

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received AUG 9 1983  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic John R. Morgan House

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number 234 Church Avenue not for publication

city, town Oshkosh vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county Winnebago code 139

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" 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
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input 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 Constance Misky

street & number 234 Church Avenue

city, town Oshkosh vicinity of state Wisconsin 54901

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Winnebago County Courthouse

street & number 415 Jackson

city, town Oshkosh state Wisconsin 54901

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1974  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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Located in an area comprised of civic, commercial, and residential elements, the one-time residence of John R. Morgan was one of six Queen Anne style homes built at Oshkosh, Wisconsin, during the construction season of 1884. Built on property which Morgan acquired in 1865, the structure stands at the southwest corner of the intersection of Church Avenue and Franklin Street. The main facade of the house faces south; that is, toward Church Avenue. The builders of Morgan's "palatial residence" were Bell and Cole, a contracting and constructing firm at Oshkosh. J. R. Wagner, an Oshkosh painter, performed the work of decoration.<sup>1</sup> (See photograph # 1, 1887.)

Built at a time when Oshkosh was acquiring the refinements of elegant living associated with post-Civil War America, the John R. Morgan residence was an excellent example of the Queen Anne style which had been "the popular rage...in the east for a considerable length of time and...[was] gaining strength each year in the west." Possessing an "outward appearance... which was imposing" and measuring approximately eighty feet in length and fifty-two feet in width, the structure stood two stories in height not including attic space. An octagonally shaped tower "added greatly to the beauty of the house." With its octagonal tent roof and surmounting finial, the tower reached upward for possibly a story and a half beyond the second floor level of the house.<sup>2</sup> (See photograph #1, 1887.)

The design of the Morgan house included numerous features expressive of the "exuberent<sup>[sic]</sup> visual display" characteristic of the Queen Anne style: a multi-gabled roof accented by finials at the gable ends; iron roof cresting; irregular wall lines with a horizontal band encircling the structure at the second floor level; tall, slender crowned chimneys; and decorated front and side porches supported by massive carved ~~bracketed~~ pedestals. The main fenestration of the house is regular with one-on-one double hung sash; over the front porch there is a large grouped window of three sections and three sash, the top being of leaded panes; in addition, windows of small square lights occur in the several gables of the structure. All gables are open with exception of those occurring in the front facade which display elaborate cross-trimming. All gables possess ornamental barge boards. Roof supports on the porches are topped by brackets. Except for the porches, the house rests on a foundation of quarry-faced regular coursed ashlar in which openings occur at regular intervals. A water table surrounds the house at the first floor level. The clapboard siding and exterior wooden trim are generally intact, but during the ninety-nine years since its construction, the house has undergone some exterior modification. A shorter roof has replaced the tent roof with its related gables on the octagonal tower; the iron roof cresting and the finials are gone; a small balcony which originally ornamented the tower is gone; iron railings have replaced decorative wooden railings on the front and side porches; and the original roof has been re-covered with asphalt shingles. The overall appearance of the house remains much the same, however, as when the structure was photographed in 1887 for a book entitled Oshkosh Illustrated.<sup>3</sup> (Photos #1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, #7)

When the Morgan house was built in 1884, the Oshkosh Northwestern asserted that it typified late nineteenth-century elegance in American living. From basement to attic, "every modern improvement that can be wished for" had been incorporated into the structure. The basement boasted a stone floor, plaster walls, and laundry rooms. The basement was also the location of a steam heating plant, the boiler of which had been manufactured at the Union Steam Boiler Works operated by Martin T. Battis at Oshkosh. Hot and cold running water served all parts of the house; gas fixtures were in every room. Electric bells were another feature of "modern" living in the Morgan house.<sup>4</sup> (Photo # 26)

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

John R. Morgan House, Oshkosh, Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet Physical Appearance

Item number 7

Page 1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

The first floor of the house contains five rooms -- parlor, sitting room, dining room, library, and kitchen. Front entry to the first floor is gained through a vestibule opening into a commodious hallway from which a grand staircase made of oak and mahogany and regarded as "one of the nicest pieces of work of this kind in the city" in 1884, rises to the second floor. On the first floor, (and also reflecting the tastes of the period) hardwoods -- birdseye maple, cherry, and birch -- were used to finish the parlor, sitting, and library respectively. Oak and ash were used in the dining room; oak and mahogany in the hall. Floors were also of hardwood enhanced by hardwood borders, while heavy carving on windows and doors produced "extremely rich and beautiful effects." Meriting especial attention in 1884 were two elaborately tooled wooden mantles with decorative tiles gracing the first floor. "In these," stated the Northwestern, "Bell & Cole take a pardonable amount of pride as they were manufactured in their own factory, and certainly [are] the equals in every way to the same class of materials which, purchased in Milwaukee or Chicago cost considerably more money."<sup>5</sup> (Photos # 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, & 17)

The Northwestern also called attention to two "special features" of the John R. Morgan house. One was an "elegant sideboard" built into the dining room and made of mahogany, oak, and ash at the Bell & Cole shop. According to the newspaper, the wood was "almost as brightly polished as...the beveled plate glass mirrors...set in it." The other special feature of the residence was its inside blinds of cherry which also testified to the elegance of the house, as inside blinds were usually made of pine. Altogether, the interior woodwork and decoration of the house are largely intact, including wall coverings which are original.<sup>6</sup> (Photos # 16, 19, & 20)

Located at the rear of the house a short distance from the northeast corner is a carriage house which appears to have replaced the original, perhaps by remodeling.<sup>7</sup> Its design is, such, however, that it does not materially alter the impression of the residence itself.<sup>7</sup> (Photo # 29)

<sup>1</sup>For the description of the John R. Morgan house when constructed, see Oshkosh Weekly Northwestern, December 11, 1884. Cited subsequently as Weekly Northwestern. The Oshkosh Daily Northwestern, December 6, 1884, carries the same description, but incorrectly identifies the house as belonging to Richard T. Morgan. Cited subsequently as Daily Northwestern. For records concerning Morgan's acquiring the property where the house stands, see Winnebago County, Chain of Title Index, Tract Index Book 17, p. 145.

<sup>2</sup>The opinion regarding the popularity of the Queen Anne style is that of William Waters, a noted architect of Oshkosh; see Weekly Northwestern, December 11, and Daily Northwestern, December 6, 1884. These issues carry the description of the Morgan house contained in the paragraph; but see also photograph of the John R. Morgan house in Art Publishing Company, Oshkosh Illustrated. Historical, Descriptive and Picturesque, no page enumeration. Cited subsequently as Oshkosh Illustrated. This source incorrectly locates the site of the John R. Morgan house as being at the corner of Church and Jackson streets in Oshkosh.

<sup>3</sup>See John J.-G. Blumenson, Identifying American Architecture (Nashville, c. 1977), p. 63, with regard to the image of the Queen Anne style; and, photograph of John R. Morgan house in Oshkosh Illustrated.

<sup>4</sup>Weekly Northwestern, December 11, 1884; Daily Northwestern, December 6, 1884.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Photograph of John R. Morgan house in Oshkosh Illustrated.

Please note: Photos #21-25 are from second-floor views; #29 is an original lamp fixture.

## 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) ✓
Associated with prominent person				
<b>Specific dates</b> 1884	<b>Builder/Architect</b> Bell & Cole, Oshkosh, Wisconsin			

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The John R. Morgan house is significant for being architecturally a splendid example of the Queen Anne style which was becoming very popular at Oshkosh during the early 1880's. Some notion of the house's physical elegance may be gained from its having been built at a reported cost of \$12,000, a figure far exceeding the costs of construction for other residences built at Oshkosh during the year. Another area of its significance lies in the fact that it was constructed by John R. Morgan, a leader in the flourishing lumber and woodworking industry of the city. Finally, the house is in an excellent state of repair and preservation despite its ninety-nine years. Plans call for it to become the home of the Winnebago County Historical and Archeological Society as its present owner, Constance Misky of Oshkosh, has indicated intent to present the house to the Society.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Weekly Northwestern, December 11 and Daily Northwestern, December 6, 1884, provide data with respect to the construction cost and popularity of the Queen Anne style at Oshkosh. See also photograph # 29.

Brief statement on history of ownership of John R. Morgan house

Standing on original site, lot 43, in W.W. Wright's Subdivision, part of block 45 and block

Built as a residence for John R. Morgan, 1884, on land he acquired in 1865. After Morgan's death in 1906, the house became the property of his son, John Earl Morgan. In 1911, it went to Mrs. Luther Davies, and from her to Grace Morgan Davies. In 1935, it became the property of U. Morgan Davies who sold it to Arvin Scradar and wife in 1946. After 1946, a series of complicated transactions affecting the ownership of the house occurred; it finally became the property of Constance Misky in 1963.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>See County of Winnebago, Chain of Title Index, Book 17, p. 145 and p. 146; ibid., Ward 7, pages are not numbered.

(continued)

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet # 9.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Oshkosh, WIS

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	3	7	5	4	9	0	4	8	7	5	2	1	5
Zone				Easting				Northing						

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

E 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

F 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

G 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

H 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

### Verbal boundary description and justification

A small triangular piece in S W Corner of Lot 16 and all of lots 13 & 14, except N 12 ft. of Lot 14 Block F - see attached map.

### 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 Edward Noyes, Professor of History

organization University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh

date May 6, 1983

street & number 800 Algoma Boulevard

telephone 414-424-2451

city or town Oshkosh

state Wisconsin 54901

# 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

*Richard Murray*

title Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

date 7/20/83

### For NPS use only

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

*J. Alvares Byers*  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 10/14/83

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Sketch of John R. Morgan's Life and Career (J. R. Morgan House,  
Oshkosh, Winnebago Co., Wisc.)  
Continuation sheet Significance Item number 8 Page 1

Born in Wales on January 19, 1831, John R. Morgan was taken to America by his parents in 1833. The family settled in New York state where young Morgan received a practical and "fair English education." John inherited from his father a liking for carpentry which he began to follow at the age of twenty, and with his brother Richard, went into construction work. In 1855, John and Richard traveled west to the developing city of Oshkosh where they worked in a planing mill. Soon, they acquired ownership of the mill, but shortly after, their shop was destroyed by fire. The brothers rebuilt, and in 1857 organized a new firm which manufactured window sash, doors, and blinds. In 1860, these works were destroyed by fire, but once more, the Morgans re-built. In 1868, the Morgans founded a new company, Morgan Brothers. Between 1871 and 1875, no fewer than three fires struck Morgan Brothers, but even so, the Morgans prospered. In 1860, the census had tabulated John R. Morgan as a carpenter owning real estate worth \$1,000 and personal property worth \$200; in 1870, the census listed him as a lumberman owning real estate valued at \$9,000 and personal property at \$16,000. In 1889, John R. Morgan retired from Morgan Brothers, but a few years before his death in 1906, he returned to Morgan Brothers as president.

Although John R. Morgan unstintingly devoted his energies to the lumber and woodworking business, he had time for other pursuits. He was interested in banking, and became a founder and vice-president of the German-American Bank of Oshkosh, now the Valley Bank of Oshkosh. He was a "large stockholder" in the National Union Bank and was an investor with the Wisconsin National Bank of Milwaukee. Morgan was also interested in politics, serving on the Board of Aldermen at Oshkosh, and he engaged in the work of the Congregationalist Church there. At the time of his death, he was regarded as a civic leader at Oshkosh, and his career was cited as an example of how an individual of humble origin could rise in the scale by the rule of strive and thrive.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>There are numerous accounts of Morgan's life and career; for convenient sources see Daily Northwestern, March 28, 1898, July 10, 1906, and June 5, 1953; Publius V. Lawson, History Winnebago County Wisconsin... (Chicago, 1908), II, pp. 1053-1055; and The Biographical Dictionary...of Representative Men of Chicago, Wisconsin and the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago and New York, 1895), pp. 360-361. Figures concerning Morgan's property and his occupation are taken from United States Census, manuscript, 1860, Wisconsin, Winnebago County, p. 29, and ibid., I, p. 458. Cited subsequently as Census with appropriate year.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

John R. Morgan House, Oshkosh, Winnebago Co., Wisc.

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 2

## Historical Sketch of the Morgan Company

In 1855, John R. Morgan and his brother came to Oshkosh where they worked in a planing mill. This was the beginning of an effort which led to the establishment in 1868 of a firm known as Morgan Brothers. In 1870, the census listed the plant as having a capitalization of \$12,000 with twenty-six employees whose wages over a nine-month period totaled \$10,000. In the census year, Morgan Brothers produced \$44,000 worth of product made from \$28,000 worth of pine logs. Between 1871 and 1875, the firm was hurt by no fewer than three disastrous fires; even so, it survived.

In 1889, John Morgan and his brother Richard retired from management of the company; their responsibilities were assumed by Thomas Morgan, Albert T. Morgan, and John Earl Morgan, a son of John R. Morgan. Thomas Morgan is credited with establishing the plant at its present location, Sixth and Oregon streets in Oshkosh. Another disastrous fire occurred in 1895; but a new, modern plant with the latest equipment was erected to take the place of the old.

After the deaths of Albert Morgan in 1899 and Thomas Morgan in 1903, John Earl Morgan had charge of managing the firm. One mark occurring early in his tenure was the incorporation of the Morgan Company in September, 1904. The incorporators were J. R. John R. Morgan, J. E. John Earl Morgan, and Lydia Morgan. The capitalization of the Company was \$500,000, a figure that was a marked increase over the firm's capitalization of 1870.

Before his death in 1906, John R. Morgan returned from retirement to become president of the Company. After his death, J. Earl Morgan became president. During his presidency, the firm continued to expand, it earned "a national reputation for its sash, doors, and blinds," and by "economy and rigid quality control" survived the Great Depression of 1929. On February 11, 1939, J. Earl Morgan retired from a half-century of administrative work which had begun in 1889.

U. Morgan Davies, nephew of J. Earl Morgan and grandson of John R. Morgan, next became president of the Morgan Company. Under his presidency, the firm met the challenge of an unusually vigorous housing industry and increased production caused by demands of World War II. After the war, the firm modernized its equipment and augmented its production.

As of 1953, the Morgan wood-working network included the Morgan Company at Oshkosh; The Morgan Sash and Door Company at Chicago (acquired in 1889); and The Morgan Millwork Company at Baltimore (acquired in 1910). All of these merged in 1972 with C E Morgan Division of Combustion Engineering. In 1953, when the centennial of the City of Oshkosh was observed, the Morgan family had been associated in a major capacity with the lumbering industry of the city for ninety-eight years.

As of 1983, Morgan products are known throughout America; the firm also conducts overseas business based on a product line specializing in doors, stair work, and mantles. The company which employed twenty-six hands in 1870 now has 513 employees at Oshkosh, and 552 more in C E Morgan Distribution System of Combustion Engineering.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>For data relative to the above sketch, see Census, 1870, Winnebago County, I, p. 652; Daily Northwestern, June 5, 1953; Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography (Madison, 1960), pp. 259-260; Winnebago County Corporation Record, I, pp. 425-428; Notes of Wisconsin Industrial Hall of Fame in possession of writer. For more recent information, the writer is indebted to Henry Kimberly, former president Morgan Company, interview, April 28, 1983.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

John R. Morgan house, Oshkosh, Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet      Significance      Item number      8

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

Page      3

Historical sketch of Bell & Cole, Architects and Builders at Oshkosh, Wisconsin. Associated by Holland's Oshkosh City Directory of 1879-1882 with "some of the most prominent and oldest" manufacturing firms in the city, Bell & Cole's position in the construction business there was firmly established. In 1879, A.E. Bell, the founder of the firm, was credited with having "done more in the building line [at Oshkosh] than any other ever located there. A "practical architect" as well as "a builder of thirty-two years of experience," Bell was joined by E.W. Cole as a partner in 1877 [1867?]. Their shop, where they planned buildings and made materials for them, was located at Pearl and Market streets in the city. As of 1879, or five years before they constructed the John R. Morgan house, Bell & Cole enjoyed a reputation for having performed "a vast amount of work" in satisfying their customers. (One of their customers was Philetus Sawyer, lumberman and politician.) According to the Directory, Bell & Cole had "a prominent position among the notable institutions" contributing to the prosperity of the city of Oshkosh.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Holland's City of Oshkosh Directory, 1879-1882 (Chicago, 1879), pp. 72-73.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Major Bibliographical Sources (J. R. Morgan House, Oshkosh,  
Winnebago Co., Wisc.)  
Continuation sheet      Item number 9

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Page 1

Public Documents:

United States Census (Manuscript), Wisconsin  
Winnebago County, 1860 and 1870.

County of Winnebago, Corporation Record, Volume T, Chain of Title, Tract Index, Book 17  
and Ward (City of Oshkosh)

Newspapers:

The Oshkosh Weekly Northwestern

The Oshkosh Daily Northwestern

Other Sources:

Art Publishing Company, Oshkosh Illustrated. Historical, Descriptive and Picturesque.  
(Oshkosh ?, 1887).

George A. Randall, Compiler, Illustrated Atlas of Winnebago County, Wisconsin, Containing  
Outline Map of the County, Map of Early Townships in the County, with Village and City  
Plats. (Madison, Wisconsin, 1889).

The Biographical Dictionary and Portrait Gallery of Representative Men of Chicago,  
Wisconsin and the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago and New York, 1895).

Holland's Oshkosh City Directory, for the years 1879-1882, (Chicago, 1879).

Blumenson, John J.-G., Identifying American Architecture A Pictorial Guide to Styles  
and Terms 1600-1945 (Nashville, c. 1977).

Poppeliers, John, Chambers, S. Allen, and Schwartz, Nancy B., What Style Is It?  
(Washington, n.d.)

Meyer, R.P., Stith, D.J., and Dean, J.M., Styles and Designs in Wisconsin Housing: A  
Guide to Styles (Madison, 1974).

Personal Interview:

Henry Kimberly, former president of Morgan Company, April 28, 1983.

Addendum:

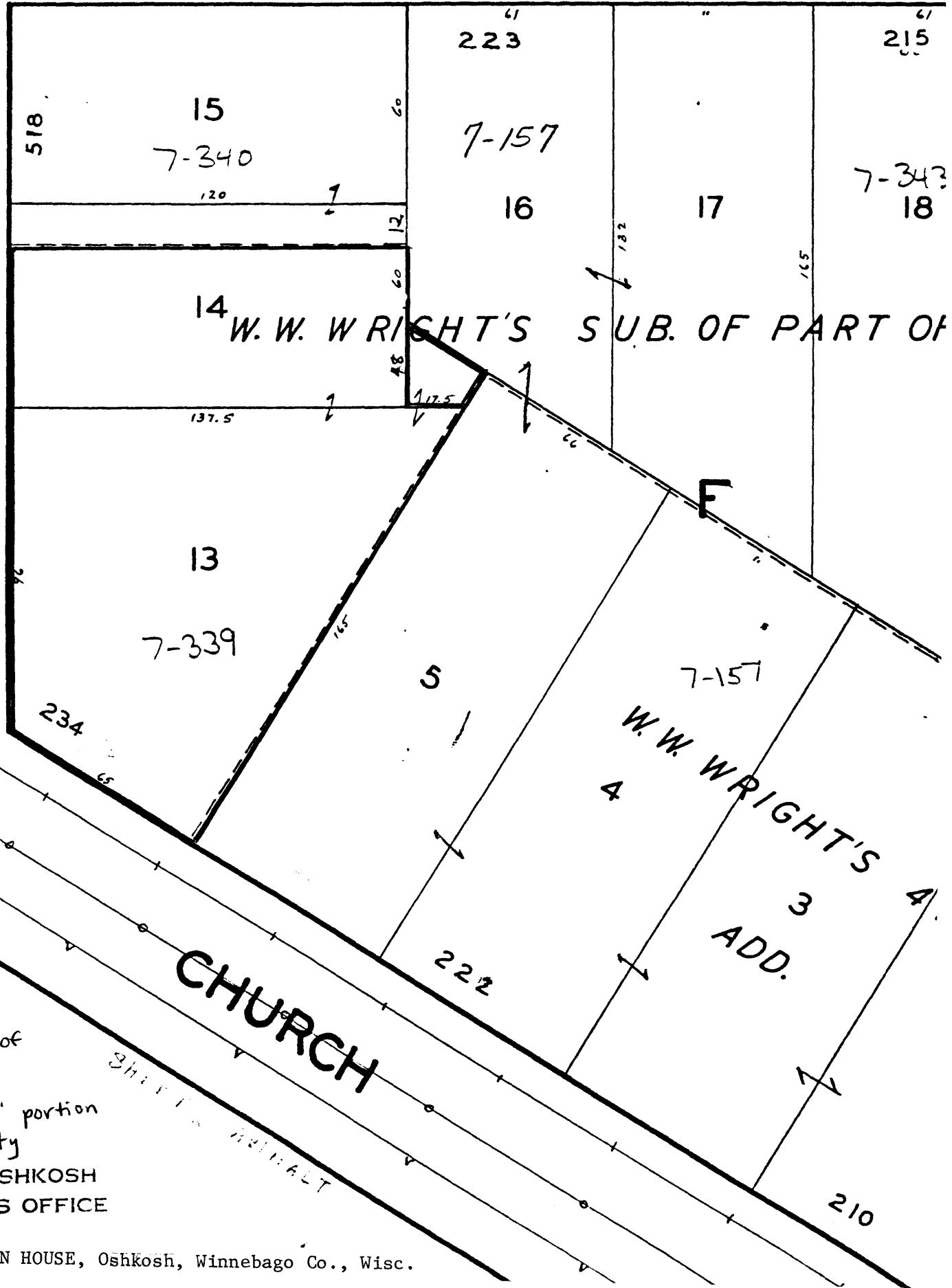
Winnebago County

Plat Book Number 1.

W. PARKWAY

ST.

FRANKLIN



14 W. W. WRIGHT'S SUB. OF PART OF

7-157  
W. W. WRIGHT'S  
ADD.

CHURCH

- boundaries of property  
 - "triangular" portion of property  
 CITY OF OSHKOSH  
 ASSESSOR'S OFFICE