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

Name of Building or Site

Common Name
Erdman Office & Shop

Historic Name (if applicable)
Marshall Erdman & Associates
Erdman-Peiss Lumber Company

Location

Street Address
5117 University Ave.

Aldermanic District
19th

Classification

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

Zoning District
C3 WP-14

Present Use
vacant

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

Name(s)
Erdman Real Estate Holdings LLC

Street Address
P.O. Box 5180
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

Telephone Number
John Snowden, (608) 662-2211

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)

Parcel Number
070918414081

Legal Description
(Text below from city assessor web page. Also please see attached.)

T7N R9E, SEC 18, PART OF SW 1/4 SE 1/4, DESC AS FOL: BEG AT A PT ON THE NLY LN OF UNIVERSITY AVE AT A PT COMMON TO LOTS 81 & 82 OF THE PLAT OF INDIAN HILLS, TH S 49 DEG 06 MIN W 122.4 FT, TH N 45 DEG 08 MIN W 163 FT, TH S 44 DEG 52 MIN W 20.2 FT TO A PT ON SWLY LN OF UNIVERSITY AVE & POB, TH CONT SD BRG 354.8 FT, TH N 45 DEG 08 MIN W 100 FT, TH N 01 DEG 00 MIN E 108.2 FT, TH N 44 DEG 51 MIN E 275.4 FT, TH S 44 DEG 40 MIN 11 SEC E 75.06 FT, TH S 46 DEG 16 MIN 45 SEC E 100.02 FT TO POB.

Condition of Property

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

Altered or Unaltered?
Altered

Moved or Original Site?
Original

Wall Construction
wood, glass, concrete block

City of Madison
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

Historical Data

Original Owner

Marshall Erdman

Original Use

office & shop for building/construction company

Architect or Builder

William Kaeser (architect)

Marshall Erdman (builder)

Architectural Style

Wrightian

Date of Construction

1949-50
c.1951
1965-66, 1977, 1983

Indigenous Materials Used

Dane Co. Truax Field vets housing trusses reused;
concrete block likely manufactured nearby;
wood likely local or regional.

List of Bibliographical References Used

Numerous. Please see following page.

Form Prepared By
Name and Title

Amy S. Kinast

Organization Represented (if any)

Address
5018 Tomahawk Trail
Madison, WI 53705

Telephone Number
(608) 231-1086

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

July 12, 2011

List of Bibliographical References Used

Angle, Burr, Dolores Kester, and Ann Waidelich, *The Origins of Some Westside Madison, Wisconsin, Street Names: Part II – Western Suburbs North of the Beltline to about 1970*. Copyright 2009 by Burr Angle.

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Biebel, Anne E. "The Residential Architecture of William V. Kaeser." M. A. thesis , University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1985.

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Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society. "Wisconsin Historical Society Determination of Eligibility Form, Agency # WisDOT 5992-08-18, WHS # 10-1465/DA, Erdman & Associates Office and Shop (Building No. 1), 5117 University Avenue, City of Madison, Dane County, 53705." Certified Dec. 2010. Prepared by Elizabeth Miller.

Erdman Development Group, LLC, 2010 Demolition Permit Application (unapproved). "Erdman Center Redevelopment 5117 University Avenue: Demolition Permit." Accessed online. Madison, Wis. Contains multiple exterior and interior photos of buildings, including 5117 Building One and others. 25 pp.

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Merrill, Robert, Wikipedia entry, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Merrill. July 12, 2011.

Moe, Doug and Alice D'Alessio, *Uncommon Sense: The Life Of Marshall Erdman*. Black Earth, Wisconsin: Trails Custom Publishing, 2003, 224 pp.

National Register Bulletin, "Historic Residential Suburbs, Guidelines for Evaluation and Documentation." National Park Service, U.S. Dept. of the Interior. July 2011. (http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/suburbs/part2.htm)

Sprague, Paul E., "The Marshall Erdman Prefabricated Buildings," *Frank Lloyd Wright And Madison: Eight Decades Of Artistic And Social Interaction*, Elvehjem Museum of Art exhibition, UW-Madison, Mary Jane Hamilton Curator. UW System Board of Regents. 1990. pp. 151-67.

Wis. DOT Architecture/History Survey, Wis. DOT Project ID 5992-08-18(79), CTH MS (University Avenue), Allen Boulevard-North Segoe Road, Survey Date February and July 2010. Prepared by Bankowitz and Miller.

Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

This parcel encompasses about 1.3 acres. On March 1, 2011 Madison City Council voted at the request of property owner to subdivide the larger parcel on which Marshall Erdman Office & Shop sits, labeling the larger area on which the Office & Shop sits as "Lot 1" and the Public Service Commission Building site "Lot 2." Changes might not be fully recorded yet.

From Division of Historic Preservation DOE form, Erdman, certified December 2010 and amended by author:

Boundary Justification: The historic boundary of the Erdman & Associates Office and Shop coincides with the legal boundary of the parcel on which this building sits. Erdman & Associates purchased ten additional acres adjacent to the site after the initial 1949 purchase that pertains to this nomination. (A 2009 conditional use agreement that expires in 2012 allows Spring Harbor Animal Hospital to the west of the Office & Shop use of an employee entrance and parking area to its rear.)

Portion below nearly verbatim excerpt from Division of Historic Preservation DOE form for Erdman Office/Shop, certified December 2010. Original footnotes and figures removed.

INTRODUCTION
The Erdman & Associates Office and Shop stands at 5117 University Avenue in the city of Madison, about five miles west of the central business district. The Office and Shop is made up of two buildings: the Wrightian 1949-50 Office and Shop, designed by distinguished Madison architect William Kaeser and expanded to the west in 1965; and what was the McGilligan Furniture Store, a non-contributing, one-story resource erected ca. 1951 (…). Erdman & Associates acquired the former furniture store and built a two-story section connecting it to the Office and Shop in 1977. A two-story addition was appended to the rear of the former furniture store 1983. Both buildings and additions are of exposed, concrete block construction on a poured concrete foundation. The 1949-50 section of the Office and Shop is front-gabled, while the 1965 Office and Shop addition, the former furniture store, and the 1983 addition possess flat, built-up roofs.

DESCRIPTION
The Erdman & Associates Office and Shop is set on the south side of University Avenue. A driveway runs south from the street along the east side of the building, widening to provide parking along the east property line. South and east of the building, the parcel has been paved with asphalt. Pavement and lawn both appear west of the rear half of the building; the neighboring building encroaches on the west along the front half. A lawn with a scattering of mature trees can be seen to the north, between the Office and Shop and the sidewalk along University Avenue. An additional ten acres with a series of metal storage buildings formerly associated with Erdman & Associates are located just south of the Office and Shop parcel;

beyond lie the tracks of the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad. Along University Avenue, east and west of the property, commercial uses predominate. Residential areas dating from the 1950s and 1960s lie north of University Avenue, and south of the railroad.

The Erdman & Associates Office and Shop face north. The 1949-50 Office and Shop (east), the 1965 addition (east-central), the 1977 connecting section (west-central), and the ca. 1951 former furniture store (west) can all be seen on the north-facing façade. The north-facing (front) façade of the 1949-50 Office and Shop displays a one-story, flat-roofed, projecting section (…) The entrance appears at the northeast corner, and consists of a wood and glass door. To the east, a fixed window rises the full height of the wall, and turns the corner. An angular, clapboarded wing wall with a broad, flat roof projects to the east beyond the window. The wing wall originally extended above the roofline, and served as the sign for Erdman & Associates (…). West of the entrance, a pair of tall windows are centered in the concrete block wall. Above the projecting section, the front-facing gable of the second story is visible. Exposed trusses in the gable end frame fixed windows. These trusses were recycled from barracks being dismantled at Truax Field. The shop addition has no openings, while the connecting section displays a series of small windows at the first story (…). The second story of the connecting section is clad with vertical board siding. A group of three, slender windows light the second floor. The north-facing (front) façade of the former furniture store consists of a wall of floor-to-ceiling, fixed windows, wrapping around the corners (…). A metal and glass door is set off-center toward the east end of this façade. The east face of this section features a broad, heavy concrete block chimney, and regularly-spaced, multi-pane metal windows (…).

On the south-facing (rear) façade, the 1949-50 Office and Shop (east), the 1965 shop addition (central), and the 1983 addition (west) are visible (…). On the rear, the 1949-50 Office and Shop is one-story on a raised basement. The basement possesses two broad openings that may have held garage doors originally. Both have been reduced, stuccoed, and hold fixed windows and an off-center, wood-and-glass door. At the second story, this section is finished with broad, metal panels and displays single and paired, single-pane windows. The flat-roofed, shop addition exhibits a broad canopy, stucco and exposed concrete block finishes, and a band of single-pane windows. The south-facing (rear) façade of the 1983 addition exhibits an off-center band of fixed, single-pane windows at each story.

The east-facing façade of the 1949-50 Office and Shop is articulated by concrete block pilasters, which frame bands of single-pane windows (…). At the second story, a broad, shed-roofed dormer appears at the north end of the façade. The dormer holds a series of fixed, single-pane windows, and marks the office section of the Office and Shop (south of the dormer, the first floor was originally the shop). Originally, the dormer was about one-third as wide, and was expanded in 1966. The east-facing façade of the 1983 addition features an exterior wooden staircase, which rises to the entrance in the north corner (…). A pair of tall, fixed windows appears north of the door. A band of fixed, single-pane windows can be seen south of the entrance. At the south end of the east face of the 1983 addition, a two-story wall of fixed windows is framed with concrete block.

The west-facing façade is composed of the ca. 1951 former furniture store (north) and the 1983 addition (south). At the north end of the former furniture store, the corner display windows are visible (…). To the south, brick pilasters articulate the façade and separate metal, multi-pane windows. The west-facing façade of the 1983 addition is partially obscured by the neighboring building, but toward the south end, bands of fixed windows appear, turning the corner to the south-facing (rear) façade.

The interior of all sections of the Office and Shop presently contains a network of corridors, with office spaces and work cubicles. Interior finishes include carpeting, acoustical tile, and drywall. Many work spaces feature Techline cabinets and furnishings, a product line developed by Erdman & Associates.

ALTERATIONS

The Erdman & Associate[s] Office and Shop retains good exterior integrity. Alterations to the 1949-50 Office and Shop are limited to the 1965 addition, the 1966 expanded dormer, and the reduced garage openings. The dormer is in keeping with the architectural character of the 1949-50 Office and Shop, while the placement of the reduced garage openings on the rear façade minimizes their impact. The 1965 shop addition is set back on the front façade, as is the 1977 connecting section. Neither is noticeable when looking at the front of the Office and Shop. The former furniture store is very evident. Although it was not associated with Erdman & Associates during the period of significance, it was erected during that time, and its appearance is architecturally compatible with the 1949-50 Office and Shop. The interior of the original Shop has been altered, but the building otherwise retains its layout. Overall, the Erdman & Associates Office and Shop retains good integrity.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria.

This section contains two parts:

1. Nominator Significance Report. pp 1-6.
2. State Historical Preservation Significance Report extended excerpt. pp 7 -9.

1. NOMINATOR SIGNIFICANCE REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Marshall Erdman Office & Shop, Building One at 5117 University Avenue in Madison, Wis., satisfies all four historical categories of the Madison, Wis. Landmark ordinance: Culture/politics/economy/society; important people; architecture; and work of master(s).

The importance of Marshall Erdman (1922-95) is rooted in his early association with Frank Lloyd Wright on the local but world-renowned masterpiece Unitarian Meeting House (1949-51) in nearby village of Shorewood Hills. Wright hired Erdman to build the church within a meager budget. Upon its completion, its many visitors immediately prompted the congregation to institute tours. Visitor numbers increased after the church's 2004 National Register designation.

Erdman's design imprint is all over mid-20th century suburban Madison. His reputation for building, supplying, and prefabricating homes grew from local (1940s vets) to regional (early 1950s pre-cut kit), to national (U-Form-It prefab). He worked closely with talented architects for value-added product. His very last project, Middleton Hills, pays homage to pre-WWII-era Arts & Crafts neighborhoods.

His fame was cemented by the 1960s and 1970s by his phenomenally successful Doctors Parks. These were suburban, accessible turnkey clinics in medical subdivisions. Later Erdman & Associates matured into a full-fledged modern medical design-build corporation.

This nomination pertains to a building steeped in architectural history of wide reach and great renown. Erdman escaped the Holocaust by immigrating to the U.S. as a teenager and attained citizenship through WWII service. Afterward he resumed college and graduated from UW-Madison. He became part of a local network of fellow professionals that aided his eventual success.

In 1949, he launched his building and construction company from the Office & Shop along 100 feet of University Avenue frontage he and his distinguished wife Joyce Mickey Erdman purchased for the purpose. Though the company continuously expanded, he worked out of this building his entire 50-plus-year career.

Erdman's constant adaptation to trends in the construction and design profession made his company a prominent, commercially successful, and widely respected Madison company. Evidence of this permeates the whole city. Therefore, angles from which to approach this property's historical significance abound, and this slim report can only hope to summarize the essentials.

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT CHURCH

Erdman Chosen

Frank Lloyd Wright chose Marshall Erdman in 1949 to build the Unitarian Meeting House in nearby Shorewood Hills. The church might never have been built if Erdman had not agreed to do it as homage to Wright and not solely for monetary gain. The church's revolutionary soaring roofline strongly influences post-1951 church architecture. This project launched Erdman's career and closely affiliated him with Wrightian buildings and with Regional Wrightian architects then clustered in southern Wisconsin.

Organic thinking espoused by Wright, as well as motifs and methods used in the church, infused and informed Erdman's later endeavors.

The Wrightians

The Wrightians were a well-traveled, smart group of architects based in and around Madison, Wis. who post-WWII carried Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture principles forward via Mid-century Modernism. They were energized to work within the master's orbit and to have direct access to some of Wright's most successful buildings. Rapid land development created drama, and these men were helping write the script.

The Erdman Office & Shop was designed by Regional Wrightian William Kaeser. The building sometimes served as a metaphorical "Madison truck stop" or incubator for the Taliesin crowd. Among these men Erdman was an instigator, a doer - not just a dreamer. They were interested in all aspects of the built environment, including planning: In the 1950s, Madison western suburbs were growing twice as fast as eastern suburbs.

Wrightian architect Herb Fritz rented office space from Erdman in the front Office portion for himself and his draftsman in the 1950s (probably early 1950s, a close Fritz family member recently told the author). Fritz had made the space so comfortable that Erdman decided to make it his own office.

Moe and D'Alessio write:

> Another project with Wright was also under way during these years. In 1957, Marshall wrote Wright in Arizona with an estimate to build the Wyoming Valley School, in the neighborhood of Taliesin, for $53,000. The design was a recycled version of a design Wright produced in 1926. Herb Fritz was involved with the school building and produced the working drawings. Marshall built it, his first school but a forerunner of more to come.

Together with the book's photo of the completed Wyoming School, the above passage leaves the reader to gather that the built Wyoming School might have been inspired by Kaeser's Erdman Office & Shop design, which in turn could have originated with Wright's first Wyoming School drawings much earlier. For the Wrightians, even their buildings triangulated.

Their eyes were on design and practicality. Some (Erdman excluded) had deep Midwestern roots and grew up on practically self-sufficient small-scale farms.

Each seemed to gravitate to a niche and Erdman worked among them: William Kaeser designed upper middle class homes, commercial dairy buildings and public structures; Herb Fritz, a prolific second generation Wrightian, designed more than 100 projects in Madison alone with sensitivity to site; James Dresser created restaurants, tourism venues like Robot World, and smaller conceptual sculpted houses. All three men designed at least a couple Indian Hills homes.

Significance p. 3

William Kaeser

William Kaeser (1906-1995) was a local architect and a Regional Wrightian. He designed the Erdman Office & Shop and other buildings for Erdman, including a Shorewood Hills home.

Kaeser was born in Illinois in 1906. His parents came from arts and crafts and building backgrounds and ran a small dairy farm there. His family later moved to Madison where he grew up. After high school, Madison architect Frank Riley hired Kaeser summers (1927-31) and again briefly after college as a draftsman.

On a 1930 summer trip to Europe, Kaeser discovered "modern" architecture. He felt European Modern Style was inspired by Wright's Prairie Style. Hence, Kaeser's interpretation of Modern can be viewed as Prairie returning to its Midwest roots for later generations.

He graduated from University of Illinois and earned a masters degree in architecture from MIT in 1932. Then he considered joining Taliesin but instead accepted a scholarship to the new Cranbrook Academy of the Arts in Michigan founded by Scandinavian Eliel Saarinen. Saarinen tasked Kaeser with preparing a 50-year development plan for Madison, Wis.

In 1935, Kaeser set up his Madison architecture practice while also working part-time (1935-38) as Madison's city planner.

Kaeser served in the Corps of Engineers during WWII in the construction division at Badger Ordnance Works in Baraboo, among other duties. He returned to private practice after the war.

He kept architecture in the public consciousness with trade journal and popular writings. His passive solar home design was featured in the book *Your Solar House*, published in 1946 by Simon & Schuster.

In 1951, he joined structural engineer Arthur McLeod, who he had known since University of Illinois days, to form Kaeser & McLeod. Kaeser became known for designing useful spaces for cultural creatives, professionals, and manufacturers whose work demanded use of modern technology.

Organic Ethic

Wisconsin's strong agricultural roots coexist alongside its rich architectural heritage. By the turn of the 20^{th}-21^{st} century, the word "organic" had gained widespread acceptance in reference to organic agricultural practices that restrict synthetic inputs and instead celebrate healthy soil and rich compost. Frank Lloyd Wright instilled organic architecture principles; but he also required members of the Taliesin fellowship to garden and he recommended farming. For Wright's generation, organic farming was the only kind of farming. So it was natural for Wrightians to design homes for suburban garden lots.

ERDMAN MADISON HOMES

Marshall Erdman responded to an acute housing and labor shortage faced post WWII by cash-strapped vets and others. He practiced thrift learned through personal circumstances, the deprivations of war, and the Great Depression. He exemplified the post-WWII can-do attitude and propagated the then-dominant do-it-yourself ethic.

Erdman's precut, kit, and prefab homes amount to "artisan prefab" – prefab using high quality materials and infused with artistry and skill like the Wisconsin artisan cheese.

His genius was for manufacturing affordable, livable, structures with flexible layout and effectively marketing them to the mushrooming middle class. Such economies of scale and market share had

consistently eluded the notoriously over-budget, prickly Frank Lloyd Wright.

Office & Shop Context

Erdman's commercial lot and the Indian Hills subdivision across the avenue to the North were part of an early model regional planning effort. State Director of Regional Planning M.W. Torkelson and seven other mostly governmental entities signed off on the Indian Hills plat in 1947. Earlier, the Warner/Risser and Pearson families, with longtime ties to the area, had formed the Robert-Merrill Co. for development purposes.

Who Or What Was Robert Merrill?

Perhaps only coincidentally, Robert Merrill (1917-2004) was the primary assumed name of Brooklyn-born and Jewish Moishe Miller (Old World Millstein), a popular WWII-era radio crooner who went on to become a mainstay of the Metropolitan Opera. Merrill was in particular known for a rendition of "Home on the Range," with lyrics by a Kansas poet. He is perhaps most famous for his moving rendition of "Star Spangled Banner."

A Merrill family (probably unrelated to the singer) did have early claim on land in the area. And this author could neither confirm nor deny any link material or poetic between the singer and Robert-Merrill Co. The whole topic sounds fanciful indeed. But at a minimum the tangent illustrates four late 1940s trends: Suburban ranch homes beckoned city dwellers and the displaced; patriotic fervor was high for proud and bereaved vets and families; relatively recent Jewish immigrants frequently changed their names (as Erdman had); and a battle-weary public drew role models from all walks of life.

William Kaeser Architect-Planner

It is no coincidence that the building's architect was William Kaeser who was Erdman's Shorewood Hills neighbor and Madison's part-time, first city planner for four years in the 1930s. His booklet "A City Plan for Madison, Wis." was published in 1935.

The nascent profession of regional planning encouraged developers to ask how a building site would integrate regionally with sanitary sewer lines, traffic routes, height/density, fair housing practices, and other considerations.

In 1949, the State Highway Commission was given approval authority over subdivisions impacting state highways (like University Avenue). Further state amendments in 1951 allowed broader local subdivision regulations in response to the post-WWII building boom. Wisconsin's current land division and platting law was enacted in 1955.

Indian Hills (now 96 homes, improvements, and parkland) is a postwar curvilinear suburban development draped over a glacial drumlin. A National Register Bulletin web page states, "Thus, by the late 1940s, the curvilinear subdivision had evolved from the Olmsted, City Beautiful, and Garden City models to the [Federal Housing Administration]-approved standard, which had become the legally required form of new residential development in many localities in the United States."

Erdman used his new Office in 1949. Indian Hills subdivision's opening several years later was likely slowed by careful attention to planning details, by efforts to conform with emerging regulation, and by deference to market readiness.

Indian Hills "Showroom"

Indian Hills subdivision to Erdman's north became a convenient show area for his artisan prefab houses and the work of his architect friends. It contains whole houses, building components, and finish work amid

a state-of-the-art 1950s mostly middle class suburb.

Some of the earliest Indian Hills homes are four Erdman prefabs (1953-56) along the south side of Flambeau Road near the entrance. One was a 1954 parade home. The view south through its carport (absent foliage) frames the Erdman Office & Shop. Erdman doubtless used this part of the block as a show area much like a car dealer uses a sales lot. Doctors Park in Shorewood Hills would later offer a similar marketing opportunity.

Besides being a model of planning, some of the uniqueness of Indian Hills resides in its high concentration of Regionalist Wrightian homes. Taliesin trained architects designed an estimated half dozen homes there. Even details such as monument signs (at Indian Hills Park on the east side of Flambeau Road [c. 1958] and at the opposite end of Flambeau near the entrance to Indian Hills [c. 1959]) and street-side mailboxes reinforce modern rusticity.

Parks records show Parks Superintendent John Marshall supported 1950s Indian Hills Garden Club efforts to acquire unbuilt lots close to University Avenue for expanded parkland and to buffer the busy highway. For landscaping Indian Hills Park, Marshall followed in the tradition of prairie landscape gardener O.C. Simonds who earlier in the century left his mark on Madison through Park and Pleasure Drive assignments. Marshall planted native species such as crab, dogwood, hawthorn, and high bush cranberry. The acreage's former owner, Ernest Warner, (1868-1929) was a Madison attorney and Progressive leader who led the Park and Pleasure Drive Association from 1912 to 1929.

Erdman In Madison

Erdman's houses are well represented throughout post-WWII Madison neighborhoods. Sherman Village on Madison's north side includes 100 Erdman homes (1958-59); Harry Brody developed it. Other neighborhoods sporting Erdman homes are Midvale (1947-61), village of Shorewood Hills (1947-56), Crestwood (1949-59), Hammersley Rd area south of Beltline (1951-64), and east side and city of Monona (1950-60). Frank Lloyd Wright designed three prefabs expressly for Erdman to manufacture, and status and free publicity were the main benefits. Only two designs were constructed, and west Madison has a couple fine examples.

Blackhawk Park Prefab Lab

West of his Office & Shop, Erdman saw the Blackhawk Park subdivision (1950-51) speedily fill with 136 tiny prefab rental homes made by Harnischfeger Homes, Inc. of Wisconsin. He must have kept an eagle eye on the nascent subdivision, his de facto prefab home learning laboratory.

Floyd J. Voight, an insurance man, financed $1.5 million Blackhawk Park under Section 608 of the 1949 Federal Housing Act. Wisconsin Historical Preservationists are considering nominating this subdivision to the National Register as an intact, high integrity example of a post WWII prefab housing development. Homes are Minimalist Traditional style.

Techline

Immediately west of Erdman's Office for many years was the glass-fronted McGilligan Furniture Store (c. 1951). Erdman acquired the former furniture store and connected the Office & Shop with it in 1977. Furniture was another target of his boundless curiosity and construction expertise. In the 1970s he perfected Techline, a prefabricated cabinet and furniture line. The line was spun off and son Dan Erdman took charge of Techline. In the 1980s it became a household name.

Middleton Hills

Middleton Hills is an Erdman housing and commercial project in a bordering city begun late in his career.

It demonstrates how his early exposure to regional planning and collaboration with planners impacted him a lifetime.

MEDICAL BUILDINGS

Marshall Erdman was a pioneer in design/build medical buildings, which were a logical extension of his residential work. Offering desirable suburban commercial buildings aesthetically supported surrounding suburban homes.

Erdman was one of the first to break from the pre-WWII model of medical offices on upper floors of downtown multi-story block buildings or on hospital campuses. Over a couple years, he diligently researched the medical sector's needs. Then he masterminded the revolution called Doctors Parks. This brought human-scale, suburbia-appropriate prefabricated and thoughtfully furnished medical clinics to market. It facilitated a new model of health care delivery – the independently owned clinic. He designed/built one-story, residential-type clinics with easily adaptable layouts in calming environments. People with limited mobility could more easily see their doctors.

Sixty Erdman medical or commercial structures went up in the Madison area (1949-2003). Also erected were 13 schools or churches (1950-1976). Statewide, the firm built the Marshfield Clinic (1975) and the Mayo Clinic's Midelfort Clinic (1995) in Eau Claire.

Envisioned as a way to enhance the clinics, Erdman started a corporate art collection and furnished clinics with contemporary abstract art. He bought the red brick old bottling building east of the Office & Shop in 1985 to house the collection along with more corporate offices. In the 1990s, he signaled this venture to the community with the oversized, 3,000-pound metalwork sculpture "Up Reach" erected just northeast of his Office & Shop along University Ave. It was designed by artist Bo von Hoheriche and manufactured and installed by a team that included Erdman factory employees.

"Up Reach" caught the eye of at least one Madisonian who coined a nickname and wrote a poem for it. Fran Rall is a longtime First Unitarian Meeting House member and a tour docent there c. 2000-2011. Prior to that she led tours at the UW-Madison art museum. "I thought it was great they were doing art for their building," she recently shared with the author. She wrote "Big Red" during a 1994 visit to the sculpture where she also encountered Erdman outside, who delighted in hearing her read the new poem.

"Big Red"
by Fran Rall

You have to look!

It's Big Red

Ignoring the swarm of buzzing cars.

The meteor burned you crimson,

As you hurled it back spaceward.

Wisconsin is saved.

Madison cheers.

Big Red, Our Hero!"

2. State Historical Preservation Significance Report

The following is a nearly verbatim excerpt (original footnotes and figures removed) from: Division of Historic Preservation, Wisconsin Historical Society. "Wisconsin Historical Society Determination of Eligibility Form, Agency # WisDOT 5992-08-18, WHS # 10-1465/DA, Erdman & Associates Office and Shop (Building No. 1), 5117 University Avenue, City of Madison, Dane County, 53705." Certified Dec. 2010. Prepared by Elizabeth Miller.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Erdman & Associates Office and Shop is eligible for the National Register under *Criterion B*, in architecture, for its association with Marshall Erdman. Erdman began his career as a builder-contractor with a handful of modest, custom-built homes, in 1949. The landmark project of the early days of Erdman's career was the construction of one of Frank Lloyd Wright's masterpieces, the Unitarian Meeting House in Shorewood Hills. By 1953, Erdman had involved his firm in prefabrication, with the production of the U-Form-IT homes. The following year, Erdman erected the company's first prefabricated medical clinic. Erdman & Associates would eventually become the leader in the design and construction of prefabricated health care facilities in the United States. Marshall Erdman's work for the United States Agency for International Development and the Peace Corps in the 1960s demonstrated his commitment to civic responsibility, and, indirectly, led to the development of Techline, Erdman's prefabricated cabinet and furniture line, in 1969. In the 1980s, Erdman served on several public commissions in Wisconsin, as well as promoting public art. Perhaps Erdman's most innovative undertaking, the "New Urbanist" development of Middleton Hills, which Erdman designed and built with Andres Duany, broke ground weeks before his death in 1995. Erdman's significance in architecture is richly represented by his body of work, but Erdman did maintain his office at 5117 University Avenue from 1949 until his death, associating this building most closely with his storied career. The period of significance for the Erdman & Associates Office and Shop extends from 1949 to 1960, the fifty-year cut-off date.

SIGNIFICANCE

Association with Marshall Erdman: Marshall Erdman (1922-1995) was born Mausas Erdmanas in Tverai, Lithuania. In 1938, Erdman's father sent him to relatives in Chicago. Erdman completed high school in Chicago in 1940, and attended the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign), enlisting in the Army Corps of Engineers in 1943. [Or Army?] Following WWII, he finished his bachelor's degree in political science at the University of Wisconsin, where he met Joyce Mickey. They married in 1946. In January 1947, the Erdmans bought the lot at 509 North Meadow Lane in Madison, and together built a small house, which Joyce had designed. Although they intended to live in it themselves, when the Erdmans received an offer, they readily sold the house. With the profit they bought several more lots, launching themselves as Marshall Erdman & Associates, a sole proprietorship engaged in home-building. By January 1948, the Erdmans had built or were building nine houses, all designed by Joyce. The Erdmans purchased the parcel on which the 1949-50 Office & Shop sit in April 1949. The Office portion of the

building was completed by the fall of 1949, and the original Shop was finished in 1950; both were designed by William Kaeser. That year, Erdman & Associates completed $675,000 worth of projects, employing eight cabinetmakers and millwrights in the shop, and 37 men in the field.

In addition to homes, the company erected stores, apartment buildings, warehouses, and a church. That church, which would not be completed until 1951, was the Unitarian Meeting House in Shorewood Hills, the project that began Erdman's association with Frank Lloyd Wright, made his name, and nearly bankrupted him. Bids from major construction firms to erect Wright's design are said to have ranged from $500,000 to $1.2 million. Wright, initially uninterested in working with an "amateur," then approached Erdman, who agreed to build the Meeting House for $102,000. Even with substantial volunteer labor from the congregation, the final cost exceeded $213,000 and Erdman had to take out a personal loan to complete the project. But in the end, Erdman had gained international publicity, and Wright as his mentor.

In 1951, Marshall Erdman & Associates incorporated. Although the firm continued custom building in the early 1950s, Erdman was interested in exploring prefabricated housing. In 1953, Erdman developed the U-Form-IT house, in collaboration with carpenter Henry Peiss. There were two models, both one-story, three-bedroom units, designed by the Madison architectural firm of Weiler and Strang. Each unit cost $9,000; it was said to save the homeowner $5,000 in labor expenses. An article in Life magazine in October 1953 garnered a tremendous response to the U-Form-IT houses. In 1954, Erdman had a factory erected adjacent to the railroad on the ten acres south of the Office and Shop. William Kaeser designed the plant (not extant) [this author questions that assertion. Was it converted into motel or offices similar to way Shop converted?], intended to employ 50 men and produce five U-Form-IT homes a day. By this time, there were ten different U-Form-IT plans, all with three bedrooms. In addition, the U-Form-IT had attracted the notice of Frank Lloyd Wright, who disparaged their architectural character, and designed three models of this own for Erdman & Associates to build. Although Erdman only built eleven of Wright's prefab designs (five in Wisconsin) [Footnote: The two in Madison are 5817 Anchorage Avenue (1956), and 110 Marinette Trail (1959).], the collaboration with Wright brought additional publicity, and boosted Erdman's business. In the 1950s and the early 1960s, Erdman & Associates manufactured and erected more than 600 prefabricated homes, mostly in Madison and in southeastern Wisconsin.

During the mid-1950s, Erdman & Associates investigated other opportunities for prefabricated construction. The firm erected a small building for two dentists at 3414 Monroe Street (extant, altered) in 1954. This was Erdman & Associates' first prefabricated medical clinic; the company would grow to become the leading builder of health care facilities in the United States, erecting more than 200 by 1959, and some 2,500 by the 1990s. In 1957, Erdman & Associates built the first of 20 prefabricated schools in the United States, in Germantown, Wisconsin.

Erdman & Associates' focus in the 1960s and 1970s was on health care facilities. In a parallel development, the [sic.] Marshall Erdman's leadership in prefabrication brought him to the attention of the United States Agency for International Development. In the early 1960s, Erdman would build 30 schools and 100 homes in Gabon, West Africa. Additional work for the Peace Corps followed in the Virgin Islands in 1965-66. In 1966, Marshall Erdman helped the

government of Tunisia establish a prefabricating plant in that country. During his international service, Erdman discovered advanced cabinet-and-furniture-making machinery in Europe, which he bought in 1967. This machinery inspired the creation of Techline, the prefabricated furniture line to which Marshall Erdman devoted his attention for much of the rest of his life. The Techline factory was built in Waunakee in 1969; the same year, all the company's manufacturing moved to the Waunakee site. By the late 1990s, more than 60 Techline studios had been established across the country.

In the 1980s, Marshall Erdman became more active in civic affairs in Wisconsin. In 1983, he was appointed to the State Building Commission, serving several years. In 1988, Erdman acted as chair on the commission to restore Frank Lloyd Wright's home, Taliesin, and served on another that was carrying out the plan for the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison. Erdman also advocated for public art during this period, establishing an art department at Erdman & Associates in 1983, to select artwork for the health care facilities the company designed. In the early 1990s, Erdman commission[ed] the metalwork sculpture that stands in front of the building at 5105 University Avenue (by that time the home of the firm's art department).

Marshall Erdman's last major initiative was his plan for Middleton Hills, a 153-acre development in the community-design style called "New Urbanism." Erdman invited one of the leading practitioners of the style, Andres Duany, who had designed the town of Seaside, Florida, with his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, to speak in Middleton in 1993. Erdman and Duany began collaborating on the plan for Middleton Hills shortly thereafter. Although the plan encountered some challenges due to its unconventional nature, it was eventually approved. Groundbreaking took place in August 1995, shortly before Erdman's death. Today Middleton Hills is a thriving community, with an innovative design, one of the many legacies of Erdman's rich and prolific career.

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

Marshall and Joyce Erdman purchased the parcel on which the 1949-50 Office and Shop sit in April 1949. The parcel on which the former furniture store is located was acquired in 1977. These two parcels, along with six more adjacent to these, were sold t Erdman Real Estate Holdings (the current owner) in January 2003.The building has been largely vacant since 2007.



Early 1950s : Building exterior of Marshall Erdman and Associates.
Image ID: WHi-5075
Office & Shop at 5117 University Ave., Madison, Wis.
Photo by William Kaeser, building architect.



1947: Veterans Housing.
Three men at the University of Wisconsin, with tent and sign that reads "People of Madison! Vets in tent need rooms to rent".
Image ID: WHi-3338
Photo by unknown.



1958 aerial view. Erdman property, lower right. Railroad left, curving. Indian Hills subdivision, bottom right corner. University Ave. bottom right. Looking SW toward Craig Ave. Blackhawk District, upper right.
Image ID: WHi-5070
Photo by William Wollin.



1948: Frank Lloyd and Olgivanna Wright in a Crosley Car in the country.
Image ID: WHi-1904
Photo by Gerhard R. Schulz.



1948: Low Cost Housing for World War II Veterans.
Interior to one of four Erdman homes, Midvale Blvd., Sunset Village, Madison.
Image ID: WHi-54825
Photo by Arthur Vinje.



1950 ca. Unitarian Meeting House Construction.
Roof trusses in auditorium of the Unitarian Meeting House during construction.
Image ID: WHi-26536
Photo by John Newhouse.



ca. Sept. 1950: Unitarian Meeting House Work Day.
Image ID: WHi-26524
Photo by John Newhouse.
Unitarian Meeting House Work Day Description: Group skilled workmen in front of the Unitarian Meeting House on one of their work day donations to the project. The building was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Left to right, seated, the workmen are Eathen Henstock, Milton Thorpe, Ervin Schmudlach, Chalres Manteufel, Urban Richgels, Harold Vetter, Dan Werber, Frank Tetzlaff, Howard Busse, Josephn Boykin, and Elliott Schamens. In the second row are Guy Henry, Donald Van Schoyek, Harry Riegels, Albert Loftus, Arthur Winkler, Herbert Hulsizer, Herbert Amundson, Ralph Arneson, Erling Landsverk, Harold Johnson, Nathan Williams, and Marshall Erdman, the general contractor. In the third row are Byron Tetzlaff, Paul Okey, Robert Shaw, Richard Gorski, Arthur Gulrud, and Lawrence Walter, the two men in the back are William Kruse and John Johnson.



August 19, 1951 before: Unitarian Meeting House Construction.
Image ID: WHi-26534
Photo by John Newhouse.



c. 1949-51. Unitarian Meeting House Congregation Sorting Stones.
Image ID: WHi-26547
Photo by John Newhouse.



1951: First Unitarian Meeting House, 900 University Bay Drive.
Image ID: WHi-35078
Photo by John H. Howe.



1952 ca. First Unitarian Society Meeting House.
Image ID: WHi-35633
Photo by William Wollin.

The south façade Unitarian Meeting House, 900 University Bay Drive.



date unknown: Erdman Prefab I: Rear view of the Van Tamlen House, an example of Erdman #1, a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed prefabricated home marketed by Marshall Erdman.
Image ID: WHi-66125
Photo by Herb Jacobs.



date unknown: Marshall Erdman Prize-winning Prefabricated Home. Image ID: WHi-26526
Photo by John Newhouse.



1958: 2700 Marshall Court in Doctors Park, Shorewood Hills. Early drive-through pharmacy.
Image ID: WHi-5069
Photo by William Wollin.



Marshall Erdman Office & Shop, 5117 University Ave., Madison, WI. Recent photo by Jason Tish. Courtesy Madison Trust For Historic Preservation.



Rear View. Recent photo by Jason Tish. Courtesy Madison Trust For Historic Preservation.

SURROUNDING AREA PHOTOS
ERDMAN NOMINATION BY KINAST
JULY 2011



Railroad



Whitney Way



ERDMAN OFFICE & SHOP
5117 UNIVERSITY AVE
MADISON, WI



Craig Avenue

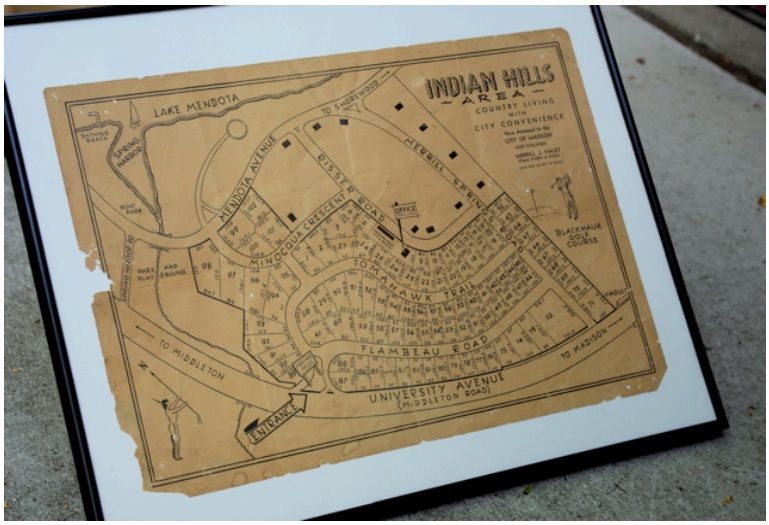


University Avenue









c. 1951 marketing. "Indian Hills: Country Living With City Convenience." Note staggered lot layout for solar aspect and optimal views. Courtesy M.B. Dunning.



Curvilinear Minocqua Crescent with mature oaks.



1954, Erdman home, Flambeau Rd. Note tapered overhang, window style.



1952-53, James Dresser (Wrightian) "Sunflower House," Tomahawk Trail.



1953, Flambeau Rd. Typical Erdman-Peiss horizontal windows.



1954 U-Form-It by Erdman, Flambeau Rd. Interior windows, wall, ceiling detail.



Possible William Kaeser design, Merrill Springs Rd.



1956 Erdman home, Flambeau Rd. Carport view frames Erdman Office.



Wrightian home on small lot, Tomahawk Trail.



Erdman-Peiss elements in Tomahawk Trail home.



Home gardeners and gardens abound.



Park sign crafted c. 1958 by Alfred Kleisch, Erdman Shop carpenter, Tomahawk Trail resident (deceased) and part-time landscaper.



Present-day resident artist.