

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 15 1985

date entered JUN 19

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

1. Name

historic The Monroe McKenzie House

and/or common The Fisk Carlin House

2. Location

street & number 226 Main Street not for publication

city, town Palmyra vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county Jefferson code 055

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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
	<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name The Village of Palmyra

street & number P.O. Box 157

city, town Palmyra vicinity of state Wisconsin

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number 320 S. Main St.

city, town Jefferson state Wisconsin

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1985  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town 816 State Street, Madison state Wisconsin

## 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

Situated near the center of Palmyra, the Monroe McKenzie House is a mid-nineteenth century Greek Revival residence distinguished by grout construction. The house is composed of a two story main block, with monolithic grout walls and gable roof, and a one story frame wing with gable roof and clapboard siding which projects from the east facade. The main block, which measures about 25 feet square, rests on a fieldstone foundation. The walls above that were formed by pouring a mixture of lime, water, sand and gravel into wooden forms about 18 inches deep. When hardened, the mixture was as strong as traditional concrete, and the formwork was removed and set up for another layer. Successive layers of grout were poured until the entire wall (including gable ends) had been formed. The exterior of the grout walls was then covered with a whitewash veneer that is scored to simulate masonry blocks. The exterior grout walls are about 12" thick.

The gable roof of the main block is underscored by a molded wooden cornice with returns at the gable ends. The longitudinal axis of the house runs in a north-south direction, and the south gable end, oriented toward the street, serves as the principal facade, with the entryway placed on the east. The door is enframed by sidelights and sheltered by a pedimented portico with a spindle-work frieze and brackets. Windows are double-hung sash that originally had six-over-six panes. The front windows now feature one-over-one panes except for the single attic window in the gable end which still has the original pane configuration. The west side facade features two window bays disposed symmetrically, while the north (rear) facade has three windows across the first story, two at the second, and a window in the gable end. The east wall is lit by one only window. Most of the windows on the side and rear facades still have the six-over-six pane arrangement. All the windows are surrounded by wooden frames; the windows at the first story have molded lintels.

The frame wing, oriented perpendicular to the axis of the main block, contains one room (the kitchen) and has two six-over-six double hung sash windows on the east facade and a smaller window on the west. An enclosed frame porch, possibly added in the early twentieth century, runs across the front facade of the wing while a small shed is appended to the rear. Three brick chimneys--one rising from the roof of the main block, one rising from the roof of the wing, and one built against the exterior of the rear wall--serve the house. The house has a standing seam metal roof.

The interior plan of the house is two rooms wide and two rooms deep. The entry hall, placed on the east side of the plan, has a stairway and leads to a room in the rear while on the west of the first floor are two additional rooms. Upstairs are four bedrooms oriented around the hallway. The house retains maple floors and plaster ceilings. A portion of the grout wall is visible in the interior gable end, revealing the horizontal layers of grout.

A square, frame one-story garage stands in the rear of the lot. The property features only minimal landscape ornament and is located near the commercial business district of the village.

# 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** c. 1846<sup>13</sup> **Builder/Architect** unknown

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Monroe McKenzie house is a significant example of mid-nineteenth century grout construction in southeastern Wisconsin, reflecting important innovations in the development of concrete several decades before the material was used commonly in American building. Like other grout (or "gravel wall") buildings of the period, the monolithic walls of the McKenzie house were built of lime mixed with water and hardened with sand and gravel in temporary wooden forms. The grout method was introduced to Wisconsin in 1844 by Joseph Goodrich of Milton, Rock County, and was soon celebrated for its durability and practicality by Orson Fowler in his popular treatise A Home for All (1854).<sup>1</sup> Twentieth century scholars have continued to recognize the importance of the grout method pioneered by Goodrich. Richard W. E. Perrin has called grout a rediscovery of "Roman concrete" and Carl Condit considered the method an early, if isolated, "essay" in the history of concrete construction in America,<sup>2</sup> appearing in Wisconsin nearly a half century before monolithic construction was common. But extant grout buildings in Wisconsin are rare. Fewer than twenty-five have been identified in the statewide Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places, most of those in Rock County (including eight buildings in Milton that are listed in the National Register of Historic Places). As a well preserved grout building outside of Rock County, the McKenzie house is both an outstanding illustration of an important method of construction and a reflection of the diffusion of that method across the pioneer Wisconsin landscape.

Grout Construction: Concrete is the "oldest synthetic material used in the building process," dating to at least 121 B.C. when the material was used in the foundation of the Temple of Concord at Rome.<sup>3</sup> Roman builders discovered that when quicklime (calcium oxide) was combined with volcanic earth (later known as pozzolana) and mixed with water, sand, and an aggregate of brick and stone, the substance, when hardened, was as strong and durable as stone. But despite this ancient application, concrete technology was "lost" during the Middle Ages. Not until the eighteenth century did experiments with concrete resume,<sup>4</sup> although concrete construction was unusual until the nineteenth century.

Experiments with concrete in the United States date to colonial times, but the first notable application came in 1810 when the builders of the Erie Canal applied a hydraulic cement (made from local limestone) to a facework of the canal. Over the next three decades at least a dozen natural hydraulic cements were discovered along the Eastern seaboard, in Illinois and in Kentucky.<sup>5</sup> But despite these advances, the use of concrete in America

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Perrin, Richard W. E. The Architecture of Wisconsin. Madison: State Historical Society of WI, 1967.  
Condit, Carl. American Building. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1.0

Quadrangle name Palmyra, WI

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

116	37104510	47482010
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 4 and s.w. half of Lot 3 in Block 4, Original Survey of the Village of Palmyra.

### 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 Leonard T. Garfield, Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin date 1/29/85

street & number 816 State Street telephone 262-1339

city or town Madison state WI 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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *[Signature]*

title DIRECTOR OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION date APRIL 24, 1985

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

*[Signature]*  
Keeper of the National Register

date 6-19-85

Attest:

date

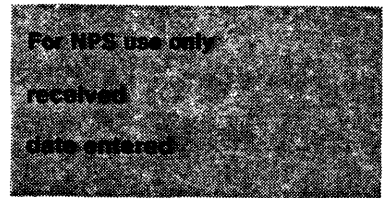
Chief of Registration

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Palmyra, Jefferson County

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remained limited. Hydraulic lime was unavailable in many areas and the uncertain strength of those that did exist made concrete impractical for most building. Monolithic construction was rare and remained so until an artificial cement (or Portland cement), patented in 1872, was produced in a Philadelphia factory, making concrete construction more practical.

Within this context of uneven development, the use of grout in Wisconsin was a noteworthy innovation. Although at least one monolithic concrete house was built in New York in 1835 (with which Goodrich, a native of New York, may have been familiar) the Goodrich method used local materials in a locally-devised "recipe." The formula--calling for one bushel of lime for every seven or eight of gravel--was, according to Goodrich's account, durable and relatively inexpensive. Fowler, upon visiting Goodrich in 1850, praised the practicality of the method, noted that "it was copied extensively" in the region, and believed that the "superiority of the plan must certainly revolutionize building and especially enable poor men to build their own homes."

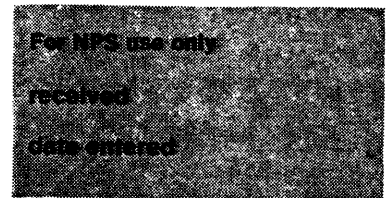
Although the grout method was never widespread, grout buildings were built outside the confines of Milton. The diffusion of the technique was no doubt due, in part, to Goodrich himself. As the proprietor of the grout Milton House, a popular "temperance inn" and stage stop, Goodrich was able to use his place of business as an advertisement for his favorite method of construction. Known locally as the "gravel man," Goodrich discussed his ideas in the local newspapers as early as 1846 and through private correspondence.<sup>10</sup> By the time Fowler gave national attention to the method in 1854, grout buildings had been constructed in several Wisconsin communities, including Palmyra.

Although the influence of Goodrich on the builder of the McKenzie house is unknown, the grout method had clearly arrived in the village by mid-century. In addition to the McKenzie house, grout buildings from the period include a one and one-half story house west of the McKenzie house at 312 W.Main St. and a two story house in the nearby rural Town of Eagle, Waukesha County. Both of these houses have been slightly altered. In addition, historic fire insurance maps (c.1890) indicate that a grout blacksmith shop, later covered with stone veneer, stood on the corner of West Main and Second streets in the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Aside from these buildings, no other grout structures have been identified in the vicinity, although lack of systematic survey data hinders an accurate assessment of the extent of grout construction in the area. Nonetheless, the McKenzie house stands as the finest identified grout building in Jefferson county.

Background history: While the actual builder of the McKenzie house is unknown, the first resident was an early Palmyra settler and entrepreneur. Monroe McKenzie, born in Vermont in 1805, settled with his family in Palmyra in 1844, a year after the village was platted.<sup>12</sup> In 1845, McKenzie and his wife purchased several lots of residential land near the center of the village and, according to deed research, soon began construction of a house to accommodate themselves, their four children, three young workmen employed in McKenzie's shop, and, after the death of Mrs. McKenzie in 1847, a housekeeper.<sup>13</sup> Constructing the house not only befitted the size of McKenzie's household, it reflected his successful station in life. A pioneer boot and shoe manufacturer, by 1850 McKenzie's shop annually produced about \$1300 worth of goods and employed McKenzie's three boarders.

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McKenzie House, Palmyra,  
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McKenzie himself had accumulated \$1000 worth of real estate by that date. For the next twenty years, McKenzie remained in business, increasing production (his shop made \$3000 worth of boots in 1860, for example) until his retirement in 1870 or 1871.<sup>13</sup> In addition to his boot and shoe shop, McKenzie played a role in the civic development of the village. In 1848, McKenzie helped found the local Masonic lodge. He was a trustee of the cemetery association when that organization was founded in 1851. In 1867, a year after the village was incorporated, McKenzie was elected Palmyra village president, serving a one-year term.<sup>14</sup>

Although an early business in Palmyra's history, McKenzie's shop was soon over-shadowed by more substantial concerns. During the two decades that McKenzie operated his shop in the village, larger businesses developed including a cooperage, reaper factory, foundry and grain mills.<sup>15</sup> By the mid-1850s, McKenzie had competition from several other boot and shoe firms, including the firm of J. C. Thompson which had exceeded McKenzie's production by 1860.<sup>16</sup> A few years after McKenzie's retirement, an even larger boot and shoe factory was established (T.R. Qualey and Co.), which employed 9 to 12 men and shipped boots and shoes throughout the northeast.<sup>17</sup>

Monroe McKenzie died in 1883, and his house was successively owned by his son, his housekeeper, his daughter (Pluma Leffingwell), the proprietor of a local general store (T. J. Sleep), Jonathan Rowe, Elizabeth Rowe Morris, and Fisk Carlin.<sup>18</sup> In 1980, Mr. Carlin gave the house to the village of Palmyra to be restored and used as a museum by the Palmyra Historical Society. Since that time, the Historical Society has carefully maintained the structure and several interior rooms have been restored to a turn-of-the-century appearance. The restoration of the first floor interior is now nearly complete.

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FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Orson Fowler, A Home for All, Or the Gravel Wall and Octogon Mode of Building, Revised and enlarged edition (New York: Fowlers & Wells, 1854), pp. 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Richard W. E. Perrin, The Architecture of Wisconsin (Madison: State Historical Society, 1967), p. 36; Carl Condit, American Building (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> Condit, p. 155.

<sup>4</sup> Condit, p. 156-157.

<sup>5</sup> Condit, p. 157.

<sup>6</sup> Condit, p. 158.

<sup>7</sup> Condit, p. 157.

<sup>8</sup> Janesville Gazette, January 24, 1846, as quoted in The Bicentennial History of Milton (Milton, 1970), p. 6 and Fowler, pp. 19-20 and Perrin, pp. 35-36.

<sup>9</sup> Fowler, pp. 19-20, and Perrin, pp. 35-36.

<sup>10</sup> Janesville Gazette (see above), and unsigned draft of letter from Joseph Goodrich to Mr. Burr, April 23, 1851, in the collection of the State Historical Society Area Research Center, University of Wisconsin-Whitewater as quoted in the "Grout Building in Milton Thematic Nomination," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form, (1978) at SHSW.

<sup>11</sup> "Palmyra," Sanborn-Perris fire insurance map, 1892 in the archives of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin in Madison.

<sup>12</sup> The History of Jefferson County, Wisconsin (Chicago: Western Historical Society, 1879), p. 659.

<sup>13</sup> See property abstract in possession of Palmyra Historical Society.

<sup>13b</sup> For information of McKenzie's household and his business, the United States Census, 1850, 1860, 1870: manuscript schedules for population and industry, Palmyra, Wisconsin. For information on retirement, see History of Jefferson County, p. 659.

<sup>14</sup> History of Jefferson County, pp. 530, 535, 659; John Henry Ott, Jefferson County and Its People (Chicago: S.J. Clarke, 1917), p. 256.

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FOOTNOTES (continued):

<sup>15</sup> For information on prominent businesses in Palmyra, see History of Jefferson County, p. 532. For figures on Thompson firm, see United States Census, 1860: manuscript industrial schedule, Palmyra. For names of competing boot and shoe firms, see Wisconsin State Business Directory, 1857-1858 (Milwaukee: Strickland and Co., 1858), p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> See United States Census, 1860: manuscript industrial schedule, Palmyra.

<sup>17</sup> For information on Qualey and Co., see History of Jefferson County, p. 533.

<sup>18</sup> McKenzie's obituary appears in the Palmyra Enterprise, April 14, 1883, and information on successive owners is available through property abstract in possession of Palmyra Historical Society.