

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

Name of Building or Site	
Common Caputo-Milsted Building	Historic (if applicable) Willett S. Main Building
Location	
Street Address 101-105 State Street	Aldermanic District 4th
Classification	
Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.) Commercial	
Zoning District C4	Present Use Commercial/Residential
Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)	
Name(s) Maria Milsted	
Street Address 106 W. Mifflin Street Madison, WI 53703	Telephone Number (608) 255-5050
Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)	
Parcel Number 0709-231-0101-1	Legal Description SEE Attached Sheet
Condition of Property	
Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins) Good	
Altered or Unaltered? Altered	Moved or Original Site? Original site
Wall Construction Stone Masonry	

123/NGLB. A/101 STATE ST

105 STATE ST

RCD # PARCEL: 0707-231-0101-1 LOT # 0000 BLOCK # 0000
01 ORIGINAL PLAT. PART OF LOT 3 BLK 76 -BE
S AT E COR OF BLK. TH W 67 FT 7 IN ALG S
02 TATE. TH S 69 1/2 FT TO NIFFLIN. TH NE T CLASS: COMMERCIAL
Q REG.

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

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The Willett S. Main Building is one of Madison's oldest commercial buildings and the oldest building facing the Capitol Square(1). It is located where the Capitol Square and State Street meet. The three story, triangular building was constructed in 1855-1856 by Willett S. Main to the designs of local architect Stephen V. Shipman.(2)

The exterior is constructed of large sandstone ashlar blocks, stippled to give a more interesting appearance. Until recently, the walls were painted gray. The current owner has had the paint removed. The flat roof is trimmed with a wood cornice with brackets and dentils. The cornice runs along both the State and Mifflin Street facades, and indents slightly before following the rounded corner facing the Capitol.(3)

The seven bay primary elevation, with its three commercial storefronts, faces State Street. Early photographs indicate that the building only had two storefronts, each originally faced with cast iron. These were separated by a central entry to the upper rooms and offices. By 1885, each store front had its own address (103 and 105 State Street). By 1908 a third street number had been assigned to the building (#101), and by at least 1942 a new interior wall had been installed.(4)

(1) Frank Custer, "The Main Building: It's the Oldest Structure on Capitol Square," Madison (September, 1986), 113.

(2) The Custer article and other popular articles indicate that the building was constructed in two separate stages. There is nothing in the public record to support this assertion. According to Willet S. Main's diaries (now housed at the Archives of the State Historical Society), the building cost over \$5000 to construct, a sufficient sum to erect the building we see today.

(3) A similar cornice can be seen on the American Exchange Bank, another masonry building fronting the Square, also designed by Shipman.

(4) Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps, 1908 and 1942.

1940s photographs show that the storefronts had been redesigned in the Art Deco style.(5) The commercial storefronts have been more recently modified, probably in the 1960s or 1970s, with simulated brick below the large plate glass windows and metal plating above. The upstairs entry is now found to the far right side of the State Street elevation. Long range plans by the current owners include returning the storefronts to their original design.

The State Street windows of the upper floors retain their original shape, sandstone window hoods and sills (several have been recently replaced in kind). The one over one window sashes are double hung. They probably date to ca. 1912 when Paul Findlay purchased the property for use as a grocery store.(6) Photographs ca. 1885 reveal that the original windows were wooden two over four lights with only the lower sash operable.(7)

The 1942 Sanborn-Perris map indicates that the first floor corner entry had been enlarged with a small addition. The entry may have been added to by 1910 when the first story was remodeled for use as a grocery.(8) The second story corner window probably dates to after 1949. Many Madison residents recall when the Main Building was occupied by a bridal shop that displayed wedding dresses in this highly prominent window.

The four bay wide Mifflin Street facade never included much decorative ornament. Over time the windows and doors of West Mifflin Street have been modified or infilled, so that the window and door pattern is much less regular than it had been originally. The renovation by the current owners included the replacement of stone where a recent doorway had been cut.

(5) The photographs accompany a 28 September 1947 newspaper article in the Wisconsin State Journal by Henry Noll and a 23 January 1949 Capital Times article by Alexius Bass. It was Bass who first mentioned the unsupported claim that the building was constructed in two separate stages.

(6) Custer, "The Main Building," 115.

(7) These photographs are in the possession of the owner. Original copies are on file in the Visual and Sound Archives of the State Historical Society. Copy negatives no. WHi (X3) 33580.

(8) A postcard shows the Main Building with an enlarged entry similar in size to what is there now. The accompanying street scene includes an electric street car running the length of unpaved State Street, giving a probable date of ca. 1910.

A secondary entrance is toward the rear corner of the building at 106 W. Mifflin Street. This entry provides access to a small business office on the main floor and to the building's basement. To the right of the entry is a large plate glass window in an area that was probably originally used as a freight and service entry.(9) By 1910 the freight entry had been converted to a window with a large single light and a transom with leaded lozenges. This window was destroyed in a car accident (ca. 1980) and replaced with the current large plate glass window without a transom.(10)

(9) Ca. 1880 view of State Street from the Capitol, Enlargement 5-1047, Visual and Sound Archives, State Historical Society. Other close-up photos of the store and building indicate that these entries had two stone steps to the street. WHi (X3) 33579 and WHi (X3) 33580.

(10) Conversation with current owner, Maria Milsted, 28 July 1993.

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

Original Owner	Original Use
Willett S. Main	commercial
Architect or Builder	Architectural Style
Stephen V. Shipman	Renaissance Revival
Date of Construction	Indigenous Materials Used
1855-1856	Sandstone

List of Bibliographical References Used

See attached sheet

Form Prepared By:

Name and Title

Richard Bernstein
601 S. Dickinson
Madison, WI 53703 (608) 251-4615

Organization Represented (if any)

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

Address

PO Box 296
Madison, WI 53701

Telephone Number

(608) 251-4615

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

April 9, 1995

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

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to
Designation Criteria:

Madison: 1847-1856

The period from 1847 to 1856 has been termed Madison's "Village Decade." Despite the fact that Madison had not yet been formally established as a city, it was experiencing a period of tremendous growth. One direct result of this growth was the amount and type of construction found in Madison during this period.

Much of the prosperity and increase in development was the result of the efforts of one man - Leonard J. Farwell, one of Madison's most tireless promoters. Because of his many achievements, this period in Madison's history has also been known as "the Farwell Boom."⁽¹¹⁾

In 1847 Farwell had purchased all of James Daune Doty's unsold original land holdings. The following year Madison was made the home of the State Capitol and the state university. In 1852 Farwell began his two year term as Wisconsin's governor. While in this position he continued to focus on developing his village of Madison. Investment groups started in 1852 and spearheaded by Farwell constructed the Capital House (later known as the Vilas House) and the Bruen Block. The Capital House opened a year later. Both buildings (no longer extant) were constructed of large sandstone blocks. In 1852, Farwell started to build a large, stone, octagonal house for his own residence. This magnificent structure was finished two years later. It too has since been demolished.

On 17 October 1855, Willett S. Main, an observer of Madison's commercial growth, noted: "Dr. Griffen and myself called and saw Farwell's new house. It is certainly a monster thing. . . . The stone block is going up pretty. Begins to look quite stylish."⁽¹²⁾ The first reference appears to be about Farwell's new mansion, then under construction. The second reference seems to be about Main's own stone block, then also under construction, and the subject of this nomination.

⁽¹¹⁾ David Mollenhoff, Madison, A History of the Formative Years (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall / Hunt Publishing Co., 1982), 45-70.

⁽¹²⁾ Main was an avid diarist, and most of the quotes that follow are from his diaries, known as The Main Papers. The diaries are housed in the Archives of the State Historical Society.

The Construction of the Willett S. Main Building

On Wednesday, September 12, 1855, Main "let the job for putting up the stone block to John and Nathan Parkins (13) for \$2400." On 20 September, Main wrote: "The diggers commenced on the cellar this morning, but it is so wet it hardly pays to try to do anything." Main contracted with other artisans for the specialty items the new building would require. He contracted with George J. Skinner for the "cast iron columns for the building,"(14) Cassidy to excavate the cellar,(15) and the James' for the construction of the door jambs, windows and exterior cornice.(16)

In hopes of spurring the workmen to a quicker conclusion, it seems that Main had Shipman, the architect, come to the worksite to urge them on.(17) Work was often delayed due to inclement weather, and discontinued entirely for the winter from November to late March. But by the end of April 1856 the stonework was

(13) The 1858 Madison City Directory lists a John and Nathan Parkin. Their addresses are the same, indicating a family relationship, and both their professions are stone cutter. Since John is listed as head of household and Nathan as boarder, it is likely that John was the father and Nathan his son-apprentice.

(14) "Skinner will cast the iron columns for the building for \$25 each or 5 1/2 [cents?] per lb." Willett S. Main Papers, 22 September 1856.

(15) "Cassidy's hands worked on the cellar today. Masons will commence laying the walls tomorrow." Willett S. Main Papers, 25 September 1855.

(16) "The James' are at work making the window frames for the store. Bought some lumber of Bull for that purpose." (20 October 1855); "Purchased another thousand feet of lumber for the cornice. Have two hands at work at it. The sash will be completed in a few days." (23 February 1856); "Assisted in the AM in drawing cornice from Campbell's shop for the workmen to put on the building." (25 April 1856). Willett S. Main Papers.

(17) "Had Shipman come down and spur Parkin and Miller. They are altogether too slow. 1 November 1855. Willett S. Main Papers.

finished.(18) By June the interior plastering had been completed and by July third Main was open for business selling dry goods.(19)

Main took a great risk situating such a large building so far from the existing center of commerce. The Main Building was one of the first commercial blocks west of the Capitol, something that Main would later blame for the slowness of business.

The economy in general had soured, and the building boom that had been so feverish was severely weakened by difficult economic times. Main wrote in his diaries:

Buildings are not going up as rapidly as used [to] owing to the tight times in money."(20)

Trade turned up a little today. Took 70 dollars cash. If we could do half this for the next ten weeks I should feel satisfied. These are hard times and I am afraid we shall have hard sledding to pay for the goods when they come due.(21)

Trade is remarkably dull with us in the Store, at no time since we opened, has there been anything like it. I see [little] chance ever, that the store can run but a short time longer. . . . Families are curtailing their expenses, buying nothing they can possibly get along without.(22)

(18) "Cold and bleak today as though winter has come in earnest. Stopped all work on the building." (22 October 1855); "The weather continues cold. No work is done now on the building and from present appearances I am thinking it will lay till Spring." (20 November 1855); "The masons are preparing to commence work on the building." (24 March 1856); "The stone work on the building is completed now for finishing it off." (22 April 1856). Willett S. Main Papers.

(19) "The second story of my building is being plastered. I shall be glad when I can stop paying money for it begins to squeeze hard." (13 June 1856); "Am having the 3d story plastered and lathed ready for the mortar. Paid Ripley \$75 -Lord knows I hope to get done paying out money before long." (30 June 1856); "This has been the best day for trade yet. Took \$112 cash and charge about \$30." (3 July 1856). Willett S. Main Papers.

(20) 15 July 1856. Willett S. Main Papers.

(21) 19 July 1856. Willett S. Main Papers.

(22) 9 July 1856. Willett S. Main Papers.

Main watched with great dismay as fellow friends and colleagues sold off their properties, often at a great loss. He wrote:

Fox's store building and grounds and his new house and lots were struck off this PM to [Napoleon] Van Slyke for about \$2000, being about one half the original cost. This big splendid property shows a sad depreciation of real estate. I think Fox is completely scooped by this sale.(23)

Ultimately, Main himself suffered the same financial and emotional fate as so many others.

The firm of A.H. Main has got to . . . either sell out or assign. Shall probably do the latter. However much is to be deplored, yet it cannot be avoided. Therefore look the shortened disaster broadly in the face and with a bold valiant push onward . . . and in the end you shall come out victorious.(24)

The terrible "blue" have held me tight all day long. This PM the assignment was executed and Miller took possession of the store. This time the thing is done with no idea of resuming. The whole thing will be effectively cleared and we shall know where we stand. This doing business with such a heavy load of debt is terrible and I shall never do it again.(25)

The store now under assignment quite brisk. The awful heavy feeling of discouragement and anxiety of mind has worn off and I am feeling quite natural again. Yet there will arise occasionally remeberences of shipwreck. But up and on! Cry not for the past, but have wisdom there from and push on [to] the future.(26)

It seems very odd to have the store shut up. I hardly know what to do now. It has been such a habit to go down to the store that it will be a long time to become accustomed to the change. . . . I bid goodbye to the Store and pass on to unexplored regions.(27)

(23) 3 February 1860. Willett S. Main Papers.

(24) 2 March 1860. Willett S. Main Papers. A.H. Main refers to Alexander H. Main who was Willett's older brother and a partner in the business.

(25) 16 March 1860. Willett S. Main Papers.

(26) 19 March 1860. Willett S. Main Papers.

(27) 26 July 1860. Willett S. Main Papers.

Willet Main was born in 1828 in Edmeston, New York, and arrived in Madison with his parents in 1847. He died in 1902. In addition to running the general store on State Street, Main served as Dane County's undersheriff and sheriff. In 1871 he was appointed as Chief Deputy United States Marshal and held the post for 16 years. In 1890 he was again appointed Deputy United States Marshal. In 1889 he was elected to represent Dane County in the State Senate and served for four years. Main was also noted as the president of the Monona Lake Assembly.(28)

Tenants

For many years the Main Building housed cigar manufacturers and dealers. Julius Schadauer began his cigar manufacture and dealer business in 1877. City directories list his business address as 101 State Street until ca. 1884. By 1886 he had moved his business to 216 State Street. Schadauer was born in Austria in 1854. His family moved to Buffalo, N.Y. in 1855 and came to Madison in 1857.(29) By 1888 Fred L. Hess had moved his tobacco manufacturing business from Williamson Street to the upper floors of the Main Building. He conducted his business there until ca. 1902. No ready biographical information is available on Hess.

Madison had a reputation at the turn of the century as a cigar smoking town. In the 1902 Madison, Past and Present an estimate is given of \$250,000 as the yearly sum spent in Madison on cigars alone by the city's and surrounding area's estimated 5500 smokers. University professors consumed the costliest cigars.(30) While some cigars were imported, a large number were manufactured in Madison. Locally manufactured cigars used seed and Havanna tobacco for fillers and Sumatra leaf for wrappers. Some domestic wrappers were used, but generally Wisconsin furnished the binders. In 1902, 10,000 acres of tobacco were grown annually within a 15 mile radius of Madison. Dane county produced nearly half of the state's crop, and produced the highest poundage of tobacco of any county in the country. In 1902 the Dane County estimate was 20,250,000 pounds.(31)

(28) "Willet S. Main is Dead," Wisconsin State Journal, 5 July 1902.

(29) C.W. Butterfield, History of Dane County (Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880), 1027. The name is listed as Schadaner in the biographical entry.

(30) "Madison Smokes 4,000,000 Cigars Every Year." In Madison, Past and Present (Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902), 231.

The Main Building housed a number of different businesses during its historic period. In addition to the cigar manufacturers and dealers, a succession of saloons occupied the ground floor from ca. 1868 to ca. 1909. For 25 years the Blied Brothers operated a hardware store next to the saloon. From 1879 to 1881 Miss Sheldon's School was located on the second floor. The Hook Brothers Piano Company opened in the Main Building in 1914 and had a business there until ca. 1928. The Ward-Brodtt music store opened in the building in 1929.(32)

The Main Building also served as a home to several fraternal and labor groups. During the 19th and early 20th centuries these groups met in the upper floors of the business blocks in downtown Madison. Those meeting at the Main Building included: 1858, the Masons; the late 1860s to the early 1880s, the Druids (a German fraternal order); and, 1883, the Knights of St. George. From ca. 1896 to ca. 1911 the Main Building housed the Union Labor Hall on its upper floor.

The Typographical Union was the first to organize in Madison (1856), followed by the Journeymen Tailors (1864), the Bricklayers and Masons (1892), Cigarmakers (1893), and Carpenters and Joiners (1893-1899). Other unions followed. In 1893 the American Federation of Labor granted a charter to the Federated Trades Council of Madison. The council consisted of one or more delegates from each local union. Council meetings were held the fourth Monday of each month at the Labor Hall.(33)

Stephen V. Shipman

Architect Stephen Vaughn Shipman was born in Montrose, Pennsylvania. He learned the building trade from his father and built several buildings in Pennsylvania before coming to the Midwest. In 1855 he established an office in Madison; therefore, the Main Building was probably one of his earliest commissions in his new home.

From 1861 to 1865 Shipman served in the Civil War. He returned to Madison to design the dome of the rotunda of the second State Capitol. Shipman was also the supervising architect of the U.S. Courthouse and Post Office in Madison, built in 1867 and designed by Alfred B. Mullett, Washington, D.C. In 1870 Shipman moved to Chicago where he designed many buildings after the great fire of 1871. He died in 1905.

(31) Nathan P. Strause, "Tobacco Industries." In Wisconsin Past and Present (Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902), 99-100.

(32) Custer, "The Main Building," 115-116.

(33) "Organized Labor." In Madison, Past and Present (Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902), 63-64.

In Madison, Shipman also designed the Central State Hospital for the Insane, the old Dane County Courthouse, the Soldiers' Orphans Home School, the old Park Hotel, the First National Bank, and the American Exchange Bank. With the exception of the 1856 Main Building and the 1871 American Exchange Bank, all have been demolished. The 15 year difference between the two extant buildings shows Shipman's adherence to popular styles of the day. The Main Building employs the vocabulary of the early Renaissance Revival style in its plain treatment of the wall surface and the use of cornice window heads. At the American Exchange Bank the High Victorian Italianate style is evident in the greater variety of decorative applications, including pilasters and the use of segmental and rectangular arches with pronounced keystones. Major commissions outside of Madison include the Stoughton Universalist Church and the Northern Hospital for the Insane in Oshkosh.(34)

Summary

The Willett S. Main Building is significant as the oldest surviving commercial building on Madison's Capitol Square. It is also significant as a relatively intact example of a mid-nineteenth century sandstone commercial building. Commercial buildings of this period in Madison commonly utilized locally-quarried sandstone, but are increasingly rare. Other surviving examples include the Burrows Block (1856, 120-128 S. Pinckney Street), the Suhr Building (1887, 102-104 King Street), and the Schoen Block (1875, 117 E. Main Street).

The Main Building therefore qualifies as a city landmark pursuant to Madison Government Ordinance 33.01(4)(a)3, since it:

Embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen, inherently valuable for a study of a period, style, method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.

(34) The description of Shipman's background was taken almost verbatim from the Architects' Files at the Division of Historic Preservation, State Historical Society.

List of Bibliographical References:

Baas, Alexius. "City Just a Village When 'Flatiron' Building Erected." The Capital Times, 23 January 1949.

Butterfield, C.W. History of Dane County. Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1880

City Directories.

Custer, Frank. "The Main Building: It's the Oldest Structure on the Capitol Square." Madison (September 1986): 113-116.

Custer, Frank. "Venerable Old Shop Cupid's Corner Now!" Capital Times, 8 September 1967.

Madison Past and Present. Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902.

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

Noll, Henry. "Various Types of Businesses Have Used Site." Wisconsin State Journal, 28 September 1947, 40.

Photographs. Visual and Sound Archives of the State Historical Society.

Sanborn-Perris Fire Insurance Maps.

Thwaites, Reuben Gold. The Story of Madison: 1836-1900. Madison: Roger Hunt, 1973.

"Willett S. Main is Dead." Wisconsin State Journal. 5 July 1902.

Willett S. Main Papers. Archives of the State Historical Society.