



CHARLES QUAGLIANA

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Architect

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Mr. Kevin Burow, AIA, NCARB, LEED AP
Knothe & Bruce Architects, LLC.
7601 University Avenue
Middleton, WI 53562

Re: 616 West Wilson Street Historic Evaluation
Madison, WI.

Dear Kevin,

The following is my report on the 616 West Wilson Street property.

Purpose

The purpose of the research, observations and analysis was to investigate the property at 616 West Wilson Street to determine if the house can be linked to architects Claude and Starck.

Summary

Typical vernacular single-family "cottage" residence from the early 20th century. Typical catalog interior wood components, doors and trim from the period. Not noteworthy architecturally and it does not appear to be an architect designed house. Likely an addition to the rear now an integral part of the house. Apparently, there is no association with a significant person or event in history. Relatively intact interior and perhaps exterior (under vinyl siding). Contextually, this house and adjacent houses were isolated within a warehouse, railroad and commercial area, separate from the remainder of the neighborhood east of S. Bedford Street. Presently surrounded by 4-5 story contemporary office and apartment buildings.

At first glance and with moderate research efforts I cannot link this house to architects Claude and Starck; however, I cannot say it is not one of their commissions. I can say it is certainly not of the character, design and architectural vocabulary for which they are known. 616 West Wilson Street is not listed on either of the two primary inventories of their work, however several of their simple, unadorned commissions, such as the Dodge Creamery in Jefferson (1903), are also not listed. Without significant additional research it can not be determined if this is a Claude & Starck commission.

Overview

I walked through the house on March 7th to observe conditions and conducted limited research at the Central Library and Wisconsin Historical Society archives on March 11th.

The house is noted in an Intensive Survey Form, City of Madison/State Historical Society of Wisconsin, dated 9-18-2006. It is listed as the Russ Valentine House, Claude & Starck architects, 1900. The source of this information is listed as Architects File.

A house at this location initially shows up on Madison Sandborn maps in 1892 as a 1 story dwelling. The Sandborn map of 1898 shows the same dwelling. This dwelling is smaller than the current house. The 1902 Madison Sandborn map shows a 1 story dwelling very similar to today's house, in size and plan and with a front porch. One can assume the previous house was either removed and replaced or perhaps renovated.

Madison City directories from 1875 to 1925 list a Mr. Russ Valentine as a gardener living at 616 West Wilson Street.

I was able to view three images in the Wisconsin Historical Society digital collection. These are: Whi 34753 a view of the West Wilson Street area 1928; Whi 4568 a kite view of the railroad yards dated 1908; and, Whi 57703 a 1949 aerial view of the Isthmus. All provide a glimpse of West Wilson Street area but nothing definite can be discerned from the images.

I also looked at sources in the Madison Central Library including Madison City Directories, Madison telephone books and the clipping files. I found nothing that links this house to any architect or builder.

I checked the City Assessors file and found 616 West Wilson is parcel number 070923404100. The record indicates the house was constructed in 1901. This seems to be correlated to the Sandborn map information.

I was also able to find an article in *The Prairie School Review*, Volume 14, 1981, written by Gordon Orr about Louis Claude and the firm's work. It provides a list of known residential projects by the firm. 616 W. Wilson is not listed. Established in 1896, the firm's primary commissions were influenced by the work of architect George Maher of Chicago.

I checked the Northwest Architectural Archives at the University of Minnesota. They have a collection of Louis W. Claude Papers (blueprints, renderings, photos, etc. of many of the firm's projects). The collection contains a Master List of Commissions. There are no records of 616 W. Wilson Street or for Mr. Russ Valentine.

I was not able to find the thesis project of Gordon D. Orr, 1971, University of Wisconsin, Madison. It is assumed this thesis about Prairie Architecture in Madison inspired Mr. Orr to further research Claude and Starck architects during his lifetime.

General Observations

Architecture

This property is typical vernacular small-scale worker housing of the late 1800s in Madison. Small in scale, simple rectangular shape, essentially a floor and a half in height and with minimal distinguishing architectural features.

The interior is composed of standard catalog pine woodwork. It appears the vintage is late 1890s to early 1910s, as evidenced by the decorative head blocks and fluted casing on the first-floor doorways. These can be found in millwork catalogs of the era. (For example: Radford Millwork Co. of Oshkosh, WI. 1871) No significant built-in cabinets were observed. Door and door hardware appear to be pre 1900 designs. Wood trim and door hardware of the second floor are of a simple design, typical of second floor space. The stairway is composed of standard catalog components. The majority of the first floor remains near "original" condition. The second floor features low ceilings and half height side walls. There are three bedrooms and one bath on this level.

The house is likely balloon framed given its age. The exterior wall framing extends from the first floor to the roof line. The roof line appears to be straight and true. The house has a full basement.

The exteriors of the house retains its primary form but has lost portions of the defining elements, details and finishes as they are covered by vinyl siding or removed. The front porch appears to be original to the house, but has been upgraded with new flooring, posts, railings and some new brackets.

If you have any question of concerns about my commentary offered here please contact me to discuss.

Sincerely,

Charles J. Quagliana, AIA
Preservation Architect

