

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Dane
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE SEP 12 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Bascom Hill Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
College Hill

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
*observatory Dr., Univ. ave., Park, Langley and State sts.*

CITY OR TOWN:  
Madison

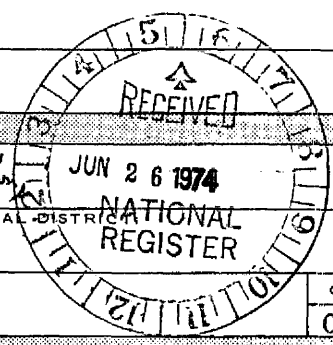
STATE:  
Wisconsin

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Second

COUNTY:  
Dane

CODE:  
55

CODE:  
025



3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
University of Wisconsin, City of Madison and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

STREET AND NUMBER:  
\_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN:  
Madison

STATE:  
Wisconsin

CODE:  
55

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Register of Deeds, Dane County

STREET AND NUMBER:  
210 Monona Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:  
Madison

STATE:  
Wisconsin

CODE:  
55

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Wisconsin's Historic Preservation Plan, Volume II: The Inventory

DATE OF SURVEY: 1973  
 Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
State Historical Society

STREET AND NUMBER:  
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Madison

STATE:  
Wisconsin

CODE:  
55

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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FOR NPS USE ONLY

HIS E 300/150  
246 N 441/1500 447 1500 447/1500

**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

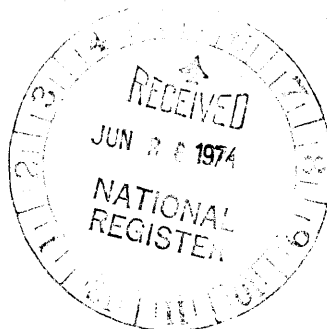
The Bascom Hill Historic District is an irregular area approximately 1,900 feet long from east to west and 1,500 feet long from north to south. The center of the district is sited roughly one mile due west of the Wisconsin State Capitol just west of the intersection of North Park Street and State Street. The vast majority of the ownership belongs to the University of Wisconsin, though one building belongs to the State Historical Society and some of the rights-of-way belong to the City of Madison. The entire district, therefore, is publicly owned.

The dominant topographic feature of the district is Bascom Hill, a tree-lined slope framed by the university's oldest and most respected buildings. This hill slopes from Bascom Hill, at the top, down and to the east of its foot along North Park Street, and it constitutes the major visual and functional axis in the area. Cross axes exist at the top of the hill in front of Bascom Hall from Birge Hall north through Muir Park to Lake Mendota, and just east of the hill from the Elvehjem Art Center north to Lake Mendota through Library Mall. The major axis along Bascom Hill actually extends visually along State Street from Bascom Hall itself to the State Capitol one mile east.

Some fifteen major buildings are included in the district along with several lesser buildings and the Carillon Tower. The district is the hub of University of Wisconsin activities, both social and academic, and adjoins Madison's most interesting and varied downtown commercial street, State Street. In good weather and during the summer the area teems with activity, which, frequently, focuses on the five-by-seven-mile Lake Mendota to the north or the exciting urban rhythms of State Street.

The original and present physical appearances, of course, vary a great deal. The area was, before 1851, one of Madison's dominant twin hills. The first was selected in 1836 as the seat of the state's capital city, and the second was thought to be natural for the seat of the state's university from the earliest days of statehood. Thus the "original" appearance was of a wooden wilderness still partially preserved by John Muir Park, and the present appearance is the result of a continual and vibrant physical evolution from 1851 to date.

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*[Faint, illegible text]*

## SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1851 - 1969

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric               | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering          | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry             | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture               | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention            | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture   | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape            | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Music     |   |  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Conservation   |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

THE SELECTION OF "COLLEGE HILL" - After the four lakes, the dominant topographic feature of the wilderness which was to become Madison must have been its two hills. The territorial legislature, in 1836, reserved the top of the easterly hill as the site of a future state capitol. It is not surprising that it was generally felt the second hill would be the site of a university. After 1838 the westerly hill popularly was called "College Hill," though it didn't receive the name formally until 1848.

Judge James Duane Doty, the prime mover behind the selection of Madison as the territorial capital, was also an inveterate speculator in "Wisconsin" lands, both on his own behalf and on that of eastern investors. One such investor was Aaron Vanderpoel, of New York, a member of the House of Representatives who concluded numerous deals in western lands through Doty. In and near the "City of Four Lakes," Doty acquired for Vanderpoel two quarter-sections, one in the proposed town and one west of it. The latter was to become the site of the University of Wisconsin. Doty was to point out to Vanderpoel his interest in seeing the selection of Madison as the capital upheld when Congressional review of the legislature's selection loomed as a prospect early in 1837. Doty had done his homework well, however, and had won many converts to his cause through the careful distribution of choice Madison lots and wise outside investments, such as Vanderpoel's.

Whether Doty foresaw the siting of a university on Vanderpoel's hill west of Madison is not known. The first official attempt to place it there came in the autumn of 1838. In January of that year the territorial legislature gave the university paper existence and stipulated that it be located "at or near Madison." The university act created a "Board of Visitors" and resulted in a petition to Congress for a land grant. The board appointed a committee composed of August Bird (another Doty colleague), David Brigham, and George Slaughter to examine lands in the vicinity of Madison and report at the next board meeting on a "suitable site for the location of the University." The board failed to secure the required lands but did succeed in implanting the idea generally that the hill west of the village should be the site for the University.

Fully ten years later the matter was pursued again and brought to conclusion. In 1848 Wisconsin became a state and the legislature created the University and a board of regents to govern it. That autumn the

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Jeffrey Dean and Gordon D. Orr, Jr., Bascom Hill Historic District  
 [Report to the Campus Planning Committee], Madison, Wis.:  
 April 30, 1974.

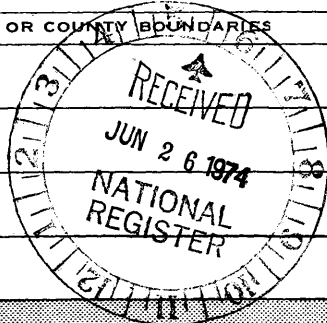
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY		OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	U.T.M. Coordinates:		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE			
NW	Madison West, Wis. (7 1/2')	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NE	<del>04207203</del>	0			0		
SE	04787200 <i>Incorrect</i>						
SW	<del>04767151</del> <del>04187154</del> <i>HS</i>						

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 46

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 AND TITLE:  
**Jeffrey M. Dean, State Preservation Planner**

ORGANIZATION: **State Historical Society** DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**816 State Street**

CITY OR TOWN: **Madison** STATE: **Wisconsin** CODE: **55**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: James Morton Smith  
 James Morton Smith

Title: Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Date: June 20, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

[Signature]  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 9/17/74

ATTEST:  
[Signature]  
 acting Keeper of The National Register

Date: 9-11-74

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(Number all entries)

8. Statement of Significance (continued) - a

first board of regents met. A major item on its agenda was the appointment of a committee not to choose a site but to buy "college hill" from Aaron Vanderpoel, that site being a foregone conclusion. The tract contained 157-1/2 acres and carried a price tag of \$15 an acre plus a 2-1/2% commission to Vanderpoel's agents, Catlin and Williamson. Vanderpoel had purchased the land through Doty in 1838 for \$1.25 an acre.

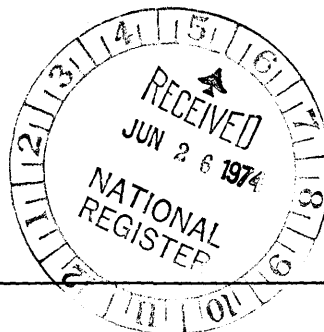
In January 1850 "A General Plan for The University of Wisconsin" was prepared which envisioned five buildings. Located at the westerly terminus of an approximate east-west axis was the "Main Edifice," now Bascom Hall, designed by Indianapolis architect William Tinsley. "North Dorm" and "South Dorm" were located further down the hill and were built after designs by Milwaukee architect John F. Rague who also apparently prepared the general plan. Still further down the hill two more identical dorms were proposed.

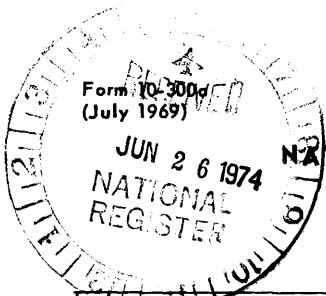
Sketchy and incomplete as it was, this plan was followed generally for nearly a decade.

On January 15, 1850 the regents elaborated Rague's plan detailing the dimensions of the proposed main edifice and describing "An Avenue two hundred and forty feet wide extending from the main edifice to the east line of the grounds and bordered by double rows of trees." The four dormitories were described in detail and two broad carriageways were prescribed outside the dormitories and parallel with the tree-lined avenue.

North Hall (1851) - John F. Rague, Milwaukee, Architect

The first building constructed after the regents approved the "General Plan" of 1850, North Hall was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966. Rague designed the Madison sandstone building to be very similar to dormitories at Ann Arbor, Michigan, and planned to build three more on the hill. Originally called "North Dormitory," the building cost \$19,000 to build and was opened to classes on September 17, 1851, with lecture rooms, a chapel, laboratories, a library, and living accommodations for up to 65 students. The fourth story was used for class work, and the lower floors for study and lodging. From 1861-1863 the world-famous naturalist John Muir lived on the first floor when the building was in use as a men's dormitory.





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8. Statement of Significance (continued) - b

South Hall (1855) - John F. Rague, Architect

North Hall's twin, this building frames the axis established in the 1850 plan and the view of Bascom Hall. South Hall contained more lecture rooms and student lodgings, and also a dining hall, a natural science collection, and faculty apartments. The \$20,000 cost of the building so crippled the University at the time that the purchase of books and apparatus had to be temporarily discontinued and the curriculum limited.

Bascom Hall (1857) - William Tinsley, Indianapolis, Architect

For well over a century, Bascom Hall has been the symbol of the University. One of its dominant features, a circular dome on an octagonal drum, was destroyed by a fire in 1916. Three additions to the 1857 center section, in 1895, 1907, and 1926, have expanded the building into its present form. An original semi-circular colonnade and porch on the east facade have been replaced by the stately Doric portico of today. Construction began in 1857, but the building was not finished until 1859 since funds did not come in as rapidly as hoped.

Assembly Hall and Library Building (1879) - David R. Jones, Madison, Architect

A rare example of the High Victorian Gothic style in Madison, this building, now called "Music Hall," was designed by the same architect who conceived Washburn Observatory. This interesting style evolved into the Richardsonian Romanesque, which is illustrated by Science Hall a few yards away across the hill. "Music Hall" was built with Madison sandstone and trimmed with bands of contrasting Lake Superior brownstone. The Assembly Hall and Library Building met two needs of the University in the 1870's. First, it provided a hall where the president of the University could meet all the students at a single sitting. Second, it was an important symbol of the advance of the University in the area of letters, in contrast to the sciences symbolized by the old Science Hall of 1875.

Mining Engineering and Heating Station (1887) - H. C. Koch, Milwaukee, Architect

Popularly known as "Radio Hall" after the long tenure which WHA radio had in this building starting in the 1930's, this building was designed by the same architect who conceived the original 1875 Science Hall and its 1888 replacement. Originally, it was the university heating station, but was soon converted to the Mining and Metallurgy Building before it was briefly abandoned. WHA, the oldest radio station in America to have a continuous scheduled broadcasting, occupied it from 1934 to 1972. About a quarter-century ago Frank Lloyd Wright declared Radio Hall to be one of the only two honest buildings in Madison, the other being the now-

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8. Statement of Significance (continued) - c

demolished City Hall. On the interior are some interesting examples of New Deal "Art Deco" design and artwork dating from the 1930's.

Science Hall (1888) - H. C. Koch and Allan D. Conover, Architects

This is the second Science Hall to stand on this site, the first being destroyed by fire. The design for the present Science Hall was initiated by H. C. Koch but concluded by Allan D. Conover, then professor of engineering at the University and employer of Frank Lloyd Wright. Koch designed a stone structure with foundation facings of Berling granite. But it was then decided to make the building fireproof and Conover was called in. He substituted structural steel, then a new innovation locally, hollow tile, and a red-brick superstructure. The whole was topped with a high-pitched roof of black slate. Wright described both Conover and the construction of Science Hall in his Autobiography. In 1920 a writer, doubtless influenced by contemporary Neo-Classicism, called Science Hall "The largest, most useful, most expensive, and easily the ugliest building the university had yet acquired. Science Hall will doubtless stand indefinitely, a monument to the prosperity, progressiveness, bad taste, and good intentions of the latter eighties." It is today one of the few remaining examples of the Richardsonian Romanesque in Madison.

University Armory and Gymnasium (1894) - Conover and Porter, Madison, Architects

One of the only two remaining buildings on campus designed by Conover and Porter, "Old Red" is perhaps the most significant historical site in the District. It was built to replace an original on the site destroyed by fire, and met with mixed responses at opening ceremonies. It was praised as one of the finest recreational facilities in the nation, and was also called, candidly, a monstrosity. For decades, "Old Red" was the center of University sporting, social, and cultural activities. It was the site of the annual sophomore-freshman "rush," and housed championship basketball teams from 1911 to 1934. On November 11, 1909 the new fight song, "On Wisconsin," was performed here for the first time by its composer, William T. Purdy, at a mass meeting before the Minnesota homecoming game. Pablo Casals, Ignatz Paderewski, John Philip Sousa, and the New York Symphony Orchestra are among those who performed here. But its greatest historical significance comes from having been the site of two important state Republican political conventions, both led by Robert M. LaFollette. Having been elected governor in 1900, LaFollette moved the 1902 convention to "Old Red" from its traditional Milwaukee site. In 1904 the famous "Gymnasium Convention" took place, the last of Wisconsin's statewide political conventions. A split took place between the Stalwart and Progressive wings of the party and the latter, backed up by husky football players, prevented the former from entering "Old Red." The Stalwarts held a rival convention, but

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8. Statement of Significance (continued) - d

Progressive party control had been assured.

State Historical Society (1900) - Ferry and Clas, Milwaukee, Architects

The State Historical Society building, a good example of the Neo-Classical Revival, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Carillon Tower (1934) - Arthur Peabody, Madison, Architect

Designed by Laird and Cret for Peabody, the 85-foot high Carillon Tower is second only to Bascom Hall as a University landmark. Originally built with twenty-five bells from England, there are now fifty-six bells installed. The original building was built with gifts from the classes of 1921 through 1926. In 1973 the final five bells, cast in the Netherlands, were installed largely through a fifty-year gift from the class of 1919. Regular concerts by the University carillonneur are known and appreciated throughout the region.

Humanities Building and Elvehjem Art Center (1969) - Harry Weese, Chicago, Architect

Though a contemporary building, this major structure is widely recognized as one of the most significant recent designs to have been built in Madison. It relates well to the Historical Society building across the street in scale, line, and color, even though some seventy years separate them. Of all the contemporary university buildings, it makes the most direct and tangible contribution to the character of the historic area.

John Muir Park -

This seven-acre wooded area, formerly known as Bascom Woods, was named in honor of naturalist John Muir by the regents in 1959. A three-level overlook surveying the waters of Lake Mendota was constructed on the park's knoll in 1962. Official dedication of the park as a laboratory for the study of plants and animals took place in 1964. At the dedication, botany professor Grant Cottam described the park as "one of nature's history books.....We have here a living document that serves as a primer for those students just beginning to read biology and as a technical encyclopedia for the more knowledgeable." Muir Knoll, formerly a campus ski jump, is marked by a red boulder dedicated to Muir in 1918.



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8. Statement of Significance (continued) - e

The University of Wisconsin, in considering this historic district proposal, adopted its own evaluation system for planning purposes which it applied to the buildings previously mentioned, as well as others in the district, as follows:

I. Essential to the district. North Hall, South Hall, Bascom Hall, the Assembly Hall and Library Building (Music Hall), Science Hall, and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

II. Buildings of historic significance which must be recognized in future uses of the sites. University Armory and Gymnasium, Mining Engineering and Heat Station (Radio Hall), the Carillon Tower, and the Memorial Union.

III. Not essential to the district, removal desirable with no replacement. University Club, Lake Lab, and the Sanitary Engineering and Pumping Station.

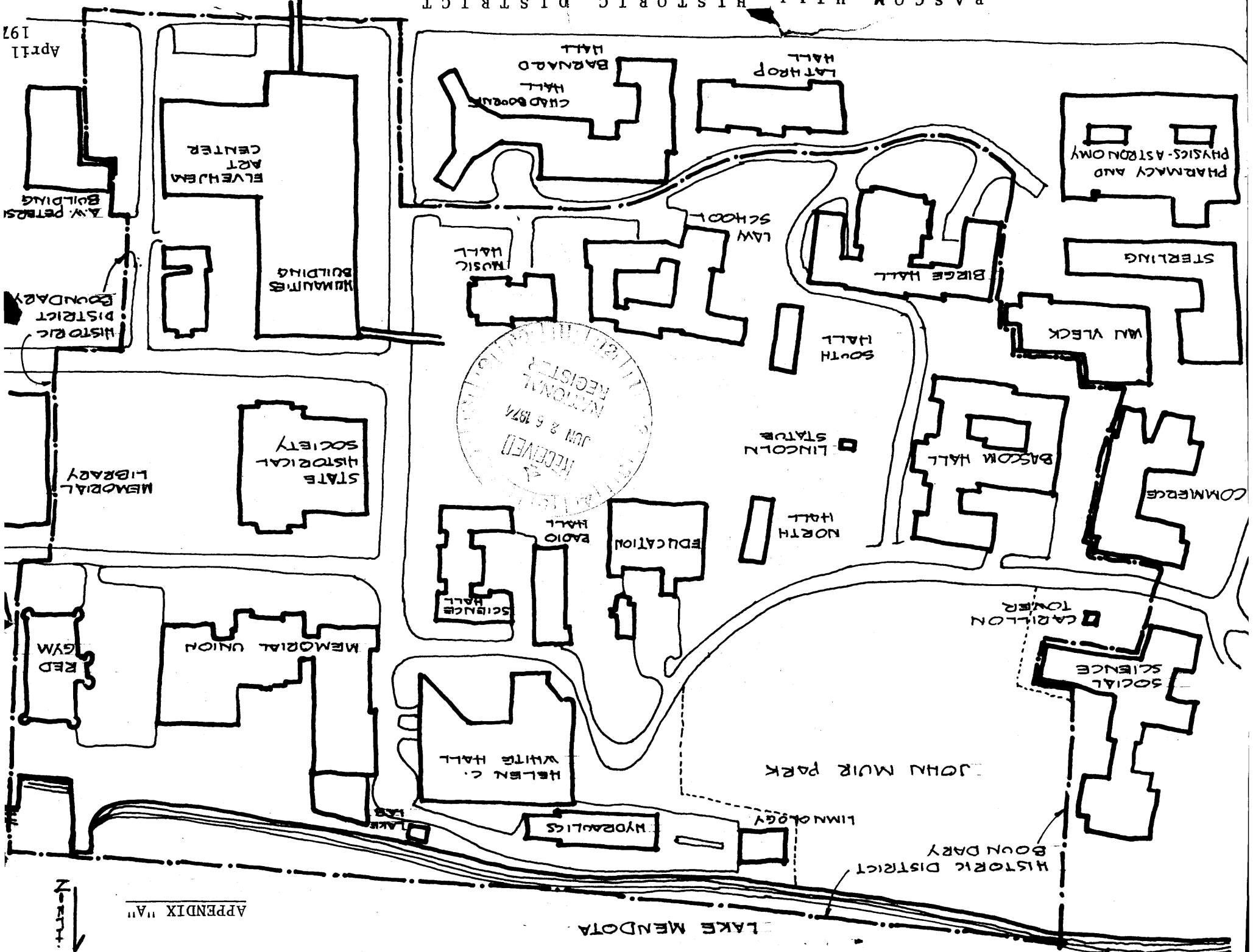
IV. Building occupies a key site and replacement will be critical. Birge Hall and the Education Building.

V. Contemporary buildings contributing to the district. Humanities Building and Elvehjem Art Center, Helen C. White Hall, and Limnology Laboratory.

In conclusion, the Bascom Hill Historic District represents the most historic cluster of institutional buildings in Wisconsin. Even beyond this it is a sensitive mix of urban and natural spaces comprising a memorable and coherent whole significant in itself. The buildings themselves are of major statewide significance, but together in their interrelationships and their relation to "College Hill" and Madison's natural environment they become part of the greater identity that is the Bascom Hill Historic District.



April 1972



APPENDIX "A"

LAKE MENDOTA

North

HISTORIC DISTRICT BOUNDARY

LAKE MENDOTA

Limnology

Hydraulics

JOHN MUIR PARK

HELEN C. WHITE HALL

SOCIAL SCIENCE

CARILLON TOWER

COMMERCE

BASCOM HALL

LINCOLN STATUE

NORTH HALL

EDUCATION HALL

SCIENCE HALL

RADIO HALL

STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMORIAL LIBRARY

WM. VECK

STERLING

PHARMACY AND PHYSICS-ASTRONOMY

BIRGE HALL

LAW SCHOOL

MUSIC HALL

HUMANITIES BUILDING

ELVEHJEM ART CENTER

A.W. PETERS BUILDING

CHADBOURNE HALL

LATHROP HALL

BARNARD HALL