

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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 Bowen, James B., House

historic Seth Van Bergen House

and/or common Bowen, James B., House (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 302 South Mills Street not for publication

city, town Madison vicinity of congressional district Second

state Wisconsin code 55 county Dane code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name James Korb, Korb Management

street & number 505 North Pinckney

city, town Madison vicinity of state Wisconsin 53703

5. 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 Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" 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 James Bowen House is a two-story Italianate villa built of locally quarried sandstone. Its coursed ashlar masonry is an enduring example of stone construction popularized by German immigrants in the second half of the 19th century.¹ Square in plan, the Bowen house features an original centrally-located cupola and a small, single story rear wing also of sandstone. The latter served as the kitchen and the servants' quarters during the early years of the house. The regular fenestration and the simplified stone lintels above the windows suggest carry-overs of Greek Revival elements.

The low-pitched hipped roof is underlined by ornate brackets and a plain frieze. There are two brick chimneys on the north and south sides. The original single story veranda formerly ran the length of the east facade until replaced by a wrap-around porch in the 1890's.² The veranda was fronted by wooden Ionic columns. Cast iron cresting once edged the roof of the veranda and also along the edge of the roof of the house. Today only the east side of the wrap-around porch remains. There were initially two entrances to the house: the main entrance through the east-facing veranda, and a kitchen door on the south side of the rear wing. That rear entrance has since been replaced by two doors on the north side accommodating two apartments in a wood frame addition to the wing.

The interior of the house has been altered to create seven apartment units. The present utilitarian staircase replaced a grand, divided staircase in the entrance hallway.³

A wood frame carriage barn mirrored the lines of the main house just to the southwest of it. The barn was built at approximately the same time as the house. Also square in design, the barn possessed a smaller and simpler cupola and a crested railing that circumscribed the hipped roof. It was destroyed shortly after 1923.

The house rested on a 60 acre tract of land up to the turn of the century, at which time the property was divided into residential parcels. Presently the 60 acre estate has been reduced to a single lot where the house stands on the corner of Mills and Chandler streets.

¹Richard W. Perrin, Architecture of Wisconsin, chapter seven.

²Ramsay family scrapbook.

³Interview: Wayne Ramsay III, April, 1980

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 type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
				Association with significant person

Specific dates 1852-55¹ **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The James Bowen House stands as a reminder of early Madison. It has weathered change from its origin as a farmhouse on a 60-acre estate to becoming the home of a prominent Madison family for 64 years, and eventually to its current function as an apartment building. One of Madison's oldest surviving sandstone houses, it is a prime example of well executed masonry construction that flourished in Madison in the 1850's and 1860's, and well-preserved Italianate villa.

Association with Significant Person

The construction of the house occurred between 1852 and 1855 by a local real estate investor and farmer, Seth Van Bergen. Bergen came to Madison in 1842 and owned a number of farms and at one time was "owner of nearly the whole of Greenbush,"² an early-developed neighborhood on the southwest edge of the city. The house rested on the east end of 60 acres, most of which was cultivated with oat and wheat crops. In 1859 a recent Madison settler from Connecticut, James B. Bowen, purchased the house from Van Bergen. Bowen was to lead a very active and distinguished life in Madison. He became the first homeopathic physician to practice in Dane County and although he met with initial feelings of animosity, the doctor eventually established one of the largest practices in the region.³ Bowen was elected mayor of Madison in 1871 on the Republican ticket, becoming the city's 10th mayor since being incorporated in 1856. Bowen also found time to be president of the Park Savings Bank in addition to conducting a number of other business ventures throughout his years in Madison.

James Bowen's daughter and her husband, Wayne Ramsay, inherited the house after Bowen's death in 1881. James Ramsay, their son, assumed ownership in 1914, living there until 1923 when the house was sold to a Lutheran organization. Plans to convert the house to a children's hospital never materialized. The Bowen house briefly housed two university fraternities in 1925-26 and 1927-28, and then was an orphan's home in 1929-30.⁴ By 1935 the house had been divided into three separate apartments and since that time four more units within the house have been created.

Architecture

The exterior of the Van Bergen-Bowen House has survived remarkably well over the past century and a quarter and remains essentially as it appeared in the 19th century. Its facade is one of the best preserved of the sandstone block homes built in Madison during this period. With its bracketed cupola intact, it is perhaps the best example of cubic Italian Villa form in Madison. Because at the time of its construction the house was located outside of town, the Bowen house now is an imposing older landmark in the midst of a much younger, smaller scale neighborhood.

The house was designated as a local landmark by the Madison Landmarks Commission in 1972.

(continued)

UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property c. 0.14

Quadrangle name Madison West, Wisconsin

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6	3	0	4	2	2	0	4	7	7	0	5	1	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 5 of Block 13 of Bowen's Addition to Madison.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Daniel Erdman, Volunteer, Historic Preservation Division

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date August, 1980

street & number 816 State Street telephone (608) 255-1715

city or town Madison state Wisconsin 53706

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Richard Murray

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 5/6/81

For HCRS use only

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

Entered in the

National Register date

3/1/82

John
factory
Selma Byers

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 1

8. SIGNIFICANCE (continued)

FOOTNOTES

¹ Abstract of Title for Bowen House, Dane Co. Title Company, Madison.

² Wisconsin Necrology, vol. 10, p. 182.

³ Madison, Past and Present, pub. by Wisconsin State Journal, page 144.

⁴ Madison City Directories, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1920-1935.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 1

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (continued)

Abstract of title for Bowen House, Dane Co. Title Company, Madison, Wis.

History of Dane County, 1880, Wisconsin State Historical Society

Madison City Directories, Wisconsin State Historical Society.

Ramsay family scrapbook.

Wm. J. Park Co. Madison, Dane County and Surroundings, Madison, 1877.

Perrin, Richard W., Architecture of Wisconsin, Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1967.

Madison Past and Present, Wisconsin State Journal, semi-centennial edition, 1902.