

INVENTORY FORM FOR NOMINATED PROPERTIES

Name of property: Abner L. Harris House (Reedsburg MAH)

Owner: Elmer Swanson

Address: 226 North Pine Street

Owner's address: 226 North Pine Street

City: Reedsburg County: Sauk

Reedsburg, Wisconsin

REGISTRATION INFORMATION

160 NRHP Certification (date)

- Listed in NRHP (LI)
- Determined eligible in DOE process (DD)
- Determined eligible in nomination process (DN)
- Additional documentation added to nomination (AD)
- Boundary increased (BI)
- Boundary Decreased (BD)
- Delisted (DL)

170 Thematic or Multiple Resource Nomination Name (code)

Multiple Resources of Reedsburg

180 NRHP List Name Abner L. Harris House

190 Level of Significance

- national (NA)
- state (ST)
- local (LO)

200 District Classification

- pivotal (P)
- contributing (C)
- non-contributing (NC)

210 Applicable Criteria

- event (A)
- person (B)
- architectue/engineering (C)
- information potential (D)

215 Criteria Considerations

- religious property (A)
- moved property (B)
- birthplace or grave (C)
- cemetery (D)
- reconstructed property (E)
- commemorative property (F)
- less than 50 years old (G)

220 Area of Significance (code)

- Architecture
- Other-Significant person

230 Period of Significance

1873-1908 (Date of construction: c. 1873)  
Source: A

340 Review Board Date 10/19/84

70 USGS Quad Map

Reedsburg West Quadrangle

80 UTM Coordinates (Format: 99-999999-9999999)

15-742120-4824140

85 Listed Acreage Less than one

60 Verbal Boundary Description Mott's First Addition,

Lots 6 & 7, City of Reedsburg; also south 33' of  
Lot 8, Block 8 in Mott's First Addition.

Description

The Abner L. Harris house is a brick Second Empire style residence located on Reedsburg's north side. A mansard roof with small circular windows under horseshoe shaped arched dormers caps this two story house. The roof is now painted slate but a c. 1899 photo shows a two-tone slate roof with a diamond pattern design on it (F). The roof has a heavy cornice with paired brackets and a paneled frieze. There are large 4/4 windows on both stories with horseshoe shaped arched heads. The front porch has a flat roof, paired brackets, paired columns with capitals on bases, and a wood balustrade. The corner columns are tripled. Two front and side bay windows have arched head windows and the front windows are leaded. The main entry has the same circular arch motif found on the rest of the house and has a fanlight over the large paneled double doors that have circular relief patterns. The plan of the house is rectangular, although an 1881 brick addition (C) and a clapboard solarium form appendages to the main house. A clapboard sided bay window was built on the south side much later, perhaps in the 1940's (E).

The solarium is visible only from the side of the house and is not an obtrusive addition. The clapboard bay window at the southwest corner does not enhance the design of the house, but is not highly visible because of the presence of large evergreens.

The interior of the house, like the exterior, is characterized by large proportions. The first story ceilings are tall and have plaster center ceiling ornaments and cornices. Pocket doors with beveled glass separate some of the rooms. A stairway on the south leading to the second story has a massive newel post with in-laid woodwork. Two marble fireplaces with leaf and floral motifs decorate the front parlor and dining area and a large chandelier hangs from the center of the parlor. The chandelier was probably moved from a house of the same era that was razed in the 1930's (E). The second story of the house has bedrooms and baths and ceilings have been lowered.

The Harris house is located in a residential section of the city, near the corner of North Pine Street and Second Street. The adjacent corner lot is empty and the grounds

See Continuation Sheet

Architectural/Engineering Statement of Significance

The Abner L. Harris house is a significant example of the Second Empire style in Reedsburg and the only residential property of this style in the city.

As a unique and well-executed example of this style, it merits individual nominations for excellence of design. When compared to other residences of the 1870's, the Harris house stands out as one of the finer examples of design and construction in Reedsburg. Only one other house of the same era, the High Victorian Gothic Edward M. Hackett house at 612 East Main Street (also being nominated), is comparable in degree of integrity and design execution.

William Dierks, who built this house, was born in Hanover, Germany. He learned carpentry and building in Germany and continued to work at this trade for nine years after arriving in Reedsburg in 1866. Part of this time he was the partner of

See Continuation Sheet

690 Bibliographic References (Sources)

- A - "Reedsburg Free Press", January 2, 1874.
- B - "Reedsburg Free Press", July 16, 1874.
- C - "Reedsburg Free Press", May 5, 1881.
- D - "Reedsburg Free Press", April 10, 1900.
- E - "Reedsburg Times-Press", August 2, 1973.
- F - "The Reedsburg Times", Souvenir Edition, May 5, 1899.
- G - "Reedsburg Free Press", January 2, 1874 & August 2, 1872.
- H - "Reedsburg Free Press", January 3, 1873.
- I - "Reedsburg Free Press", July 16, 1874.
- J - Butterfield, C. W., The History of Sauk County (Chicago, Western Historical Society, 1880).
- K - Memorial and Biographical Records and Illustrated Compendium of Biography (Chicago, George A. Ogle & Co., 1901).

See other side of sheet

700 Study Units (code)Commerce: Retail TradeWholesale Trade

350 Demolished

\_\_\_\_\_yes \_\_\_\_\_no

360 Date Demolished

## Historical Background

In June, 1874 Abner L. Harris bought Dierks' house for \$4,000, \$800 of which was paid in lots that Harris owned on the east side of the public square (City Park)(I).

Harris was born near Mansfield, Ohio in 1839 and came to the Town of Troy, Sauk County, Wisconsin in June, 1846 with his parents. In 1860 he left and became a traveling salesman in Wisconsin and Iowa until 1862 when he followed the army as a sutler until the close of the war (except for a few months he spent in Canada). He then went to Mobile, Alabama and opened a grocery store which he ran for one year. Harris came back to Troy, Wisconsin and farmed there until 1867 when he opened a mercantile business in Loganville that he operated until 1871. He then joined with John Kellogg in Reedsburg to form Kellogg and Harris, a general store.

In 1880 the firm of Harris & Hosler was organized. It was a general merchandise store and had a shipping operation. In 1893 Harris & Hosler helped form the firm of Stolte, Dangle & Foss to run the mercantile operation so that they could concentrate on the shipping aspect of their business (J,K). The Harris & Hosler firm did a large volume of shipping potatoes, produce, grain, wool, and railroad ties (L). In 1896 they built a new business block at 196 Main Street.

Harris helped finance the local woolen mill and in 1893 led the movement for city electric and water installation when he was mayor. He also was on the Building Committee of the Presbyterian Church and helped finance the building's construction. He was postmaster during the Grant, Hayes and Garfield administrations and a three time mayor of Reedsburg (M). In 1904 the local newspaper reported Harris might have a concession to supply workers on the Panama Canal (N). Harris was in Panama in 1904 and again in 1906, but information on his activity there is vague (O). Harris died in 1908.

Soon after his death his daughter married William Hannibal Brigance and owned and occupied the home at 226 North Pine Street. That year Mrs. David B. Rudd (Mary Meyer Rudd) bought the house (E). Her late husband had been a lumberman and investor in Rudd's Mills and in various Reedsburg industries. The Rudds had adopted Mrs.

See Continuation Sheet

## Historical Statement of Significance

The Abner L. Harris house has local historical significance for its association with Harris, a prominent merchant and early promoter of Reedsburg. Harris was a partner in one of the larger shipping concerns in Reedsburg between 1871-1908. An indication of the scope of his business is shown by Harris' trips to Panama in 1904 and 1906 when he was exploring the possibilities of obtaining a concession to supply canal workers. Harris was a major backer in what would become the Big Store, the city's largest retail establishment. In a city such as Reedsburg that was a trade center for the surrounding area, this was an important role. In his 1908 obituary the newspaper noted that "Mr. Harris came here with the advent of the railroad . . . and began that aggressive system of merchandising which from that time to this has made our little city famous throughout the southern part of this state and given us that substantial growth . . . he very soon gave Reedsburg a reputation which drew trade and patronage for miles outside our county . . . it has been said the Harris & Hosler store was a school for other merchants" (M)

Harris also helped finance the local woolen mills and the Presbyterian Church and was a leader of the movement to get water and electric power for Reedsburg in 1893. Further civic activity of Harris' is indicated by his appointment as postmaster and his election as mayor three times. Harris is important to the history of Reedsburg because of his contribution to the development of the city through his civic and financial activities.

## Bibliographic References (sources) con't:

- L - "Wisconsin Industrial Review", March 1912 (Vol. XIII, No. 147).
- M - "Reedsburg Free Press", April 23, 1908.
- N - "Reedsburg Free Press", March 17, 1904.
- O - "Reedsburg Free Press", April 1, 1904 & April 19, 1906.
- P - "Reedsburg Free Press", June 10, 1938.

Continuation Sheet

226 North Pine Street  
Reedsburg, Wisconsin

Additional Description con't:

are flat. Landscaping consists of evergreens near the house. The home is larger than those around it and, therefore, very visible.

Architectural Statement of Significance con't:

Edward M. Hackett, who lived at 612 East Main Street. In 1875 Dierks opened a furniture store which he sold in 1880, the same year he bought a one quarter share in the local brewery. He also built (and probably designed) J. V. Kelsey's business block in 1873 at 297 Main Street and his own furniture store in 1878 at 251 Main Street.

The bricks for the Harris house were delivered in August, 1872 but the house was not finished until the end of 1873 (G). It is characterized by its large proportions, horseshoe shaped window arches, and mansard roof with circular windows. The clapboard bay window on the side of the house, a recent addition, does not detract from the overall integrity or proportions of the house. Even as the house was being completed in 1873 it was recognized as an outstanding home. The "Reedsburg Free Press" wrote that "the mansard roof of the fine dwelling of William Dierks looms up before us, and, upon inspection, we conclude that this building is probably the most stylish in town" (H).

Historical Background con't:

Rudd's niece, Freda Blank, and after Mrs. Rudd died in 1924, Freda married Edward Nishan and continued to live in this house until her death in 1938. Freda donated

Historical Background con't:

funds to build the Presbyterian manse in 1925 at 330 Second Street and gave the city land to build a new hospital at 547 North Park Street in 1933. When she died, she gave donations to the city, the Presbyterian Church, Greenwood Cemetery, the library and established a fund for goiter research (P). Her husband lived in the house until his death.