

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Robert M. LaFollette House

AND/OR COMMON

Robert M. LaFollette House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

733 Lakewood Boulevard

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Maple Bluff

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin

CODE

05

COUNTY

Dane

CODE

025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Bronson C. LaFollette

STREET & NUMBER

733 Lakewood Boulevard

CITY, TOWN

Maple Bluff

VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dane County Register of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

City--County Building

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

none known

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Throughout his long career as a prominent State and national political figure, LaFollette was associated with Madison, the State Capitol. This house in suburban Maple Bluff was his home for the last 20 years of his life, during which he served his last year as governor and four terms as U.S. senator.

LaFollette moved from a house on Broom Street in Madison to a 60 acre farm in Maple Bluff in 1905. He used a two-story brick house on the farm as his residence. The house has been remodeled and had several porches added to it through its three generations of ownership in the LaFollette family, but it is essentially the same house that Robert LaFollette bought in 1905. Of the original land, only three or four acres remain and a brick three car garage (nonhistoric) is the only other structure on the plot.

No information was available as to alterations to the house during or after Robert LaFollette's association with it, and it was not possible to see the interior, but the house and grounds at the time of the inspection had a generally run-down and overgrown appearance, with some broken windows and cracks apparent in the masonry walls, and a vine covered a large portion of the south and east sides of the house.

The house is a two-story brick structure composed basically of two connected rectangular sections of different heights, with a two-story bay with a mansard roof which creates a modified tower effect. It is apparent from the detailing--the cornice, the window treatment and the bonded brick--that the two sections were built at the same time, and since the detailing is Victorian, it is probable that the exterior of the house is essentially the same as when LaFollette bought it in 1905. The porches on the south, at the southeast entrance and on the rear (north) of the house are obviously later additions, but their construction dates are unknown.

Both sections of the house have hipped roofs and the taller (southern) section has two hooded chimneys of different design, the northeastern section has one hooded chimney projecting from a flat central square area which is surrounded by a metal roof cresting matching the trim on the mansard roof of the tower. The southeast section of the house has a bracketed cornice with paneled frieze, but the cornice design has only a plain frieze on the other sides, although on the rear of the two sections there is a simple brick cornice. All the windows in the house have stone lintels and sills.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1905-1925

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

When Robert Marion LaFollette spoke at the University of Chicago February 22, 1897, one sentence from his speech succinctly summarized his political philosophy. He said, "Go back to the first principles of democracy--go back to the people." Democracy, LaFollette intensely believed, had to rest on the people, not on special interest groups or cliques. This idea guided him throughout his political career in the United States Congress and as governor of Wisconsin. As leader of that State he was instrumental in returning the government to widespread citizen participation. He inspired many Americans, a notable contribution toward strengthening of an active democracy, and become one of the most prominent leaders of the Progressive Movement in America.

LaFollette was born on a farm in Primrose Township, Wisconsin, on June 14, 1855. He attended the university of Wisconsin and was graduated in 1879, after which he studied law. As a member of the bar, LaFollette in 1880 decided to run for the office of District Attorney in Dane County, without the permission and support of the local boss. Unused to self-announced candidates, the Republican boss opposed LaFollette's plans. LaFollette was incensed at the attempt to stop him, and set out on a campaign that characterized the whole of his political career--he turned to the people--and the voters elected him.

LaFollette won a seat in Congress in 1885 and continued to serve for three terms. While in Washington, he became increasingly aware of the power of wealth and the concentration of economic interests, but his opposition to political patronage aroused little enthusiasm, especially among the political leaders of Wisconsin. Neither did LaFollette's support of the Interstate Commerce Act and the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, bring praise from the political hierarchy in his home State.

Defeated in the election of 1890, LaFollette returned to Wisconsin. A complete break with those who, in conjunction with railroad and timber interests, ran the State soon occurred, and LaFollette's crusade began. Until 1900 LaFollette and an increasingly dedicated band waged an unrelenting campaign to break the power of the vested interests. This struggle against those in power made LaFollette and his followers the best known Progressives in the country.

Resenting his abandonment by the party after 1890, and determined to reform the political machine, LaFollette set out on a campaign against the bosses, to establish a new political system. During this ten year period he developed a reform plan, basically comprised of a system of direct primary nominations protected by law; an equalization of taxation of corporate property with that of other similar property; the regulation of charges by railroads and other corporations to ensure

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Doan, Edward N., The LaFollettes and the Wisconsin Idea (New York, 1947).
 Case, Belle and LaFollette, Fola., Robert M. LaFollette (2 Vols. New York, 1953).
 LaFollette, Robert M., Autobiography (Madison, 1960).
 Persons, Frederick T., "Robert M. LaFollette" in Dictionary of American Biography X (New York, 1943).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	16	306950	47761050	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The approximately two acres remaining of the original 60 acre farm is an irregularly-shaped lot, with a triangular northeast corner section gone from the basic rectangular plot, which faces Lakewood Boulevard on the east and extends through to Wilder Street on the west. The national historic landmark boundary is the present property line, since the surrounding neighborhood is a developed suburb, although the LaFollette House is well screened from surrounding properties by shrubbery and wooded sections and overlooks a golf course located on the east side of

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

Blanche Higgins Schroer; Landmark Review Project

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

8-6-76

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202/523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

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.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/20/82

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

Robert LaFollette

CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

fair play and to prevent them from passing on their taxes to the public; and the erection of commissions of experts for the regulation of railroads and for other public interests.

LaFollette toured the State for followers, and received the most support from western sections where the farmers had been receptive to Granger and Populist ideas, and in northern communities where timber barons had provoked real opposition, with his least support in the more populated southeast. By 1900, LaFollette had so successfully outmaneuvered the political machine and engaged widespread support, that he won the Republican gubernatorial nomination by acclamation.

He was inaugurated in January 1901, committed to a program of direct primary legislation, tax reform, and railroad control. "This was partly reminiscent of Populism, partly anticipatory of Progressivism; but nowhere else was such a program so aggressively presented in a Republican State, and before the trend of the times was fully realized elsewhere the "Wisconsin Idea" had taken a place at the head of liberal political thought."²

The 1901 legislature and much of the press were persistently opposed to LaFollette's tactics and it was not until 1902 that he secured not only his own renomination but the election of a supportive legislature. The conservatives in the 1903 legislature were still able to block passage of LaFollette's railroad and taxation laws, but by 1904 a majority of the State central committee were LaFollette men. A delegation of at-large candidates headed by LaFollette was chosen, in an unprecedented single State convention, to be sent to the Republican National Convention.

Opponents of this system, the "Stalwarts" held a rival convention, and this Stalwart group was recognized by the National Convention. Despite this split, the Republicans won in 1904 in Wisconsin, and LaFollette met with a sympathetic legislature in 1905. While the Wisconsin Idea began to further develop under the attention of a number of LaFollette lieutenants, LaFollette himself was elected to the U. S. Senate in 1905, but deferred his resignation as governor and qualifications as senator until January 1906 to complete work begun in Wisconsin.

He was elected to succeed himself in the Senate three times more by his unshakable following, although he was at no time recognized by the Republican party as the Wisconsin leader, and his attacks on opponents were unrelenting. However, over the years a significant number of LaFollette-backed measures were adopted. Prior to World War I the direct primary was established by law in most States, severing to some degree boss selection of candidates, but also dissolving much party unity. His tax reforms made Wisconsin a leader in tax assessment and in adoption of income tax, which soon became a national policy.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Significance ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

His reliance upon regulatory commissions composed of technical experts nearly rebuilt the State administration of Wisconsin and later changed the whole aspect of American government. This movement toward government committees of experts was most fully developed in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin, which received particular attention from LaFollette and through his influence that institution achieved national prominence.

LaFollette's name was suggested for presidential candidate at the Republican National Convention of 1908, but his long-term defiance of certain Republican sectors made such a proposal unacceptable. However by 1912 the real possibility of his succeeding Taft after the 1910 Democratic gains seriously split the party. LaFollette's strong stand against the power and greed of major business groups led him to organize the short-lived National Progressive Republican League in 1911, and his image as a progressive and a supporter of labor often threw him into close alliance with Wilson and Democratic progressives.

His independent nature asserted itself in his stand opposing involvement in World War I and cost LaFollette support and popularity. His usual criticism of large concentrations of wealth led to an attack on the Americans who were deriving large profits from the munitions trade and Wall Street loans to Allies. He spoke against declaration of war on Germany, believing that the American people were being misled and that the war would impede national progress, however, he later supported a fully equipped army in war. Nevertheless his stand was misrepresented and exaggerated, resulting in condemnation from many, even in Wisconsin.

However, by the next senatorial election in 1922 the war was over and his constituency support was stronger than ever. From 1919 until 1925 he and his circle of sympathetic colleagues, the "little group of willful men" as Wilson had called them, retained an important voice and balance of power, and grew in prominence within liberal politics. A conference for progressive political action held in Cleveland in 1924 invited LaFollette to run for the presidency as an independent. He did, with Burton K. Wheeler, a progressive Democrat, as vice presidential candidate, and they received nearly 5,000,000 votes, or about one-sixth of the ballots cast.

Soon afterward LaFollette succumbed to the ill health which had hampered him for many years. He died the following summer of 1925 in Washington, leaving his political legacy in Wisconsin and his senate seat to his eldest son and namesake.

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Robert M. LaFollette

CONTINUATION SHEET

Footnotes

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE

1

¹ Quoted in Robert M. LaFollette, LaFollette's Autobiography (Madison, Wisconsin, 1960) pp. 85-86.

² Frederick T. Persons, "Robert M. LaFollette" in Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. X (N.Y., Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943) p. 543.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Boundary

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 2

Lakewood Boulevard. On the enclosed plat map, the landmark is labeled Lot Z.

Beginning at the northeast corner of the property, at a point on the west curb of Lakewood Boulevard, approximately 600 feet north of the intersection of Lakewood Boulevard and Farwell Street, the boundary runs south along the west curb of Lakewood Boulevard for about 304.0 feet; thence due west for about 340.92 feet to Wilder Street; thence north along the east curb of Wilder Street for about 145 feet; thence along a diagonal, in a northeastly direction for about 187.44 feet; thence due north for about 66.0 feet; then east for about 170 feet to the beginning point on Lakewood Boulevard.