

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

Name of Building or Site	
Common August C. and Della Larson House	Historic (if applicable) August C. and Della Larson House
Location	
Street Address 1006 Grant Street	Aldermanic District Thirteenth
Classification	
Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.) building	
Zoning District R4A	Present Use two-unit residence
Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)	
Name(s) R. Roth and Lynne B. Judd	
Street Address 1006 Grant Street Madison, WI 53711	Telephone Number 255-1973
Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)	
Parcel Number 0709-223-3001-7	Legal Description Lots 1 and 2, Block 12, Wingra Park
Condition of Property	
Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins) excellent	
Altered or Unaltered? altered	Moved or Original Site? original site
Wall Construction brick and stucco	

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

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

The A. Cornelius Larson house was built in 1911.¹ Published accounts all attribute the design stylistically to the Madison firm of Claude and Starck.² The house faces east onto Grant Street at the corner of Jefferson Street, approximately one mile southwest of the University of Wisconsin campus in Madison.

Setting

The house is located in a rectangular plat, called Wingra Plat, on what is now the near west side of Madison. It is situated on a square corner lot measuring 120' on each side. It faces east toward Grant Street. To the south the land slopes down to Vilas Park and Lake Wingra. An alley on the south side separates it from houses facing Grant and Adams streets. The plat was created in 1889. By 1911, when the house was built, this area was a fast-growing suburb known as Wingra Park.

The neighborhood is easily accessible to the University and to Edgewood College, whose grounds form its western border. To the south are Vilas Park and Lake Wingra; to the north is a neighborhood shopping area along Monroe Street, a main artery leading into central Madison from the west. Homes in this neighborhood from Grant Street west are almost exclusively owner-occupied single family, whereas homes east of Grant Street are a mixture of owner-occupied and rental, single and multi-family.

The lot, at the southwest corner of Grant and Jefferson Streets has several very large maple and oak trees framing it along both streets, two more modest maples along the alley, and a towering fir tree in the southeast quadrant of the lot. There are two large burning bushes on the property, one at the southeast

¹ City of Madison property appraisal records; in addition, *The Wisconsin State Journal* reports construction of the foundation and continuing progress on the home at 1805 Jefferson Street being built by A. Larson in the May 9 and August 24 editions in 1911..

² Kristin Visser, Frank Lloyd Wright & the Prairie School in Wisconsin (Madison, WI, 1992), p. 116.

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corner, the other in front of the north end of the house on the Grant Street side, a very large, old hydrangea in front of the house, and many smaller shrubs and plantings.

The walkway to the front entrance runs diagonally across the front lawn from the corner of Grant and Jefferson to the front entrance. It is framed at the corner by a pair of brick pillars capped in limestone that match the brick and limestone coursing on the house. There is a long driveway extending the length of the lot at the western edge, from Jefferson Street to the garage, which sits at the southwest corner of the lot.

The house is a two-story, dark red brick and cream stucco structure. It is composed of a large side-gabled main block with two large projecting front-facing gabled pavilions. It measures approximately 54' by 33', with two attached porches. There is also a double garage, with a large turntable in the floor, facing north with access through a driveway from Jefferson Street. The garage was built at the same time as the house and matches the house in style and materials.³

Exterior

The entire first floor of the building is dark red brick similar or identical to that used in other Claude and Starck homes in Madison built at about the same time. It appears to be identical, for example, to that used in the William Collins House, now a bed-and-breakfast, at 704 East Gorham Street. Limestone coursing bands the house at the sill level of the front-facing windows and continues all the way around the house.

The same brick used on the first floor of the house covers the exposed parts of the concrete foundation. There are small basement windows on three of four sides.

³ Ibid.

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The second floor and the garage are clad in cream colored stucco. A double string course molding wraps around the house on the second floor at mid-window level. The top piece of molding sweeps over the tops of the windows to form a drip mold. Both porches have railings on the second floor with detailing typical of the style. The front porch railing contains a diamond cut-out pattern that is repeated in the interior. The banding, window frames, bargeboards, porch railings, and garage trim are all painted dark brown.

The house and garage roofs are asphalt shingle. There is some evidence that the original roof was slate⁴. A single chimney of red brick projects above the roof on the rear elevation.

The original, and currently main, entrance is right of center between the two large, front-facing gables on the west facade. There is a broad, flat-roofed porch extending the distance between the gables. The porch ceiling has ornamental rafters extending from the house outward beyond the edge of the porch roof.

Windows on the first floor front of the main elevation are grouped in threes, with tall sets on either end and a small grouping of three in the center, sheltered by the porch. Above the porch is a very tall grouping of three windows with leaded lights in the upper quarter, flanked by smaller windows on either side. These are flanked by extensions of the house under the gables, each of which has a double window.

On the north side of the second floor, above the large enclosed porch, are two unusual variations on bay windows. Each bay consists of two windows projecting from the house at a forty-five degree angle from the house, creating a triangular effect.

⁴ Pieces of slate were found in the decayed gutters during repair work in 1992.

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All of the windows on the east- and north-facing sides of the house (i.e., facing Grant Street and facing Jefferson Street,) contain the property's signature leaded glass, excepting casement windows in the north-facing, first floor porch. In addition, the leaded windows appear in a double set on the rear of the house near the northwest corner, visible from Jefferson Street.

The front door is golden oak, with a large, ornately leaded light in the top half. It is flanked by vertical, leaded lights. There is a second, unobtrusive and currently unused, entrance at the other end of the porch, which was added to provide separate entrance to the apartments when the house was subdivided.

At the southwest corner of the house, in the rear, there is a small two-story porch containing the rear entrance to the principal living quarters, the entrance to the accessory apartment, and a separate cellar entryway.

The garage is a one-story stucco-clad, gable-roofed structure. It has two sliding doors, each having a series of small square lights at the top, that consume most of its north face, and two windows each on the east and west sides.

Interior

The house has a large central foyer, living room, dining room, study, bath and guest suite (bedroom and bath) on the first floor, in addition to a large, unheated, enclosed porch on the north side of the house, facing Jefferson Street and a small, open porch in the rear, facing west. On the second floor there are three bedrooms and one and three-quarter baths in the primary living quarters, as well as the accessory apartment with a kitchen, living room, bedroom, bath, and porch. The apartment enjoys a separate entrance.

There is a full, walk-up attic and a full basement containing furnace and laundry facilities and a wine cellar. A portion of the basement is partially finished, including a bath. This area was used as an additional apartment at one time.

The interior first floor is characterized by extensive quarter-sawn oak woodwork true to the Prairie style, brass hardware and nine-and-one-half foot ceilings. The large, central foyer is crowned by wide oak molding, more ornate than that bordering the floor and contains the central, main staircase, with newel and balustrade containing a diamond pattern that is characteristic of the house. The woodwork frames doorways to the dining and living rooms, as well as two coat closets.

The living room is also marked by wide crown molding and has a large wood burning fireplace on an interior angled wall, framed by a classic Mission-style oak mantle and green tiles typical of the style and period. The three front-facing windows, two side-facing windows that open onto the enclosed, unheated sunporch, and a doorway to the sunporch all contain the leaded glass windows that appear extensively in the house and are characterized by narrow bands of colored glass along the outside edge of the windowpane, in this case employing green, purple, and cream colors. There are two pocket doors in the living room, one entering onto the vestibule that separates the main front door from the foyer, the other entering onto a small study to the rear of the living room. Joints in the crown and base moldings appear to indicate that the pocket doors were originally a double set separating the living room from the study, one of which was moved to achieve an altered traffic pattern when the house was subdivided

The sunporch is brick with casement windows, wooden tongue and groove flooring, and a stucco ceiling.

The study faces west and is situated behind the living room. Although small, it features a set of two windows facing west and one facing north that opens onto the sunporch, all with leaded glass.

The dining room is situated at the southeast corner of the first floor and has a smaller fireplace on an angled wall that mirrors that found in the living room. There is no chimney or flue, but a modest metal vent pipe and a capped gas jet, indicating that

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perhaps the fireplace originally housed some type of heater. The room is marked by dark-stained oak wainscoting topped by a plate rail that extends around the room at the level of the mantle. There are two built-in china cabinets, on the south and west walls, both having double doors that employ the same leaded glass found in the windows. There are three front-facing and two narrow south-facing windows in the room.

Flooring in the foyer, living room, study, and dining room are quarter-sawn oak.

The kitchen and a bath, placed in a portion of the original butler's pantry, occupy the southwest corner of the first floor. Current cabinets, counters, and tile countertops are not believed to be original, but this is undocumented. The room has two large south-facing windows and there is an additional south-facing window in the bathroom.

Between the kitchen and the study, in the center of the rear half of the first floor, are a bedroom and bath, currently used as guest quarters. There is evidence that the wall dividing the two has been moved and the bath is not original to the house. Placement of the light switch indicates that the entrance to the bedroom was originally from the foyer. The suite can now be reached from either the kitchen or the study. Rear facing windows in this part of the house are plain glass, the woodwork is not oak, and the flooring is maple.

The stairs to the second floor are also quarter-sawn oak with quarter-sawn oak trim. There is a landing and reversal of direction halfway up, beneath three very tall, oak-framed windows with leaded glass lights at the top. The balustrade of vertical oak stiles with the house's signature diamond pattern, continues to the second floor and frames the stairwell at the top.

The woodwork on the second floor is not oak and may be ash. Most of it stained a medium color. Flooring is maple. Doorknobs are glass. The layout of the two wings forms a mirror image, with

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two main rooms, one of which has a large walk-in closet, and a bath at each end. There is an additional room in the center with two doors, one from the landing at the top of the main staircase, the other from the back staircase, which also serves the accessory apartment occupying the south end of the second floor and provides walk-up access to the attic. The closet in this room has been converted to a three-quarter bath.

The two bedrooms at the north end of the second floor feature the unusual bay windows described above. A bath with a north-facing window is situated between them.

The accessory apartment on the south end of the second floor uses the two main rooms as bedroom and living room, with a bath situated between them. The large walk-in closet that is reached from the living room has been converted to a kitchen. The second floor porch, on the rear of the building, can be reached from the bedroom.

The attic, reached through the back stairwell, has a floor but is otherwise unfinished.

Integrity

The Larsons occupied the house until 1940. City records indicate that it was vacant for a time following the Larsons move out of the house and that by 1943 Joseph Endres had purchased it for use as a rental property. Mr. Endres or subsequent owners altered the interior substantially to separate sections of the house into apartments. The central foyer was divided in two and a kitchen was installed in the north half of it. A second front entrance was added to allow access to the south half of the foyer, which was further divided to achieve separate entrances to the apartment on the south end of the first floor and the second floor. The walk-in closets in the front-facing upstairs bedrooms were converted to kitchens and those bedrooms became living rooms for two second-floor apartments. The original kitchen was divided to

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provide a common corridor from the back door to the interior basement access.

Despite these changes, permanent damage to the original character of the home appears to be limited. Reuniting the foyer required recreation of the crown and base molding because only a fraction of the original remained in the smaller, divided south foyer. The second front door presents a challenge because of difficulty obtaining matching brick. Otherwise, changes were superficial and are gradually being undone.

The surrounding neighborhood is largely as it was when the Larsons lived there. Most of the surrounding houses date from the same period or earlier and are substantially unaltered. Grant Street has become a connection between parts of Madison and Vilas Park and Zoo, increasing traffic in recent years.

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

Original Owner August C. and Della Larson	Original Use single-family residence
Architect or Builder attributed to Claude and Starck	Architectural Style Prairie Style
Date of Construction 1911	Indigenous Materials Used not applicable

List of Bibliographical References Used

City of Madison, permit files and tax records.
 City directories.
Community Business, July 15, 1920 and Sept. 16, 1918.
 Orr, Gordon D., Jr. "Louis W. Claude: Madison Architect of the Prairie Style,"
The Paririe School Review, v. XIV, Chicago: 1981.
Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, Madison, WI: 1924, pp.48-49.
Wisconsin State Journal, May 9, 1911 and August 24, 1911.
 Visser, Kristin, Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School in Wisconsin,
 Madison: 1992.
 Mollenhoff, David V., Madison: A History of the Formative Years, Madison:
 1982.

Form Prepared By:

Name and Title

Katherine H. Rankin, Preservation Planner; based on National Register nomination form prepared by Lynne B. Judd, owner

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 1, 1995

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

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The A. Cornelius Larson house is being nominated as a locally significant example of the Prairie style in Madison. It embodies many signature design elements of the Claude and Starck firm. Secondly, it was built for and was the principal residence for many years of a prominent Madison citizen and his family. Both buildings on the property, the house and the garage, are architecturally significant.

Summary History of Madison

Madison was selected as the capitol of Wisconsin and settled in the second half of the 1830s. Development began southeast of the Capitol Square and gradually spread both east and west, down modern day Main Street and State Street. The University of Wisconsin was established on "College Hill", now referred to as Bascom Hill, in 1848.

Through the remaining decades of the nineteenth century the railroad arrived and Madison's economy and population grew. By 1889 the city had grown about as much as it could without filling in marshes and lake shore and beginning the move to suburban lands. One of the first of the "suburban" areas opened for development was "Wingra Park," a 380-lot subdivision on the shore of Lake Wingra, west of the downtown.

At first, sales of Wingra Park lots were slow, impeded by lack of street car service, which necessitated a 30-minute walk to the Capitol. Extension of the street car, first to Camp Randall and

later to points further west, heralded a change in fortune for the suburb, such that by 1892 it was considered "the leading and most popular suburb" by the *Wisconsin State Journal*.⁵

The Prairie School⁶

Emergence of the Prairie school around the turn of the century reflected an attempt to create a wholly American style of architecture, distinct from that of Europe and lacking the clutter and fussiness of the Victorian style. Frank Lloyd Wright and others designed thousand of houses in the Prairie style in the first two decades of this century. These houses are primarily in the Midwest, but also in California, Utah, upstate New York, Florida, Texas, and even as far away as Puerto Rico.

In general, Prairie style buildings exhibit open interiors, with a focus on a large central fireplace in residential buildings; furniture, light fixtures and other decorations designed specifically to be a part of the building; sparing use of decorative elements; emphasis on the horizontal, especially the use of low or flat roofs with wide overhangs, rows of windows, and bands of decorative trim; the use of simple geometric shapes and sharp, clean-cut edges and corners; and melding inside and outside through lots of windows and doors. Prairie buildings used natural materials, especially wood, brick, stone, stucco and plaster, as they appear in their natural state.

The Larson house exemplifies all of these characteristics.

⁵This section derived from David V. Mollenhoff, Madison, A History of the Formative Years (Madison, WI, 1982).

⁶ This section derived from Visser, pp. 10-12.

Claude and Starck

The firm of Claude and Starck practiced throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Illinois⁷ from 1896 until their partnership was dissolved in 1928.

Louis Claude was born in Baraboo, Wisconsin in 1868. While he attended the University of Wisconsin, he was employed by Allan Conover, for whom Frank Lloyd Wright had worked previously. Claude left the university and Conover in late 1889 to take a job with the Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan. After nearly two years with Sullivan, years when Wright and George Elmslie were also there, Claude returned to Madison. After a brief stint teaching engineering at the university, he opened an architectural practice, and by 1896 was in partnership with Edward Starck.

Starck, the son of a contractor, was born in Milwaukee in 1868. He came to Madison with his family when he was ten. Little is known about his early life, except that he worked for architectural firms in Madison, Milwaukee, and Chicago before returning home to open an office.

Claude and Starck worked in a variety of architectural styles throughout their 32 year partnership. During that time, they designed hundreds of buildings in Madison and throughout the Midwest. In addition to homes, they designed schools, banks, government buildings, churches, and commercial buildings. They also developed a thriving business designing libraries. They produced nearly forty for small towns throughout the Midwest, and they wrote extensively about proper library design. Louis Claude

⁷ Gordon D. Orr, Jr., "Louis W. Claude: Madison Architect of the Prairie School," The Prairie School Review, Volume XIV, (Chicago, 1981).

was probably the partner who was most interested in Prairie-style buildings, given his experience with Sullivan and his continuing friendship with Frank Lloyd Wright.

The partnership dissolved in 1928, apparently because of personal differences. Starck went into partnership with other architects and continued a successful practice for another decade. He died in October 1947. Claude continued alone, and with few clients, until he retired in 1947. He died in August 1951.⁸

A. Cornelius Larson

The following excerpt, from Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, illustrates Mr. Larson's accomplishments and his place in the community until the time of its publication.

August Cornelius Larson was born on a farm in Wiota, Wisconsin, in Lafayette County, on October 1, 1875. His early experience was the same as that of any other healthy American boy brought up in the rural district. He was given a common school education and then entered Warren Academy, from which he graduated in 1895. He then taught in the public schools for three years, after which he entered Wheaton College, at Wheaton, Illinois, where he graduated from the Normal course in 1899. After finishing at Wheaton, he determined to take a regular college course and entered Coe College, at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, from which he graduated in the classical course with the degree of B.A. in 1903.

While in college he entered the life insurance field and upon completion of his college work, he threw his entire

⁸ Previous five paragraphs from Visser pp. 17-18.

energy into this line of work. Coming back to Wisconsin, his work gained the attention of the Central Life officials and he was appointed state manager for that company the following year. Under his leadership the Wisconsin Agency of the Central Life has grown to be the largest agency in the company and one of the largest in the state. Over two hundred and fifty men work under his direction. He was made a director of the company, being the only field man so appointed. He filled two terms as secretary of the National Association of Like Underwriters, being elected without opposition. He is a director of the Commercial Trust Company of Madison and is connected with several banks in Madison and Dane County. He is a member of the state board of the Y.M.C.A., also the local branch, and he is also a member of the Congregational church. He devotes considerable time to civic affairs.

Mr. Larson was married to Miss Della Eva Perry on August 3, 1898, and they have two children: Ralph and Lucille, the first a graduate of the University of Wisconsin, and the latter now in her junior year at the same institution. Mr. Larson's home is located at No. 1006 Grant Street, Wingra Park, Madison.⁹

City of Madison historic files indicate that Mr. Larson was President of the Randall Bank, at least throughout the 1920s. Randall Bank was an important institution in the Wingra Park, and later, Vilas Park neighborhoods.

The Larsons occupied the house until 1940, after which it went through a series of owners and was converted to apartments by the

⁹ This section from Wisconsin: Its History and Its People, 1924, pp. 48-48.

mid-1940s. It contained four apartments and a sleeping room at the time of purchase by the current owners in 1991. They have reconverted it to an owner occupied principal residence with one accessory apartment.

Context

The A. Cornelius Larson house is related in style to several Prairie School houses found in the University Heights Historic district, just one quarter mile to the north. In the University Heights district the Prairie style is epitomized by the houses built for prominent professors during the same period by Claude and Starck at 1920 Arlington Place and 2001 Chamberlain Avenue, by Murphy and Cloyes at 2021 Van Hise Avenue, and by Alvan 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.

The Vilas Neighborhood, in which the Larson house is located, has historic homes throughout it. Just two blocks away is a cluster of one-and-one-half story Craftsman bungalows designed by Cora Tuttle. Across the street from the Larson home, at 1011 Grant Street is a Claude and Starck Tudor Revival style home. Farther west on Jefferson Street, in the 1800, 1900, and 2000 blocks, are several examples of local variations on the Prairie idiom.

The Larson house is an excellent example of the Prairie style and of Claude and Starck's work. Architectural historian Gordon Orr has compared the arrangement of the roof masses and cross gables on the house to those on the Reedsburg Library and Sullivan's Bradley house, also in Madison.¹⁰ The house features the over

¹⁰ Gordon Orr, architectural historian, quoted in City of Madison historic files.

hanging eaves typical of the style and several examples of trademark Claude and Starck detailing. The parallel string courses that wrap around the second floor at mid-window and the design of the leaded glass windows, used extensively throughout the house provide strong indication of a Claude and Starck design.¹¹

¹¹ Visser, pp. 116-17.