

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (1)

Name of Building or Site

Common Quisling Towers Apartments	Historic (if applicable) Quisling Towers Apartments
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Location

Street Address 1 E. Gilman Street	Aldermanic District Fourth
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Classification

Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)
building

Zoning District R6HHIS-MH	Present Use apartments
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Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

Name (s)
Max F. Miller

Street Address 3738 Atwood Avenue	Telephone Number
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Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

Parcel Number 0709-144-0708-0	Legal Description SW 90 feet of Lot 1, Block 93, Original Plat
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Condition of Property

Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)
good

Altered or Unaltered? altered	Moved or Original Site? original site
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Wall Construction

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

The Quisling Towers building is a five-story, 70 x 40 foot rectangular building of "buff-gray" pressed brick and Bedford stone trim.¹ Grouped corner windows are accentuated by projecting copings; above the third story, these "tiers" culminate in terra cotta-trimmed balconies, which fill voids between the two-story "towers." Terra cotta copings, marking the water table on the front (north) facade, are carried across the matching brick wall which "grows" from the building's northwest corner and "steps down" the slope of Wisconsin Avenue along the west side. There are no major alterations inside or out.

Twenty-six apartments (studios, one and two-bedroom units) occupy the interior. Painted plaster surfaces conceal the fireproof construction of hollow structural tile anchored to face brick.² At the front door, a simple metal canopy shelters the full-length glazed double doors and sidelights; the oval vestibule inside retains its linoleum tile floor and sculptured plaster ceiling. Now as originally, hall floors and stairs are carpeted. Appointments in the rental units vary according to size, and except for minor improvements, remain unaltered. The three, two-story two-bedroom apartments located in the towers are most distinctive, with two-story window walls lighting living and dining areas; curved stairs, overlooking the living level, serving the upper-level bedrooms; a fireplace; and balconies. Most corners are curved or finished with metal corner beads. Kitchens, "of latest design"³ in 1937, include the original painted white pine cabinetry; where the color scheme has been restored to the original, doors are white outside, red inside, with black trim, and red-scored brushed chrome pulls. Baths include the original black and white tile surfaces and porcelain fixtures. Call boxes are still in place, though non-functional. One-bedroom and studio apartments are simpler, with similar kitchens and baths, and period hardware, but no dramatic spaces or substantial appointments.

1-3 Specifications, Apartment building for Dr. Abraham Quisling, Lawrence Monberg, architect, 1937 (City of Madison Building Inspection Records).

**City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)**

Original Owner Dr. Abraham Quisling	Original Use apartments
Architect or Builder Lawrence Monberg	Architectural Style Moderne
Date of Construction 1937	Indigenous Materials Used not applicable

List of Bibliographical References Used

City of Madison Building Inspection Records.

"History of Quisling Towers Apartments," written statement by Lawrence Monberg, undated, received by the Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, January, 1983.

Koyl, George S., ed., American Architects Directory, 1955, p. 386.

City directories.

Form Prepared By:

Name and Title

Diane H. Filipowicz/and Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner

Organization Represented (if any)

City of Madison

Address

P. O. Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701-2985

Telephone Number

266-6552

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

March 5, 1993

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

In its massive sculptural form and retention of period detail inside and out, the Quisling Towers Apartments is probably Madison's best example of the Art Moderne period of construction. Its local prominence, obvious period quality, and unaltered state establish its significance. Furthermore, the building is a pivotal element in the Mansion Hill Historic District.

The Quisling Towers building was designed for Dr. Abraham Quisling by architect Lawrence Monberg, then of Chicago, Dr. Quisling sought out the young Danish-born architect on the recommendation of his father-in-law, a Chicago contractor. In exchange for redesigning the project that Quisling proposed, Monberg was given full control over details and execution of his design.¹ The result, with units of various sizes, levels, and period decor (balconies, stair towers, "modern" kitchens), was considered bold in the context of Depression-era construction, as well as its design. At the time, Monberg was in the last years of his employ as chief draftsman for the firm of L.G. Hallburg & Co., of Chicago, just prior to opening his own office in Kenosha, Wisconsin. From the 1940s through the '70s, Monberg designed a large number of schools in Wisconsin, as well as many public and commercial buildings. After leaving Wisconsin, Monberg continued to practice in Florida.²

One of Madison's prestige apartment buildings, the Quisling Towers attracted "established" and long-term tenants. Current residents include a substantial proportion of students and young professionals who were attracted to the building because of its architectural distinction.

Both in the context of other period construction and of the work of its architect, the Quisling Towers building can be evaluated. Although there are a number of buildings of "modern" design of the 1930s in Madison, few, if any, are as distinctive, substantial, and well-preserved as the Quisling Towers. Most comparable are two other commissions done a decade later for Dr. Quisling: a clinic (diagonally opposite the Towers) and a hotel (one block northwest). Both designed in the Art Moderne style and both of the same gray brick, these large-scale buildings are also pivotal elements in the local Mansion Hill Historic District, but are less remarkable for their date and lack of distinctive interior features. The Quisling buildings are the only known Monberg works in Madison.

¹"History of Quisling Towers Apartments," Written statement by Lawrence Monberg, undated, received by the Historic Preservation Division, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, January 1983.

²George S. Koyl, ed., American Architects Directory, 1955, p. 386.