display the new combination engine and hose wagon in front of the recently completed Fire Station No. 3. The building was faced with molded tin resembling masonry.

THE STREET AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD SINCE WORLD WAR I

The major waves of development previous to World War I determined much of the physical structure and character of the street and the neighborhood, but by no means did the street's metamorphosis terminate at that point. Factors which have had immeasurable impact on the viability of the neighborhood as an attractive residential area and of Williamson Street as the neighborhood commercial-service center involve primarily the increase in the use of the private automobile, the on-going urbanization of outlying districts, the continued growth of state institutions, and a reduction in the activity of the nearby industries.

As the importance of the automobile increased, so did the volume of traffic which plied Williamson Street in varying capacities. The street has served three functions: the route which was used by the rural population to the north, east, and southeast of Madison; the route to the rapidly growing subdivisions and the Village of Fair Oaks; and State Trunk Highway 30 from about 1936 until about 1946.

During the period from the 1900's through the 1950's, business on Williamson Street related to the sale, supply, and maintenance of automobiles increased. The outmoded businesses of implement, buggy, and

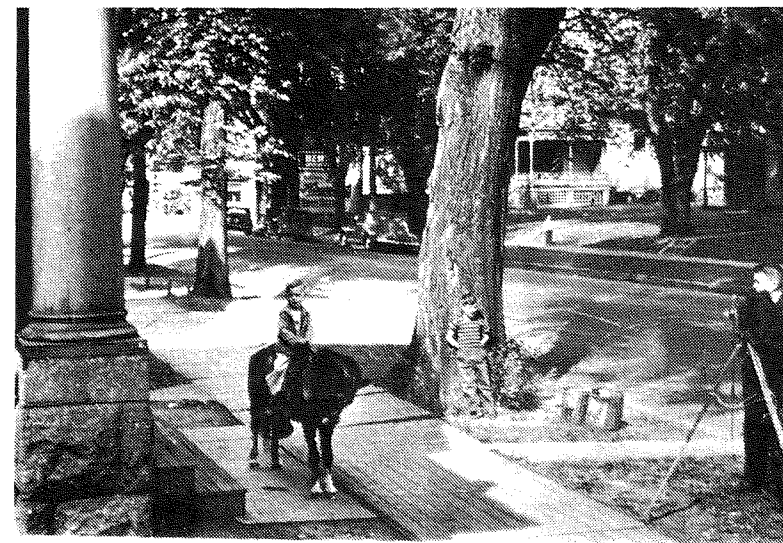
wagon manufacture and repair often had adapted to the growing demands of the automobile trades.¹⁷ Many of those businesses have ceased operations over the years and the vacancies have contributed to the blighted appearance of the street.

The years following World War II saw an unprecedented boom in suburban expansion and an increase in the numbers of automobiles pouring through the neighborhood streets. To ease the flow of traffic the Blair-Wilson-Williamson intersection was redesigned. Williamson Street was widened from Baldwin to Livingston in 1953-54 eliminating the street trees, many of them lindens.¹⁸ Williamson and Wilson were greatly widened between Livingston to the foot of King Street in 1954-55 with the reconstruction of the interchange. The completion of the first phase of the John Nolen (North Shore) Drive was in 1962. Demolition for these improvements claimed: the buildings on the north side of the 300 block of East Wilson; the old Franklin Street depot of the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul & Pacific Railroad; the implement houses on the 500 block of Williamson; much of the 600 and part of the 700 blocks north of Williamson. The diversion of through traffic from Spaight and Rutledge Streets to Williamson in 1975 has further increased the flow by a significant amount.

The waning of the commercial strength of Williamson Street has been due, in part, to the decline in trade with the decreasing numbers of employees of the nearby factories, many of which have closed or relocated in the past few years due to changes in production technology and scale, shipping modes, and corporate merger.

In recent years, the quiet inactivity of the rails, the vacancies of manufacturing and warehouse buildings, and the air being freed of coal smoke, all have had the effect of softening the memories of a noisy, smoky industrial zone which Williamson Street bordered and was a part of. New life is being breathed into the solid residential areas of the Third Lake Ridge, and Williamson Street's vitality is emerging as a key to the neighborhood's revival efforts and the redevelopment of the railroad yard.

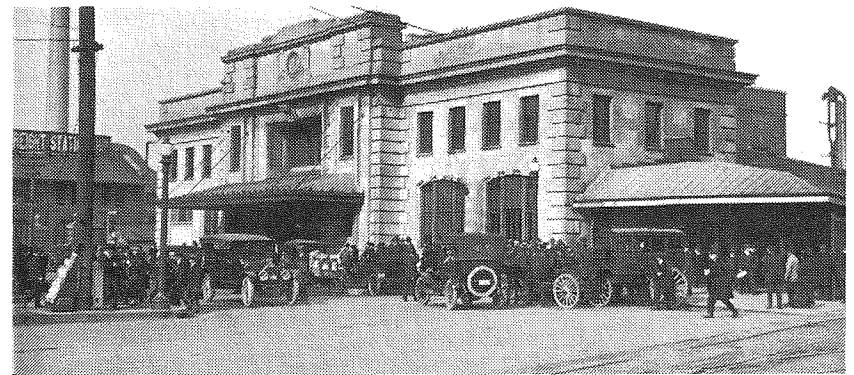
Although Williamson Street has evolved to its present state with a uniquely distinct character, its continuing development and metamorphosis mirrors that of similar streets in other American cities across the nation. Perhaps some aspects of its character are in need of revision, but certainly others which reflect its uniqueness should be conserved.



c.1946. A door-to-door photographer with his pony on the 1000 block of Williamson Street. photo: Marion Jaquish.

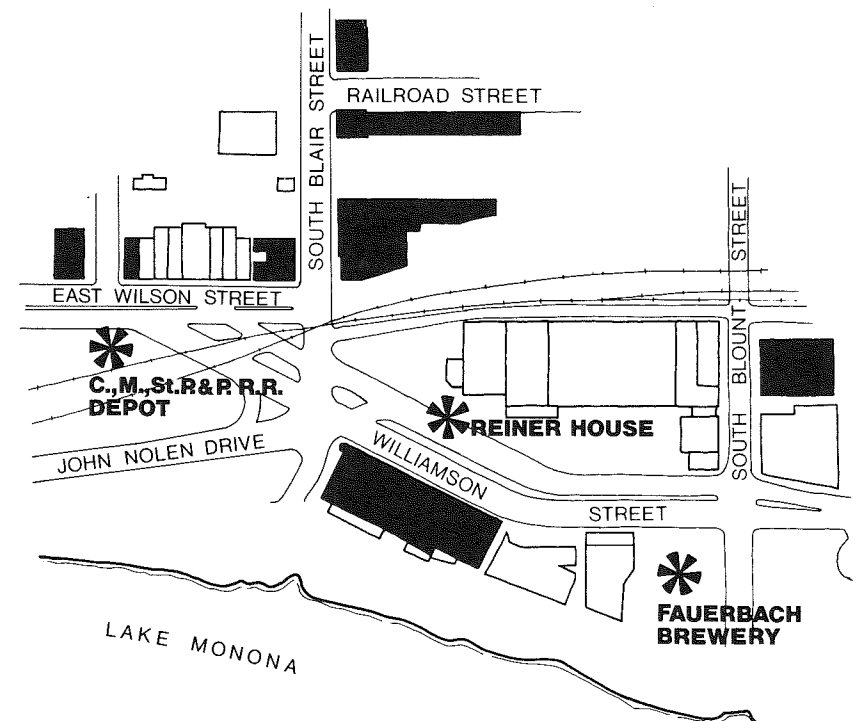
A GUIDE

TO BUILDINGS AND SITES



c.1920? The Chicago & North Western Railroad depot on S. Blair Street. photo: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

THE "EAST MADISON" RAILROAD DEPOTS — The first east side depot was built by the Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad at the foot of Franklin Street in 1869. It was later replaced by a larger facility in the late 1880's which stood until 1952. The old Chicago & North Western Railroad depot stood east of Blair Street on Wilson, erected in the 1870s. It was enlarged in 1885 incorporating the Monona Hotel and replaced by the





June 20?, 1925. East Wilson Street, crowds gathered to view the procession carrying the body of Robert M. LaFollette, Sr. from the C.&N.W.R.R. depot to the Capitol rotunda. photo: Mrs. Frank Trostle.

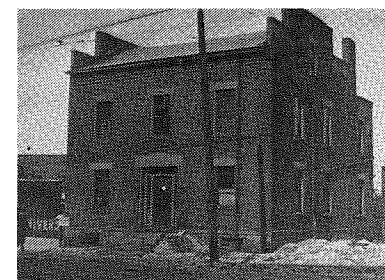
depot building of a Neo-Classical style of architecture in 1910, which became known throughout the Midwest as the "handsomest station in the North Western system."¹⁹ The North Western closed its station and sold the building to the Madison Gas & Electric Company in 1965.

EAST WILSON STREET — East Wilson Street carried the travelers between the depots and the Capitol Square-King Street business district. Since the early days of the east side railroad depots, hotels were found there to accommodate transients. Standing at 502 East Wilson is the old Lake City House built in 1883. The building currently known as the Wilson Hotel was built in two sections: the southwest half was built in 1886, an expansion of J.B. Drives Hotel on the corner — originally August Ramthun's East Madison House built in 1873; the present corner building replaced the earlier structure in 1897 and both became known as the Elver House. The first three stories of the Cardinal Hotel, designed by Madison architect Ferdinand Kronenberg, were built in 1908. The fourth and fifth floors were added the following year. No trace remains of the four hotels listed in city directories on the 600 block of East Wilson Street.

111-17 SOUTH BLAIR, THE AUTOMATIC TEMPERATURE BUILDING — The Wisconsin Wagon Company was founded in 1883, and in that year completed a large frame building at the site. The existing brick building replaced it in 1903 or 1904. The company's production and sales competed with that of the smaller local wagonmakers and may have been instrumental in setting the tone for development of the Implement Row area.

MACHINERY ROW — The buildings at 601-27 Williamson Street and frame buildings adjacent to them which stood at 513-25 were known as "machinery row," not to be confused with Implement Row, the name for the area. Lew Porter, former partner of Allen D. Conover, was listed as the architect. They were built in segments over a period of several years beginning in 1898 replacing older buildings as they became available and providing space for farm implement agencies and a variety of other businesses.

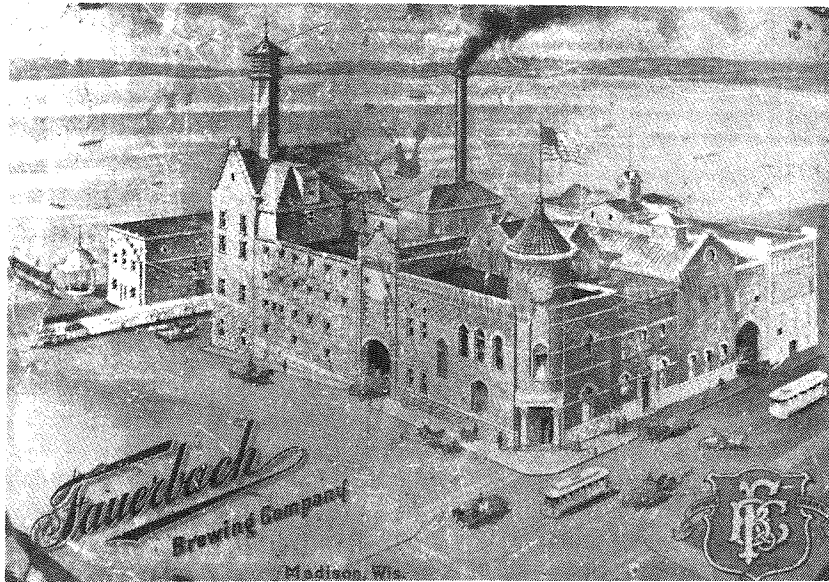
MADISON GAS & ELECTRIC — At the current site of the generating plant on East Main Street, the Madison Gas Light and Coke Company plant was built and provided the Village of Madison with its first gaslight in July of 1855. In 1889, the Madison Electric Company was formed with its generating plant located at 631 Williamson Street. In 1896, the Madison Gas & Electric Company began business after having purchased and combined the separate operations of the gas and electric plants. In 1902, the company constructed on Blount Street the first gas engine electric generating station in the country, the most economical at the time, with both operations at one site.



c.1920-25. The John Reiner house. photo: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

THE JOHN REINER HOME — John (Johann) Jacob Reiner, the second German to settle in Madison and the first to marry here, arrived in 1847. He was a blacksmith and a wagonmaker by trade. He built a small house at the edge of the Village of Madison (on the 600 block of East Wilson Street) with logs from the "sugar bush," now known as Fuller's Woods. It was in that house that the first Christmas tree in Madison was erected in 1848. That year he opened the first known blacksmith shop on Williamson Street adjacent to his house. His larger red brick home of a stepped gable design common in the New England states was built in 1850 and housed many newly arrived immigrants temporarily.

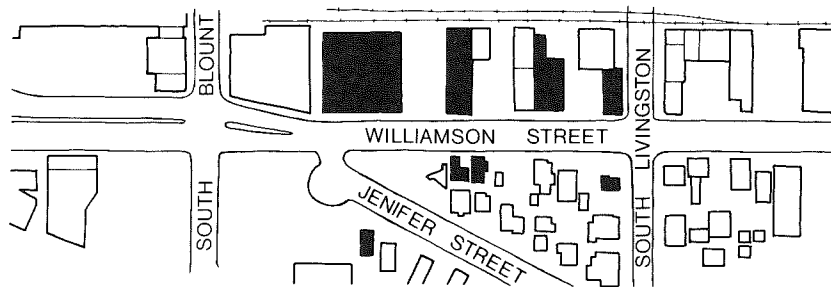
THE FAUERBACH BREWERY SITE, 653 WILLIAMSON — On this site Madison's first brewery was built by Adam Sprecher in 1848. In 1868, Peter Fauerbach bought it and greatly increased its production. In 1890, his sons incorporated and over the next few years erected the bottling



c.1904? Birdseye view of the Fauerbach Brewery. courtesy: Julius Vogel.

and ice houses, malt house, cooling department, and engine house which stood until December, 1967. The brewery had remained in the family until that time.

THE McCORMICK BUILDING, 301 SOUTH BLOUNT — Once known as the "King of Implement Row," the old McCormick Harvesting Machine Company erected a building at the southeast intersection of Blount Street and the tracks in the spring of 1898. The branch office which had opened in Madison in 1895 served all of southwestern Wisconsin. The building was expanded in 1900 toward Williamson Street, almost doubling its size. It was occupied by International Harvester from about 1904 until the early 1950s. Their Motor Truck Division was housed in the adjacent building on Williamson Street until 1955.

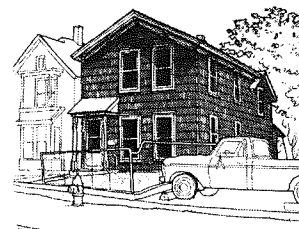


714 WILLIAMSON — In 1912, the Capital Paper Company, paper wholesalers, completed the building at 714 Williamson Street, designed by Alvan Small, architect. The building was vacated by paper wholesalers in 1976.

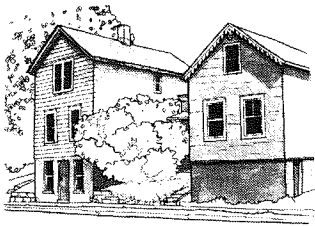
722 WILLIAMSON — Forced by fire from older quarters in Clinton, Wisconsin, Leavitt L. Olds moved his seed company to 315-17 East Wilson Street in 1910 to be nearer to the University's agricultural experimental farm and to take advantage of the railroad facilities. It took three years to build the new building at 722 Williamson Street, also designed by Alvan Small, which was one of the first reinforced concrete buildings in the city. Olds first occupied it in 1913 and remained until 1972, the last of the agricultural businesses to leave "Implement Row."



c.1914. 714 and 722 Williamson Street.
photo: Raymond Lang, L.L. Olds Seed Company.



719 JENIFER, THE JULIUS VOGEL HOME — The rear portion of the house was originally a two-room cottage purchased by Julius Vogel, a turner from Saxony, in 1854. In 1867, he built the front portion of the house to accommodate a family of ten children. The Norwegian violinist Ole Bull was a frequent visitor to Vogel's workshop at the rear of the house and is said to have kept his violin there on occasion. The house has remained in the family to this day.



731 and 735 Williamson Street

c.1951. 718 Jenifer Street. The Frederick Krehl house. courtesy: Madison Public Library.

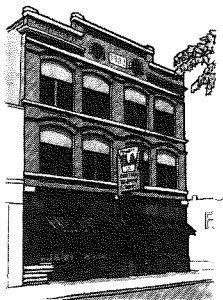


731 WILLIAMSON — The residence and very likely the workshop of cabinetmaker August Wildhagen was housed in this humble building which was constructed in 1858. In 1869, it became the home of Frederick Krehl, a merchant, whose later home occupied the narrow corner between Jenifer and Williamson Streets. A rather imposing two-story residence with a mansard roof built in 1887, it was later demolished to make way for the service station now vacant.



732 WILLIAMSON — This building was probably built as an investment property in 1898 by John Sprecher, a retired merchant. It served as an implement sales house for Keegan Farm Implements as late as 1955, the last implement business in the vicinity.

735 WILLIAMSON — This building was built in 1889 for Mathias Schmidt, a barber whose shop occupied the street level above which was his home.

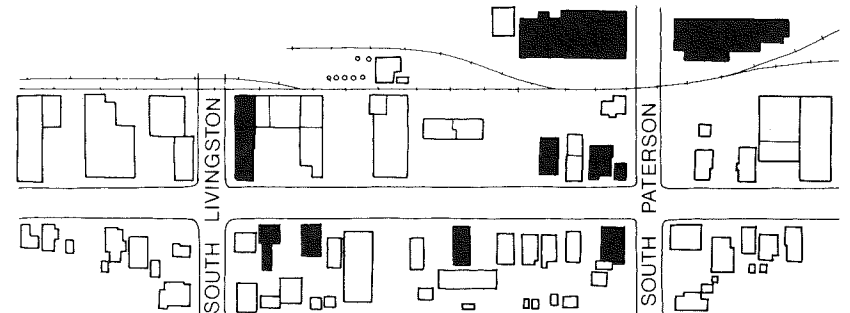


744 WILLIAMSON — The Madison Candy Company was founded in 1899 and was first located in the "machinery row." This building, designed by John Nader, was constructed in 1903 and occupied the following year. Sugar was brought in by the carload, thus explaining its location.



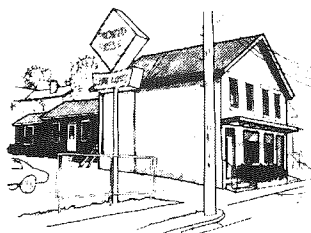
751-53 WILLIAMSON — Built in 1938 as the Taylor Super Service Station, this is now the oldest of the service stations on the street. One of three similar stations in the city built and operated by Jack Taylor, it reflects the International Style of architecture popular at that time. The brick building behind it and to the right originally was two stories high and may have served as the stable for John G. Ott's grocery business which was at one time located at this corner. Ott's 1873 red brick home stands nearby on Jenifer Street at Livingston.

754 WILLIAMSON — In 1906, the Lake City Bottling Works commenced operation at this location after having been in a plant at Paterson and Spaight Streets for many years. It remained in operation as a bottling company until the early 1950s. A Howel's Root Beer sign still adorns an outside wall.



802 WILLIAMSON — The building was built by the Joseph Schlitz Brewing Company in 1904 for their Madison agency. Charles Niebuhr was the proprietor of the saloon in the same building, which no doubt specialized in Schlitz beer.





805 Williamson Street

805 WILLIAMSON — The two-story brick veneer building was probably erected in 1872 by John Schlundt, a wagon maker, whose business was located on the premises. The brick building served as a boarding house as well as his residence. The small frame wing at the rear of the building, built in 1862, was the residence of Henry Winkler, whose grocery business was at the corner of Blount and Williamson Streets.

811 WILLIAMSON — The brick-faced rubblestone building was probably built in 1871 for Heitkamp and Schmidt, wagonmakers. It served as a blacksmith shop for a number of years. William Heitkamp lived in a brick house next door to the east and John Schmidt boarded at Schlundt's house at 805.

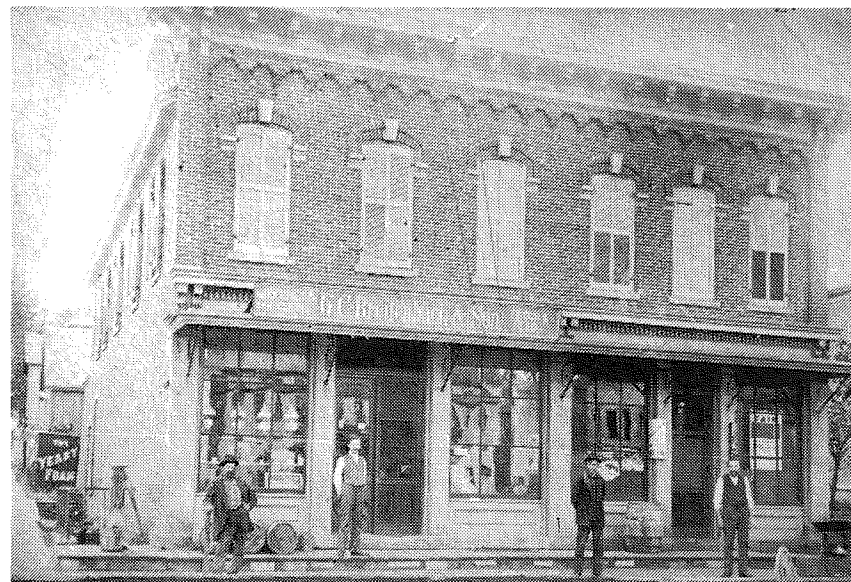
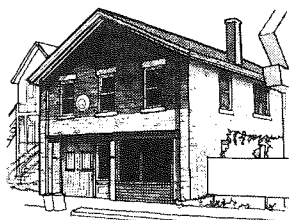
831 WILLIAMSON — This brick veneer store and residence was built for Henry Breitenbach in 1885. He advertised a stock of "groceries and provisions, flour and feed, crockery and glassware."



844 WILLIAMSON — This handsome frame house was constructed by Andreas Schubert sometime during 1888-1890 at about the same time that the saloon next door was built for him. He lived above the saloon which was built in front of a house constructed perhaps as early as 1853.

851-53 WILLIAMSON, THE BIEDERSTADT-BREITENBACH GROCERY & SALOON — Charles Biederstadt operated a grocery at this corner as early as 1868. A fire in 1873, which destroyed part of the Jaquish Hotel

811 Williamson Street



c.1895. The Breitenbach grocery and saloon. photo: Otto Breitenbach, Jr.

(now a residence at 854 Jenifer), forced him to rebuild the following year the double shop front brick building at 851-853. The George C. Breitenbach family bought the business in 1889, operated the grocery, and lived above the store for three generations.

852 WILLIAMSON, THE WISCONSIN INN

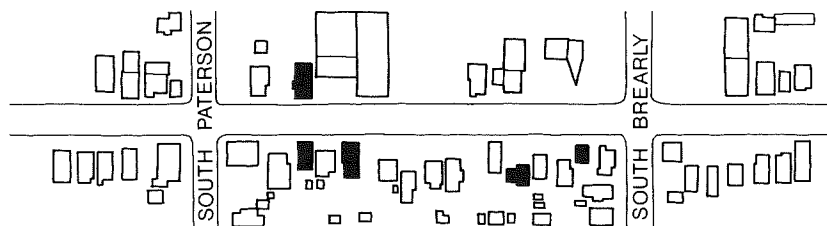
— This large frame building was erected in 1867 for J.C. Wicker who advertised a stock of coal and stoves. The mansardic third floor was probably added when the building was subsequently expanded to the rear and converted to a boarding house, probably in 1890-1891, by a later proprietor, Christian A. Horstmeyer, who called it the "East Madison House."



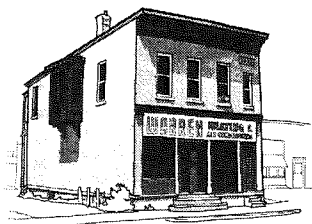
854 WILLIAMSON — Also constructed about 1890-1892 for Christian Horstmeyer, this building has served continually as a barber shop since John Gausman occupied it in 1896. It is of unusual construction in that it has no foundation other than a row of stones on which the building frame rests.

THE PATERSON STREET TOBACCO WAREHOUSES — On the southwest side of Paterson Street at the tracks stands the Sutter Brothers Warehouse built in 1899. It contained tobacco sorting and sweat rooms on the first floor and leaf tobacco warehouse space on the upper floors. It was provided with steam heat and electric lights, at the time the most modern of conveniences. Later it was owned by the American Tobacco Company.

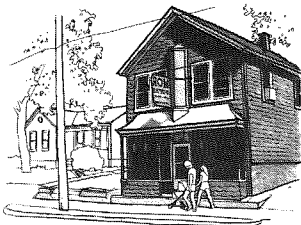
The building across the street was also built in 1899 as the F.S. Baines Leaf Tobacco Warehouse.



911 WILLIAMSON — This shop and residence was built about 1896 for Frank G. Dickert whose family home was next door at 907. He operated a shoe and boot store at 911 for over twenty years.

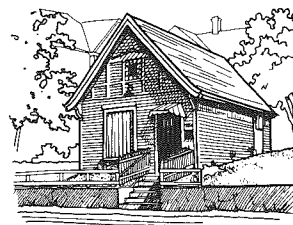


912 WILLIAMSON — Originally built in 1887 as a grocery and feed store and residence for Henry Wessel.

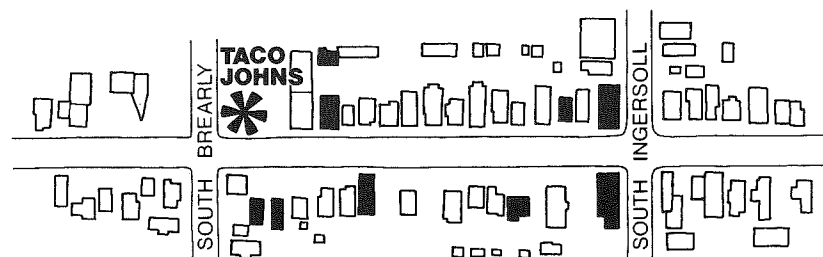


917 WILLIAMSON — Built in 1882 for Charles D. Vogel as a wagon shop. Vogel later took up construction and contracting. This was the parent business of the Vogel Brothers Building Company. Next door to Vogel's shop, in the vacant lot stood Edward Streidt's blacksmith shop. Streidt's home, built in 1886-1887, stands at 923 Williamson.

939 WILLIAMSON — This red brick house was built for Henry L. Foster in 1853-1854. He was a produce and commission merchant whose business was located at the corner of East Wilson and West Canal (South Hancock) Streets.

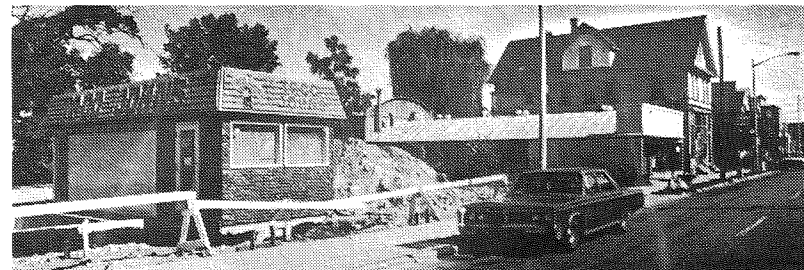


951 WILLIAMSON — This building was built about 1897 for Joseph Lacher, a barber who lived next door at 953. Fred Haspel, a developer, probably built the somewhat similar houses at 945, 947, and 953 in 1892-1893.

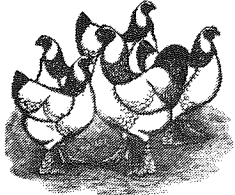


THE TACO JOHN'S SITE — Since the 1850s, this has been the site of mixed commercial and residential buildings until the development of a service station in 1934-1935. In 1976, a small prefabricated building

c.1976. 1002 Williamson Street, Taco John's. photo: Capital Times, Bruce Fritz, photographer.



CAPITAL CITY POULTRY YARDS



JOS. E. STEINLE, Proprietor,
1002 WILLIAMSON STREET,
BROOKER AND DEALER IN

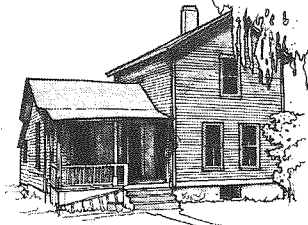
HIGH BRED FANGY POULTRY

Courtesy: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

was erected for a carry-out taco franchise. Strong public public sentiment which opposed the business on the basis that it and similar drive-in establishments were potentially damaging to the character of the neighborhood resulted in its eventual removal.

1005 and 1007 WILLIAMSON — These twin houses were built by Joseph A. Steinle in 1872 and were assessed at \$300 each. Steinle lived in 1005. He worked at and later owned Caspar Mayer's saloon at the corner of State and West Mifflin Streets (the sandstone building). Steinle later built his home at 1002 Jenifer.

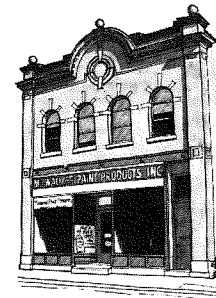
1014 and 1014½ WILLIAMSON — The large brick building was built in 1904 at a cost of \$6,000 for Otto Kautz, a cobbler, to be his shop and residence. Kautz's mother's home which previously stood here was moved to the rear of the lot. One of the oldest buildings yet standing on Williamson Street, it was built in 1852-1853 for Michael Welch.



1019 WILLIAMSON — Willis W. Blossom, who was a jobber in calendars and leather goods and a pastor of the Pentecostal mission, built this building from 1914 to 1916. The mission was housed in the building until 1933. On the site of the parking lot next door a log house stood until the 1930s, the first dwelling on the block, which had been built by Thomas McLeary, presumably in 1853.

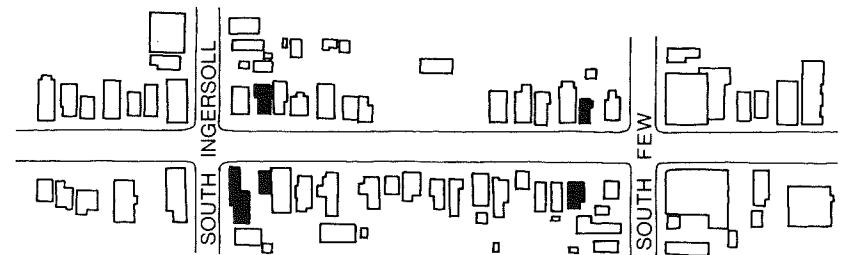
1043 WILLIAMSON — Part of this house was built in 1855 on the second lot to be subdivided on Williamson Street. Most lots were divided and built upon by the 1890s. This house was for a long time the home of the Sprecher family who operated a funeral parlor in the house next door at 1045.

1046 WILLIAMSON — This house was built on the lot next door in 1855 by F. Blank and moved to the present loction by John Doeblin, a tinner, in 1872. It once had a kitchen and dining room in the basement level as did many early houses in Madison.



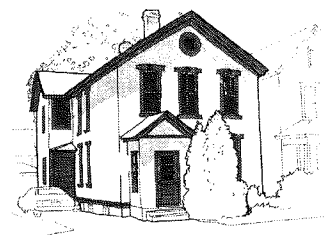
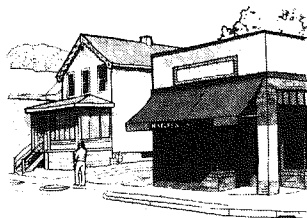
1053 WILLIAMSON — Albert and Elmer Mills moved their grocery business to the building constructed for them in 1904 from smaller quarters at 1004 Williamson Street. They resided on the second floor. Next door on the vacant lot on Williamson stood a small frame house in which Orson Welles is said to have lived briefly during the 1910's.

1054 WILLIAMSON — This building was opened in 1902 as a drug store by Clement L. Bobb, and it was for a long time known as the Atwood Pharmacy.



1101 WILLIAMSON — This building was opened by 1927 as an Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company store and in 1931 as a Universal Grocery store. By 1933, the company changed its name to Kroger. The building at 1109 was also built for an A&P in the 1940's.

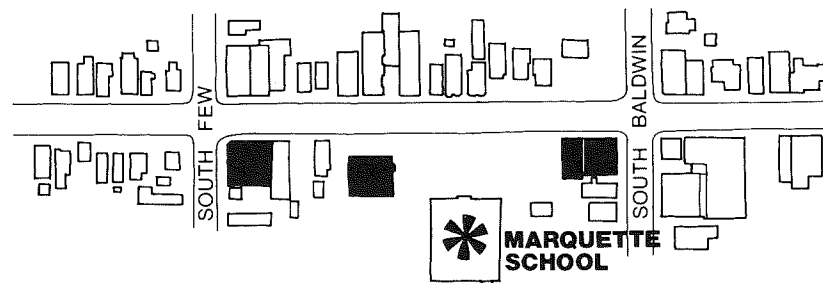
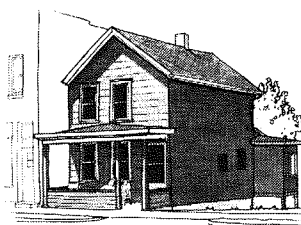
1105 WILLIAMSON — This house, with its unusual bargeboard trim on the gable end, was built by Thomas Dineen, a lumber dealer, in 1860 and was assessed at \$500.



1106 WILLIAMSON, THE JOSEPH WEIDHOLZ HOME — Built of red brick in 1883 by Henry G. Maisch, a mason, it later became the home of Joseph Weidholz who immigrated from Berlin. In 1903, Weidholz started upholstery work in its basement, a business which has been carried on by his sons in a shop on Ingersoll. In the early years of the business a delivery cart was hand-drawn as far away as Highland Avenue and Regent to pick up and deliver work.

1149 WILLIAMSON — This frame duplex was probably moved to its present site and converted to two apartments in 1883-1884. It is a good example of an early type of rental housing available to employees of local businesses and industries.

1150 WILLIAMSON — This small frame house was built in 1855, the second building on the block, for James O'Conner. In 1862-1863, it became the residence for George Lamp of Lamp & Siegel, wagon-makers, whose business was located at the corner of Paterson and Williamson.



c.1941-47. 1201-05 Williamson Street.
photo: Henry Gempeler, Sr.

1201-05 WILLIAMSON — Built in 1911, this building housed first the Jacobson's and later the Bettlinger's grocery stores. This block was virtually undeveloped until the 1890s. As late as 1891, seventeen of the eighteen lots were held for speculation by E.W. Keyes.

THE ORTON THEATER — A building at 1207 Williamson was opened in 1913 as the Orton Theater, a nickelodeon, with H.H. Hile as proprietor. It was closed in the early 1930s.



photo: Robert Jaquish.



c.1925. 1237 Williamson Street, Marquette School. photo: Anita Digney.

THE EAGLES CLUB (OLD SIXTH WARD/MARQUETTE SCHOOL SITE) — The first of the Sixth Ward public schools was opened at 1237 Williamson in September of 1894. The Sixth Ward School, as it was so named, was typically laid out as were the schools of that time with four rooms up and four rooms down around a central hall. It was probably the work of the prominent Madison architects, Conover (Allen D.) and Porter (Lew F.). Porter's wife, Carolyn, was on the citizen's committee which selected the name "Marquette" in 1904. The school was abandoned in 1940 when the new school opened on South Thornton Avenue. The present Eagles Club was built in 1953.



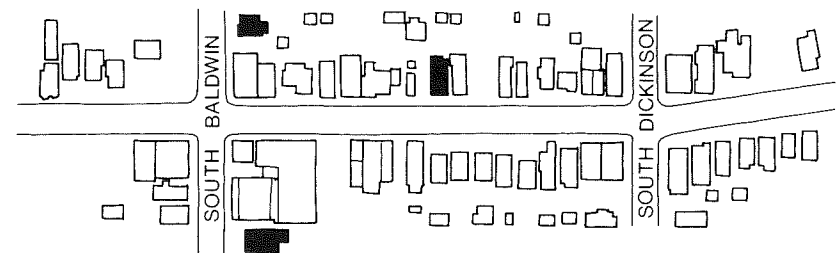
1249 WILLIAMSON, MADISON FREE LIBRARY, WILLIAMSON STREET BRANCH — Due to the popularity of the Madison Free Library's store station opened on Winnebago Street in 1906, a request was made to the Carnegie Foundation for a gift. The Foundation responded in 1911 and preparations were made for the construction of the first branch library in

Madison. The Madison architectural firm of Claude (Louis W.) and Starck (Edward F.) was employed to design the building. The result of their work is a building of the Jacobethan Revival Style, as was the old main library on North Carroll, characterized by its forms, fenestration, and materials. The library opened on March 25, 1913, and was a focal meeting place in the neighborhood for "clubs, recreation groups and some of the classes of the Continuation School, the forerunner of the Vocational School."²⁰ It quickly became a popular after school retreat, due in part to the excellent view afforded of Butler's Pool Hall across the street, which was off limits to the younger children. The Williamson Street branch was closed in 1958 with the opening of the Hawthorne Branch.

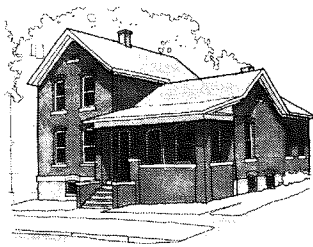


c.1929? 1248 Williamson Street, the Butler Pool Hall. photo: Mrs. Joseph Butler.

1255 WILLIAMSON, SHAFER PHARMACY — Built in 1915 for Edward Williams whose pharmacy was previously on the Capitol Square at 1 West Main.



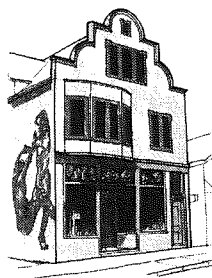
315 SOUTH BALDWIN — Built in 1879 for Henry Meier, this house originally occupied the corner and faced Williamson, the first building on the block to do so. It was moved to its present location in 1916 for the construction of the building on the corner which was first occupied by a Great Atlantic and Pacific Tea Company store.



c.1889. courtesy: State Historical Society of Wisconsin.



413-15 SOUTH BALDWIN, THE GILL & BOYD HOSPITAL — One of the first of several attempts to found a hospital for the general public in Madison was that by Doctors William W. Gill and James N. Boyd. They erected and opened the "Madison Hospital" in 1889. Boyd died only a short time later, the enterprise lapsed, and the building was converted to apartments. The Hospital Association, organized in 1898 for the purpose of establishing a public hospital, in 1900 resolved to purchase the Gill property but could not raise the funds.



1354 WILLIAMSON — The unique mural-decorated building was built in 1906 as a saloon and residence for Max Gaertner, who operated it under the name of "Kaiser Hall." Next door to the northeast was the Fred Marks grocery in a building moved to the site in 1882. Marks built a new grocery on the corner, now occupied by Ace Hardware, in 1900.



1410 WILLIAMSON — Built in 1855 by Willard Knight, a mason, the originally pretentious mansion was added on to more than once and probably served at one time as a boarding house. In about 1902, it was expanded to accommodate the offices of the Northern Electric Company whose former plant can be seen behind the house and beyond the railroad tracks.



1456 WILLIAMSON, THE FERDINAND KRONENBERG HOME — Kronenberg was the architect who designed St. James Church, the first unit of St. Mary's Hospital, and the first technical college building on North Carroll Street. He built his home in 1910.

1526 WILLIAMSON, MICKEY'S TAVERN — Opened in 1902 by Henry Niebuhr, it is still owned and operated by the Niebuhr family. Eliphalet Fuller's hotel occupied the same site from about 1854 to 1866. Across the street stood James Dawson's woolen mill from 1854 until the close of the Civil War.

301 SOUTH RIVERSIDE DRIVE — The Bethany Evangelical Free Church was founded in 1906 by Pastors Loe and Hanson who were sent from the Salem Free Church of Chicago to hold tent meetings in the summer. Meetings were also held in a building now a part of Ace Hardware before the small chapel was built at 420 South Baldwin. A church was built on Riverside Drive in 1912-1914 which was demolished in 1977 to make way for the present structure.

FOOTNOTES

1. Wisconsin Archaeologist, 5:111 (Sept., 1926) Wisconsin Archaeological Atlas, 1929-1944, unpub., Charles E. Brown papers, mss. S.H.S.
2. Park, Wm. J., & Co., *Madison, Dane Co., and Surrounding Towns*, 1877, p. 34.
3. Durrie, Daniel S., *A History of Madison, the Capital of Wisconsin*, Atwood & Culver, Madison, 1874, p. 62.
4. Ibid., p. 63.
5. Draper, Lyman, *Madison, The Capital of Wisconsin*, 1857, p. 13.
6. *Wisconsin State Journal*, Sept. 7, 1864.
7. *Madison, Past and Present*, p. 26, Wisconsin State Journal, Madison, 1903.
8. *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 20, 1897.
9. *Madison, Past and Present*, p. 156.
10. Roughly 60% of the current building stock in the area bounded by Lake Monona, Blount Street, the rail yard, and Dickinson Street dates to the period of the 1890's through the 1910's according to material collected by the Landmarks Research Committee in July, 1976.
11. Vogel Brothers Building Co. grew out of the wagon manufacturing business at 917 Williamson St.; Robert J. Nickels, Inc., electrical contractors, at 303 South Ingersoll, was established in 1905.
12. Local suppliers of construction materials have included: the Frederickson operation at the corner of Main and Blount (later 702-12 E. Main), builders, contractors, and manufacturers of sashes, doors, blinds, and lumber, from 1890 to 1943-45, whose business had grown from a saw mill operation in 1855; Warnes and Swenson, a planing mill at 523 E. Main, from 1886-87 through 1897; and Parkinson Cedar Co., at 625 E. Main, from 1897, later became Marling lumber.
13. Durrie lists August Ramthun's East Madison House on East Wilson (no. 524) at Blair in 1873. City directories list the Germania House (510 E. Wilson), with J. Simon, proprietor, was open by 1876-76. By 1880-81, the Lake City House, Geo. Schlotthauer, proprietor, at 502 E. Wilson and the Wisconsin House, John Schott, proprietor, at 601 E. Wilson were listed in city directories. The 1886-87 directory adds the Northwestern Hotel at 613 E. Wilson and the Monona, built in 1885, at Chicago & North Western depot, 624 E. Wilson. In 1888-89, Heick's Hotel appears at 631 E. Wilson and in 1890 Weckesser's Hotel at 607 E. Wilson. In 1894-95, the Lake View House, 402 E. Wilson, joined the ranks, but about ten years later moved, perhaps due to fire.
14. *Argus & Democrat*, March 1, 1855.
15. Circus employees. From an interview with Mickey Niebuhr, July, 1977.
16. Early boating related establishments: Boat Liveries—Stephen Baas, at the foot of S. Hancock, in 1886; W.R. Wilmot, at the foot of S. Blair also in 1886; A.M. Schott, by 1888-89, at 412 S. Blair; J. Williams, at the foot of S. Hancock in 1888-89; Nordstrom, also

at the foot of S. Hancock, in 1890-91. The first builder listed in city directories in that area was Blackmer, at 413 S. Blair, in 1892-93. The last boat builder listed in the area was Wm. C. Schmidt, in 1923. The last boat liveries listed were Schott's and Wirka's (formerly Baas), both in 1935.

17. In 1907, one of the first three automobile dealers listed in city directories was the Wisconsin Wagon Co.; in 1909, the International Harvester Co. was another among seven dealers listed; and in 1911, the J.I. Case Threshing Machine Co. at 513-19 Williamson, was listed among thirteen such dealers. A short time later Case opened a wholesale automobile office on the 700 block of East Washington Ave., the first of these businesses to locate there.
18. *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 16, 1902.
19. *Capital Times*, July 7, 1965.
20. Ela, Janet S., *Free and Public*, p. 56, Friends of the Madison Public Library, Madison, 1975.

Written and illustrated by Gary Tipler with supervisory assistance from the City of Madison Landmarks Commission and Professor William H. Tishler of the University of Wisconsin, Department of Landscape Architecture.

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