

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 26 1987

date entered JUN 25 1987

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic n.a.

and/or common Simeon Mills Historic District

2. Location

street & number 102 through 118 King Street;
115 through 123 E. Main Street not for publication

city, town Madison vicinity of

state WI code 55 county Dane code 025

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | N.A. | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant |

4. Owner of Property

name Please see inventory of buildings on continuation sheet

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dane County Courthouse

street & number 210 Monona Avenue

city, town Madison state WI 53709

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1973; updated 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state WI 53706

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Simeon Mills historic district is located at the corner of Main and King Streets, the east corner of the Capitol Square in downtown Madison. King Street is one of the four streets that radiate from the corners of the Square in the direction of the points of the compass. Sloping away from the Square, it ends two blocks east at East Wilson Street. Just beyond are the railroad tracks and the shore of Lake Monona. Main Street runs along the southeast face of the Square.

The district is small, encompassing only one, triangular-shaped block. It is composed of seven buildings, now divided into nine ownership parcels. The buildings have a unity of scale and material, enhanced by the fact that they are joined by party walls. All of the buildings are two or three stories in height, except for a small wing at the rear of 116 King Street, which is one story high. All of the buildings are brick load-bearing construction, four have sandstone facades and two have brick facades. The seventh building is an 1855 structure the facade of which was completely rebuilt in 1972 in metal and glass. This is the only non-contributing building within the district.

The buildings range in date from ca. 1845 to 1887. Five of the buildings are Italianate in style and one is vaguely Romanesque. Following is a short description of each building:

117 E. Main Street, Schoen building, David R. Jones, Architect, 1875. Local sandstone was used for the face of this three-story building in the Italianate style. Carved stone window arches, sills and surrounds and small quoins trim the four-bay facade. The large, four-over-four windows are original; the original cornice is gone. The interior features a stamped tin ceiling on the second floor.

119 E. Main Street, Thompson block, 1868 (NRHP 6-7-84). This three-story, four-bay, cream brick building has exuberant and unique brickwork, in the form of denticulated segmental window arches, deeply recessed window bays and fancy corbelling under the cornice. The cornice and original windows were removed many years ago. The first floor storefront was restored in 1984.

121-123 E. Main Street, Argus-Heilmann building, late 1840s, new facade 1891-1892. This brick two-story building has seven double-hung windows on the second story. A heavy rusticated stone stringcourse at the second story lintel level and a corbelled cornice lend a vaguely Romanesque feeling to the simple design. The storefronts have been remodeled between the original iron posts.

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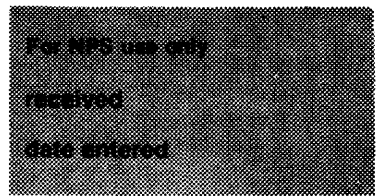
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Item #4: Owner of Property

INVENTORY OF BUILDINGS

102 King Street, contributing
John and George Sutton
104 King Street
Madison, WI 53703

104 King Street, contributing
John and George Sutton
104 King Street
Madison, WI 53703

106 King Street, contributing
Paul Rauterberg
106 King Street
Madison, WI 53703

110-112 King Street, non-contributing
LCR Partnership
c/o Contact Realty, Martin Rifken, Pres.
P. O. Box 2079
Madison, WI 53701

114-116 King Street (also known as 108 S. Webster St.), contributing
LCR Partnership
c/o Contact Realty, Martin Rifken, Pres.
P. O. Box 2079
Madison, WI 53701

118 King Street, small parking lot
Security Savings and Loan
184 W. Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53203

115 E. Main Street (also known as 108 King Street), contributing
Allen H. Chase
102 N. Spooner Street
Madison, WI 53705

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117 E. Main Street, contributing
Contact Realty Corp., Martin Rifken, Pres.
P. O. Box 2079
Madison, WI 53701

119 E. Main Street, contributing (listed on NRHP 6-7-84)
Robert C. Voss, Trustee
119 E. Main Street
P. O. Box 1348
Madison, WI 53701

121-123 E. Main Street, contributing
Pauline Sinaiko Trust
c/o Bernard Seltzer
3609 Odana Road
Madison, WI 53711

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102-104 King Street, Suhr Bank building, John Nader, Architect, 1887. This Italianate, sandstone flat iron building is three stories high. When it was built in 1887, the architect intentionally copied the design of the Mills Block next door, with its bracketed stone lintels, square stone piers on the first floor and bracketed cornice. A semicircular parapet over the angled corner has been removed. The corner entrance is framed by granite composite columns, reminiscent of the building's days as a bank.

106-108 King Street, Mills and Catlin block, 1852; 110-112 and 114-116 King Street, Mills block, 1855; and 115 E. Main Street, Catlin building, 1867. In the 19th century these buildings were all considered to be part of the Simeon Mills block. Constructed of Madison's soft, golden sandstone, the buildings have simple stone window lintels on brackets. Most windows on the block are one-over-one double-hung. Originally three stories high, all but the section at 116 King Street lost the upper story in past remodelings. The section at 110-112 King Street received a new plate glass front in 1972 and is considered non-contributing. The appearance of the masonry at 115 E. Main Street has suffered from sloppy tuckpointing. The interior of 114 King Street features a three-color mosaic tile floor, probably dating to the early 1900s.

Archeological Potential

Because of the intensive development of the district from 1838 to the present, it is highly unlikely that prehistoric archeological resources remain extant within the boundaries of the district. Buildings once existed at the site of the parking lot at 118 King Street, and excavation there could yield some archeological information about the historic period.

Preservation Activities

The Simeon Mills historic district is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places by the City of Madison at the request of most of the owners of the block. Because of the location of a notorious nightclub on East Main Street in the 1960s and 1970s, the block had acquired a reputation for shady, nighttime activities. Since the closing of the night club, the property owners, neighborhood residents and City officials have worked to improve the area's image. A local developer who specializes in the rehabilitation of older buildings has recently purchased and renovated part of the old Mills Block, and has plans to renovate several of the other buildings on the block. An architectural firm is in the process of restoring the Suhr bank building, and in 1984 the gaudy old nightclub front was removed and the original storefront restored. The Simeon Mills historic district is within a larger area that was recently nominated to the National Register, but was not listed due to owner opposition. The larger area was determined eligible for the National Register on June 24, 1986.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

Specific dates ca. 1845-1936¹ **Builder/Architect** n. a.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Simeon Mills historic district is historically and architecturally significant as the heart of downtown Madison in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The district contains one of the highest concentrations of 19th century commercial buildings remaining in Madison. Specific areas of significance include Architecture, Commercial Development and Communications History.

Historical Background

In 1836 the paper city of Madison was selected as the seat of government for the new Wisconsin territory. The next Spring, Eben and Rosaline Peck became the first permanent settlers when they built a log hostelry on the block just northeast of the Simeon Mills historic district, where two state office buildings now sit. The Peck hostelry was the first home of many Madison residents who came here to build the first Capitol building at the head of King Street. Other workmen built their own cabins at the foot of King Street near Lake Monona.

In 1837, an enterprising young man named Simeon Mills built a tiny combination store, saloon and post office of logs at the corner of Main and Webster, the first store building in Madison. By the fall of 1838, when the territorial legislature converged for its first session, there were about 24 log and frame buildings in town, on a "stump-strewn hillside centered along King Street."² The buildings included the uncompleted Capitol, some private homes, three hotels, two saloons and two small stores.

In 1846, when Madison became a village, Madison's settlement of 625 souls was still clustered around King Street, "the only defined street...stump filled and still almost unbroken sod."³ Some structures were also springing up nearby along East Main and South Pinckney Streets. Around this time a pioneer newspaper company built a brick structure at the corner of Main and Webster Streets. Known as the Argus building, its second floor was fitted up as lodge rooms for the Madison Masonic Lodge #5 and the local chapter of the I.O.O.F. This pioneer structure is still extant behind an 1892 facade, at 121-123 E. Main Street. It is the oldest known building remaining in Madison.

The decade between 1846 and 1856, when Madison became a City, was a boom period for the pioneer village. Thousands of Yankees, Irish and Germans poured into Madison and the surrounding farmlands. Madison's settlement now covered all of Capitol Hill. Between 1847 and 1854, one thousand buildings were erected. The business district now included not only King Street, but

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .55 acre

Quadrangle name Madison, West, WI

Quadrangle scale 1: 24000

UTM References

A

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|---------|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 6 | 4 | 0 |
| Zone | Easting | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | | |

B

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|------|---------|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 4 | 7 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 1 | 0 |
| Zone | Easting | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | | |

C

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

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| Zone | Easting | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | Easting | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | | |

H

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|------|---------|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | Easting | | | Northing | | | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheet.

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 Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner

organization City of Madison Department of Planning and Development

date October, 1986

street & number 215 Monona Avenue

telephone 608-266-6552

city or town Madison

state WI 53710

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

title

date MAY 13, 1987

For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 6-25-87

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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also the Main and Pinckney Street faces of the Square. Substantial brick and stone blocks were replacing the small pioneer log and frame structures. In 1852, Simeon Mills erected a three-story business block on King Street (extant, 106-108 King Street). The native sandstone structure housed shops on the first floor and a theater, known as "Badger Hall", on the third. In 1855, Mills expanded his block to the east (extant, 110-116 King Street). In 1857, business activity downtown was thriving. King, Pinckney and Main Streets were "so thronged with teams from the country that it is difficult to pass through them."⁴ This tributary trade was the basis of Madison's commercial economy: farmers and their families delivered their wheat crops to grain dealers and then spent some of their earnings in the shops downtown.

In the next two decades, the mercantile business experienced ups and downs, depending on the national economy, the effects of the war and the prosperity of the farmers. Two extant buildings were erected on East Main Street in this era: Ole Thompson's grocery store at 119 E. Main Street (1868) and Philip Schoen's Capitol Bakery next door (117 E. Main Street, 1875).

The 1880s saw another boom in business growth. In 1885, there were 193 businesses in the downtown, a number never exceeded to this day. The 1880s boom saw the erection of John J. Suhr's Deutsches Bank Building (1887, 102-104 King Street, extant), the last building erected on this block.

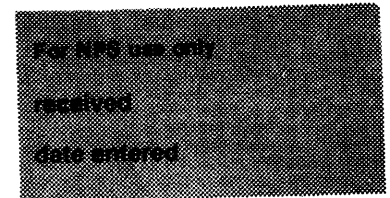
In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, sales to the very important tributary trade became lackluster. The expanded railroad network allowed farmers to deliver their products to small town depots rather than travel all the way to Madison. But at the same time as the city was losing farm families as customers, Madison was experiencing a population boom caused by the rise of several large manufacturing firms and the rapid expansion of the University of Wisconsin. During these years, the downtown commercial center occupied all of the blocks facing onto the Square, all of King Street, South Webster Street, East Main Street to the 300 block, and also State Street on the opposite side of the Square. The north side of King Street was a continuous wall of three and four-story commercial buildings from the Square to the middle of the 200 block, and two- and three-story buildings lined both sides of the 100 and 200 blocks of East Main Street.

In the 1920s the increased ease of movement caused by the automobile revived the tributary trade. The prosperity of this era caused some of the brick and sandstone buildings in Madison to be replaced by more modern buildings, but the Simeon Mills historic district was spared this redevelopment. The historic character of the area remained essentially intact until the recent

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"era of progress", which saw the loss of the third story from part of the Mills Block and the demolition of an old sandstone hotel at 118 King Street. Retail trade in the district and in downtown Madison fell off as major shopping centers were built on the outskirts.

Today the historic character of the Square, as a bustling commercial center, has nearly vanished. Only small concentrations of 19th and early 20th century buildings are still extant. On the Square, a row of six small historic buildings remains on Mifflin Street (14-24 E. Mifflin Street). The south side of the 100 block of West Main Street contains four older buildings. Finally, State Street, the street connecting the Capitol with the University to the west, contains some 19th century structures, but its essential character is derived from the many 1920s and 1930s buildings that line this newer shopping street. Because almost the entire block remains as it was in 1887, the Simeon Mills historic district retains better than any other section of Madison, the scale and character of the downtown in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Commerce

Since the Simeon Mills historic district contains some of the oldest commercial buildings remaining in Madison, it is not surprising that these buildings housed some of the oldest, most important and longest lasting mercantile establishments in the city.

The longest use of a building as a grocery store in the city began in 1856 when R. K. Findlay shop set up in the storefront at 108 King Street.⁵ By 1867, Findlay was the sixth largest merchant in Madison and in 1868, he was the fifth largest, making his store the largest grocery store in town. Findlay fell into hard times during the 1873 depression and sold his business to J. H. Hill, who owned the shop for only a couple of years, selling it to Andrew Mayers in 1877. Mayers and his family continued operating the grocery store at this location until 1937. Mayers sold not only groceries, but crockery and drugs as well. His shop was by far the longest term crockery shop in Madison, in the period before 1940, and was also the longest term drug store, by far, of any establishment in town. In 1930, Mayers was honored as the oldest living, active merchant in Madison.

Another building housing a grocery store for a very long period of time was the Thompson block at 119 E. Main Street. The building was constructed in 1868 to serve as a grocery store for Ole Thompson, one of Madison's early Norwegian entrepreneurs. It continued to be used for that purpose under various owners, including the Nelson family, until the 1930s. According to the National Register nomination for this building:

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Nelson's grocery was known as not only one of the better groceries, but also as somewhat of a neighborhood meeting place. At the turn of the century, the building was described as being "packed from cellar to roof with staple and fancy groceries and everything useful to good living". The grocery was noted for its fish market -- Nelson made frequent buying trips to Chicago to handpick his purchases. The store was patronized by many of Madison's oldest and most prominent families. A news reporter reminisced in 1946, "In the earlier day, Nelson's grocery was a veritable community center for the exchange of neighborhood news and was a favorite meeting place for many whose homes were east of the Capitol Square."

One more grocery store in the district stands out as being among the major pioneer retail establishments: the firm of Klauber and Ott at 116 King Street. Begun in 1858 by Morris Fuller, the firm went through several owners before becoming Klauber and Ott in 1865. In 1868, the firm had \$100,000 in sales, making it the seventh largest mercantile establishment in Madison and probably the second largest grocery behind Findlay's up the street. Perhaps the Panic of 1873 was the reason for the demise of this shop, also, because it was about that time that it closed its doors.

A prominent early drug store was John Wright's shop at 106 King Street, the first establishment to rent the storefront after the building was constructed in 1852. Paine and Dunning purchased the pharmacy a few years later and ran it at this location before moving to another in 1866. Incidentally, the Nelsons at 119 E. Main Street also ran a pharmacy in conjunction with their grocery store and sold paints, oils and crockery, too.

The building at 104 King Street housed the longest term shoe shop of any in Madison. Adam Blind began selling boots and shoes in the red brick building formerly on this site, which burned down shortly before the current structure was built in 1887. Blind reopened his shop here after the new building was completed. Later John Huegel became a partner and sometime after Blind died, a Mr. Hyland also joined in the operation. The shoe store continued in this location until the 1970s and it was only a few months ago that the Huegel family sold the building.

The building at 116 King Street was the home of a leathergoods firm for much longer than any other building remaining in Madison. Charles Hoebel and George Mack established a retail saddle and harness business in 1875. In 1876, Hoebel bought out Mack's share and ran the business in his own name,

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catering to patrons from all over Dane County. In 1885, Hoebel bought the wholesale leather and finding company of J. K. Schnellenberger, the name was changed to the Madison Harness Company, the operation was converted to a wholesale concern and it was moved from its old location on East Washington Avenue (gone) to 116 King Street. In 1897, the firm was incorporated by Hoebel, with his three sons, as the Madison Saddlery Company. In 1902, the company employed 20 to 25 men, including two traveling salesmen. At that time, they manufactured all kinds of harnesses and dealt in saddlery hardware, blankets, fur goods, saddles, whips, leather and findings. In 1907, they moved to a large new building constructed for the firm a few blocks away. The store at 116 King Street was purchased by Charles Wehrmann, who continued to run a leather goods shop at that location for many years.

The Simeon Mills historic district was also the home to two important retail bakeries. In 1873, George Heilmann began his bakery at 121-123 E. Main Street. The firm, known as the Madison Bakery, at first baked 25 to 50 loaves of bread a day, but by 1902, the daily production had reached 1500-1800 loaves, 300 dozen rolls and many other types of baked goods. In that year, a lunch room run in conjunction with the bakery served 110 lunches per day. Heilmann also ran a saloon and a candy store in the same building. The saloon was later operated by a succession of other proprietors. In 1927, the bakery operation moved to a large new manufacturing facility a few blocks east of the old site. Heilmann's bakery was probably the largest retail bakery in Madison in the later part of the 19th century, and the building housed a bakery for longer than any other building in Madison, extant or gone. Heilmann's lunch room was the longest term restaurant in a building remaining in Madison, although other, fancier establishments in buildings no longer extant were more famous in their day.

Just down the street at 117 E. Main Street was the combination bakery-restaurant-and-saloon of Philip Schoen. Schoen founded the Capitol Bakery at this location in 1864. He probably did well at the beginning because of the great demand for baked goods created by the civil war encampment at Camp Randall, and it was said he grew rich from his business.⁶ In 1875 he moved his old frame building off the block and built the sandstone-faced structure that exists today. Schoen continued to have a hand in the business until about 1885, when the bakery part of the firm was phased out and a saloon-restaurant was continued. Run by a series of different men until prohibition, the business then by necessity became simply a cafe-style restaurant. The Schoen building housed a restaurant for the second longest term of any extant building in Madison.

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The building at 102 King Street was built in 1887 to replace an older brick structure that was damaged by fire. It was constructed for John J. Suhr, who was born in Bremen, Germany, in 1836. In 1857, Suhr came to Madison where he began working in a small local bank. In 1871, Suhr used the capitol he had built up working in the bank for 14 years to open his own bank. His intention was to cater specifically to the many German residents of Madison. First located in the Dean Block (103 King Street, demolished), the German-American Bank moved in 1887 to the new Suhr building across the street. The small bank was known for its personal, friendly service. John J. Suhr died in 1901. His sons, John and Edmund, carried on the affairs of the bank. In World War I, its name was changed to the American Exchange Bank. In 1922, the bank moved to a larger building a block north of the district, where it is thriving to this day under the ownership of descendants of John J. Suhr. The building at 102 King Street housed the bank for 35 years and is one of only two 19th century bank buildings remaining in Madison. It is also one of a very few buildings remaining in Madison connected with the German population - Madison's largest immigrant group.

Communications

The Main-King district was home to several important newspapers, starting with the Argus in 1844. The Argus was one of the first newspapers in Madison. Founded by Simeon Mills, J. Smith and B. Holt in 1844, it was at first located in Mills' original log store building in the 200 block of E. Webster Street. Shortly thereafter, E. B. Dean built the building at 121-123 E. Main Street and the Argus operations moved in. Democratic in politics, the Argus was at first a weekly paper that faltered after losing the government printing contract to a rival newspaper, the Wisconsin Democrat. After changing hands several times, with J. Smith maintaining editorial control, the Argus merged with the Democrat in 1852. The merged paper became the first daily in Madison. It folded in 1856, was resurrected for a while, but finally died ca. 1861. The building at 121-123 E. Main Street continued to be known as the Argus building for many years after the newspaper's demise.

Later in the 19th century, the premier German newspaper in Madison, the Staats-Zeitung, had its offices for several years in the Schoen building at

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117 E. Main Street (ca. 1880 to ca. 1890). Afterwards, the Staats-Zeitung printing plant was used for many years for job printing.

In the 20th century, Madison's current afternoon daily, the Capital Times, was begun by William T. Evjue, in the basement of 108 King Street. Evjue formed the Capital Times in 1917 after his former employer, Richard Lloyd Jones of the Wisconsin State Journal, sided against Senator Bob LaFollette over America's involvement in the war with Germany. The Journal had been a staunch supporter of LaFollette and his progressive ideals until he opposed the war, at which point the Journal turned on LaFollette completely. Evjue continued to defend LaFollette and began printing his new newspaper despite strong attacks that it was pro-German. Editorials in the Capital Times were pro-war, but local sentiment was strong against the paper anyway. Evjue also editorialized against big business and in favor of the common man. Very few merchants would advertise in the paper. The Capital Times managed to stay afloat, however, when it received a contract to print LaFollette's Weekly Magazine.

After the war, merchants began to advertise in the Capital Times and readership grew to 10,000 by 1919. In June, 1919, the State Journal was sold to a conservative national newspaper syndicate and the Capital Times' position as the major progressive voice in Madison became firmly established. In 1927, the Capital Times moved to a new building constructed for its use at 302 E. Washington Avenue.

One of the few printing firms (and for many years the only one) in Madison not run by a newspaper was Cantwell Printing. In 1867 Michael J. Cantwell and a Mr. Robison formed a job printing business on the upper floors of 114 King Street. Robison left town shortly thereafter, but Cantwell continued the business. Born in Ireland in 1837, Cantwell had come to Madison when he was twelve years old. Here he learned the printing trade working for the Wisconsin Express newspaper. In the late 19th and early 20th century, Cantwell printed the American Thresherman, an internationally famous farmers' publication that took a trainload of paper to produce one issue. In 1906, perhaps due to the success of the Thresherman, Cantwell moved his company to a new building erected for it at 121 S. Pinckney Street (extant, but extensively altered).

Architecture

The Simeon Mills historic district contains some excellent local examples of 19th century Italianate architecture. The Italianate style is elegantly

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represented by the Suhr building at 102-104 King Street. Its bracketed window lintels, doubled scroll brackets at the cornice and granite columned entrance create a simple and dignified classical composition. The design of the Suhr building was purposely old-fashioned for 1887 because its architect wished to echo the design of the 1852-1855 Mills block next door, which survives in less complete condition. A more unusual version of the Italianate style is the Ole Thompson block nearby (119 E. Main Street). Molded brickwork, in the form of inset panels, pilasters, corbels and denticulated window arches create a bold and energetic play of light and shadow on this cream brick building. Another pleasant Italianate design is the Schoen block next door at 117 E. Main Street. This elegant sandstone facade features corner quoins and molded segmental arches around original four-over-four window sash. A bricked-in storefront and the loss of its cornice detract from the simple beauty of the design, but the building is soon to be renovated in a more sympathetic fashion.

The Simeon Mills historic district is also architecturally significant because it contains three buildings constructed of an indigenous native material: sandstone. The favored building material for the finest commercial blocks and residences throughout most of the 19th century in Madison, it is a lovely, warm golden stone that was quarried on the west side of town. The buildings within the district with sandstone facades are the Mills block (106-116 King Street and 115 E. Main Street), the Schoen building (117 E. Main Street), and the Suhr building (102-104 King Street). Unfortunately, the native stone is very soft and many local sandstone buildings in Madison have been demolished. The City of Madison Landmarks Commission believes that sandstone buildings are so integral a part of the visual character of the city that a sandstone building may be designated a local landmark simply because of its construction in that material.

Finally, the district contains two buildings designed by two of Madison's important 19th century architects: John Nader and D. R. Jones.

John Nader designed marine fortifications on the east coast before coming to Wisconsin to work on the Portage Canal. He moved to Madison in 1873, where it appears from his known designs that he specialized in institutional and religious architecture. From his designs for such extant buildings at St. Patrick's Church, the Madison Candy Company, the Dane County Asylum and several churches and courthouses outside of Madison, it is clear that Nader was an accomplished and talented architect. Just before World War I, Nader moved to New York City, where he died a few years later. The Suhr bank building at 102 King Street is significant as Nader's only known design for a commercial building.

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D. R. Jones was born in North Wales and came to Wisconsin with his parents in 1845. He practiced architecture in several Wisconsin towns before starting his own practice in Madison in 1872. Jones designed several well-known buildings in Madison during his residency here, including Assembly Hall and Washburn Observatory on the University Campus and many lovely Victorian-style houses for well-to-do Madisonians. Jones' illustrious career received a stunning blow when a new wing he designed for the state capitol collapsed during construction, killing many workmen and injuring scores more. Although subsequent inquiries exonerated him, Jones' practice never recovered. He moved to a rural Wisconsin village in 1885, where he lived until his death in 1915. Jones is known to have designed five major commercial blocks in downtown Madison. Of those, two remain: one (the Smith and Lamb Block at 105 W. Main Street) has been extensively altered. The other is the Schoen building located in the district at 117 E. Main Street.

¹The beginning of the period of significance for the Simeon Mills historic district dates to the construction of the earliest extant building within the district. The end of the period of significance corresponds to a date 50 years ago. The district continued to be the heart of Madison's downtown commercial area until the 1960s, but its significance is not considered to be exceptional enough to waive the 50-year rule.

²Mollenhoff, p. 33.

³Mollenhoff, p. 37.

⁴Wisconsin State Journal, April 17, 1857.

⁵Information about the longevity of use of commercial buildings is derived from a systematic, thematic study of city directories and other primary and secondary sources, undertaken as part of the comprehensive survey of the City of Madison. The period of study was limited to the years before 1940.

⁶"Madison Past and Present", p. 100.

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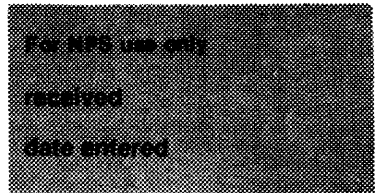
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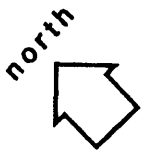
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Simeon Mills Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin

Item #10, page 1 - Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The district consists of the entirety of Block 103, Original Plat, City of Madison.

The Simeon Mills historic district is a subset of the Main-King historic district, which was determined eligible in June of 1986. To the northeast of the district, across South Webster Street, are modern office buildings. To the south, across King Street, is a grouping of commercial buildings, the oldest of which dates to 1889. To the northwest, across East Main Street, is the Tenney Building, a multi-story office building constructed in 1929.



south webster street

(108)

east main street

115 117 119 121-123

102

104

106

(108)

110-112

114-116

118

king street

east doty street

not to scale

..... boundary

south pinckney street

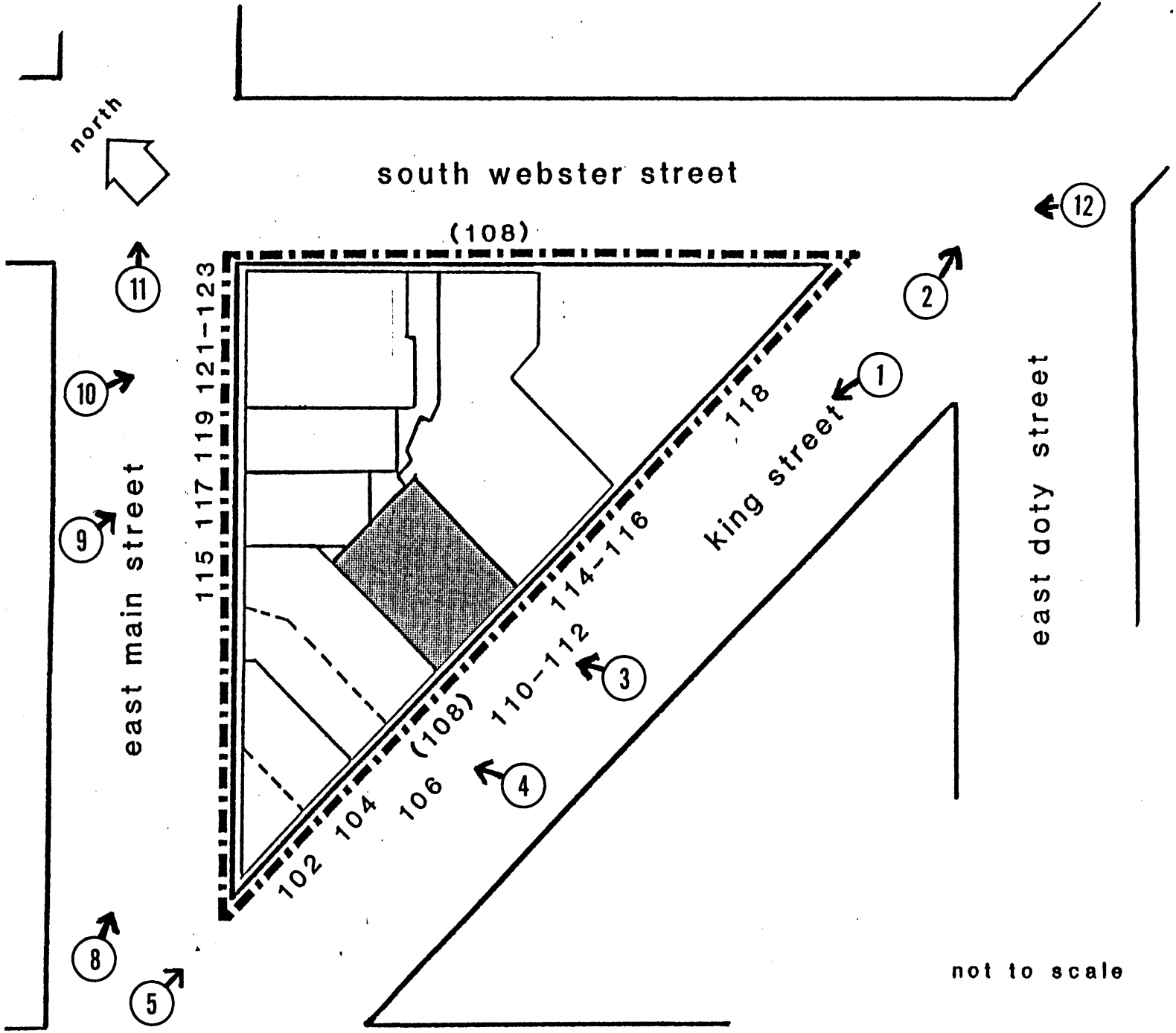


contributing building



non-contributing building

simeon mills historic district



not to scale

..... boundary

6 → south pinckney street

□ contributing building

■ non-contributing building

location of photographer

simeon mills historic district

MAY 26 1987