

Dear Members of the Plan Commission:

I am sorry I am unable to attend the meeting on Monday when you will be discussing the demolition permit application and rezoning that involves the historic property at 502 West Main Street. I urge you to consider the Staff Report's recommendation to make efforts to relocate this historic building a condition of approval. While I understand there is some debate about the structural soundness of the building, I am hopeful that further study can be done to assess this. Moreover, the Planning Staff have agreed to facilitate finding a new owner and location for the building, which is significant in this case.

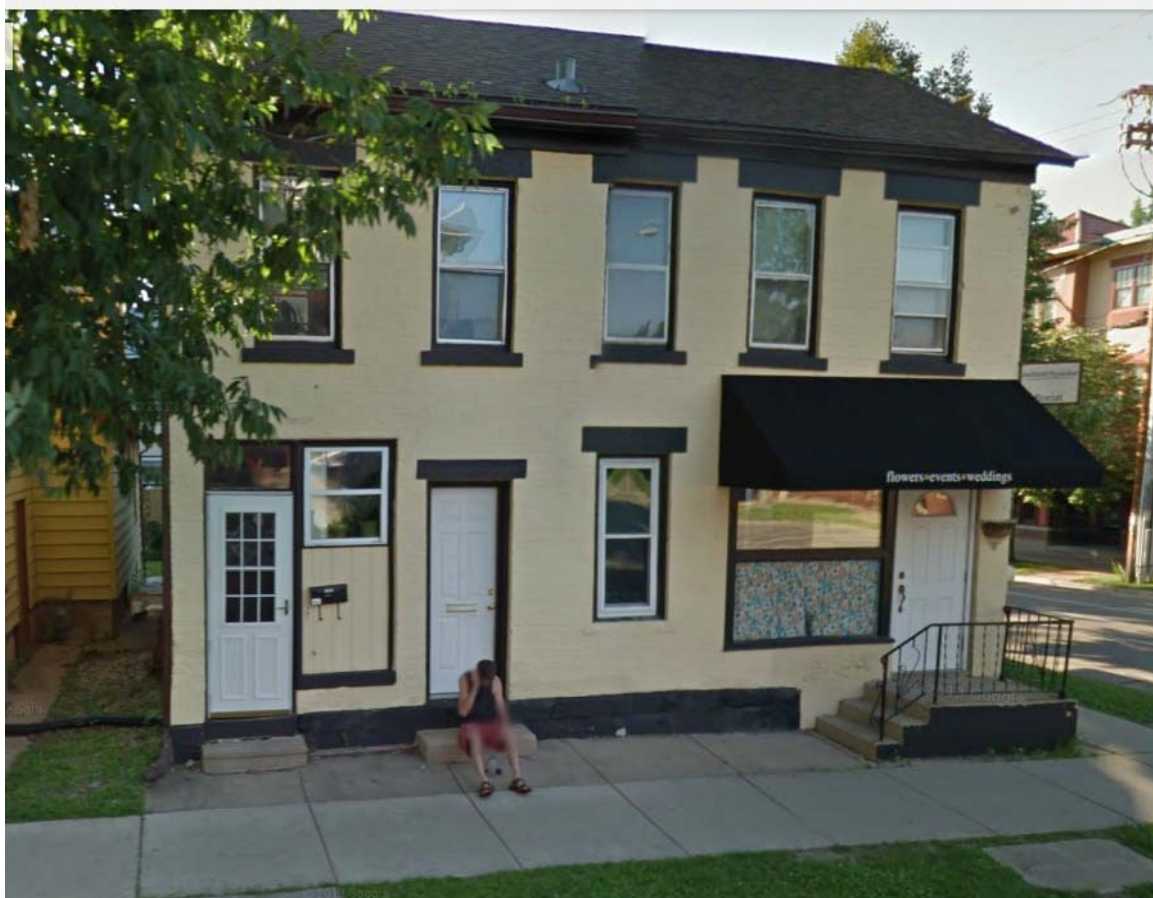
There are but a handful of buildings in Madison from the 1850s and 1860s - many of them on the east side, first settlement, or near the square (not in this area, where many of the older buildings have been razed). These early buildings are an important part of Madison's heritage, and many have been demolished in recent years or are threatened with demolition. This building, also, has an important commercial history that I'm sure you will hear about in public testimony on Monday night.

Please consider this in making your decision.

Anna Andrzejewski, Professor
Department of Art History
Buildings-Landscapes-Cultures Program

502 West Main Street

Commercial/residential building constructed in 1870 and 1890 (according to the Assessor).



Google street view image



Google street view image



Google street view image

Applicant: E. Edward Linville, Linville Architects LLC

Applicant's Comments: Keller Realestate Group is planning a new 4 story mixed use building (retail street level with three stories of apartments above)(18 units) consistent with D2 UMX criteria. This building is a "sister" project to a well received retail/apartment mixed use project across the Main Bassett intersection known as the Tuscan Building. To construct this now Bassett Neighborhood project in its entirety requires demolition of the structure at 500 W Main St

Staff findings: The preservation file notes that the building was built in 1866 for Mrs. B. Lannon as a residence and store. An addition was constructed in 1875. The Lannons only owned the house for two years, but they lived in it probably until c. 1875. There is a note in the file to check the census data to determine the ethnicity of Hannah and Chancellor Hill as they lived in and operated a grocery store in this building from 1873-1895. From 1918 to 1935, the building housed San Piazza's shoe shop. From 1935-1950, it was used as a grocery and liquor store by Piazza's daughter. In 1950 the site was still known as Hill's Corner. The Alexius Baas article from the Capital Times (undated) is attached to this report.

AGENDA # 5

City of Madison, Wisconsin

REPORT OF: LANDMARKS COMMISSION	PRESENTED: April 7, 2014	
TITLE: Buildings Proposed for Demolition - 2014 (32607)	REFERRED:	
	REREFERRED:	
	REPORTED BACK:	
AUTHOR: Amy Scanlon, Secretary	ADOPTED:	POF:
DATED: April 7, 2014	ID NUMBER:	

Members present were: Stu Levitan, Chair; Erica Fox Gehrig, Vice Chair; Jason Fowler, David McLean, Marsha Rummel, and Michael Rosenblum. Christina Slattery was excused.

SUMMARY:

Buildings Proposed for Demolition - 2014:

- 1601-1603 Wright Street
- 1621-1623 Wright Street
- 1625-1627 Wright Street
- 1629-1631 Wright Street
- 330 East Wilson Street
- 502 West Main Street

Gary Tipler, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. Tipler provided a history of the building at 502 West Main Street. He explained the building was built in a style (Federal/Greek Revival mix) that was older than the date of construction suggests. Tipler explained that it is rare building type in Madison. Tipler explained this neighborhood has fallen through the cracks when considering recent planning efforts and that this building has been overlooked.

Paul Schoeneman, registering in opposition and wishing to speak. Schoeneman read from his written statement to explain the history of the building at 502 West Main Street.

Schoeneman explained the building is a “sister” building to the Doris House. He suggested that the proposed design be configured around the existing building to maintain the building in its existing location.

Edward Linville, registering in support and available to speak. Linville explained that he understands both sides of this issue, but that this existing building is not of high value when determining the contextual historic thread. Linville has tried to incorporate the 502 building into the development of this site, but it did not provide an appropriate final product.

The Commissioners discussed the history of the building and its rare (Federal/Greek Revival) style and the importance of the building type (corner commercial structure).

ACTION:

A motion was made by McLean, seconded by Rosenblum, to convey to the Plan Commission that in their review of the demolition of 502 West Main Street, the Landmarks Commission regrets the continuing loss of the architectural and cultural history of the neighborhood and that there is no known historic value for the other properties (1601-1603 Wright Street, 1621-1623 Wright Street, 1625-1627 Wright Street, 1629-1631 Wright Street, and 330 East Wilson Street). The motion passed by voice vote/other.

History of Old Grocery Store Building Remains a Mystery

Alma's Grocery

Structure Located At Corner of West Main, Bassett Sts.



Here is pictured the building at the northeast corner of the intersection of W. Main and S. Bassett sts., which is the subject of today's article on Madison's historic buildings, by Alexius Baas.—Capital Times staff photo.

By ALEXIUS BAAS
ON THE NORTHEAST corner of the intersection of W. Main and S. Bassett sts. stands an old building known at present as Alma's Grocery. How many thousands of times I have passed this place I should hesitate to say. It has always intrigued me and I have repeatedly resolved to inquire into its history. A few days ago I made good that resolve. The building always had for me an air of mystery as if to say: "I could tell you much of the early times of this neighborhood, but I will not. Find out for yourself." I accepted the challenge. But so far as its exact age and origin are concerned I must admit defeat. Its present owners went to considerable trouble to hunt up the abstracts of title to the property but could find only those dating back to 1873. This structure was already old at that time.

MY SEARCH took me to various people who have lived in the neighborhood for many years but their recollections go back only as far as the date just given.

One ancient lady indeed was reputed to be in possession of its early history but she declared in no uncertain terms and in a voice that carried well down the street: "I won't tell ye nothin' about nothin'" and slammed the door for added emphasis.

This preponderance of negatives dampened my reportorial inquisitiveness and I retreated in bad order.

Others were eager but unable to be of much help. Mrs. Janette Foran who lives just around the corner on S. Bassett st. said that a family named Hill ran a grocery store in the building for many years. The Misses Rose and Julia McNamara, also long time residents of the neighborhood, had verified Mrs. Foran's statement and Miss Rose added the information that the Hills are all deceased—that there were two children, Ella and Rollin Hill, who inherited from the old folks and that Rollin disappeared about the time of the 1893 Chicago World's fair where he had gone and never was heard of again. Mystery seems to shroud the building's early years.

THERE, IT STANDS, mute testimony to the fact that some pioneer Madisonian built early and well. The abstracts referred to above contain a number of names familiar to old timers among which are C. J. Roe and wife, James Morgan, Hannah Hill, Blanche B. Harper, James McCue, James H. McCue, and his sister, Mildred; Anthony Dixon, Fredericka Krehl, August Krehl, and Pauline Contradi. I find also the Joseph Boyd company in later years and Lydia R. Bartlett.

About the year 1905 San Piazza left his native Sicily. In 1918 he established himself in the old Hill building as a shoemaker and continued his shop there until his death in 1935. At that time his daughter, Alma, and her husband, F. S. Stassi, took the place over and opened a grocery store. Thus the building reverted again to its old time use.

At present it is owned jointly by the Stassis and Sam Piazza, Alma's brother. The Stassis have three children, Colleen, employed as a typist by the Mautz Paint Co., and Anthony and Sam, both students at Central high school.

THE STASSIS have named their store Alma's Grocery after Mrs. Stassi whose first name is Alma. They are very proud of their establishment and well they may be. It has an atmosphere of friendly neighborliness and the owners make one feel at home and welcome whether one is a customer or merely a passerby who drops in for a chat.

The quarters are small but there is an amazing amount of merchandise on the shelves and every inch of floor space is utilized. There is a large room to the rear of the store formerly used by the Stassis as living quarters when the children were small. It is now used as a storeroom.

Alma feels quite strongly about the advantages of a small neighborhood store over the elaborate, modern, chain type of grocery and she can be quite eloquent about them. She is right. The cozy feeling that is so much a part of her place is entirely lacking in the larger establishments.

ALMA'S GROCERY is more than a place of barter and sale. It is a meeting place for the neighbors, a news exchange for the customers, a place where buyer

and seller are on intimate and friendly terms.

It is a "throw-back" if you like, to the corner grocery of older days. It has a "unique charm" all its own.

The exterior of the old building matches the "homey" simplicity of the store itself. It is built of brick, a simple rectangle with a wing to the rear. It rises to two stories and a small attic. The second story is painted in tan, much weathered by the years. The first story facing Main st. is white and brown. The store entrance is on the corner facing Main st. Entrance to the upper floor and to the remainder of the ground floor also face Main st. but at the western end of the building.

SEVEN LARGE double windows, twelve paned, light the upper story, five on Main st., two on S. Bassett st. These last are topped with two smaller windows half circular in shape. I doubt if Madison has their duplicates. From the arrangement of the five Main st. windows and from what Mrs. Stassi tells me of the floor plan of the second story, I would guess that the building originally functioned as a hotel or boarding house.

Among the older neighbors the old place still bears the name of Hill's corner. From time immemorial the corner has been the rendezvous of the neighborhood children. It still is and the Alma Grocery candy counter is heavily patronized by them. And, of course, there is the inevitable dog, in this case, a wise and friendly old Chow named "Skipper," who belongs in the next block but who is pet to all the kids and who makes the corner his headquarters.

Yes—Alma's Grocery is a colorful survival of the old days inside and out and well worth a visit.

Paul Schoeneman, Sun Prairie WI

Madison Landmarks Commission and Madison Planning Commission;

Concerning; 502 W Main St,

I think it would be a tremendous historical and architectural loss if 502 W Main Street is demolished.

This architecturally and historically important building is a very significant link to early Madison and the Basset Neighborhood.

It was built in 1866 by Mrs B Lannon as a residence and store.

The house is considered a 'sister' to the landmark Doris building one block further down W Main St.

An addition was added in 1875, the same year that Hannah and Chancellor Hill purchased the building.

Later the building housed San Piazza's shoe shop, and later it housed a grocery and liquor store.

The building obviously played a significant social role to the neighborhood.

Into the 1950's this intersection of Basset and W Main was know as 'Hill's Corner'.

Perhaps the developer can be asked to reconfigure his plans to spare this important building.

It is fortunate that the building is located so closely to the corner of W Main and Basset Streets.

This could allow the developer to spare 502 W Main St and build his development in an L-shape around 502 W Main's footprint. Perhaps the later 1875 (rear?) addition could be sacrificed in order to give the developer more of a developable parcel?

Please refer to the way that the 100 block of State St redevelopment was reconfigured in order to spare 3 historic buildings (and rebuild a 4th historic building). This development appears to provide a fairly seamless interior configuration of the 100 block. This compromise arose from requests by local preservationists.

Thank you,

Paul Schoeneman

Historical Summary 502 West Main Street the Lannon-Hill House & Store

Prepared by Gary Tipler. June 8, 2014



Overview on determining the history of 502 West Main

In the past few weeks, I spent a bit of time on research and conversations with the Donovan family members on their written histories and recollections of the house/store at 502 West Main Street. The challenge has been that so few early records of the building remain, and that there were generations of the families that lived there for which few records have easily been found. Thus the anecdotal histories may not have been accurate. This brief summary is based on records I was able to find.

Significance of 502 West Main, the Lannon-Hill House & Store

I believe the building to be architecturally significant as one of the few remaining residential/commercial buildings of the period and particularly of the Greek Revival Style. The Doris House at 605 West Main is the only other one of significance that remains.

Why 502 West Main wasn't listed in the Downtown Historic Preservation Plan.

Katherine Rankin recently recalled that 502 West Main wasn't included on the preservation list because it had alterations from its original appearance. Though the dates aren't known, the alterations included the very early rear one-story addition, perhaps in 1875; and a late-19th Century alteration to install store windows in the first floor, both of which would be included in a period of significance for a property listed on the National Register of Historic Places, should one be sought. There was also the alteration of a couple doorways on the building's Main Street façade to provide more window space for the store at some point, date(s) unknown, followed by a likely replacement of that window or door with another window in recent decades. Any of these latter alterations are reversible. The storefront windows nearest the corner are part of the building's history and should remain, if the building were to be renovated.

502 West Main Chronology

The house and store appears to have been built in 1867 by Mrs. Bridget Lannon, wife of Patrick Lannon, Irish immigrants. Patrick Lannon had fought in the Civil War. His death record has yet to be found. Bridget Lannon likely built the building and lived there with her son, William Patrick Lannon for a few years.

It appears that a Patrick Donovan had a grocery store in the building in 1868. The Donovans may have lived in the building between the residency of the Lannons and the Hills, who bought the building in about 1875. The Hannah and Chancellor Hill family maintained a grocery store on the ground floor and their home on the second floor for decades.

The neighborhood was strongly made of Irish immigrants and their families.

The Architecture

The Lannon House was built in a Greek Revival style. Though late for the period, it strongly resembled another house, the Doris House at 605 West Main Street, a Madison Landmark built in 1857-58. The difference was that the Lannon House was built with cream brick, likely from one of the Jefferson brickyard, which was stronger than the locally made vermilion-colored brick found in the Doris House. The other notable difference was the use of locally quarried sandstone for the lintels and sills, whereas the Doris house employed brick arches and sills.

The building may have been built similar to the James Doris House at 605 West Main Street for a reason. Thomas Doris lived next door to the Lannon House, so the Doris family may have influenced the selection of the builder or a decision to build in a similar style to his father's house a block west. Thomas Doris and the Donovan family were connected by marriage and by the business, the Providence House hotel.

The Greek Revival style commercial/residential buildings were found throughout commercial and residential corridors in Madison, though almost all have been demolished and or replaced by other buildings.

Sources

James Doris House, 605 W. Main, Madison Landmark Nomination Form

http://www.cityofmadison.com/planning/landmark/nominations/172_605WMainStreet.pdf

[It's a Long Way To Tipperary: The Donovan Family Odyssey](#), by Josephine Donovan.

Photos Provided by Gary Tipler, 6/9/12





Doris House, 603 W. Main Street

