

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

Name of Building or Site	
Common Wisconsin State Capitol and Capitol Park Grounds	Historic (if applicable)

Location	
Street Address Capitol Square Madison WI 53702	Aldermanic District 4th

Classification	
Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.) building and park grounds	

Zoning District C4	Present Use government
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Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's Office)	
Name(s) State of Wisconsin	
Street Address 1 W Wilson St Madison WI 53702	Telephone Number 608/266-1741

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)	
Parcel 0709-242-0501-0 1 W Mifflin St	Legal Description Original Plat. PT Sec 13 & 14. 23 & 24 T 7N R9E. A parcel of land 914 ft square lyg bet Carroll & Pinckney Sts & Main & Mifflin Sts.

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

Altered or Unaltered? altered	Moved or Original State? original site
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Wall Construction white Bethel granite	
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CITY OF MADISON LANDMARKS COMMISSION
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

Capitol building The following statement regarding the construction and appearance of the Capitol building is taken from the National Register nomination of 1970:

"Cruciform edifice with four wings, each at 90° from the next and each 125 feet in width and 187 feet in length. This, of course, describes a Greek Cross, although in its orientation, with the wings extending toward the corners of the square grounds, the Capitol may be just as accurately described as a St. Andrew's Cross. Each wing terminates in a portico composed of Corinthian columns supporting a pediment. 'At each of the angles formed by the conjunction of the wings is a pavilion crowned with a flat dome. A podium wall above these flat domes forms the base upon which the barrel of the great dome rests. The barrel is treated as a circular Corinthian arcade. The great dome, the crowning feature of the building, rises to a height of 300 feet at the lantern, which is surmounted by a gilded bronze statue symbolic of the spirit of Wisconsin.'¹

"The architect was George Browne Post of New York City, who was one of the architects of the Columbian Exposition. 'Post's cruciform plan with the great dome over the crossing was selected out of five invited submittals,'² by the capitol building commission. The Capitol has been described in its time as one of the most beautiful Capitols in the nation and, in some features, as 'undoubtedly the most beautiful public building in America.'³ Its dome was intentionally designed to be a few inches lower than that of the Capitol in Washington, D. C.

"The apical statue symbolizing Wisconsin's motto, 'Forward,' was created by Daniel Chester French, a famous sculptor of the Columbian Exposition. Karl Bitter, another renowned sculptor of the same period, 'executed the statuary in the east and west pediments and the four groups at the base of the colonnade around the barrel of the dome. The group in the tympanum of the south pediment is by Adolph A. Weinman; that in the north pediment by Attilio Piccirilli.'⁴

"Exterior construction is of white Bethel granite. In 1965 the entire exterior of the capitol building was cleaned and restored to its original white appearance. Weather permitting, this beautiful, crowning landmark of Madison can be seen for miles, day or night (when it is floodlighted), from most approaches to the city.

"The interior of the Capitol is also very sumptuous, having been executed in exotic marbles, together with many beautiful Wisconsin granites and Kasota limestones from nearby Minnesota quarries.'⁵ There is a handsome mural decorating the interior of the dome, and many other murals, with subjects appropriate to their locations, enhance the beauty of the building's interior. The awe-inspiring spaciousness of the barrel and dome, and the beauty of the polished stonework of many colors inside the building can best be appreciated in views from the rotunda at both the ground floor and second floor levels."⁶

The Capitol is currently undergoing a ten-year renovation and restoration project to convert it into a modern working building while restoring and preserving its original 1917 appearance, some of which had been lost during previous remodeling projects in the 1950s and 70s. Electrical, mechanical and communications systems are being upgraded, asbestos is being removed, and air conditioning is being added. Old furniture is being replaced by modern office furniture designed to look like the original oak.⁷

Capitol Park Grounds "The Wisconsin State Capitol is located in the heart of downtown Madison on an isthmus formed by Lake Mendota to the north and Lake Monona to the south. Accenting the beauty of the Capitol building is the Capitol Park. The Capitol Park grounds consist of six and one-half acres of lawn and three acres of surface walks, steps, approaches and drives. There are over fifty thousand annual plants, of sixty varieties, planted in thirty-one flower beds, plus several varieties of perennial plants and rose bushes. A special flower bed on the north lawn was dedicated in 1922 by the Gold Star Mothers to commemorate sons lost in World War I...

"The statue on the North Hamilton approach to the State Capitol is named 'Forward' and was designed by Jean P. Miner, a Madison artist. 'Forward' was originally made of clay and exhibited at the Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Illinois in 1893. After the Columbian Exhibition, women of Wisconsin donated funds so that 'Forward' could be presented to the State of Wisconsin in a permanent form.

"'Forward' was fabricated in copper using repousse, the same technique used for America's Statue of Liberty. This technique involved hammering hot sheet metal to a model...

"The statue on the King Street approach to the State Capitol is of Hans Christian Heg, a Civil War soldier. Heg was born in Lier, Norway and came to Wisconsin in 1840 with his family. Heg helped organize the 15th regiment, and was appointed to the rank of Colonel of the predominantly Scandinavian unit. Heg was fatally wounded at the Battle of Chickamauga in September 1863. The bronze statue was designed by Paul Fjelde, a Norwegian architect. It was cast in Norway and presented to the State of Wisconsin by the Norwegian Society of America in 1926.

"The 'Forward' and 'Heg' statues were conserved in 1990. First they were cleaned with detergent and water, then blasted with ground walnut shells at low pressure to remove corrosion. The statues were then sealed with a pigmented wax to provide a uniform color and to protect them from the elements."⁸ "Forward" is in deteriorating condition.

"The Wisconsin State Capitol... is built entirely of White Bethel Vermont granite, which alone of all the granites compares with marble in whiteness and general appearance and is the hardest and most durable stone used. In order to equalize the difference in the level of the park and give the building a greater appearance of symmetry, it was placed on a formal terrace surrounded by a balustrade of the same white granite, on which pedestals are provided for lights and appropriate groups of statuary... The podium or terrace, is surrounded by a granite balustrade..."⁷ The balusters and lamps are of the same design as are those inside the Capitol.

The walkways are lined with a low wall of granite, and include semi-circular seats with bronze flower vases on pedestals standing in front of them. There are a number of historic bronze drinking fountains on the terrace.

The grounds and structures on it require constant maintenance and repair to keep them in excellent condition, as well as projects to carry out landscaping master plans. The Wisconsin State Capitol grounds were awarded the Grounds Maintenance Magazine and Professional Grounds Management Society Grand Award, as well as the Capitol Community Orchid Award, both in 1982.

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

Original Owner	Original Use
State of Wisconsin	government
Architect or Builder	Architectural Style
George Browne Post of New York City	American Beaux Arts
Date of Construction	Indigenous Materials Used
1906-1917	Wisconsin granites

List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Perrin, Richard W. E., The Architecture of Wisconsin, 100.
2. Ibid.
3. Mikkelsen, Michael A., "The Wisconsin State Capitol, Madison, Wisconsin," 196, (quoted in Perrin).
4. Perrin, op. cit., 100-102.
5. Ibid.
6. Nomination for the National Register of Historic Places, Richard A. Erney, Acting Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1970.
7. Written materials from the State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Buildings and Grounds.
8. Wisconsin State Capitol Guide and History, State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Building and Grounds, 1991, 10-11.

Form Prepared by: Shirley Seaman Lake, Legislative Assistant and Concerned Citizen

Organization Represented (if any)

Address

738 Western Avenue
Madison WI 53711

Telephone Number

608/238-1647

Date Nomination Form was Prepared

June 11, 1995

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

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation

Criteria:

Capitol Building

Located in the heart of Madison at the conjunction of four radiating streets— State, King and North and South Hamilton Streets— the State Capitol and grounds is the visual focal point for the entire city of Madison. Historically the center of the city, it is surrounded on all four sides by the businesses and office buildings of the downtown. The dome on the State Capitol building has become in many respects the symbol for the City of Madison.

The Capitol grounds has served as the "Central Park" of the city since Madison was founded in 1837. In the pioneer era, it served much as Boston Commons did, with pigs and other stock animals allowed to pasture on the grounds. Later, the grounds became a Victorian park, complete with decorative wrought iron fences, stone gates and a fancy fountain. In Madison's heyday as a Midwest resort, the capitol grounds were used by tourists as a pleasure park, and the water from the fountains on the grounds were said to have curative powers.

When the current State Capitol was erected in the early twentieth century, the Capitol grounds assumed the neo-classical splendor that they have today. The grounds still serve as the central park for Madison residents and tourists from all over the state and the world.

The following statement of significance for the state capitol building is taken from the National Register nomination of 1970:

"Architecture, Sculpture. Significance in these areas is in the building's beauty and exemplification of the best of the post-Columbian classicism found in numerous public and private buildings from the time of the Columbian Exposition in 1893 to the Century of Progress in Chicago in 1933. The architecture of George Browne Post in this edifice is both masterful and pleasing. The Wisconsin Capitol, unusual among statehouses of this country in its form and classis symmetry, is a source of pride to the people of this state. It is sumptuous but not overdone in detail. The exterior sculptural work of such masters as Daniel Chester French, Karl Bitter, Adolph A. Weinman and Attilio Piccirilli would be difficult to surpass and completes the harmony and beauty of Classic architectural style at its best.

"Invention. The Assembly Chamber contained the first electric voting machine used by a legislative body. Its inventor was B. L. Bobroff, of Milwaukee, and it was installed in 1917.¹

"State Government and History. Historically, the present capitol is the third to stand on the same site. Its immediate predecessor, built between 1856 and 1869, burned on February 27, 1904, with serious damage and the loss of valuable state records. Destruction was not total, however, and state government, which needed to be housed during construction of a new capitol, functioned in temporarily repaired parts of the old building as the new one,

begun in 1906, was built wing by wing. The new west wing was completed in 1909 and occupied by the legislature the same year. The building was finally completed for full occupancy in 1917...

"In the Wisconsin Capitol, though not entirely in the present building, took place the historical progressive legislation and innovations in state government for which Wisconsin is noted. Some of this legislation which was enacted in the current building includes the Workmen's Compensation Act and the establishment of the Industrial Commission in 1911; the Unemployment Compensation Act in 1932; and creation of the Public Service Commission in 1931. The latter was actually the continuation and renaming of the first state regulatory agency to control public service companies, which... had its beginning in 1874 when, through the Potter Act, Wisconsin railroads were first regulated. Prior to 1931, this regulatory agency, though its scope had been broadened to include gas, water, telephone, and electric utilities, water power, and public transportation, had retained its original identity as the Railroad Commission.

"Other of Wisconsin's historically significant, pioneering legislation in socio-legal areas which originated on the same site but not within the present capitol building are the first direct primary election law (1904), the first state civil service (1901), and the first legislative reference library and bill drafting service (1901), to mention some better known examples.

"Many other states, and in some instances the Federal Government, have either adopted or adapted to their own use most of Wisconsin's progressive and forward-looking legislation, governmental practices, and state services which had their origin within the Capitol or had originated in the immediately preceding building on the same site and were further implemented in the Capitol which stands today."²

The Capitol houses both chambers of the Legislature, the State Supreme Court, the offices of all but two of the state's constitutional officers and the Wisconsin Law Library.

Capitol Park Grounds

Architecture, Sculpture The beauty of the grounds, with its spacious lawn and richness of trees and flower gardens, enhances the Capitol. The architecture of the esplanade, low walls, pedestals, flower vases, drinking fountains and the two statues is a compatible extension of the internal and external architecture of the Capitol building. The two important free-standing sculptures of Colonel Heg and the allegorical figure "Forward" are two of the finest sculptures remaining in the city of Madison.

History The grounds historically have been a gathering place for citizens of Madison and the State of Wisconsin, and in its earlier times included a popular fountain, near the Martin Luther King, Jr. (formerly Monona Avenue) entrance.

"The Capitol Park is visited by over five hundred thousand people a year. The Capitol Park is host to such seasonal activities as the Saturday Farmers Market, the June Dairy Cows on the Square, the Taste of Madison, the six-week Summer Concerts on the Square and the Autumn Holiday Parade. Weekly

activities include noon-time and evening entertainers, numerous political speakers and rallies as well as other social events."³

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1. Mack, John G. D., "The Four Wisconsin Capitols," 41-52.
 2. Nomination for National Register of Historic Places, Richard A. Erney, Acting Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1970.
 3. Wisconsin State Capitol Guide and History, State of Wisconsin Department of Administration, Division of Building and Grounds, 1991, 10.