

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

**Name of Building or Site**

**Common**

Marrakesh Cafe

**Historic (if applicable)**

McGovern Block

**Location**

**Street Address**

121 West Main Street

**Aldermanic District**

4

**Classification**

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

Building

**Zoning District**

C4

**Present Use**

Restaurant

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

**Name (s)**

Larry Lichte

**Street Address**

123 West Main Street

**Telephone Number**

257-4808

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

**Parcel Number**

0709-231-1906-4

**Legal Description**

Lot 8, Mills Subdivision of Block 73, original plat

**Condition of Property**

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

Good

**Altered or Unaltered?**

Unaltered (from 1936 remodeling)

**Moved or Original Site?**

Original Site

**Wall Construction**

Brick with terra cotta veneer

**City of Madison Landmarks Commission**  
**LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)**

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

Built as a standard commercial Italianate building in 1871, the McGovern Store was remodeled in 1936 by the Wells Printing Company. The changes to the building included a new store-front, giving it the Art Deco facade, done largely in terra cotta, now seen on the first story of the building.

The first story of the building at 121 West Main is four bays wide (two windows and two doors), and there are vertically striated, terra cotta pilasters between each bay. These pilasters and two windows rest on a base of polished green terra cotta, resembling granite, that extends up from the ground approximately two feet. Under each window, inset into the terra cotta, is a terra cotta grate in an abstract sunburst design. Above each bay, in the spandrel, is another more complex, abstract sunburst design in terra cotta. The pilasters and spandrels are capped with an abstract geometric course, also done in terra cotta. Above this are three, simple, unornamented courses, where the current occupant's business sign is located. The first story facade is then capped by another geometric course and finally concludes with another unornamented beltcourse.

The vertical stress created by the striated pilasters, and the abstract designs done in terra cotta, combine to make this an excellent example of an Art Deco Style store-front.

The second story of the building originally looked much like the building next door at 123 West Main. Probably in 1936 the windows were reduced in size and trim removed. This half of the building's front elevation is brick and has only three bays. The windows are set in a recessed panel; they are double hung sash and sit on simple brick sills.

Above the first story, the building has the look of a typical commercial Italianate building with a heavy, denticulated cornice. Pilasters at each side of the facade are interrupted by the cornice, but then continue to the top of a simple parapet. The roof is flat.

The interior of the building has been remodeled several times over the years. The most recent major remodeling was done in the late 1980s, when the building was converted from a printing company to a restaurant/bar. The second story contains small apartments.

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

<b>Original Owner</b> Anthony McGovern	<b>Original Use</b> Store
<b>Architect or Builder</b> Unknown/Stark and Schneider, Inc.	<b>Architectural Style</b> Commercial Italianate/Art Deco
<b>Date of Construction</b> 1871/1936	<b>Indigenous Materials Used</b>

**List of Bibliographical References Used**

1. Sanborn-Perris Maps for Madison, 1885-1942.
2. Madison City Directories.
3. Madison Tax Rolls.
4. Madison City Building Permits.
5. Preservation Brief #7, "The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra Cotta.
6. Cultural Resource Management Plan, SHSW, "Architecture" Art Deco and Terra Cotta.
7. "Corporate Image and the Avant-Garde: 1915-1930."
8. Madison City Preservation Planning resource files

**Form Prepared By:**

**Name and Title**

Tricia Canaday and Katherine Rankin

**Organization Represented (if any)**

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation and City of Madison

**Address**

432 North Blackhawk Avenue  
Madison, WI 53705

**Telephone Number**

(608) 233-2704

**Date Nomination Form Was Prepared**

1-14-92 and 4-12-94

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

***Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:***

The McGovern store building, constructed in 1871, is significant architecturally as an excellent example of a terra cotta, Art Deco store-front. It is one of the comparatively few Art Deco style buildings in Madison; one of only a few terra cotta facade buildings; and the only one to combine them both.

The American "Art Deco" movement began at the Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes, in 1925. This exposition was visited by a great number of American architects, was thoroughly written about in American papers and had a significant impact on American architecture and design. These new designs were typically characterized by an angular hard edge suggesting machine precision, stressing of verticality, and low-relief geometric ornamentation, often detailed to look like chevrons, fluted columns, or stylized sunbursts. Granite, terra cotta, ornamental metals such as bronze, and crazed carrara glass were frequently used for decorating the facades of Art Deco buildings. Glazed terra cotta, an ancient building material made of cast and fired clay, was popular because it could produce intricate details and designs much more easily, and inexpensively, than hand-carved stone.

In the midwest, terra cotta was regionally important in works by Chicago School architects such as Louis Sullivan. The material was adopted by architects for Art Deco facades because of its suitability for use in the style's elaborate design. While the Art Deco Style is probably most closely associated with skyscrapers of the period, such as the Empire State Building, it also became popular for smaller scale commercial buildings during the late 1920s and 1930s. Art Deco style buildings became a symbol of modernity and progressiveness.

Wisconsin in general, and Madison specifically, have limited numbers of Art Deco buildings. The period of popularity of the style was fairly brief (spanning approximately 20 years--1925-1945), and during much of that period there was little construction because of the Great Depression. Few new buildings were built in Madison's downtown during that era, but it was not unusual for buildings and store-fronts to be remodeled to give an old building a new look. The McGovern building was one such building. When the Wells Printing Company acquired the building at 121 West Main, and converted it from a grocery store to its own purposes, it also redesigned the store-front facade. The architectural firm of Stark and Schneider, Inc., was hired in 1936 to transform the building from a traditional, commercial Italianate, to something more modern. The result is an excellent example of an Art Deco storefront in terra cotta.

While there are other fine examples of Art Deco-style buildings in Madison (for example, the Wisconsin State Office Building at 1 West Wilson Street), and also of terra cotta facades (for example, the old Castle and Doyle building at 125 State Street), no other building in the City combines this style and decorative material in as highly ornamented a way as does the McGovern store building.