

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

**Name of Building or Site**

**Common**

Leonard House

**Historic (if applicable)**

Charlotte and William Ellery Leonard House

**Location**

**Street Address**

2015 Adams Street

**Aldermanic District**

Thirteenth

**Classification**

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

building

**Zoning District**

R2

**Present Use**

single-family residence

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

**Name(s)**

Jeffrey R. Ford and Jule Stroick

**Street Address**

2015 Adams Street  
Madison, WI 53711

**Telephone Number**

251-1039

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

**Parcel Number**

0709-223-4204-6

**Legal Description**

Lot 4, Block 17, Wingra Park

**Condition of Property**

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

good

**Altered or Unaltered?**

altered

**Moved or Original Site?**

original site

**Wall Construction**

wood frame

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

*Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.*

The William Ellery Leonard house was built in 1915.<sup>1</sup> It was designed by local designer/builder Eugene Marks.<sup>2</sup> The house faces north onto Adams Street in the Wingra Park plat, one mile southwest of the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison. It is a two-story, side-gabled structure, approximately 30' by 24' with a 10' by 15', two-story gabled wing projecting to the rear (south). There is a small garage, also facing north, at the rear (southwest corner) of the lot. The garage was constructed in 1930 and matches the house in style and materials.

Stained a dark brown, the house is a typical example of the Craftsman style, of which Madison has many examples. The house features the grouped windows, overhanging eaves, exposed beams and horizontal accents (provided here by contrasting shingle and weatherboard siding, with a slight projection marking the bottom edge of the second story shingled area,) that typify the style. It has a living room, dining room and kitchen on the ground floor, in addition to an un-heated sun porch occupying the rear wing. On the second floor are three bedrooms and a bath, a large storage closet and a sleeping porch. There is a deep

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<sup>1</sup>Building permit dated July 7, 1915, and tax records. Leonard states in this autobiography that the house was built in 1914, but the evidence indicates that this is probably not true.

<sup>2</sup>Permit. Leonard claimed that he contributed to the design, but the extent of his contributions, if any, beyond the typical client is unknown.

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basement, containing the furnace and laundry facilities.

#### EXTERIOR

The entrance to the house is in a central pavilion, formed by a slight projection in the axial front wall, facing north. There is a small, gable-roofed porch over the entrance, supported by square pillars resting on brick piers. The front door is panelled golden oak, with small, square lights arranged three-over-three. Above the porch is a double casement window. On the first floor, on either side of the central pavilion, shallow window bays supported by exposed beams project from the front wall, emphasizing a triple casement window to the west of the entrance and a row of three small windows set high in the wall to the east. There is a massive, wire-cut brick chimney, flanked by pairs of small casement windows, against the west wall. At the back of the house, in the corner formed by the projecting rear wing, there is a cellar entryway, covered by a slanting door, in the foundation wall. From the east side of the south-facing porch, a door opens to a steep flight of steps with a high balustrade sided in wide weatherboard. The kitchen door is in a small, box-like extension from the east wall of the house. At ground level below the west wall of the rear porches, a slatted door gives access to a storage space.

The deep overhang of the roof is supported on exposed rafters. There are ornamental bargeboards consisting of three lapped, horizontal boards terminating in small boxed gable ends. The roof, originally cedar shingled, is covered in asphalt tile. The house is sided with cedar shingles on the second storey and wide cypress weatherboard on the first storey. Both are stained a dark brown. The lowest course of shingles projects at a slight angle, marking the level of the second floor. The window sash is painted white, as are the pillars on the front porch.

The foundation is poured concrete. There are small basement windows to the west of the front entrance, on the north side

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of the chimney in the west wall, and on the east wall, north of the kitchen entrance. Due to the southward slope of the lot, the foundation wall is exposed at the rear of the house. There are two larger windows in the south end of the west foundation wall, two in the facing east wall and one at the east end of the south (rear) wall. Thus the basement is unusually well-lit, although unfinished.

#### INTERIOR

The interior first floor is characterized by extensive oak woodwork. Very simple in design, the woodwork frames wide archways leading to the living room from the front hall and from the dining room. Triple casement windows topped by three-light transoms with a window-seat in the front (north) wall of the living room, small double casement windows on either side of the fireplace and a pair of double-hung south-facing windows in the rear wall are also framed in oak, as is the mantel-piece, above a massive wire-cut brick chimney. The dining room has an oak plate rail around all four walls, and French doors leading to the sunporch. There is a row of three casement windows high on the east wall in the dining room, and a pair of double-hung windows facing south. The floors in the living room, dining room and front hall are narrow-width oak.

The interior of the sun porch is finished in wide cypress weatherboard, stained dark brown. The ceiling is wainscotted. There is an exterior door in the east wall, otherwise the porch has windows on three sides. (The sash was formerly brown-stained casements, hung in pairs. These have been replaced with aluminum storm-screen combination inserts. The upstairs porch retains the original sash on its east and west sides.) The flooring is painted pine.

The front entrance leads into a small "air lock", with a coat closet in its east wall. A second door, with three-over-three lights, leads into the front hall. The front hall features a built-in oak bench backed with oak

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panelling and a grill, composed of vertical stiles and a chamfered horizontal bannister, screening the stairs. Two steps lead from the hall to a landing, which gives access to the stairs and to two steps descending to the kitchen.

Opposite the steps, in the kitchen, is a small closet-like space, occupying the box-like projection on the east wall of the house, containing the rear entrance and originally designed to hold an ice-box. The kitchen retains some of its original cupboards, which have cove moldings and panelled doors with square metal latches. The kitchen has a small double-hung window in the east wall and two casement windows in the north (front) wall. The third window in the row, as seen from outside the house, lights the cellar stairs, which are reached from the kitchen. All of the kitchen woodwork has been enamelled in white. The floor is asphalt tile.

The stairs to the second floor are oak, with oak trim. The second floor features a large central hall, with doors to the three bedrooms, the bath, a storage closet and a linen closet. A balustrade of vertical oak stiles, square posts and a chamfered banister surrounds the stairwell. The stair landing, lit by casement windows, is above the front entrance to the house. Below the casement windows is an oak window-seat, which extends around the north and west sides of the landing. Except for the balustrade and the window seat, and a mantelpiece in the southwest bedroom, the woodwork on the second floor is of painted pine. The floors on the second floor are narrow width maple.

In the southwest corner of the second floor is William Ellery Leonard's study. It has a tall brick fireplace, with an oak mantle. Two double-hung windows in the south wall and one extra-wide window adjacent in the west wall make a sunny corner. A door in the south wall leads to the sleeping porch. The sleeping porch is finished in the same shingle as the second floor exterior walls, stained a dark brown. Its ceiling is wainscotted; the floor is painted pine. A second door to the porch leads from Charlotte

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Leonard's bedroom, in the southeast corner of the second floor. This room has glass doorknobs (all other hardware in the house is brass) and a full-length mirror in the closet door. A pair of double-hung windows face south, and there is a small, stationary window high in the east wall. The small third bedroom is in the northwest corner of the second floor. It has two double-hung windows in the north wall and a third, large, window facing west. The bathroom is in the northeast corner of the second floor. It has a pair of windows, facing north. Next to it is the storage closet, which has a small window, facing east.

The attic of the house, reached by a hatch in the hall ceiling, is unfinished.

#### SETTING

The house is located in a rectangular plat, called Wingra Plat, on what is now the near west side of Madison. It faces north towards Adams Street. To the south the land slopes down to Lake Wingra and Vilas Park. A narrow alley at the back of the 60' x 120' lot separates it from a single row of houses on Vilas Avenue, facing the park. The plat was created in 1889. Leonard characterized his property as being at "the edge of the city." Most of the houses were built before 1920, and with only scattered exceptions, there have been no new houses built there since 1935. The neighborhood is easily accessible to the University and to Edgewood College, whose grounds form its western border. To the south are Lake Wingra and Vilas Park; three blocks to the north there is a neighborhood shopping center along Monroe Street, a main artery leading into the city from the west. Otherwise, the entire plat is an area of single-family homes, wooded and serene. The lot at 2015 Adams Street has an oak, a beech, an ash and two maple trees. Some of the plantings mentioned by William Ellery Leonard in his autobiography still exist, notably lilacs at the rear of the lot and on its west edge, and honeysuckle. A long driveway runs down its west side. The small, front-gabled garage, at

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the southwest corner of the lot, was built in 1930.<sup>3</sup> It is finished in wide weatherboard, stained dark brown.

#### INTEGRITY

The house was occupied from September, 1938 until 1992 by Albert Gustav Ramsperger, of the University's Philosophy Department, and his wife Peggy, who had been a graduate student of Leonard's. The Ramspergers bought it from Charlotte Leonard in 1944. Except for updates of the kitchen and bath in the 1950s, removal of the original lighting fixtures, and replacement of casement windows on the two rear porches and over the front door, the house is as it was designed and built in 1914-15. A small garage was built at the southwest corner (rear) of the lot in 1930.<sup>4</sup> The surrounding neighborhood is as shady and quiet as when the Leonards lived there; the surrounding houses date from the 1920s or before and are substantially unaltered.

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<sup>3</sup> Records of the City of Madison building inspector

<sup>4</sup> Records of the City of Madison building inspector

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

<i>Original Owner</i> Charlotte and William Ellery Leonard	<i>Original Use</i> single-family residence
<i>Architect or Builder</i> Eugene Marks	<i>Architectural Style</i> Craftsman
<i>Date of Construction</i> 1915	<i>Indigenous Materials Used</i> not applicable

*List of Bibliographical References Used*

Please see attached continuation sheet.

*Form Prepared By:*

*Name and Title*

Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner, based on a National Register nomination prepared by Jane Eiseley

*Organization Represented (if any)*

Department of Planning and Development

*Address*

215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.  
Madison, WI 53710

*Telephone Number*

266-6552

*Date Nomination Form Was Prepared*

March 2, 1995



Leonard House, 2015 Adams Street  
Bibliographic References

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- Orr, Gordon D., Jr., "Prairie Houses in Madison," Journal of Historic Madison, 1975, P. 22-27
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- Stark, John, "Literary Madison," Wisconsin Academy Review 28,3. June 1982, p. 12-15.
- Stegner, Wallace, Crossing to Safety, New York, Random House, 1987.
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City of Madison Landmarks Commission  
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

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

The William Ellery Leonard house is significant as the residence of the professor and poet William Ellery Leonard. Built in 1915 by the Madison builder/designer Eugene Marks, it is also a fine example of the Craftsman style. William Ellery Leonard taught in the English Department of the University of Wisconsin, in Madison, from 1906 until his death in 1944. Among his published works are ten volumes of poetry, two plays, words to five published musical works, translations of Lucretius, the Gilgamesh epic, and Beowulf, numerous scholarly articles and his autobiography, The Locomotive God.

The house at 2015 Adams Street is the surviving building most closely associated with Leonard and his career in Madison. Several references in his writings give evidence of his ambition to plan and build a home and his sensitivity to the design of his surroundings. As noted succinctly by John Stark "For unusual reasons Leonard's homes were very important to him."<sup>1</sup> The house itself is described in Leonard's autobiography. He lived there with his second wife, Charlotte Charlton, during his most productive years (1914-26.) In 1926 a phobia, an overpowering fear of being any distance from the safety of his home, dictated a return to an apartment close to the campus, at 433 N. Murray Street. He lived in this building first from 1912 to 1914 and

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<sup>1</sup> "Literary Madison," Wisconsin Academy Review 23,3. June 1982, p. 14

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again from 1926 until his death in 1944.<sup>2</sup> The building still stands but in contrast to the house on Adams Street, it has lost its integrity of setting, feeling and association. North Murray Street was a residential street shaded by elms when Leonard lived there. The trees and gardens he mentions and adjacent dwellings have vanished beneath a sea of paving and new University buildings. The remodelled structure now houses University offices.

WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD; NATIONAL LITERARY FIGURE AND LOCAL CHARACTER

Louis Untermeyer places Leonard, the poet, with "traditionalists" George Santayana and George Sterling, and observes that Leonard is distinguished by his "disturbed academic fluency."<sup>3</sup> Writing in 1923, before its publication, Untermeyer says of Leonard's privately circulated masterwork, "If Two Lives is ever permitted to be published there will be few to question Leonard's passionate artistry." Horace Gregory and Marya Zaturenska<sup>4</sup> place Leonard with Louis Untermeyer, Robert Hillyer and Mark Van Doren among the "Romantic Traditionalists." They note that Two Lives was praised by Van Wyck Brooks and H.L. Mencken, and that like Sherwood Anderson, Leonard came on a scene that "welcomed a candid discussion of sex and its misfortunes in the loose jargon of what was believed to be 'Freudian psychology,'" while "Both exhausted their energies in finding themselves." They note that "At the University of Wisconsin, Leonard's presence, his tall, gray-clad figure with its shock of white hair, and his loosely knotted 'Windsor' bow tie, whose Bohemian, almost Byronic, negligence was

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<sup>2</sup> The Locomotive God, New York, Century, 1927 p. 266

<sup>3</sup> Untermeyer, Louis, American Poetry Since 1900, New York, Henry Holt, 1923. p. 293

<sup>4</sup> History of Modern Poetry 1900-1940 New York, Harcourt Brace, 1942. p. 300-316

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an attractive contrast to the formal, if decidedly unpedantic, manner of his speech and appearance, created an 'atmosphere' to all undergraduates who were interested in poetry. It is doubtful if any University lecturer of his day...excelled him in the teaching of comparative literature. Those students who survived the severe discipline of his seemingly innocent course in Anglo-Saxon, which included comparative studies of Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit, Latin and Icelandic literatures as well...emerged with a renewed respect for the power of language and its relationship to poetry. Few students escaped the influence of his Germanic training in philology, or the severity of manner which he probably inherited from Kittredge at Harvard, under whom he studied for his Master's degree. The course was ill-attended, for it demanded an almost selfless devotion to poetry and a Puritan toughness of fiber to withstand Leonard's oral examinations...To the Middle West, Leonard brought his associations of a New England heritage, which included a Protestant-Abolitionist spirit that had turned against itself in violent self-criticism of its despised 'Puritanism and prudery'..."

Recently the novelist Wallace Stegner described the Leonard he knew years earlier as his office-mate in the English Department: "We discuss my office mate and his really tragic life, his talent, his absurdities, vanities, and pretensions. He must have been something, in his prime. I wonder aloud how it would be to be sailing along like this and have him overtake you, swimming on his back in his boar helmet, with his eagle beak in the air and his voice filling the wind with Anglo-Saxon brag. Sid, ... wonders if this stormy-bright lake might sometime in the future acquire, because of William Ellery, a poetic and legendary aura such as Wordsworth and Coleridge gave to the Lake Country and Hardy gave to Dorset." <sup>5</sup>

Like Leonard, his friend from student days at Harvard, Ludwig Lewisohn, found Madison to be a refuge. Unable to find a position

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<sup>5</sup> Crossing to Safety, New York, Random House, 1987, p. 136

because he was a Jew, Lewisohn came to teach German at Madison on Leonard's recommendation. He later described Leonard at Harvard as his "friend of friends," and says of their first conversation, "It was a grey windy November forenoon that we first talked on the steps of Fayerwether Hall. He was tall and lank and thin to emaciation. An almost ragged overcoat fluttered behind him, a shapeless, discolored hat tilted a little on his head. His delicate nostrils seemed always about to quiver, his lips to beset in a half-petulant, half-scornful determination. From under the hat shone two of the most eloquent eyes--fiery and penetrating, gloomy and full of laughter in turn--that were ever set in a human head. He spoke with large, loose, expressive gestures and with a strange, abrupt way of ending his sentences. I felt drawn to him at once. Freedom and nobility seemed to clothe him and a stoic wildness. A young eagle with plumage ruffled by the storm...! I asked him...whether he wrote verse. And when he said that he did I knew instinctively that his verses were better than mine, far better, and curiously enough I was not sorry but glad and, in a way, elated." <sup>6</sup>

Leonard's national stature is confirmed in his obituary in the Saturday Review of Literature, written by William Rose Benet himself.<sup>7</sup> Under the caption "A Champion of Man" Benet heatedly defends Leonard's reputation against the New York Times obituary which placed emphasis on the famous phobia that had confined him within a small radius of his home.

#### WILLIAM ELLERY LEONARD IN MADISON

The only child born to his well-to-do parents, Leonard was named for the famous Unitarian, William Ellery Channing. Economic hardship plagued him following his father's financial ruin when he

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<sup>6</sup> Upstream, New York, Boni and Liverwright, 1922. p. 152-3

<sup>7</sup> Saturday Review of Literature 27:17, May 13, 1944

was a boy. The impoverished son managed to graduate from Boston University, earn an MA from Harvard, and realize his ambition to study at Gottingen, Germany. Returning to the United States, he earned the PhD at Columbia, with a thesis on Byron and Byronism. All the while he suffered shame and deprivation due to poverty. After the PhD he labored in Philadelphia on a projected encyclopedia which was never published, and nearly went blind from overwork.<sup>8</sup> There were disturbing incidents that foreshadowed the phobia that was to come.

Leonard arrived in Madison in 1906. He wrote, "In September, 1906, I needed these quiet inland lakes and bluffs, these wooded shores, these long coulees and sunny oak-openings, and these west winds of Wisconsin as badly as any one who ever came.... But had I not needed them as a weary man, sick in nerves and spirit, my eye would still have drunk in the beauty of town and country-side with eager delight. . . Almost from the first hours, Madison was to me the Peculiar City, a Capitol Dome on one hill, a University Dome on the other, and each Dome, as in no other city, mirrored in water . . . Here was my ideal for the dwelling-place of modern man: an organic civilization in close touch with organic nature. A city far over whose roofs, twice a year, the wild geese fly. Why is not this the most famous city in our country, I thought. I will make it that, I thought. Longfellow's poem is but a conventional fancy, made to order in the studio. But let one live here, deeply and long, and he will write the poem that will give this city to America and the world. So I thought. And in the end so I tried to do."<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Locomotive God p. 249

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p 257-58

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Yet there was nothing parochial in his evaluation of the place: "Wisconsin is a great school," he wrote,<sup>10</sup> "A great cultural force; and if not as a whole a university in the German sense, you can find there among its eight thousand something that is becoming a university, say of twelve hundred, though at present desperately entangled in administration and personnel. . . And my pride is that this vigorous institution was founded but seventy-five years ago, and founded in the wilderness . . . It is my pride, but it can never be my intellectual home. The hierarchy of the dominating values is aboriginally and eternally alien for me. . . I come to realize that the German universities had not only been the chief centers of the discovery of truth in the nineteenth century but that they had given to the world a discovery still greater, the discovery of scientific method, the technic for discovering truth."

In 1909 Leonard married his landlord's daughter, Charlotte Freeman. Two Lives<sup>11</sup> tells the story of their marriage, which ended with his wife's suicide in 1911. Madison's high society and the Freeman family calumnized him and precipitated a mental breakdown that kept him confined for months to a small cottage near what is now the southwest end of the campus, where his aged parents cared for him. He began to teach again early in 1912 and worked "frantically" at his writing to "ward off seizures of grief, of indignation, or of terror."<sup>12</sup> Although his friends advised him to leave Madison, he clung to it, in part because the job at the University represented security for himself and his parents, but also because he soon became physically unable to move more than a few hundred yards from home.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. p. 223-4

<sup>11</sup> New York, Viking, 1925. Written in 1913, at the height of Leonard's agony over the death of his wife, it was first privately printed in 1922 by B.W. Huebsch, New York.

<sup>12</sup> Locomotive God, p. 313

Leonard House, 2015 Adams Street

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An incident, following his initial collapse, brought the phobia into full flower. While hiking on the far side of Lake Mendota, he had an hallucination of a menacing train bearing down upon him, as a real train had when he was two years old. Thus the Locomotive God of his autobiography at last made itself known to him. Because of the phobia he moved with his parents to an apartment on Park Street, as close as possible to his classes on Bascom Hill. From here he made hurried trips up the hill while his parents did their errands and hurried home to provide him the psychic security he needed to keep functioning. All the while he continued to write and to publish and to participate in activities at the University Club, almost adjacent to the apartment. There was one move, to a "roomier, sunnier apartment"<sup>13</sup> at 433 North Murray Street. (Leonard was to return to it when his phobia made it impossible to live in the Adams Street house. Here Leonard, late in his career, often met with distinguished visitors. According to Newsweek (July 6, 1935) "Eminent scholars the world over visited Madison to talk with Dr. Leonard in his phobic pale. Whenever he dared not go out to dinner, admirers of his fun-loving, razor-keen intellect gaily brought basket parties to his home." Ernest L. Meyer also wrote of Leonard in The American Mercury (32:334-40, July, 1934): "His comings and goings are confined to a beaten track in an area no larger than Battery Park. But his intelligence and creative vitality embrace the globe, penetrate thirty centuries, are at home in a dozen literatures and languages, and crack the walls of his prison to live in freedom with the free.")

In 1914 Leonard married again. "That fourth summer," he writes,<sup>14</sup> "I became engaged, and their (his parents') bondage was over." Love

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 343 The address is found in the real estate transactions at the time that Leonard built the house at Adams Street and again when it was sold, in 1941. The writer remembers being taken there as a child to meet Leonard.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 345



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enabled him to visit his fiancée's family on Lake Kegonsa: "I built the neighborhood about the cottage into a new center of safety and built the poor girl into a surrogate for parents. . .I had a mighty excess of hope. . .to free myself shortly." <sup>15</sup> Following their marriage his permitted range expanded somewhat, although Charlotte herself became a prisoner: "I suffered an abnormal anxiety. . .that she will suddenly leave me forever. The Locomotive God, after shrieking over the grave of my first home, had invaded the new hearth." <sup>16</sup>

As a Germanophile, Leonard found WW I profoundly painful, and also frightening: "...the anxiety lest I lose my university post. Others elsewhere were losing theirs. The Old Madison Mob, which had hated me too for my politics as a supporter and friend of LaFollette, ...might get its deferred opportunity at last. Besides, one New York newspaper had smoked out the traitorous activities of my pen in 1914-16; <sup>17</sup> another had discovered that I had once taught German in the public schools of Lynn; another that I had long ago written a sonnet...on the Kaiser in Bonn ... Fortunately no one discovered that I had been a classmate of young Wilhelm Kronprinz. But the University of Wisconsin did not surrender its independence. Nor quite all of its patience and sense of humor. It did not ask me for a contribution to its War-Book; but on the other hand it did not ask me for my resignation. I forgive her for the first oversight; I applaud her forever for the second." <sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 347-8

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. p. 351

<sup>17</sup> A reference to his Sonnets and Poems 1914-1916 which was privately published and never publicly released.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. p. 363

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During his brief first marriage, Leonard had planned to build a home:

...  
The lakes about our City they were Four--  
And one most lovely in its loneliness,  
With sunrise, like a prophet, on its shore!  
I took her thither on the morrow's dawn:  
With backs against our City's westward land,  
We stood amongst the thickets hand in hand,  
Where men as yet had made no walk nor lawn;  
From where the Indian beauty seemed withdrawn  
Scarcely as yet, and Indian solitude  
Seemed on the glittering waters, on the wood,  
And on the banded clouds of that Spring dawn.  
And then I counted paces left and right  
Along the slope: "Look, here between the brush  
We'll set our house, facing the morning light,  
And waken with the wakening of the thrush.

...  
That evening, when the plates were cleared away,  
I spread on dining table a blank sheet  
And drew her near--O near me. Then, with neat  
Pencilings and erasures and delay  
Thoughtful or jesting, planned her, room by room,  
The house we were to build: "Our marriage day,  
Dearest, is still before us, and the bloom  
Is still to come on lilac, rose, and spray  
About new doorsteps. . .see, our study here,  
Under the eaves, with window-seat for you;  
Here is our kitchen where then first we two  
Shall wash and wipe with laughter; no one near;  
Here the screened porch for sleep and song and view.

...<sup>19</sup>

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Now, married to Charlotte Charlton: "We had built a simple cottage overlooking Lake Wingra and its woods, . . . We feared it was rather far out from town and my work; but the scene out there was so lovely, so quiet, and our best friends had their flowery homes out there. And we felt too that it might be an incentive. . . that I might 'reeducate' myself once for all by accustoming myself to a home...out there. While it was a-building, we could ride over on our bicycles. . . every day. . . or twice a day. . . in July, stakes along the green earth cleared of brush. . . a brown square hole . . . cellar beams. . . frame up and attic beams checkering the blue sky. . . the shape of a house already. . . we could see where the kitchen and the study were to be. . . talks with the kindly contractor on the precise brick for chimney and for fireplace. . . by October, twilights on the sun-parlor seat, as yet without paint, amid the sawdust and shavings with the same pine-smell I had loved in boyhood's carpenter-shop. We were really living there long before we moved in. Early the next spring I graded the lawn with my own arms and back; and planted. . . a year after. . . new trees and shrubs. A poplar. . . a tamarack. . . a pine. . . a cedar. . . a mountain ash. . . elms on the tree-lawn. . . the glad gifts from the private nursery of next-door neighbor, a suburban Thoreau. Wild honeysuckle bushes from my foragings in near-by thickets. . . flower-garden of larkspur and hollyhock and all the names of blue and gold and scarlet....

"Meantime my wife created all the indoors. . . year after year . . . of the cottage. . . The curtains in the dining-room were pale yellow. . . in her bedroom, blue. . . in my study brown to match the built-in bookcases. . . we sat behind the woodbine vines of the sun-parlor in hot moonlights. . . and we had when the time came a wood-fire in the living-room grate, or the study's. Neither of us ever cared for property: but a home, owned and paid for, and a curtained window from which two can watch. . . spring after spring. . . especially for two who have been sore beset..."<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Locomotive God p. 352-55

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Here Leonard inserts a poem about the life he and Charlotte led in the house. The first five stanzas follow:

The Wife

Ten years you've sat (within the room you wrought)  
To guard me from the Fear,  
Except for hurried trip (when I was out)  
Down town. . .and near, quite near.

Ten years you've sat, except for stolen walk  
(With scribbled note on shelf),  
By lake-side lane or neighbor's hollyhock,  
Anxiously, by yourself.

Ten years together we have hugged our home  
Because of this fierce Fear,  
And made our prison-close a world to roam,  
Counting so dear, so dear

Our swims, our skating, picnics, we together  
Our phases of the moon,  
Getting our changes from the changing weather  
From June around to June;

Viewing our lake (from hills behind our door)  
With its blue miles of light,  
While those far woodlands on the other shore  
Turned green. . .then red. . .then white;

...

Leonard had sold a property on Lake Lawn, near the campus (the house of his first marriage) and a lot in Mendota Heights, then in the Town of Madison, probably the site of the house he planned with his first wife. The lot for the new house seems to have belonged first to Charlotte Leonard. In 1918 the property is deeded from Charlotte to William Ellery "in consideration of love and affection

and the sum of \$1.00" <sup>21</sup>

Through 1925 William Ellery was well enough to make summer day trips, carefully planned, to the Baraboo hills. He even traveled, once, to New York. But a hike that summer took an unexpected route and Leonard experienced a new crisis. Over the following year he became less and less capable of getting around, and ended by moving back to Murray Street: "The phobic suffering and the grotesque bustle took our minds off the grief of leaving. We brought with us everything except my boat, my garden-tools, my boxing gloves, and . . . the cat. Our apartment (433 North Murray Street) is now famous," he continues, "for the sun through the Murray Street elm-tops...I raise a few marigolds, zinnias, calendulas, poppies and nasturtiums in the back yard..." <sup>22</sup> In 1928 2015 Adams Street was deeded back to Charlotte Leonard.

By 1934 Charlotte had had enough. William Ellery had fallen in love with a student, Grace Golden, and for awhile he again believed that he would be cured. Charlotte divorced him, and he married his "Golden Girl" in 1935. <sup>23</sup> His book A Man Against Time portrays his passion for Grace. The marriage ended in a scandal that had the Madison newspapers vying for the juiciest version of the story. <sup>24</sup> Charlotte had remarried but her husband, Bert Gill, a one-time instructor in the English Department, committed suicide in the Adams Street house. <sup>25</sup> William Ellery and Charlotte were remarried in May, 1940, living at 433 North Murray Street until his

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<sup>21</sup> Records of the Dane County Register of Deeds

<sup>22</sup> Locomotive God, p. 371

<sup>23</sup> Capital Times 5/2/44

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. 7/22-28/38

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. 5/13/38

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death in 1944.<sup>26</sup> For the next four years Leonard continued to teach, although often the classes were held in his home, or in the library (now the State Historical Society.) At his memorial service, Professor Max Otto, renowned member of the Philosophy Department said of him: "(He) went down with the banner of his indomitable will still held aloft...He sought to know the truth--set forth with rigorous logic and in poetic symbol..." Of Charlotte, Otto said, "But for (her) self-effacing loyalty and intelligent seamanship our storm-tossed friend would never have made port." Dean George Sellery noted that "The University has lost a great poet and a great scholar, one who was known throughout the nation." Dean Mark Ingraham said that he "brought knowledge, verve and color to all his teaching...he was known and respected in literary circles throughout the world...The monumental edition of Lucretius...recently published by the University Press (is) a fitting climax to his life's work." Professor Birge called him "a distinguished figure, of national reputation, a great scholar and a real poet."<sup>27</sup>

#### CONTEXT

The William Ellery Leonard house is related in style to those found in an historic district comprised of one-and-a-half storey bungalows, three blocks away. These were designed by Cora Tuttle,<sup>28</sup> and created a minor sensation in Madison. Built with the advice of such prestigious figures as Charles Van Hise, the first of these was considered one of the best built homes in Madison, although it was at the time (1908) at the very edge of the city. The success

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid. 5/25/40

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. 5/5/44

<sup>28</sup> Robert Jay Shockley, "The California Bungalow and Its Influence in Madison." Journal of Historic Madison, 1978, p. 2-9

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of Tuttle's first house created a demand, and she subsequently designed several other bungalows on adjacent lots. William Ellery remarks in his autobiography that the move to Wingra Park was desirable because "our friends had their flowery homes out there."<sup>29</sup> The Tuttle houses probably made the area more attractive to him, although he might have preferred the more prestigious University Heights, could he have afforded it. There, the Prairie style is epitomized in the houses built for prominent professors during the same period by Claude and Stark at 1920 Arlington Place and 2021 Chamberlain Avenue, by Murphy and Cloyes at 2021 Van Hise Avenue, and by Alvan E. Small at 1713 Chadbourne Avenue, as well as the famous examples by Louis Sullivan at 106 N. Prospect and by Frank Lloyd Wright at 120 Ely Place.<sup>30</sup> David Mollenhoff<sup>31</sup> notes that by 1892, Wingra Park was the city's "leading and most popular suburb." He also notes that the difference between Wingra Park and University Heights was clearly reflected in the cost of homes built in each: \$1000 to \$1400 in Wingra Park; \$5-9,000 in University Heights. Timothy Heggland and Katherine Rankin note that University Heights, where lots went on sale in 1893, was so located as to "virtually guarantee a strong interest on the part of University faculty members." And, they continue, "The houses this elite clientele built constitute one of the most important parts of Madison's architectural heritage...developed in a period that not only corresponded to the growth of the University but also to the rise and fall of the seminal Midwestern architectural expression: the prairie style (and) other progressive styles such as the Craftsman and the Bungalow." Gordon Orr notes that "lesser producers of these forms (i.e. prairie architecture) were the

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<sup>29</sup> Locomotive God, p. 352.

<sup>30</sup> Timothy Heggland and Katherine Rankin, University Heights: A Walking Tour, Madison Landmarks Commission, 1987.

<sup>31</sup> David O. Mollenhoff, Madison: A History of the Formative Years Dubuque, IA, Kendall Hunt, 1982. p. 198-203

brothers Eugene H. Marks and Charles E. Marks." <sup>32</sup> Leonard's grander ambitions are reflected in his assertion that the house at 2015 Adams was a mere "cottage."

The University has always trained and attracted writers and Leonard lived and worked in a community of scholars and writers. Among the better known literary figures whose stay in Madison coincided with Leonard's, are Aldo Leopold (1924-48,) Sigurd Olson (1918-20,) Mark Schorer (1925-36,) Sinclair Lewis (1940,) Wallace Stegner (1938-39,) Eudora Welty (1927-29,) August Derleth (1927-30,) and Saul Bellow (1937-38.) Stark <sup>33</sup> notes that "For unusual reasons Leonard's homes were very important to him." But he was not alone in trying to describe the beauties of the area; Derleth and Aldo Leopold were especially moved to portray it in their works.

#### CONCLUSION

The house at 2015 Adams Street is the structure most closely associated with William Ellery Leonard during his most productive years (1914-1926.) It is the only structure built to the design and specifications of a man intensely interested in his physical surroundings. While living in the house, Leonard revised and published his most famous work, Two Lives (1922,1925,) and Poems 1914-1916. <sup>34</sup> Also published by the UW Department of English in this period were two scholarly works, The Scansion of Middle English Alliterative Verse (Studies # 2, 1920) and Sonnets on the Self of William Shakespeare (Shakespeare Studies 1916.) Socrates, Master of Life was published by Open Court Publishing Co. in 1915,

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<sup>32</sup> Gordon D. Orr Jr., "Prairie Houses in Madison," Journal of Historic Madison, 1975. p. 22-27

<sup>33</sup> Stark, p. 12-15

<sup>34</sup> Chicago, Open Court Publishing Co., 1917. Privately circulated.



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but his verse translation of Beowulf (1923) was not formally published until 1952. In this same period he published three other books of verse: The Lynching Bee (1920) Tutankhamen and After (1924) and The Vaunt of Man (1923) and a play, Red Bird (1923.) And here he wrote his autobiography, The Locomotive God, which ends with the move from the house.

Built in the Craftsman style that was fashionable amongst Madison's intelligentsia at the time, the house embodies an organic ideal derived from the English Arts and Crafts movement and the new Prairie architecture of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright, an ideal that is reflected in Leonard's work as well. In its style and association it evokes a distinctive period in the history of the City and the University of Wisconsin.