

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED APR 12 1978
DATE ENTERED SEP 21 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Fess Hotel

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 123 East Doty Street
CITY, TOWN Madison VICINITY OF Second
STATE Wisconsin 53703 CODE 55 COUNTY Dane CODE 025

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Peter Wright, Arabesque Limited

STREET & NUMBER 123 East Doty Street

CITY, TOWN Madison VICINITY OF Wisconsin 53703

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Register of Deeds, City-County Building

STREET & NUMBER 210 Monona Avenue

CITY, TOWN Madison STATE Wisconsin 53709

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Madison Architectural Survey

DATE 1973 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS City Planning Department, 210 Monona Avenue

CITY, TOWN Madison STATE Wisconsin 53709

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Fess Hotel looks different today than when the business developed in the late 1850's. At that time, George Fess occupied only structures on Lot 3 (south and adjacent to the present building). Tax records indicate that Fess bought the buildings in 1856 and that the lot was purchased later in 1859 or 1860.

Buildings on Lot 3 were expanded and remodeled at various times and included brick and frame structures. In 1871, Fess enlarged his hotel accommodations by the construction of a two-story, 30 x 60 foot cream brick building on Lot 3. In 1880 the hotel had 34 guest rooms and could accommodate 60 horses in the livery business. Having remarried following the death of her husband, George, Mrs. Anna Fess Doolittle in 1883 purchased the two buildings on the southwest one-half of Lot 4 (the two-story portion of the existing structure, probably built between 1854 and 1858). A cream brick facade was added to match the existing facade of the hotel buildings on Lot 3, and the interior was converted to hotel rooms. This symmetrical five-bay facade features stilted segmental arches of stone with keystones on the first floor and stilted round arches of stone above. The walls are articulated by plain brick pilasters between bays and corbelled brick string courses. A wrought iron balcony ties the three central bays and a mansard roof of tin tile rests over a bracketed and panelled entablature. By the time of this remodeling the Fess Hotel establishment included an ice house and livery barns extending through to East Wilson Street, which were operated by Edward Fess, son of George Fess, Sr.

In the 1890's George Fess, Jr. purchased the remaining half of Lot 4 and in 1901 commenced upon a major remodeling-rebuilding. It appears that much of the fabric of the existing structures on this lot was incorporated in the finished hotel during this \$14,000 remodeling. The present abutting walls are quite thick; in some places there are three courses of brick, a layer of plaster and wallpaper. At this time the northeast half of the building was built to three stories with a new facade of rose colored St. Louis brick. The first floor of this facade contains large picture windows. Above are two frame oriels flanking central French doors with shaped lintels and wrought iron balconies. Carved insets in molded panels, pilasters, and classical friezes decorate the two-story oriels. The entablature is trimmed with dentils and modillions. A simple marquee hangs over the central entrance. The buildings on Lot 3 were sold in 1907 and subsequently demolished. Minor and mostly interior remodellings were undertaken on the remaining Lot 4 portions in 1908 and 1924.

The old hotel lost much of its prestige in the twentieth century and fell into disrepair. A major interior remodelling campaign by the new owners has restored the uses of the 1901 structure--a restaurant, elegant hotel rooms, a roof garden and an interior courtyard (a cocktail lounge has also been added). The exterior of the building has been altered very little since 1901. With the recent brick cleaning, repainting, and replacement of old windows, the facade looks like new.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places
1973 State
State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 816 State Street
Madison, Wisconsin 53706

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			Historical development of Madison	

SPECIFIC DATES ca. 1854-1858; major alterations in 1883, 1901¹ BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown, 1901 addition by Gordon and Paunack, Madison.²

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

A major significance of the Fess Hotel is the continuous role it has played in the historical development of Madison. Beginning in the 1850's, it remained in the ownership of one family and was always a temperance house until mid-1972; thus it has one of the longest records of service to the public of any business establishment in the city, and for well over a century has been a popular hotel and eating place for the downtown area. The Fess Hotel is also significant as a fine vernacular example of Middle and Late Victorian commercial architecture combined in one structure, the exterior of which remains intact.

History

George E. Fess, the hotel's founder, is a good example of the poor immigrant who came to the middle west and after much hardship and with great industriousness, made good. Born in Gloucestershire, England in 1816, Fess came to America in the late 1830's and went to Milwaukee where he secured a position as a steward on a Michigan Lake steamer. In 1842 he came to Madison and in the next few years worked at numerous jobs in the restaurant and grocery business. In 1856 he moved the grocery business to Lot 3, Block 105, next to the present hotel, where he also ran an "eating house." The Clymer Street (Doty) locale was the busiest area in the capital city and was thought to be one of the most valuable from a business standpoint.

Exactly when George Fess started lodging visitors is not known, but it seems probable that the boarding business was an outgrowth of the other two businesses.

Never catering to the wealthy or "upper crust" lodger, the Fess lodged and fed all variety of visitors, mostly common everyday people. Juries, legislators, travelling salesmen, weekly boarders -- all took rooms at the Fess. Its close proximity to the railroad stations and reasonable rates made it a natural stop for rail passengers. In the 1880's a room could be had for \$1.40 a day and 40¢ could buy a meal. Carrie Nation stayed in the Fess in 1901 because it did not have a bar, through there were several saloons within a stone's throw.

Known as the Central Hotel from 1901-1911, many interesting events took place at the Fess. The Fess boys were "dandies" and were active in the more daring activities of turn-of-the-century Madison. The ice-boating and horse racing enthusiasts swapped tales in a room above the livery and the hotel served as a center for the fast horse crowd in Madison.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.1

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	6	3	0	6	2	3	0	4	7	7	1	6	1	0
ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

B

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 4 Block 105 of Original Doty Plat, City of Madison, Dane County, State of Wisconsin

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Leigh H. Mollenhoff, member

ORGANIZATION

Madison, Landmarks Commission

DATE

February 28, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1501 Morrison Street

TELEPHONE

608-255-2234

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53703

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Richard A. Emery

TITLE

Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

10/24/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

R. B. Rettig

DATE

9/21/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

William Melovich

DATE

9/19/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Today the Fess still serves the public while also serving as a very visible encouragement to wise recycling and adaptive-use preservation. The present owners have been sensitive to using the best and most usable of the old, consequently retaining charm and character while modernizing and preparing for more years of service.

Architecture

The 1883 section of the Fess Hotel is one of the finest examples of mid-Victorian brickwork remaining in the city of Madison [two others which rank closely in quality to the Fess are 129 State Street and 119 East Main Street, but the first floors of these structures have been completely altered]. The Fess is one of a half dozen Victorian commercial structures remaining in the city which retain their original first floor facades.

The 1901 section was designed by Gordon (James O.) and Paunack (Frederick W.), a "reasonably prosperous" architectural firm which operated in Madison from 1892 until 1904 and which designed competently in the eclectic, Queen Anne and Neo-Classical Revival styles.³ The Fess is among their finer designs and is also among the best Queen Anne commercial buildings in the city.

eclectic - classical

1. Tax Records, 1841-1860; Wisconsin State Journal, July 18, 1883 and Oct. 9, 1901
2. Wisconsin State Journal, October 9, 1901
3. "Madison, Past and Present," Wisconsin State Journal, Madison, 1902

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below PAGE 1

9. Butterfield, C. W., History of Dane County, 1880, reprinted in 1970
Durrie, Daniel Steele, A History of Madison...to July, 1874 (Madison, 1874),
77, 346
Interviews, Mrs. Marie Fess Spence and Perry D. Fess
"Madison, Past and Present," Wisconsin State Journal, 1902, p. 172
Madison Tax Records, 1841-60, 1865, 1872, 1884, 1900, 1908
Sanborn Insurance Maps, 1885, 1898, 1902, 1908
Weekly Wisconsin Patriot, 1(23):November 18, 1854
Wisconsin State Journal, July 18, 1883; October 9, 1901

11. Katherine E. Hundt, Architectural Historian

State Historical Society of Wisconsin September 26, 1977
816 State 608/262-2970
Madison Wisconsin 53706

Donald N. Anderson, Historian & Registrar, Historic Preservation Division

State Historical Society of Wisconsin September 30, 1977
816 State Street 608/262-0746
Madison Wisconsin 53706