

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

historic Jonas, Karel, House

and/or common Terry B. Vetter House

2. Location

street & number 1337 North Erie Street not for publication

city, town Racine vicinity of congressional district First

state Wisconsin 53402 code 055 county Racine code 101

3. Classification

Table with 4 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Present Use. Includes options like district, building(s), structure, site, object, public, private, both, occupied, unoccupied, work in progress, accessible, agriculture, commercial, educational, entertainment, government, industrial, military, museum, park, private residence, religious, scientific, transportation, other.

4. Owner of Property

name Terry B. Vetter

street & number 1337 North Erie Street

city, town Racine vicinity of state Wisconsin 53402

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Racine County Courthouse

street & number 730 Wisconsin Avenue

city, town Racine state Wisconsin 53403

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Architectural and Historical Survey of the City of Racine has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1979 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 building known as the Karel Jonas House is actually the project of two building campaigns, one by Jonas, and the other by merchant Peter Stoffel. The original house was built for Karel Jonas about 1878.¹ Jonas purchased lots 15 and 16 in Block 51 for \$525 in 1874, but continued living on North Wisconsin north of Hubbard. He is first listed in the City Directory as living on the southeast corner of North Erie and Barker Streets in 1879.² The assessed value for the two lots also tripled between 1878 and 1879.

Jonas and his wife sold 1337 to Peter Stoffel in 1894 for \$3,350. Stoffel's expansion of the house took place some time between 1901 and 1908, probably in 1901 or 1902, during which time the assessed value more than doubled.

The original house was a two-story, gable-roofed, ell-shaped brick house with a one-story brick wing in the rear. The main entrance to the house was through the angle of the ell where there was a long porch on the southern elevation.

Basically, the style of the house was Italianate. It had, and has, segmentally-arched windows with label moldings of rowlock and header bricks. The deep eaves of the roof contain large triangular wooden brackets, alternating paired and single. Unlike most brick houses on the northside, the Jonas house was faced with stretcher bond rather than common.

The Stoffel addition filled the angle of the ell, added a three-sided two-story bay to the south, and widened and raised the rear wing. A small pedimented portico was added to the entrance, now on the street elevation.

Stoffel's addition is curved on the southeast corner, the wall being formed entirely of header bricks. A leaded-glass window makes this curve on the first floor, as does a blind arcade of stubby Doric columns and flat basket arches on the second. The verges of the roof are also curved.

Atop the corner section is a round turret with conical roof tipped by a pointed sheetmetal finial. The sides of the turret contain alternating squares of window and panels with relief fleur-de-lis.

1. Racine County Register of Deeds, vol. 62, p. 404.
2. Racine City Directory, 1879, p. 122.

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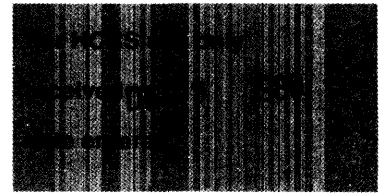
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6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places

1978

State

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

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 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	1878 ¹ ; ca. 1901-2 ²			Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

1137 North Erie Street is significant as it is the principal residence of Karel Jonas, the leading Bohemian-American of his age and a major political, literary, and ethnic figure in the late 19th century.

Karel Jonas was born in Malesow, Bohemia on October 30, 1840. He received his education at the Polytechnic Institute and also attended lectures at Prague University. In 1859, while a student, Jonas wrote The Present Condition of Austrian Colleges and Academies, a critique of the middle-school system of the Hapsburg Empire. The contents of this work so offended the Austrian government that it was seized before publication and Jonas expelled from school and persecuted.³

In 1860, he travelled to London where he learned English and wrote for Bohemian periodicals. In June, 1863, Jonas was offered the editorship of Slavie (The Slav), founded by Frank Korizek of Racine, Wisconsin in 1860.⁴ Jonas accepted the offer and held the post of editor for some thirty-two years.

Jonas was a highly competent linguist and as early as 1864 published a work entitled A Spelling Book and First Reader for Czech-Slavic Youth in America. This was followed in 1865 with the adult version, The Bohemian-American Interpreter, a pronunciation guide and modified grammar with a practical section that included such everyday activities as letter-writing and shopping. A revised edition, The New American Interpreter appeared in 1884 and went through nineteen editions by 1922.⁵

Of greater significance was Jonas' lexicographical work, the Czech-English Dictionary with Full English Pronunciation Guide, the first edition of which appeared in 1876. This was the first known Czech-English dictionary of its kind.⁶ It had an extraordinary longevity; a sixth edition was published as recently as 1951. Jonas' final grammar was published in 1890: Bohemian Made Easy: A Practical Bohemian Course for English-Speaking People.

Jonas also provided other types of practical assistance to his Czech countrymen who were struggling to adapt to American life. In 1878, he published a farmers' almanac, the Golden Book for the Farmer, which was a compilation of extracts from Slavie. In 1882, Jonas edited and published American Law: A Collection of Especially Important Laws and Legal Commentaries for Czech-American Settlers. This was a noteworthy digest of information dealing with immigration and citizenship law, taxation, property, wills, and vital statistics registration. Jonas also appealed to his countrymen through Slavie, in which, according to the noted Czech-American historian, Thomas Capek, "his word was law and his decision admitted of no appeal."

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 0.25

Quadrangle name Racine South, Wis.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	6	4	3	5	5	9	10	4	7	3	1	8	10	10
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 15 except S 45 feet of West 90 feet and Lot 16, Block 51
Original Plat (of City of Racine)

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 Michael R. Matucheski, Preservation Assistant, Historic Preservation Division

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date September 9, 1980

street & number 816 State Street telephone 608/262-3390

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 Henry

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 11/13/80

For HCERS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 3/1/82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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8. Significance

Jonas was a Republican until 1872 when he refused to support Grant for a second term. He then became active in Democratic party administrative affairs and policy making, serving as a member of the Democratic State Central and Executive Committees in Wisconsin.

In April, 1876, Jonas entered elective politics for the first time by winning a seat on the Racine common council, representing that city's predominately-Czech fourth ward.⁸ From 1878 to 1880 he served as president of the council. During this period, he also won a seat in the state assembly (November, 1877).

As a state legislator, Jonas sponsored legislation to compel employers to pay wages in lawful money and he strongly advocated liberalization of the bankruptcy law. He introduced a bill that improved the state's child labor law, and, more importantly, proposed the first legislation for the Bureau of Labor and Industrial Statistics, the forerunner of the Wisconsin Industrial Commission.⁹

In 1882, Jonas won election to the state senate and served in this body during the 1883 and 1885 legislative sessions. He continued to pursue child labor reform, wage collection, and the rights of debtors, but, on the whole, he was less active in the senate than he had been in the assembly.

Jonas was elected lieutenant-governor under George W. Peck in 1890, serving as the "ethnic" member of the Democratic team which was hoping to benefit from the reaction stemming from the passage of the Bennett Law in 1889, a compulsory school statute that also required instruction in the English language.¹⁰ Although a free-thinker, Jonas opposed the Bennett Law as an unnecessary interference with private rights and individual liberty, but this opposition was probably half-hearted. Peck and Jonas won re-election in 1892 but Jonas soon tired of his ceremonial post and resigned in April, 1894 and turned to the patronage of the federal government as he had done once before.

Jonas had longed to return to Bohemia for some time, which inspired him to seek the consular post in Prague. He did so aggressively, soliciting the assistance of President Cleveland's postmaster general, William F. Vilas of Madison. Within six weeks of Cleveland's inauguration, Jonas had the offer in his pocket, accepting what actually amounted to a minor post, on April 24, 1885. However, he was unable to assume his duties until January 12, 1887, due to the opposition of Austria-Hungary, which felt that Jonas had been "too much mixed up in Austrian politics," through his anti-Hapsburg editorials in Slavie and by way of his contact with one of the leaders of the Czech nationalist movement, Julius Gregr of the "Young Czechs."¹¹

As consul to Prague, Jonas performed his duties diligently. During his term he aided his brethren, providing them with information on farming techniques developed in the United States that might be of help to the Czech farmer as well as other technical data which was provided through a library he had set up at the consulate for use by the Czechs. However, Jonas became outspokenly critical of some of the behavior of his countrymen, especially the dual nationals who avoided the responsibilities of citizenship.¹²

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Jonas held the Prague consular post until July 15, 1889, following the ascendance of the Republicans once again. Later, he served as consul to St. Petersburg, and, in his final days, to Krefeld, Germany, where he died on January 15, 1896. He was buried near Prague.¹³

1. Racine County Register of Deeds, vol. 62, p. 404
2. Ibid., vol. 93, p. 511.
3. Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, p. 193.
4. Karel D. Bicha, "Karel Jonas of Racine: First Czech in America" in Wisconsin Magazine of History, vol. 63, no. 2, p. 124.
5. Ibid., p. 129.
6. Ibid..
7. Thomas Capek, The Czechs (Bohemians) in America (Boston and New York, 1920), p. 183.
8. Racine Journal, April 4, 1896, p. 1.
9. Bicha, "Karel Jonas" in Wisconsin Magazine of History, vol. 63, no. 2, p. 133.
10. Racine Journal, September 3, 1890, p. 1; Wisconsin Blue Book, 1891, pp. 574-575.
11. Bicha "Karel Jonas," p. 136.
12. "Bohemian and Hungarian Emigration to the United States," in Reports from the Consuls of the United States, 32: 493-494 (1890).
13. Racine Journal, January 15, 1896, p. 1.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

"Bohemian and Hungarian Emigration to the United States," in Reports from the Consuls of the United States, 32: 493-494 (1890).

Bicha, Karel D., "Karel Jonas of Racine: First Czech in America" in Wisconsin Magazine of History, vol. 63, no. 2, pp. 122-140.

Capek, Thomas, The Cechs (Bohemians) in America (Boston and New York, 1920).

Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, p. 193.

Racine Journal, September 3, 1890; April 4, 1895; January 15, 1896.

Racine City Directories.

Racine County Register of Deeds, vol. 62, p. 404; vol. 93, p. 511.

Sanborn-Perris Maps for Racine, 1894, 1908.

Wisconsin Blue Book, 1891.

11. Form Prepared by

David Black, Researcher
Architectural Conservation Program
800 Center Street, Room 329
Racine, Wisconsin 53403

December 7, 1976