

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

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**Name of Building or Site**

Common  
Larry's

Historic (if applicable)  
Mohr/Christoffer Building

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**Location**

Street Address  
113-115 West Main Street

Aldermanic District  
4

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**Classification**

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

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**Zoning District**

C4

Present Use  
Restaurant

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**Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)**

Name(s)  
Larry Lichte

Street Address  
123 West Main Street  
Madison, WI 53703

Telephone Number  
257-4808

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**Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)**

Parcel Number  
0709- 231-1903-0

Legal Description  
Lots 4 and 5 of Mills Subdivision  
of Block 73, Original Plat.

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**Condition of Property**

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

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**Altered or Unaltered?**

Altered

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**Moved or Original Site?**

Original Site

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**Wall Construction**

Brick load bearing

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**Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.**

This nomination covers a property that was originally built as two separate brick masonry commercial buildings, but has since been joined primarily on the street level for use as a restaurant and bar.

The Mohr Block (113 W. Main Street) is two stories, the Christoffer Block (115 W. Main Street) three stories tall. The two commercial blocks were built in 1873 and are three bays wide. Because they both exhibit the exact same window and cornice treatments, it seems exceedingly likely that they were both designed and built by the same individuals.

The street level portions of the facade have recently been remodeled (c.1970) with new entries, permastone facing and fixed aluminum casement windows. The Mohr Block, unlike its neighbor, still retains its denticulated and bracketed storefront cornice.

The upper story windows of both buildings retain their round keystone arches and stone sills. What were probably double-hung wood sash windows have been partially infilled with wood paneling and recently remodeled with wood sash awning windows. Upper story window bays are separated by decorative brick insets that resemble a cross within a circle. The roof-level cornices include regularly spaced decorative brackets that are paired at the ends. They are visually supported by wooden panels and brick corbelling that run the width of the building.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

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<b>Original Owner</b> Fred and Julia Mohr/H.C. Christoffer	<b>Original Use</b> Commercial
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<b>Architect or Builder</b> Unknown	<b>Architectural Style</b> Italianate
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<b>Date of Construction</b> 1873	<b>Indigenous Materials Used</b>
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**List of Bibliographical References Used**

Durries, David S., History of Madison and The Four Lake Country of Wisconsin  
La Follette, Belle M., Robert M. La Follette (MacMillan Company, New York, 1953)  
Madison City Directories  
Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps  
Thelen, David P., Robert M. La Follette and the Insurgent Spirit (Little, Brown,  
and Co., Boston, 19??)  
Two-Thirds of a Century: The Story of the Progressive [1987?]

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**Form Prepared By:**

**Name and Title**

Richard A. Bernstein  
309 Norris Court  
Madison, WI 53706 (608) 251-4615

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**Organization Represented (if any)**

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

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**Address**

PO Box 296  
Madison, WI 53701

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**Telephone Number**

(608) 251-4615

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**Date Nomination Form Was Prepared**

January 30, 1993

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

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**Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:**  
In 1873 the local newspaper announced the following:

"Messrs. Daggett<sup>1</sup>, Fred Mohr, Christoffers' & Co. have united in erecting a substantial brick building, 66 feet front, by about 85 feet deep, on Main Street, costing some \$16,000."<sup>2</sup>

From ca. 1877-1895, the Mohr Block's storefront at 113 W. Main Street was used as a bakery and restaurant for Carl Herman. Later it hosted a series of saloons from ca. 1896 to Prohibition.

H. Christoffers (owner of 115 W. Main Street) owned and operated a funeral parlor and furniture store on this site as far back as 1868. From 1873 until after 1906, Christoffers, in partnership F. Daubner and J. Hoevler, used this building to deal in his line of "fine furniture" and "upholstered goods" with "particular attention given to undertaking."<sup>3</sup>

The 1885 Sanborn-Perris map labels the front of the building as "furniture" while a 2-story metal-clad rear extension is labeled as "woodwork," thusly indicating the separation between those devoted to the showroom and warehouse from those earmarked for manufacture and production. By 1892 Christoffer's inventory included coffins and by 1908 the indicated activity in the rear extension was changed from "woodwork" to "upholstery."<sup>4</sup>

By 1898, however, part of the building was occupied by the American Thresherman, a periodical that served the local farmer. Published by B.B. Clarke, the periodical had correspondents in six different languages and in 1902 required a whole carload of paper to print. By 1909, the journal moved its headquarters to the Cantwell Building at 121-125 S. Pinckney (extant, but severely altered).

Part of the building's vacancy was filled by none other than Robert M. La Follette. From here he published his new insurgent journal - *La Follette's Weekly Magazine*.

Before returning to Washington in December, Bob had decided to start a weekly magazine. Ever since he had owned and edited the *University Press*, he had felt the lure of such an enterprise. The change in policy of the *Milwaukee Free Press*, which gradually drifted over to an openly stalwart position, created an impelling need for a progressive organ in Wisconsin.

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<sup>1</sup> M.L. Daggett was grocer who was the principal owner of 111 W. Main Street which has since been demolished.

<sup>2</sup> P. 323, David S. Durries, History of Madison and The Four Lake Country of Madison

<sup>3</sup> Madison City Directory, 1873, 1877-78, 1883, 1883-1884.

<sup>4</sup> Sanborn-Perris Insurance Maps, 1885, 1892, 1898, 1902.

I think, too, he had a vision of his magazine attaining national scope and influence.<sup>5</sup>

The first issue was published in January, 1909. Although Senator La Follette's name appeared on the masthead as editor, the actual work was performed by Herbert Quick as associate editor and Frederick W. MacKenzie as managing editor. Belle La Follette and Caroline L. Hunt, a former professor of domestic science at the University of Wisconsin, ran the "Woman and Education" department. Other feature articles were contributed by the La Follette children, Jane Addams, William Jennings Bryant, Clarence Darrow, Jack London, Theodore Roosevelt, Adlai Stevenson, John Commons, Richard T. Ely, Lincoln Steffens and many prominent muckrakers and insurgents of the period. The magazine's circulation reached 31,000 in its first year and ranged between 30,000 and 48,000 in its early years, with about half in Wisconsin. The magazine, however, never escaped a precarious financial existence from the very start.<sup>6</sup>

The Botschafter company of Madison printed 140,000 copies of the premiere issue. The masthead was emblazoned with the motto "Ye Shall Know the Truth and the Truth Shall Make You Free." The cover design featured a quill pen writing the word "The Truth." Within its total of sixteen pages were two of editorials. It is worth noting that La Follette and his law partner Alfred T. Rogers had their law offices two doors to the west at 119 W. Main Street.

By 1911 the building they occupied was listed in local directories as "La Follette's Magazine Building." When La Follette died in 1925, his wife and two sons, Phillip and Bob Jr., struggled to keep the magazine afloat, despite falling circulation and advertising revenues. After a brief period the La Follette family felt they could no longer assume the responsibility of the weekly magazine. In 1929, the La Follette family merged its declining editorial interests with those of William T. Evjue, editor of the Madison *Capitol Times*, to form the Progressive Publishing Company. On December 7, 1929, a new publication - a weekly newspaper entitled *The Progressive* - first appeared on the newsstands.

In 1931 the city directories listed 115 W. Main Street as the La Follette Headquarters Building, a subtle yet important name change. The same Directory also lists the building's name as the Kenney Building. John T. Kenney occupied room 4 on the second floor of the building by that time.<sup>7</sup> The third floor was listed as vacant. In 1935, while still listed as the Kenney Building, the directory also noted that this building was now the home of the "Progressive Headquarters." Other listings in the same directory indicates that this served as the offices for the "State Central Committee" for the Progressive Party with Aldric Revell the Assistant Secretary and Office Manager.

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<sup>5</sup> P. 263, Belle M. La Follette, Robert M. La Follette (MacMillan Company, New York, 1953).

<sup>6</sup> Pp. 66-7, David P. Thelen, Robert M. La Follette and The Insurgent Spirit (Little, Brown, and Co., Boston, 19??)

<sup>7</sup> John T. Kenney was president of Dane County Abstract of Title Company, while also a lawyer who had his offices in room 4 of 115 W. Main Street from 1931 to 19??.