

DATA SHEET

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Wisconsin
COUNTY: Grant
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE FEB 20 1975

1. NAME

COMMON: Old Denniston House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Denniston House

2. LOCATION

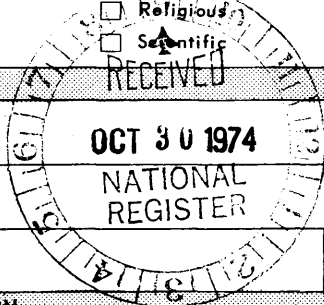
STREET AND NUMBER: 117 East Front Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Cassville		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Third	
STATE Wisconsin	CODE 55	COUNTY: Grant	CODE 043

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY <small>(Check One)</small>	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	<u>hotel</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: James Carroll	
STREET AND NUMBER: 117 East Front Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Cassville	STATE: Wisconsin
	CODE: 55



5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Grant County Courthouse	
STREET AND NUMBER:	
CITY OR TOWN: Lancaster	STATE: Wisconsin
	CODE: 55

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Wisconsin Survey of Historic Sites & Buildings	
DATE OF SURVEY: 1971	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: State Historical Society of Wisconsin	
STREET AND NUMBER: 816 State Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Madison	STATE: Wisconsin
	CODE: 55

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Located on the banks of the Mississippi and still popular with tourists and fishermen in the western part of Wisconsin, the Old Denniston House was built in the hope that it would become the home of the territorial legislature. The fourth floor was a ballroom intended for State celebrations, and on the second floor there was a large chamber intended to be the State Supreme Court but later converted into an apartment. The building remained empty for 18 years until it was purchased and opened as the Denniston House Hotel by Governor Nelson Dewey.

As it was built it was a four-story, brick structure trimmed in white-painted wood. Its windows had stone lintels and sills, and the corners of its facade, were ornamented with brick piers which had stone capitals. The overall appearance of the building was Federal. It had a gently pitched roof marked at each end by corbie-stepped gables which rose to double chimneys, and surmounted by a square bandbox with a widow's walk. A wooden porch elevated from the street ran the length of the front of the hotel. This porch had a flat roof supported by flattened gothic arches which gave it a simple but rather elegant appearance which was enhanced by the character of the entrances. There were three of these: a main entrance door with an arched fanlight and sidelights; and flanking that, French doors. The windows on the first level flanking these entrances were large, single panels of glass.

A number of alterations have occurred to change the character of the Old Denniston House. The fourth floor was removed some years ago as it was rarely used and was a favorite locale for bats. The corbie-stepped gables and the bandbox have disappeared, and now the roof of the hotel is flat, marked only by two short chimneys at each end. The corner piers with their stone capitals have also disappeared, and the building is now square and plain. The porch has been altered to have a sloping roof and is supported by straight wooden posts. The entrance has also undergone some alteration. The large panes of glass have been replaced by smaller double panes, the French doors have been filled in, and alterations to the main entrance make it appear shorter and more square.



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SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1836, constructed, 1854, opened as hotel**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | <u>Association with</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | <u>historically significant person.</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Old Denniston House is a hotel associated with the life of Nelson Dewey, the first governor of Wisconsin. Born in Connecticut, Dewey came to Wisconsin from New York as a clerk for the Daniels, Denniston Company. This company was interested in land speculation and bought the site of present day Cassville in the hope that it would be chosen as the capital of the Territory of Wisconsin because of its central location: in those days Wisconsin included what are now Iowa, Minnesota and part of the Dakotas. The Daniels, Denniston Company built the Denniston House in 1836 hoping that it would house the new capitol. Instead, Madison became the capital and the Denniston Company went bankrupt.

Nelson Dewey went to nearby Lancaster to read law and returned to Cassville to practice. He became register of deeds for Grant County and served in the territorial assembly. In 1848, at the age of 36, Dewey became the state's first governor. He served for two terms and in 1854 returned to Cassville. Dewey's land speculations and law practice had turned him into a rich man and he bought the Denniston House and operated it as a hotel. Dewey also owned most of the townsite of Cassville and supported its growth. He spent much of his time building his estate at Stonefield near Cassville, and was known both for his eccentricities and for his philanthropies. The panic of 1873 broke Dewey's fortune and not long after that a fire at Stonefield ruined his home. His wife and he separated and he moved into Cassville to live. For a while he roomed in a private home, but finally he moved into the Denniston House which he no longer owned. Dewey returned to the practice of law to make a living, but died in poverty in his room in the Denniston House in 1889. In his last years Dewey was a frequent sight on the porch of the hotel, talking politics and smoking his pipe. At his death he was all but forgotten by the state he had served.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Success and Tragedy of State's First Governor linked to Hotel,"
Milwaukee Journal (___, 1940) p. 1.
 Smith, Mattie, "The Denniston House in the Gay Nineties,"
Cassville American, July 13, 1967.
 "Old Denniston House to Get Marker," Cassville American, February
 16, 1967.
 "Historic 'Old Denniston House' Property of Scottish Rite Brother,"
Scottish Rite News, Vol. IV, September, 1963, p. 1.

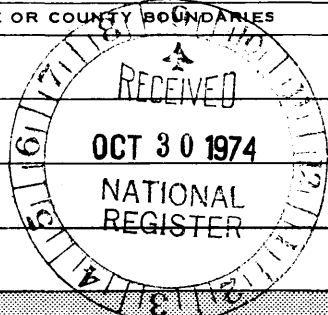
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		42 42 45	90 59 25	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than one**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



NO
26

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Charlene Stant Engel, Preservation Planning Assistant

ORGANIZATION: State Historical Society of Wisconsin DATE: 26 July, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:
816 State Street

CITY OR TOWN: Madison STATE: Wisconsin 53706 CODE: 55

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name James Morton Smith
 Title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin
 Date Oct. 23, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Arthur Lee
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 7/20/75

ATTEST:
Charles Abney
 Keeper of The National Register

Date 2.19.75

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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(Number all entries)

Old Denniston House

8. Significance.

Nelson Dewey's palatial estate Stonefield, located near Cassville, was placed on the National Register in 1970. However, due to Dewey's financial collapse in the 1870's, he lived at Stonefield for a shorter period than he did at the Denniston House. This longevity and the building's associations with Dewey's declining years are the fundamental reasons for the significance of the site.

A secondary area of significance is the association of the building with the period of Wisconsin's territorial history when the state capital was selected. Many communities vied for the honor, and the Denniston House was built speculatively to house the capitol. It enjoys, therefore, a unique position in Wisconsin's history as what one could call a "noncapitol."

[Though the building is one of the older large structures in Wisconsin, "architecture" has not been marked as an area of significance. This is due to the substantial amount of modification which has taken place during the past 138 years.]