

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAR 6 1986
date entered APR 3

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

1. Name

historic n.a.

and/or common East Wilson Street Historic District

2. Location

street & number 402-524 E. Wilson Street, inclusive, and
133 S. Blair Street not for publication

city, town Madison vicinity of

state Wisconsin code 55 county Dane code 025

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N.A.	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Please see continuation sheet

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Dane County Courthouse

street & number 210 Monona Avenue

city, town Madison state WI 53709

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1973; updated 1985 federal state county local

depository for survey records State Historical Society of Wisconsin

city, town Madison state WI 53706

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

The East Wilson Street historic district is a small commercial district located just east of the Capitol Square, the heart of downtown Madison. It is composed of 13 structures: the buildings on the northwest side of the 400 and 500 blocks of East Wilson Street, and the old Chicago and North Western Railway (C&NW) passenger and freight depots to the northeast. The commercial buildings face the railroad tracks and the shore of Lake Monona beyond. Behind the store buildings is a small residential neighborhood and to the southwest along Wilson Street are warehouses and altered commercial buildings.

The buildings in the district are unified by an even setback and by material. All but two of the contributing buildings are constructed of brick. One is a frame structure sided in asbestos shingles and the other, the passenger depot, has a gray Bedford limestone facade. The buildings are also unified by age and style. The buildings in the 500 block (with the exception of the non-contributing tavern at 504) were constructed in a relatively short period: 1872 to 1891. The buildings in the 400 block (not including the small 1954 structure at 410) are newer, dating from 1889 to 1923. Five of the eight contributing commercial buildings are Italianate in style, with bracketed cornices. Another, the Wilson Hotel, also has a strong Italianate flavor, although a major 1897 remodeling added a late Victorian corner tower.

Three buildings dominate the streetscape: the five-story Cardinal Hotel, which is the tallest building in the district, the large, three-story Wilson Hotel, the prominent tower of which commands attention, and the C & NW passenger depot, whose gracious classical lines and stone construction create an imposing monument. The rest of the historic buildings are two and three stories in height.

Although there are four non-contributing buildings in the district, they do not detract significantly from the historic flavor of the area. Two of the non-contributing buildings (410 and 504 E. Wilson St.) are tiny, one-story shops tucked beside taller Victorian structures. Another is the recently constructed office and parking lot complex of the Madison Gas and Electric Co. (MG&E). This structure is on the northeast edge of the district and is only included because it is physically attached to both the C & NW passenger and freight depots. Despite its massive size, it does not detract from the Blair Street streetscape because the architect sensitively designed the scale, setback, materials and details of the new structure to blend with and highlight the historic character of the old depots.

The worst intrusion in the district is a two-story restaurant that is composed of three 19th century commercial structures (510-516 E. Wilson St.). Nothing remains of the original facades of these structures except for six second-story window openings on the old Germania House Hotel (510 E. Wilson St.). The rest of the facade is stucco surfaced with an ugly array of variously sized non-historic windows. Although the buildings' material and design jar with its more intact neighbors, at least its height and setback lend some continuity to the streetscape.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion
___ 1400-1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science
___ 1500-1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture
___ 1600-1699	X architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian
___ 1700-1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater
X 1800-1899	X commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	___ transportation
X 1900-	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	X other (specify)
		___ invention		

Specific dates 1871-1935¹ Builder/Architect n.a.

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The East Wilson Street historic district is significant to the commercial history of Madison as the commercial area that grew up to serve the main depot of the Chicago and North Western Railway and the east depot of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. The passenger and freight depots of the Chicago and North Western are significant reminders of the most important mode of transportation in Madison in the 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, three of the buildings within the district are architecturally significant. (13 total properties, 9 contributing, 4 non-contributing.)

Historical Background

In 19th century Wisconsin, railroads were the dominant economic power. From the beginnings of settlement, Wisconsin's farmers concentrated their production on cash crops for urban markets rather than on subsistence farming. The railroads followed the edge of settlement as it moved westward to serve this demand for grain shipping to the east. In return, the rail brought to Wisconsin the heavy farm machinery and carloads of consumer goods needed by this rapidly growing pioneer economy. It was the railroads that made Madison into a wholesale and distribution center large enough to serve farmers and merchants throughout south central Wisconsin.

Between the years 1838 and 1841, the Wisconsin territorial legislature chartered several railroad companies in Wisconsin, but only one, the "Milwaukee and Waukesha" actually took shape. It began construction of a line from Milwaukee to Waukesha in 1847. In 1850, the railroad received a charter to build to Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi River and changed its name to the "Milwaukee and Mississippi". It was this line that brought the first railroad service to Madison. In 1853, the company built a large stone depot in Madison six blocks west of the Square (640 W. Washington Avenue, demolished). In the Spring of 1854, the bridge over Lake Monona was completed. On May 22, 1854, the first train arrived at the depot, greeted by hundreds of Madisonians, canon volleys, bands, firemen and fire engines. A formal celebration was followed by a picnic on the Capitol lawn. According to an eye witness:

It was a grand, but strange spectacle to see this monster train, like some huge, unheard-of thing of life, with breath of smoke and flame, emerging from the green openings ² scenes of pastoral beauty and quietude - beyond the placid waters of the lake.

After 1854, the construction on this line continued so that by 1857 it extended to the Mississippi River. In that same year, however, every railroad in the state went bankrupt. The Milwaukee and Mississippi emerged from bankruptcy as the Milwaukee and Prairie du Chien (M&PdC).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 4.34 acres

Quadrangle name Madison West, Wis. and Madison East, Wis. Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>5</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>3</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>4</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u> <u>2</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>3</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>1</u> <u>9</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>	F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheet.

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 Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner

organization City of Madison Dept. of Planning and Development date October 15, 1985

street & number 215 Monona Avenue telephone 608-266-6552


city or town Madison state WI 53710

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 

title _____ date 2/25/86

For NPS use only

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

 Entered in the National Register date 4/3/86

Keeper of the National Register

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 1

Item #4: Owners of Property

Inventory of Buildings:

Chicago and North Western Railway, passenger and freight depots
133 S. Blair Street, ca. 1908 and 1910-1911, contributing
Madison Gas & Electric Company
c/o Jim Montgomery, Facilities Management
P. O. Box 1231
Madison, WI 53701

George Isberner, clothing store, 402 E. Wilson Street, 1923, contributing
Oscar Klein
3758 E. Washington Avenue
Madison, WI 53704

Charles Smith store building, 406 E. Wilson Street, 1897, contributing
Wilson Street Joint Venture
c/o Contact Realty, Martin Rifken, Pres.
P. O. Box 2079
Madison, WI 53701

August Cunradi store building, 408 E. Wilson Street, 1889, contributing
Quentin L. Braun
408 E. Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703

Cleveland's Lunch, 410 E. Wilson Street, 1954, non-contributing
Quentin L. Braun
408 E. Wilson Street
Madison, WI 53703

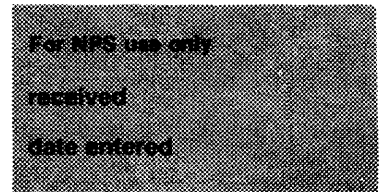
Cardinal Hotel, 416-420 E. Wilson Street, 1909, contributing
Sveum Development Corp.
c/o Philip Sveum
900 John Nolen Drive, #230
Madison, WI 53713

Lake City House, 502 E. Wilson Street, 1875, contributing
Catherine E. Millard
414 S. Randall Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

Tavern, 504 E. Wilson Street, pre-1909, non-contributing
Catherine E. Millard
414 S. Randall Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

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

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



East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 4

Page 2

Herman Kleuter store building, 506-508 E. Wilson Street, 1871 and 1891, contributing
Earl L. and Carol J. Rhode
7029 Briar Lane
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

Germania House Hotel and the Ramthun commercial buildings, 510-516 E. Wilson Street,
1872 and 1886, non-contributing
Earl L. and Carol J. Rhode
7029 Briar Lane
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

J. B. Drives store building, 518 E. Wilson Street, 1886, contributing
Earl L. Rhode
7029 Briar Lane
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

East Madison House, 520-524 E. Wilson Street, 1873, with additions, contributing
Pauline Sinaiko Trust, c/o Bernard Seltzer
3609 Odana Road
Madison, WI 53711

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

The current occupant has made his new operation the first successful use of this building in years. Before the restaurant moved in, its operator stated that if it were successful he would consider renovating the storefronts in a more compatible manner. It is hoped, therefore, that this intrusion will receive a more historically sensitive facelift in the next few years.

Following is a short description of each of the contributing buildings in the district:

402 E. Wilson Street. This three-story Prairie style commercial building is constructed of dark red brick. Stonework trims the storefront, the frieze, the cornice, window surrounds, and decorative panels inset in the brick on the front facade. The original storefront is intact and features luminaire glass transoms, green tile kick panels and a mosaic and terrazzo entrance floor. This building has housed a mens' clothing store since it was erected in 1923.

406 E. Wilson Street. This is the only building in the district that is not masonry clad. A simple, two-story, wood frame structure built in 1897, it has asbestos shingles on the front and clapboard on the side and rear. A bracketed cornice is the major historic feature. Windows on the west half are later additions, the east half has three double-hung windows. The storefronts are not original. This building housed a restaurant for over 22 years.

408 E. Wilson Street. Built in 1889, this two-story Italianate structure is brick veneered. A row of large dentils and corner pilasters are made of brick; stone trim includes sills and incised lintels, and the bracketed cornice is wood. The storefront is essentially very old with large plate glass windows and a luminaire glass transom, although the addition of Temple stone in 1962 detracts somewhat from its historic appearance. This building housed a drug store from 1889 to after 1939.

416-420 E. Wilson Street. A five-story red brick structure, the Cardinal Hotel was built in 1908-1909. Each floor is demarcated by stone beltcourses at the sills. Stone quoins trim the double-hung windows. A simple cornice crowns the design. The first floor has been altered on the exterior, but the barroom on the interior remains virtually intact, with its wainscotted walls, mirrored back bar, stained glass windows and mosaic tile floors. The structure was a hotel until recently. It is currently being renovated as apartments (NRHP, 9-2-82).

502 E. Wilson Street. The Lake City House is a small hotel erected in 1875. Constructed of brick, it is three stories high with segmentally arched windows on the second story and incised stone lintels on the third story. A bracketed cornice tops off the composition. Some of the original two-over-two windows remain on the side of the building; the rest are one-over-one. The storefront is not original. Used as a hotel until ca. 1914, the structure has also housed a saloon since its erection, except, of course, for the prohibition era, during which the space was used for a soft drink establishment.

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

506-508 E. Wilson Street. This Italianate brick building was constructed in 1871 with a matching addition to the west erected in 1891. The two-story structure is trimmed with brick pilasters, window surrounds and corbelling under the bracketed wood cornice. There are six double-hung windows on the second story facade; the first floor storefronts have been altered. This building was erected to house the Kleuter grocery and feed store at 508 and a meat market at 506, both of which remained here until ca. 1920. The Klueters owned a grocery store-meat market on this site from 1867.

518 E. Wilson Street. This simple, three-bay, two-story, brick Italianate building has incised stone window lintels and a bracketed wood cornice. Erected in 1886, it was used as a saloon from 1890 until prohibition.

520-524 E. Wilson Street. The structure now known as the Wilson Hotel was built in 1873 by August Ramthun as the East Madison House. In 1891-1892, a major addition was constructed to the west and in 1897, the exterior was entirely rebuilt. It appears that the Italianate segmentally arched windows on the second floor and the round-arched windows on the third were retained in the remodeling, but a Queen Anne style flat-roofed round tower was added at the corner. Modillioned cornices, molded brickwork, round-arched openings and columns at the corner entrance, bull's-eye windows in the tower, a rusticated stone basement and decorative wrought iron fire escapes embellish this red brick, three-story structure. The building has been a hotel since it was built. The lobby and restaurant retain their original mosaic tile floors, but the interior is otherwise quite plain.

133 S. Blair Street. The Chicago and North Western Railway passenger depot was built in 1910-1911. An imposing two-story structure of gray limestone, its style was called by contemporary accounts "Italian Renaissance". A central pavilion has a two-story entrance opening which was originally filled with doors on the first floor and windows above. This area was modernized for the Madison Gas and Electric Company many years ago, and the hanging copper and glass entrance canopy was also removed. Two large segmentally arched windows on each side of the central pavilion light the first floor, while four rectangular windows pierce each side of the second story. All sash were replaced when MG&E bought the building. Quoins trim the arched openings and every corner of the building. Dentils decorate the heavy cornice and carved wings flank a central bull's-eye window. The original passenger canopies and train shed behind the depot were demolished long ago. To the northwest of the passenger depot is the freight house, built ca. 1908. A small, two-story structure of red brick, it features large round-arched openings on the first floor, doubled, three-over-one windows on the second floor, brick quoins at the cornice, a stone beltcourse above the basement and a parapet gabled roof. When MG&E built their new complex behind the depots, the company went to great expense to sensitively renovate the little freight house for use as conference rooms and exhibit space.

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

ARCHEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

Since the East Wilson Street area is heavily developed, it is unlikely that significant prehistoric archeological remains exist within the boundaries of the district.

PRESERVATION ACTIVITIES

This section of Madison's downtown in recent decades has been run down almost to the point of dereliction. The Cardinal and Wilson Hotels became rooming houses for the down-and-out and many of the buildings in the area had fallen into disrepair. In 1980, however, a major 34-unit luxury condominium complex was constructed one block to the east of the district. Since then, developers have become more interested in the revitalization potential of this area. In 1982, the Cardinal Hotel, which had closed after a fire extensively damaged the upper floors, was purchased for redevelopment as an apartment building. This project is now under construction and the developer is planning on using the tax incentives for rehabilitating historic buildings. In 1983, Madison Gas and Electric Company decided to locate their new headquarters in the railroad depot block. After finding out from citizens and preservationists that the depots were considered important buildings to preserve, MG&E decided to make them the focal point of their new office complex. The project received a City-County historic preservation award in 1984.

This nomination is being prepared by the City of Madison at the request of the Capitol Neighborhoods Association. The neighborhood association is also using City funds to install trees and pedestrian lighting along these blocks in a style similar to the lighting used in Madison in the 1920s. A flower garden is also planned for the intersection near the depot.

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

For NPS use only

received

Date entered

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 1

Meanwhile, in 1848, the territorial legislature had chartered another rail company, the Madison and Beloit Railroad. In 1850, the line was authorized to extend through Madison to La Crosse and its name was changed to the Rock Valley Union Railroad Company. This company failed in 1854 and was consolidated with another railroad in 1855 as the Chicago, St. Paul and Fond du Lac. The company abandoned a previously partially graded line between Janesville and Madison in favor of the acquired Beloit-Madison route. The Chicago and North Western Railway Co. (C & NW), which had begun in 1855, picked up this right-of-way and finished building the line in September of 1864.

This route came into Madison from the south, crossing Monona Bay and skirting the north shore of Lake Monona to its terminus at Blair Street, just east of the Square. The C & NW was welcomed by Madisonians who were outraged by the high freight charges levied by the M & PdC to ship wheat to Milwaukee. The C & NW tried to convince the M & PdC to participate in the construction of a Union Station at Blair Street, but the M & PdC was not interested. Three years later the M & PdC was purchased by the Milwaukee and St. Paul (MILW RD) an 1863 consolidation of several defaulted railroads.

The MILW RD recognized the desirability of a depot in the Blair Street area, which was more accessible to the Capitol Square than the west depot area. But instead of cooperating in the construction of a union depot, in 1869, the MILW RD built its own small passenger depot on the south side of Wilson Street, between Franklin and Hancock. The C & NW gave up its push for a union station and in 1871 constructed one-story brick passenger and freight depots along the tracks east of Blair Street.

The years 1869 through 1871 saw the completion of three new rail connections with Madison: a twelve mile track linking Madison to the Sun Prairie end of a Milwaukee-Sun Prairie line (MILW RD), a thirty-three mile line to Portage, which linked with Green Bay (MILW RD), and an approximately thirty-five mile link with Baraboo and its connection to Winona Junction on the Mississippi (C & NW). All of these routes passed through the east depot area. In 1873, Madison was designated a stop on the C & NW's main line, between Chicago and Minneapolis.

It was in this era of depot construction and rail line extensions that the commercial area around the east depot sprang up. Contemporary newspapers attributed Madison's spurt of building activity at that time to "railroad prosperity".³ Around the year 1867, a Prussian named Herman Klueter, opened up a grocery store in the 500 block of E. Wilson Street. In 1871, he constructed a two-story brick building to house his grocery and feed business and rented out his old frame shop to a butcher. Klueter and his sons maintained an active and successful grocery, flour, feed and chinaware business here for about the next 50 years. The family lived upstairs from

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

the shop. In 1872, William Schumacher erected a two-story brick building to house the Germania House hotel. Catering specifically to German folk, this hotel is the only one remaining in Madison among the several that once existed that had strong ethnic connections. Unfortunately, it has been so altered as to have lost its integrity (510 E. Wilson Street). One year later, August Ramthun erected the east Madison house hotel and saloon (520-524 E. Wilson Street, extant). In 1875, another hotel and saloon was constructed in the area, the Lake City House at 502 E. Wilson Street (extant), built by another German, George Schlotthauer.

In the early 1880s, the C & NW built two more lines from Madison, one to Lancaster and another connection with Milwaukee. In 1885, the company replaced its small brick passenger depot with a large, two-story brick structure with dormers, a corner tower and a wrap-around veranda. The new depot housed a small hotel on its second floor and a popular dining room on the first floor. By that year, the commercial area along E. Wilson Street was still small, but thriving. In the 500 block were the three hotels described above, Klueter's grocery and meat shop, another grocery (514 E. Wilson St., altered), a tobacco shop and a barber shop (both demolished). The block directly to the east across from the new C & NW depot was mostly residential, but did include three small saloons, a grocery store and a tobacco shop (all demolished). The 400 block of E. Wilson Street contained only one building, a tiny frame barbershop at the corner of Wilson and Franklin Streets (demolished).

In 1886, the MILW RD responded to the C & NW's impressive new depot by erecting a lovely Victorian Gothic station surrounded by canopied platforms. A local newspaper said that the new depot was Madison's finest, calling it a "little daisy".⁴ In the same year, J. B. Drives, the owner of the East Madison House, erected a small brick commercial building on his property. Its first occupant was a drug store, but the building shortly became a saloon and remained such until prohibition forced the operation to become a restaurant. In 1889, August Cunradi, the pharmacist who operated the drug store in Drives' building, erected his own building down the street (408 E. Wilson Street, extant). This pharmacy continued in operation until sometime after 1939.

In the 1890s, the east and west depot areas were among the liveliest spots in town. Residents of the east side complained bitterly about the trains that often blocked Wilson and Blair Streets. But one Madisonian who wasn't complaining was Charles Elver, the new owner of the East Madison House. In 1891 and again in 1897, Elver undertook major expansions of his hotel, adding many rooms and giving the building an updated Queen Anne facade. By 1898, the East Wilson Street commercial district had nearly attained its mature configuration. The 500 block was a continuous blockface of small two- and three-story buildings. The 600 block still contained some residences, but also housed two saloons, a barbershop, stables for Denison's

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

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Dray Line, an agricultural implements warehouse and two hotels (all demolished). The 400 block of East Wilson was beginning to see development, too. In 1897, Charles Smith constructed a double store building at 406 E. Wilson Street (extant). The building housed the Sauthoff Bros., a popular merchant tailoring establishment, and a restaurant. The restaurant continued in operation until about 1920.

In 1899, 148 passenger and freight trains passed in and out of Madison each day. In 1903, the MILW RD built a monumental Renaissance-style passenger station at the west depot area, at a cost of \$59,000. The C & NW made plans immediately to put the MILW RD to shame by erecting a \$500,000 depot at Blair Street, but local citizens blocked the project for ten years over a dispute about closing nearby Blount Street.

Finally, in 1910, the C & NW announced plans to erect a scaled down, \$200,000 structure that would make up in grandeur of design what it could not be in size. The Wisconsin State Journal noted that:

the front of the station on Blair Street will be imposing. The Bedford stone will give an attractive⁵ white color like that of the new station of this company at Chicago. . .

Long canopied platforms behind the station would shelter the many passengers who arrived and embarked daily.

While the C & NW was deliberating over whether or not to build a new depot, one of its former employees, Ernest Eckstedt, decided to construct another railroad hotel. In 1907, he purchased the property at the corner of Wilson and Franklin Streets and tore down the little barbershop. In 1908 and 1909, Eckstedt erected the Cardinal hotel, the last and largest railroad hotel to be built in Madison (418 E. Wilson Street, extant). The Cardinal had a lovely Craftsman style tavern, a barbershop, a restaurant and 56 rooms for railroad men and traveling salesmen.

In 1915, the new C & NW depot was a "bustling, buzzing, exciting hub of activity".⁶ The stationmaster sold on an average of 1,000 tickets and routed 50 trains through the station each day. The east depot of the MILW RD also handled a continuous stream of passengers, enroute to Chicago, Portage and Watertown. In the 1920s through 1940s, the two train depots handled a steadily increasing passenger business, hotly competing with each other by introducing improvements in scheduling, faster and more luxurious trains and special trains for university vacations, football games, lodge activities and theatrical events in Chicago and the Twin Cities. The business area serving the depots changed very little until Prohibition began in 1916, when the several saloons in the area were forced to go out of business or become restaurants, soft drink parlors or confectioneries. In 1935,

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 4

when Prohibition ended, most of the saloons resumed operations. Throughout the historic era, the restaurants and hostelrys continued to serve railroad men and passengers in this busy part of downtown Madison.

Within a year of the end of World War II, however, the number of passengers traveling on the two railroads began to decline. Competition from expanded bus lines, a growing number of automobiles, improved roads and commercial airlines forced the MILW RD to demolish its east side depot in 1952. In 1965, the C & NW ceased all passenger business and in 1971, the last MILW RD passenger train departed from Madison. The saloons in the area continued to do a brisk business, but the hotels began serving mostly weekly and monthly lodgers. The buildings in the 600 block of East Wilson were razed for street relocation, a gas station and a post office garage.

Today, the condition of the remaining buildings is only fair. Neighborhood residents hope that recognition of the area's historical importance and the redevelopment projects proposed for the area will bring new life to this once vibrant part of downtown Madison.

TRANSPORTATION

In Wisconsin, the Chicago and North Western Railway and the Milwaukee Road were the two dominant rail companies. The Milwaukee Road placed its emphasis on east-west routes out of Milwaukee to serve the grain growing regions of the midwest and western states. The Chicago and North Western took a generally northerly direction to link Chicago with the lumber and mining areas of the north. The Milwaukee Road handled the majority of passenger and freight traffic through Madison, but the Chicago and North Western was a constant and fierce competitor. Another rail line, the Illinois Central, also served Madison, but business on the IC was only a fraction of that of the two major companies. In the 19th century, Madison, a town with few large industries, the railroads were also important as major employers.

The Chicago and North Western Railway passenger and freight depots are significant physical remnants of the railroad era in Madison. Other buildings associated with this railroad company have been demolished or seriously altered. In 1882, the C & NW built a small depot in South Madison, referred to by the company as "Madison Junction". The focal point of the South Madison commercial district, this depot was demolished many years ago. The C & NW roundhouse was originally located several blocks east of the main depots, but was demolished long ago. A second roundhouse was constructed at new switching yards on the far east side in 1895. This roundhouse remains, but it has been significantly altered into a warehouse outlet store.

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

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number

8

Page 5

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Other railroad related buildings remaining in Madison are the 1903 Milwaukee Road depot on West Washington Avenue (NRHP, 1985), the Milwaukee Road roundhouse which has been partially demolished and has lost its integrity and the Illinois Central freight depot on W. Washington Avenue.

COMMERCE

The East Wilson Street historic district contains a collection of railroad hotels, saloons and restaurants that is unique in Madison. Six railroad hotels remain in Madison, four of which are located in the East Wilson Street district.

One, the old Atlas Hotel, a few blocks to the east, has been completely altered. The other, the Hotel Washington, at the west railroad depot area, is an excellent example of its type and should be preserved. Besides the Hotel Washington and one 1903 saloon, nothing remains of the old commercial area that once existed around the west railroad depots.

It is interesting to note that almost every building constructed in the East Wilson Street area and nearly all of the merchants and innkeepers in the area were people of German blood. The heart of Madison's first German neighborhood was the 600 block of East Wilson and Williamson Streets, one block to the east of the district. While Germans were the most populous immigrant group in Madison, most commercial areas in town contained a more heterogeneous mixture of Yankee, German and Norwegian businessmen.

Architecture

The Chicago and North Western passenger depot, the Cardinal hotel and the Wilson Hotel are architecturally significant.

The Chicago and North Western passenger depot is an impressive neo-classical structure. Although the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and the State Capitol are finer and much larger neo-classical buildings, the C & NW depot design is nevertheless significant for its high quality, powerfully rendered design. The architects of the depot were the nationally known railroad designers, Frost and Granger. Both Charles Sumner Frost (1856-1931) and Alfred Hoyt Granger (1867-1939) studied architecture at MIT. Frost was especially active in railroad terminal design, no doubt in part due to the fact that his wife, Mary Hughitt, was the daughter of the president of two major midwestern railroads. Among the many railroad designs executed by Frost and his partners were the C & NW depot in Milwaukee, Union Stations in Omaha and St. Paul and the La Salle Street station, the C & NW offices and the North Western terminal in Chicago. The design of the Madison depot was meant to recall the design of the recently completed C & NW station in Chicago.

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

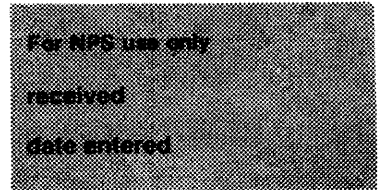
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 6



The Cardinal Hotel was listed on the National Register in 1982 as a "good vernacular example of building design in transition from Victorian style to the Commercial style". Although the simplicity of its design makes its style difficult to describe, the polychromy of stone sills and quoins against a red brick background and the simple massing create a striking and pleasant building that is a visual landmark on the near east side. The Cardinal was designed by Ferdinand Kronenberg, a member of Madison's German community, and the designer of several important Madison buildings, including St. James Church, the Joyce Funeral Home, the Frautschi Furniture Store, and the Washington Hotel in the west depot area.

The Wilson Hotel is an interesting amalgam of earlier Italianate design motifs and the Queen Anne style. Apparently, some design details from the original 1871 hotel were retained, such as the segmentally arched windows on the second floor, the round-arched windows on the third floor and the bracketed cornice. However, the round corner tower, the large round-arched lobby openings, the rusticated basement, the neo-classical swags on the fire escape and the refined molded brickwork are late Victorian elements that if not combined in a way pleasing to modern eyes are nevertheless interesting reminders of local architectural design from the 1890s. The Wilson Hotel is one of only four nineteenth century hotel buildings remaining in Madison.

¹The first building in the district was constructed in 1871. The significance of the district extends beyond 1935, but is not deemed to be of sufficient import to warrant waiving the 50-year rule.

²Wisconsin State Journal, May 24, 1854.

³Wisconsin State Journal, June 5, 1871.

⁴Wisconsin State Journal, unknown date in 1888, quoted in John Gruber, "Illinois Central Railroad Reaches North to Madison", Journal of Historic Madison, Inc. of Wisconsin, 1981-1982, p. 52.

⁵Wisconsin State Journal, unknown date in April, 1910, quoted in John Gruber, "A Railroad Changes in the Twentieth Century", Journal of Historic Madison, Inc. of Wisconsin, 1978, p. 29.

⁶David Mollenhoff, Madison: A History of the Formative Years, 1982, p. 292.

⁷Ibid., p. 122.

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

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin
Continuation sheet

Item number

9

Page

1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Item #9 - Major Bibliographic References

Architectural Reviewer, September, 1897, pp. 19-49.

Building permits, City of Madison Dept. of Planning and Development.

Butterfield, Consul W., ed., History of Dane County, Wisconsin, Chicago: Chicago Western Historical Co., 1880, p. 1007.

Capital Times, Sept. 24, 1949, July 3, 1951, Nov. 13, 1952.

City directories for Madison, Wisconsin, 1858-1939.

Desmond, Harry W., "The Work of Frost and Granger", Architectural Record, August, 1905, pp. 114-145.

Durrie, Daniel S., History of Madison, the Capital of Wisconsin, including the Four Lakes Country, Madison: Atwood and Culver, 1874, pp. 295, 344.

Gruber, John, "Illinois Central Railroad Reaches North to Madison", Journal of Historic Madison, Inc. of Wisconsin, 1981-1982, pp. 49-60.

_____, "A Railroad Changes in the Twentieth Century", Journal of Historic Madison, Inc. of Wisconsin, 1978, pp. 27-40.

"Madison Past and Present. . . 1852-1902", Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902, pp. 5, 27.

Mollenhoff, David V., Madison: A History of the Formative Years, Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt, 1982.

The National Encyclopedia of American Biography, New York: J. T. White & Co., v. 25, pp. 224, 247.

The Northwestern, Feb., 1911.

Tax assessment records, City of Madison Dept. of Planning and Development.

Sanborn-Perris maps for Madison, Wis., 1885, 1892, 1898, 1902, 1908, 1942, updated.

Wisconsin State Journal, May 24, 1854, June 5, 1871, August 15, 1873, Oct. 2, 1873, Aug. 22, 1882, Dec. 31, 1885, Dec. 18, 1886, Dec. 2, 1891, Jan. 2, 1895, Dec. 31, 1895, Dec. 31, 1897, Dec. 29, 1910.

Withey, Henry and Elsie, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, p. 224.

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

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

East Wilson Street Historic District, Madison, Wisconsin

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

For NPS use only
received
date entered

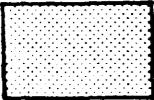
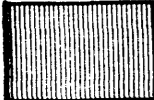

Item #10 - Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at the south corner of the property at 402 E. Wilson Street, proceed northwesterly to the rear lot line of the property at 404 E. Wilson Street. Then proceed in a generally northeasterly direction along the rear property lines of 404-420 E. Wilson Street, continue northeasterly across S. Franklin Street and along the rear property lines of 506-524 E. Wilson Street and continue across S. Blair Street to the southwesterly lot line of the property at 133 S. Blair Street. Then proceed northwesterly along said lot line to the northwesterly lot line, thence northeasterly along said line to the northeasterly lot line, thence southeasterly along said line to the southeasterly lot line, thence generally southwesterly along said line to the south corner of said lot. Then proceed southwesterly across S. Blair Street and along the southeasterly lot lines of the properties at 524 to 402 E. Wilson Street to the point of beginning.

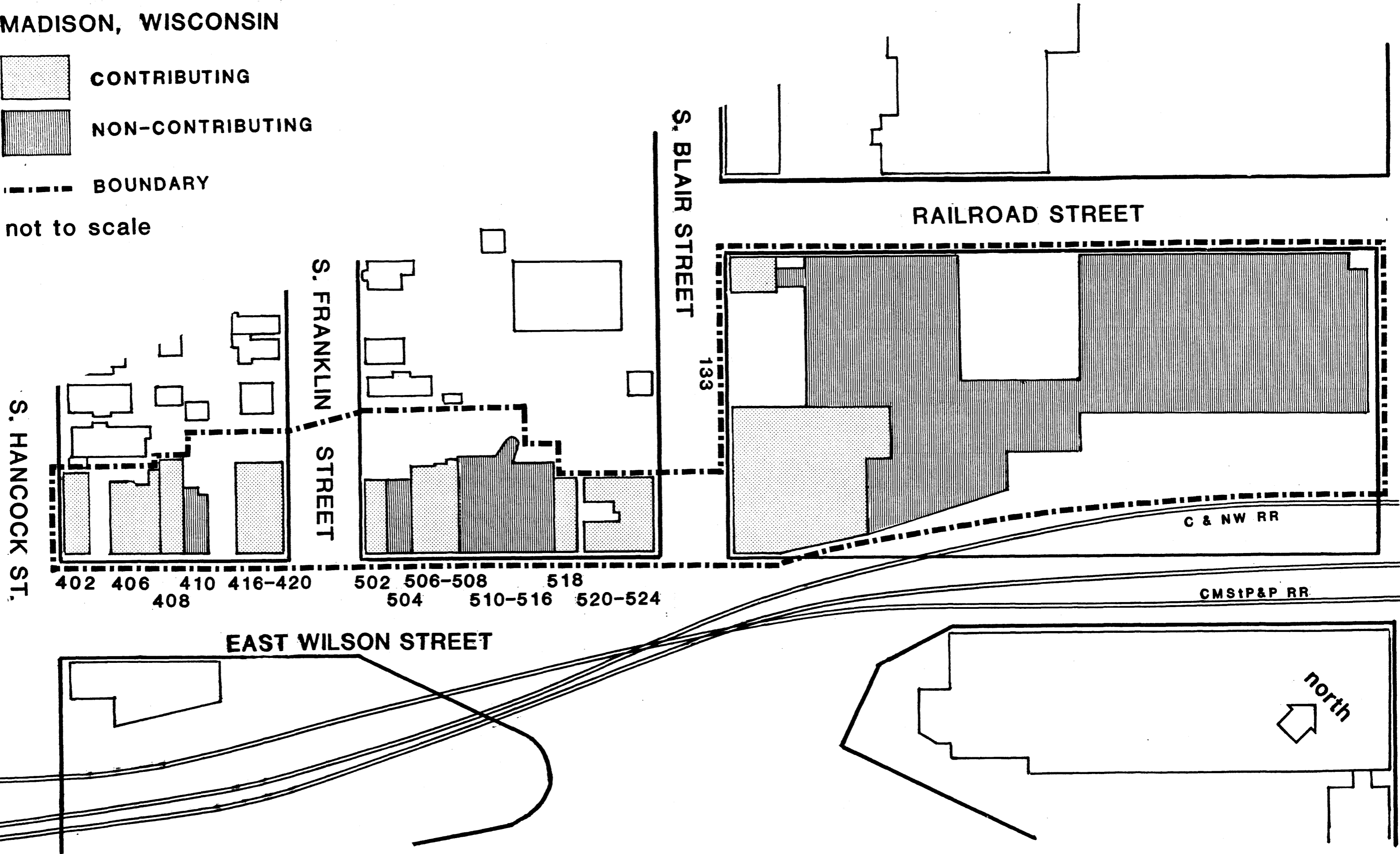
The boundaries of the E. Wilson Street historic district include those buildings which remain of the E. Wilson Street commercial area and also include the Chicago and North Western Railway passenger depot and freight depot. To the northwest of the 400 and 500 blocks of E. Wilson Street is a residential neighborhood. Northwest of the district along S. Blair Street are two commercial buildings constructed in recent times. Northwest of the district along Railroad Street are an old wagon factory and a foundry. Although these two buildings are historic in their own right, they are manufacturing buildings of a different character from the commercial buildings included in the nomination. Most of the block on which the passenger and freight depots sit is covered by a large complex erected in 1983 as the home offices of the Madison Gas and Electric Company. This complex is included because it is attached at several points to the two railroad depots. To the southeast of the district is a railroad corridor and a major thoroughfare. The only building to the southeast is a low, masonry reservoir constructed in 1968. Southwest of the district is a row of mostly altered warehouse structures on the south side of Wilson Street. On the north side of Wilson Street are two older commercial buildings, completely altered in recent years, and a 1957 office building.

EAST WILSON STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

MADISON, WISCONSIN

-  CONTRIBUTING
-  NON-CONTRIBUTING
-  BOUNDARY




not to scale



EAST WILSON STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

MADISON, WISCONSIN

MAP SHOWING LOCATION OF PHOTOGRAPHER
MARCH, 1985

-  CONTRIBUTING
-  NON-CONTRIBUTING
-  BOUNDARY

not to scale

