

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAY 12 1986

date entered JUN 13 1986

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

1. Name

historic J.H. ROUNTREE MANSION

and/or common Rountree House (Chancellor's Residence)

2. Location

street & number 150 Rountree Avenue not for publication

city, town Platteville vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 055 county Grant code 043

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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
			<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name State of Wisconsin, University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents.

street & number 1220 Linden Drive

city, town Madison vicinity of state Wisconsin 53706

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds Office, Grant County Courthouse

street & number West Main Street

city, town Lancaster state WI

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1976, 1983 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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 Rountree Mansion is situated in the southeastern part of the city of Platteville, on a small ridge overlooking the agricultural valley below and a small stream referred to locally as the Rountree Branch. The property's well-groomed lawn is well shaded with mature maples and elms, and slopes gently down to Rountree Ave. on the east and Mitchell St. to the south.

The main house is a substantial, two-story brick residence with a gabled roof and rubble sandstone foundation. The bricks are laid in American (common) bond and the roofing materials include new wooden shingles and asphalt shingles. Greek Revival in form, the imposing structure features a triangular pediment on the north facing, front facade, which sits over a simply detailed elevation containing three second floor windows and two 1st floor openings with a large transomed and sidelit doorway to one side. All windows are 6/6 pane wood sash with heavy stone lintels and slender lug sills. Recent clapboard siding and an attic vent fill in the pediment.

An elegant two-story, balustraded porch runs across the entire east elevation, supported by carved rectangular posts on wooden plinths. The upper level columns are octagonal in form. The gallery porch shades tall, asymmetrically-placed, 9/9 wooden windows capped with trabeated stone lintels. The southernmost openings are slender transomed doors leading onto the porch; also capped with sandstone lintels. Sizable brick chimneys project from the roofline, clearly pointing out the location of interior fireplaces. The cornice line of the entire structure is marked by distinctive brackets with curvilinear pendants mounted on a wide, plain wooden frieze.

A simply-detailed, two-story wing is visible to the rear of the main block, from which extends a smaller one-story dependency. The window openings of the rear wing contain smaller 6/6 sash with flat brick lintels. To the west of the last wing is yet another one-story gabled structure with an open porch.

The interior, although modified over the years, retains a remarkable degree of integrity. The front door opens onto a long hall from which rises a gracefully curved, wooden staircase. Opening off the hall are two parlor/living room spaces interconnected by way of large folding doors. Each parlor has a fireplace with ivory wood trim, a cove ceiling with molded cornice work, and in the center of the ceiling a plaster Della Robia wreath medallion. The fine woodwork including door and window surrounds, mop boards and typical Greek Revival bulls-eye corner blocks is all painted. The east wall windows opening onto the porch are full height (12½'), floor to ceiling openings with 3-panel cherry pocket shutters.

The dining room extends the width of the house and is entered from the hall or from the second living room. A long, rather narrow room it is appointed with ivory painted woodwork, a chair height dado and maple floors. Beyond the dining room lies a remodeled pantry and 1975 kitchen modernization. A curving enclosed stair leads to the second floor back hall. The upstairs area contains six bedrooms and two baths. Two small maids rooms to the rear of the house have been transformed into a single bedroom.

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 checked="" 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 1854 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Period of Significance: 1854 - 1890*
 (* Date of J.H. Rountree's death)

Built in 1854, the Rountree Mansion is both architecturally and historically significant in the local community of Platteville. The richly appointed Greek Revival residence represents a unique, southern-influenced architectural design for mid-19th century Platteville and is one of the community's best preserved homes from its early developmental period. Historically, the home is associated with Major John H. Rountree pioneer lead miner, politician, entrepreneur and recognized founder of the southwestern mining community of Platteville. Rountree's efforts as a businessman, developer and political leader helped shape much of the early development of nineteenth century Platteville and the expanding Grant County region.

Architectural significance:

The Rountree house is a fine example of the Greek Revival style in southern Wisconsin featuring a classic pedimented gable and a refined facade. A distinctive feature of the home is the two-story gallery porch to the east, which lends the house a decidedly "southern" flavor which would have been quite consistent with the Rountree family's early Kentucky and Virginia roots.

From its beginning, the house was noted for its handsome scale and detailing, and its imposing presence on the slight rise south of the commercial center of the city.

"Major Rountree is demolishing his old residence for the purpose of building a splendid villa. He has a lovely site for a residence" ¹

"Major Rountree's residence is going ahead. The brick are now being laid for the first story. When this house is completed it will compare favorably with buildings in any country." ²

Brick did not become a major component of building construction in Platteville until the middle of the 1850s and 60s. The first acknowledged brick structure in the community was Rountree's 1843 store. By 1846 there were still only "2 or 3 unpretentious brick structures" in the village.³ The Rountree mansion represents some of the earliest brick construction in the region and must have had a dramatic impact on the visual nature of residential districts within the city.

When compared to other mid-century Greek Revival designs in the city, it becomes even

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Platteville, WI

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 15 706460 4733950
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification Homestead addition. South 50' of Lot 1 & 2; South 50' of east 56.5' of Lot 3 except west 29.5' of south 20' of Lot 3; North 20' of South 40' of Lot 4 and North 20' of South 40' of West 4.25' of Lot 3; East 31.5' of Lot 6; Lot 7 and 8, Block Two.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Paul R. Lusignan / Architectural Historian

organization State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 3/25/1986

street & number 816 State Street

telephone (608) 262-4772

city or town Madison

state Wisconsin

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

 national X 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 7, 1986

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/13/86

J. Allred Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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J.H. Rountree Mansion

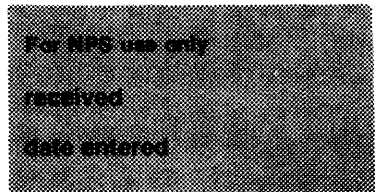
Continuation sheet Platteville, Grant County Item number 7 Page 1

A separate two-car garage and an outdoor patio area were completed on the west and northwest sides of the house in 1977, by then occupant, Chancellor W. Carrier.

The grand and eloquent, 2-story gallery to the east clearly adds ^{an} antebellum Southern touch to the handsome Greek Revival/Classical Revival home, marking it as a distinctive residential design for 19th century Platteville.

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J.H. Rountree Mansion

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more clear that the Rountree Mansion was, and remains, a landmark structure in the community. The 1983 Intensive Survey of the city sponsored by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the local regional planning commission clearly identifies the house with the best residential designs of the nineteenth century.⁴

An architect for the house was not identified, but the structure does bear a strong stylistic resemblance to the 1853 Platteville Academy building designed by a New York architect named, Gardiner. Major Rountree was influential in the hiring of Mr. Gardiner and in the completion of the school. No conclusive evidence has been uncovered however. (see attached engravings)

The Rountree Mansion along with the earlier Mitchell/Rountree house (NRHP 1972) are the two finest residential designs extant in the Platteville community representing the city's earliest era of growth and expansion, and are significant architectural resources for the entire county.

Historical significance:

John Hawkins Rountree, pioneer lead miner, politician and founder of Platteville, WI, was born in Warren County Kentucky on March 24, 1805. At 19 he moved to Hillsboro, Montgomery County, Illinois where he was appointed deputy sheriff. In 1827, three years later, he journeyed north into present-day Wisconsin with J.B. Campbell in order to prospect for lead in the newly expanding mining regions of the area. The site of their initial claim on the Little Platte River was to become the community of Platteville. Meeting with considerable success in developing the mining resources of the area, a settlement soon grew up around their rich claims and in 1834 Rountree platted the village of Platteville. Rountree became a prominent member of the business community, opening the first store in town adjacent to his sod house and the first lead smelting furnace in the spring of 1828. He was appointed the first postmaster in 1829, served as Chief Justice of Iowa County in 1834-36, and judge of probate for Grant County in 1837. A Whig, Rountree was a member of the territorial upper house (1838-46), was a delegate to the state constitutional convention in 1847-1848, and a state senator from 1850-1851 and again in 1866-67. A Republican state assemblyman in 1863, Rountree served in the militia during the Black Hawk War of 1832 and for a number of years was active as an officer in the state militia. He was one of the first regents of the University of Wisconsin (1851) and was instrumental in the introduction of the bill providing for the incorporation of the local Platteville Academy. From 1849 to 1888 he was vice-president of the State Historical Society. (charter member).⁵

Despite his far-flung political and business connections, including merchandising operations in Potosi and Cassville, Rountree's strongest entrepreneurial efforts were concentrated towards the development of the community of Platteville. In

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J,H. Rountree Mansion

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addition to operating the first store and smelter in the area, Rountree was instrumental in the establishment of a sizable creamery in the city; the start of the area's first newspaper; in helping to organize one of the first Methodist Episcopal congregation in the state at Platteville (with James Vineyard in 1832); in promoting the establishment of Wisconsin Territory's first and second Masonic lodges in Mineral Point and Platteville; and the erection of the first village school. By 1854, when Rountree replaced his original house located approximately 200' SE of the present mansion with the Greek Revival structure, Platteville was a community of 1,500 and well on its way to establishing itself as an important center of regional trade. In the 1870s Rountree was influential in bringing the Chicago & Northwestern RR to the city and was also one of the founders of the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Janesville. ⁶

The house was one of the showplaces of the region and Major Rountree and his wife entertained extensively. "Readily recognized as a man of force and influence", Rountree played host to many notable persons. General U.S. Grant, a Galena Illinois native, reportedly visited the Rountree house twice, once before and once after he was elected to the presidency of the United States.

A 1945 newspaper article in the Dubuque Telegraph-Herald declared what Grant county citizens had recognized for a long time when it stated the Rountree was acknowledged as the "founder and father of Platteville... one of Wisconsin's foremost pioneer citizens.", and of his former home "...the restored estate is a monument to a pioneer and materially preserves part of the picturesque history of early Wisconsin". ⁷

Rountree lived in this house until the time of his death in 1890. The house then became the property of his daughter, Mrs. Laura Rountree Smith, a noted local writer of children's stories. The residence continued to be used by members of the Rountree family until 1924, when the property passed into the hands of Mrs. Ellen Rountree Whitehead of Duluth, Minnesota. At that time the furniture was removed and the two story main section was divided into four apartments. The one-story west wing had been made into an apartment earlier.

Mrs. Whitehead, the last descendant of John Rountree willed the house to the state upon her death in 1935. At the time the property was referred to locally as "Rountree flats". In 1943 the decision was made to convert the building from multi-apartment units into "a stately and suitable home for the president of the college (Platteville State Teachers College)". \$13,600 was appropriated for the repair and restoration of the house and then president, Dr. & Mrs. Chester O. Newlun were placed in charge of the supervision of the work. Considerable time and effort was spent in emphasizing "authenticity and dignity" in the restoration work, which included the refinishing of all the hand-carved woodwork and the repair of the ornate plaster ceiling decorations.

The house remains the home of the University of Wisconsin - Platteville's chancellor, and despite over 125 years of use remains a significant historical and architectural landmark in the community.

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J.H. Rountree House

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FOOTNOTES:

- 1) Independent American, May 28, 1852. Page 2 Column 4.
- 2) Independent American, July 30, 1852. Page 2 column 4.
- 3) Intensive survey of Mining Communities in Lafayette and Grant Counties, WI.,
J. Rausch, Southwest Regional Planning Commission, 1983. P. 185
- 4) Ibid., pp. 165, 190-192.
- 5) Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, SHSW, 1960, P. 308.
- 6) Survey, op. cit. Page 146-148, 158, 165-166.
Grant County Witness, July 9, 1890.
- 7) Dubuque Telegram-Herald, December 1945.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

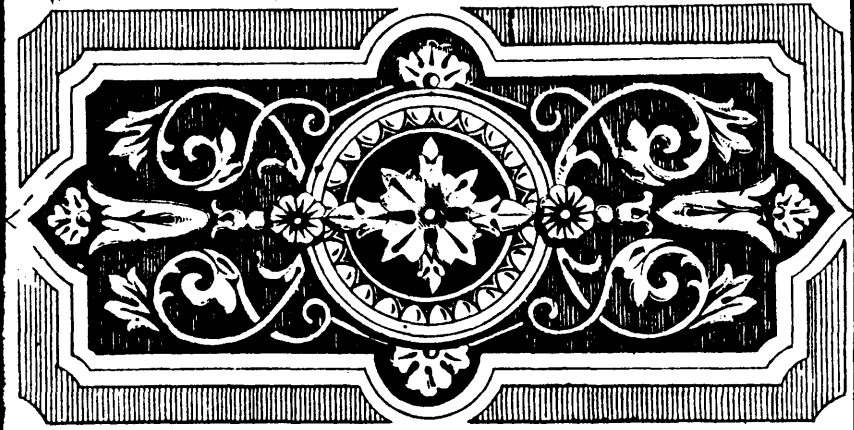
Independent American, May, July 1852.

Grant County Witness, Platteville, July 1890 (Obituary notice).

Rausch, J. , An Intensive Architectural and Historical Survey of Mining Communities
in Portions of Lafayette and Grant Counties, WI., Southwestern Regional Planning
Commission. 1983, Platteville.

Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, 1960.

**Thomas, Gilham & Devendorf's Block,
Platteville.**



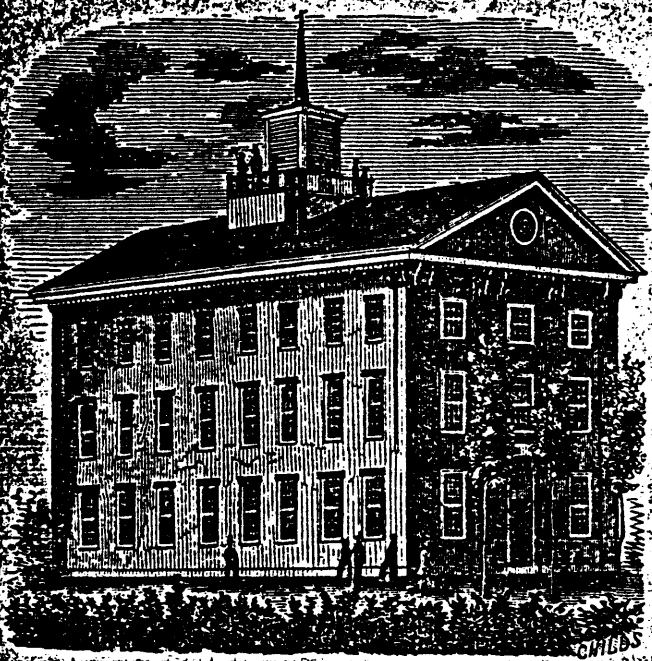
John H. Rountre's Residence, Platteville.



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25
1876
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FIFTEENTH ANNUAL CATALOGUE

OF THE



Platteville Academy

For the Year Ending June 27th, A. D. 1862.

Wis. Historical Library

OCT 18 1920

PLATTEVILLE, WIS.

Public Document Dept.

1862.

PLATTEVILLE ACADEMY BUILDING, 1853.