

December 27, 2010

Mr. Peder E. Moren  
Bethel Lutheran Church  
312 Wisconsin Avenue  
Madison, WI 53703

Re: 315 North Carroll Street

Dear Mr. Moren,

The following is my report on the property at 315 N. Carroll Street.

**Purpose**

The purpose of the research and observations was to investigate the property at 315 N. Carroll Street and to provide an impartial opinion on architectural value and significance.

**Research**

Research efforts included activities at the Madison Public Library (Central Branch), the Wisconsin Historical Society archives and review of the Madison Landmarks Commission and Madison Neighborhoods web sites.

Research indicates that the original house, designed by the architectural firm of Gordon and Paunack, was constructed in 1896-1897 for Halle Steensland, a prominent local businessman. The property is listed on the National Register of Historic Places (November 1982), is a contributing property in the Mansion Hill Historic District (1976) and is a Madison Landmark (January 1974).

I was able to locate multiple illustrative photographic images at the Wisconsin Historical Society. Several aerial photographs were located that show the Mansion Hill area in the 1920s. In particular, image WHi 23828 from 1928 shows the Capitol square and vicinity and the density of residential structures that occupied the area north of Johnson Street.

Images WHi 34745 and WHi 40277 are street scenes along N. Carroll Street, circa 1900. Both images show the Steensland residence in the context of its neighborhood environment shortly after construction.

Image WHi 35752, circa 1902, shows the homes of the Madison rich and powerful, including the Steensland house. This image is also found in Stuart D. Levitan, *Madison, The Illustrated Sesquicentennial History, Volume 1*, 2006.

In all of these images the Steensland home appears much as it is today, although the surrounding neighborhood area has evolved and changed.

I was also fortunate to find four interior images of the residence from about 1900. These images of the parlor, library, sitting room and upstairs sitting room clearly illustrate the interior finishes and furnishings of the house. The images include: WHi 34753, 34754, 34755 and 34756. These are extremely helpful in determining overall integrity.

I also obtained and reviewed copies of the following documents:

- Partial set of architectural drawings, Residence for Mr. H. Steensland, Madison, Wis. Gordon & Paunack Archt's.
- Halberta Steensland, "Halle Steensland 1832-1910", *Journal of Historic Madison*, 1980-81.
- Madison Trust for Historic Preservation, *Mansion Hill: Glimpses of Madison's Silk Stocking District*, 1981.
- National Register Nomination, Steensland House, 1981.
- Madison Landmarks Commission Nomination, 1974.
- City of Madison, *Mansion Hill Neighborhood Plan* (draft), February 2009.

The partial set of drawings was helpful, although it appears the house design was somewhat changed during construction as the perimeter wall footprint is different as are various exterior details (relieving arches over windows, window configuration, porch footprint and dormers). On the interior the stairway is a mirror image as compared to the drawings.

The National Register and Landmarks Commission nominations provided a general historical background and specifics about architectural and historical significance.

The draft Mansion Hill Neighborhood Plan is very informative as to what residents and the City envision for the future of this area. The plan seeks "...to guide public and private preservation efforts and improvements...". The Vision and Mission articulated in the documents clearly reflect a high priority on preservation activities. Concept Plan 2 within the document illustrates the potential to redevelop the west side of the Bethel Lutheran property. The preservation of the Steensland House is key attribute of that concept.

Additionally, I discussed the Steensland House with Ms. Kitty Rankin, former long time Preservation Planner with the City of Madison. Her knowledge of Madison architecture is extensive and she provided insight on this building within the context of other similar residences in the city.

### Observations

On-site observations were conducted on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>. Elements open to view were observed, photographs taken, field notes were recorded.

#### Exterior

The property embodies the general form of Queen Anne Style. "The Queen Anne style is a most varied and decoratively rich style. The asymmetrical composition consists of a variety of forms, textures, materials and colors".

(Blumenson, *Identifying American Architecture*, 1981)

The key identifying features include; steep pitched roofs, tower, tall chimneys, projecting bays and asymmetrical facades. Based upon a 1902 photo of the house, the primary facades are essentially unaltered. Although painted in an unsympathetic and nonhistoric color (white), the house still retains its key exterior elements intact.

Overall the condition of the exterior is good to fair. There are signs of wear and deterioration, although the building appears generally structurally sound. The roofs and gutters/downspouts are in good condition and generally keeping the building weathertight.

Minimal to moderate deterioration is evident in the dormers and front porch. The overall conditions are fair to poor. Isolated serious deterioration of some of the structural elements of the porch floor is evident and should be addressed very soon. Most of the dormers have deterioration at their base where they meet the roof surface.

The exterior brick masonry is generally in good condition. It appears that previous water intrusion and deterioration issues at the edge of the roof have been mitigated for the most part. Significant areas of brick masonry on all facades do need repointing and cleaning. The mortar is generally powdery and dry.

Windows are in fair condition with minimal to moderate deterioration. A few windows of the third floor have severe deterioration. All windows require some level of rehabilitation and repainting.

The stone masonry is in fair condition. The previous application of paint to the stone is trapping moisture and accelerating deterioration. The soft brownstone is also eroding at multiple locations due to water infiltration. This is especially evident at the front porch. The majority of the foundation wall is in need of remedial work including stripping of paint, severely deteriorated stones turned or replaced and then all masonry walls should be repointed.

#### Interior

Reviewing historic interior images it is evident that the interior retains a high degree of original building fabric and character defining elements.

The majority of primary spaces of the first floor, such as the entry hall, library, parlors and sitting room are quit intact. This includes the original Lincrusta (textured/embossed) wallpaper. It appears this wall covering was originally partially gilded in the entry hall. Original floors, doors, oak woodwork, windows and stairways remain. Built-ins have been lost in the kitchen and dining rooms.

The second floor retains much of its original flooring, pine woodwork and doors. A door has been added to the main stair at the second floor to secure access to the third floor. The woodwork here is presently painted but was originally clear finished.

The third floor also retains its more simple woodwork, doors and stairways. Some evidence of moisture infiltration is evident at the base of most dormer corners.

The stone and brick walls, plaster ceiling and concrete floor in the basement are generally in good to fair condition. Rain water and snow melt are entering the masonry foundation walls along the north and south sides of the building causing significant deterioration of the masonry and providing for a damp basement.

#### Evaluation

##### Historical Significance

The historical significance of the property (the association with events or lives of persons significant in our past) is high. Mr. Steensland was a locally prominent individual involved with a grocery business, insurance and banking. Mr. Steensland was also a well know philanthropist and world traveler. The East Washington Avenue Bridge over the

Yahara River is named after Mr. Steensland as he paid for the 1908 bridge to commemorate his fifty years as a Madison businessman.

#### **Architectural Significance**

The Architectural significance of this property is also high. The property embodies the qualities of the Queen Anne style and is certainly one of the finest remaining Queen Anne residences in Madison.

#### **Architectural Integrity**

The overall architectural integrity of this property is very high. I estimate that over 80% of the character defining features or elements, interior and exterior, remain intact in this property.

#### **Architectural Context**

It is my opinion that the architectural context of this property has been significantly diminished. For much of its history, this home was part of a dense residential area with homes occupying almost every lot north of Johnson Street. Today this is the only house on a block that at one time was completely residential. It is an isolated example of the kinds of homes that dominated much of this part of Madison in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The architecture of the house is inconsistent with that of the Bethel Lutheran Church building.

#### **Summary**

The property embodies the qualities of the Queen Anne style and is certainly one of the finest remaining Queen Anne residences in Madison. The property is significant for its association with prominent Madisonian Halle Steensland.

The property does possess a high level of architectural significance and integrity. The context has been greatly diminished. Therefore, the stewards of the property should consider the retention of the building.

The preservation of the Steensland House through rehabilitation of the interior and restoration of the exterior may not, but could, serve both contemporary needs and Bethel Lutheran's vision while maintaining a legacy of the past for future generations. Modern life can go on within this old building. Assuming it is financially feasible, appropriate reuse of the building, or continued use as office/meeting space, could balance the needs of the significant historic structure with those of a modern functioning church.

The historic building appears to be stable, durable and fairly adaptable. Rehabilitation with suitable compatible uses, or continued use, may effectively extend the service life of the building indefinitely, assuming rehabilitation is financially feasible.

As a nation, we are much more aware of the importance of our heritage than any time before. We embrace the concepts of historic preservation and protection of cultural resources as a necessity in the course of our continued development of the built environment.

The preservation of this building is an inherently sustainable activity with the reuse of the building, building components and materials and the embodied energy they represent. Preservation and reuse of the building embraces our nations growing concerns about a Post War culture of temporary and disposable, as opposed to a new vision of sustainability, reuse and recycling.

Preservation represents a green approach through use of recycled materials, day lighting and improved energy efficient that can be achieved through rehabilitation. The preservation of this building could provide a synergetic design that embraces social, economic and ecological responsibilities of the community and Bethel Lutheran Church.

### Comments

Based upon the findings to date, the following comments are offered.

- If a viable reuse can be found, but a more contiguous site is necessary to meet Bethel's needs, I believe relocating the home to the corner of Gorham and Carroll Streets would be acceptable. It could then be rehabilitated for an extended life.
- If a viable reuse on this site is not an alternative, relocation of the home to another site within the Isthmus would likely be acceptable. The inherent difficulty in finding a suitable new site is recognized.
- Demolition or deconstruction of the Steensland Home is likely not an alternative that will be acceptable to the neighborhood or the Madison Landmarks Commission and should only be considered as a last resort.

I look forward to an opportunity to meet with you and the committee to discuss this draft report.

If you have any questions or comments concerning these observations and findings, please contact me at (608) 444-9589.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Quagliana, AIA, NCARB  
Senior Preservation Architect