

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

Name of Building or Site
Common
Yost's Kessenich's
Historic (if applicable)
Kessenich's Building

Location
Street Address
201 State Street
Aldermanic District
Fourth

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

Zoning District
C4
Present Use
women's clothing store/Civic Center

Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)
Name(s)
Community Development Authority

Street Address
PO Box 2983
Madison, WI 53701-2983
Telephone Number
266-6558

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)
Parcel Number
0709-231-0207-7
Legal Description
Lot 6, Nolden replat of part of block 65, org. pl.

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

Altered or Unaltered?
altered
Moved or Original Site?
original site

Wall Construction
stone

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

Original Owner Kessenich's Inc.	Original Use Clothing and Dry Goods Store
------------------------------------	--

Architect or Builder Frank Riley, Architect	Architectural Style French Renaissance
--	---

Date of Construction 1923	Indigenous Materials Used none
------------------------------	-----------------------------------

List of Bibliographical References Used

see attached sheet

Form Prepared By:

Name and Title
Daina Penkiunas

Organization Represented (if any)
Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

Address 214 Acewood Blvd. Madison, WI 53714	Telephone Number 243-8144
---	------------------------------

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared
November 22, 1998

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

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The two-story, former Kessenich women's clothing and dry goods store is located at the juncture of State and Fairchild streets, one block from the Capitol Square. This excellent example of the French Renaissance style applied to a commercial building was constructed in 1923 to the designs of Madison architect Frank Riley. The building is of stone construction with a metal roof. The roof gives the appearance of a mansard roof from the front; at its center is a small cupola placed on a boxed-out platform.

The unusual shape of the building is the result of Madison's Baroque city plan, consisting of a central square with radiating streets imposed on a rectilinear grid. Because the intersection of the two streets at this corner forms an obtuse angle, Riley skillfully manipulated the vocabulary and massing of the building to present a unified front façade spanning two different streets. In plan, the façade consists of three elements: a façade along State Street, a façade facing the corner, and a façade facing Fairchild Street.

At the juncture of State and Fairchild streets, Riley gave the building a monumental entrance, which in turn forms the visual center of the façade. The entry is contained within a two-story arch traced in a banding resembling an exaggerated bead and reel molding with an acanthus leaf pattern. At the top of the arch is a decorative keystone. Paired pilasters frame the arch and support a frieze that runs along the entire façade. The frieze above the pilasters is decorated with a cartouche. One pilaster of the pair faces the truncated corner, while the second corresponds to the turning of the façade. Each pilaster is scored to resemble individual blocks and has a simple, block-like capital incised with vertical lines. A bulls-eye medallion is located in each spandrel.

The elevations along State and Fairchild streets are nearly identical. To each side of the central entrance are two large bays of windows. Paired pilasters divide the bays. At the first floor is a large plate glass window. Above was a transom, now obscured by an awning. On the second floor, each bay was lit by three double-hung windows. The two outer windows are nine-over-nine, while the center window is larger. Riley compensated for the four foot longer frontage along State Street with larger central windows. These have a dimension of 15-over-15, while those along Fairchild Street are 12-over-12. The area between the two floors is decorated with three horizontal panels. Each consists of a relief of a rectangle with truncated corners. The rectangles join together in a chain-like pattern. In the center rectangle is a large bull's-eye medallion. Here, too, Riley had to accommodate the greater length; there is slightly more space between the medallion and the edge of the relief frame along State Street. However, these slight differences in wall treatments and window dimensions are not obvious to the casual observer, indicating the subtlety of Riley's design.

The outer bay at each end of the facade is set off by single pilasters and has a smooth wall surface. On the first floor is an arched opening. Originally these openings had windows and their bases corresponded to the bottom of the first floor window. Along State Street this area has been cut to provide a door. Corresponding to the center of the second floor is an oculus. Between the two openings the wall surface is decorated with a large cartouche. The frieze above the outer bays is decorated with a horizontal rectangle panel and small medallions over the pilasters.

The central entryway is the only portion of the façade that has undergone an alteration. Originally, the entrance was set back several feet from the face of the arch. Three doors admitted shoppers to the store. Each door was separated by a portion of a larger doorframe with vertical supports and a lintel bearing the store's name: Kessenich's. Above the middle door was a swan's neck pediment with an urn at the center. The remainder of the area within the arch was recessed further. Corresponding to the level of the second floor fenestration, a bank of windows was located in the upper portion of the arch. The area between the doors and windows was filled with decorative vertical panels containing an oval relief with square panels above this section. This area within the arch has been remodeled. Modern glass doors with aluminum frames now provide access. Above the door is a blank panel; at its center is a round medallion with the store name: Yost's Kessenich's. This portion of the entrance treatment remains set back, revealing the intact niches inside the arch.

The side and rear elevations adjoin buildings or are not visible from a principal street; therefore, they are utilitarian in nature. The main façade is in excellent condition, and, with the exception of the alterations in the central arch, has had few changes in the 75 years since the building's construction.

The interior has been changed over the years to accommodate changes in store displays and changes in interior décor. However, elements of the original design and of early redecorating remain. A wood and wrought iron staircase, which appears original to the building, leads from the main shopping floor to the mezzanine level. Other features appear to date to early modernizations. These include louvered frosted glass at the mezzanine level and stainless steel lighting fixtures. These appear to date from the late 1930s or 1940s. The Starlight Room of the adjoining Civic Center now occupies the second floor of the store.

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

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The Kessenich's Building is significant under Madison City Landmark designation criterion 3 in the area of architecture as an excellent example of French Renaissance style commercial design by Madison architect Frank Riley. In addition to its stylistic attributes, the building displays a high quality of craftsmanship in its materials and detailing.

In December 1922 Frank Kessenich purchased the Nolden Hotel property at the juncture of State and Fairchild streets for a sum reported to be in excess of \$100,000.¹ By that time, Kessenich had already commissioned Frank Riley to design a new department store. It was to be a "modern fireproof store building two to four stories in height."² Frank Kessenich Sr.'s obituary reported that the new building cost \$250,000.³

The earlier Kessenich's stores had been located in and around the Capitol Square. Frank Kessenich (1860-1940) was a Madison business merchant for over 60 years. He established the Kessenich Corporation in 1916 after gaining experience in the retail industry. From 1880 to 1890 he was the Secretary-Treasurer of the R.B. Oglivie Co. dry goods store in Madison. In 1890 he organized the Keeley, Neckerman and Kessenich Department Store with Nicholas Keeley and George Neckerman. For many years the store was located at 15 N. Pinckney Street. In 1916 he sold his interest in the business and opened Kessenich's, a department and dry goods store at 26 North Carroll Street, which he ran with his sons Frank, Jr. and Harry.

The construction of the new women's clothing and dry goods store is also tied to the expansion in the 1920s of the then downtown shopping district concentrated around the Capitol Square to the commercial corridor along State Street. Kessenich's was one of the initial large-scale stores to be located on State Street. A 1940 real estate map indicates that by September of that year four department stores were located along State Street: Kessenich's, Hill's, Montgomery Ward and Company, and Sears-Roebuck and Company.⁴ The Kessenich's store had several official and popular names during its years at this location, these included Kessenich's Dry Goods and Kessenich's Department Store. The name Yost's came to be associated with the store in the 1930s, when the Kessenich family rented space in their building to the Yosts. John Yost married Adelaide Kessenich, Frank, Sr.'s daughter.

Frank Riley was one of Madison's more prolific architects during the first half of this century and this building is significant as an excellent example of the quality and caliber of his designs. Together with architects Law, Law and Potter, the two firms designed many of the substantial and important buildings constructed in Madison during the 1920s.

¹ "Old Landmark Taken Over in \$100,000 Deal," *Wisconsin State Journal*, 17 December 1922.

² "Old Landmark Taken Over," 17 December 1922.

³ "Frank Kessenich Sr., 80, Prominent Merchant, Dies," *Capital Times*, 7 December 1940.

⁴ Map of principal retail section of Madison by Stanley C. Hanks Co., Realtors, Madison, 1940.

Riley was born in Madison on September 10, 1875. He began his formal post-secondary studies at the University of Wisconsin in 1894 as a civil engineering student. However, in 1897 he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston to study architecture. He remained a student there until 1900. Staying on in Boston after his studies, Riley worked for various architectural firms (1900-1908) and eventually opened his own office (1908-1911). Riley spent the years from 1911 until 1914 in Europe, living first in London and then in Italy and Germany. With the advent of the war, Riley returned to Madison and remained here until his death in 1949. Riley's education at one of the premier architectural schools in the country and his travels in Europe afterward are unique among architects practicing in Madison at the time. In addition, the tradition of "grand tours" as a finish of one's artistic education ceased with the advent of the First World War.

During his Madison career, Riley was known primarily as a residential architect with numerous commissions throughout the city. He also designed many of the large homes in the newly opened subdivision that now forms the core of the Village of Maple Bluff. His designs in Maple Bluff include the T.R. Hefty house, now the Governor's residence. Riley's residential designs are primarily in the Colonial Revival styles, although he was adept at all the revival styles popular at the time. His designs display knowledge of the character, massing, and detailing of the period styles.

While not as numerous, Riley's non-residential designs include several prominent Madison buildings. In addition to the Kessenich's Building, these include the Madison Club (1916-17), Madison East High School (1922), and the First Church of Christ, Scientist (1929). As this list indicates, Riley's non-residential commissions span the spectrum of revival styles; however, the style of each building is suited to the use of the building. The Madison Club is Georgian Revival, East High School is Collegiate Gothic, and the First Church of Christ, Scientist is Neo-Classical. The application of the French Renaissance to a department store is likewise appropriate. The use of a European-inspired high style with rich materials and detailing would appeal to the shopper's sense of taste and would imply the quality of merchandise sold.

The Kessenich's Building is unique in Madison in its choice of style, the mansarded French Renaissance. The style never gained widespread popularity in the United States and this is the only extant example of the French-precedent style employed for a commercial or public building in Madison. Riley used the classical vocabulary of the style to organize the store's façade into large bays containing the large display windows required by merchants. The two-story arch provided a clear and grand entrance for shoppers. The use of the classical elements and of the mansard roof ties the building together and enables the viewer to read the entire façade as a unified composition, rather than a series of sections along different streets. In the high quality of its design, materials and workmanship the building meets the requirements of criterion 3 for designation as a Madison City Landmark.

List of Bibliographical References Used:

Capital Times. 31 December 1923, 7 December 1940, 14 December 1957.

Commemorative information assembled by Kessenich family. City of Madison Planning Department.

Madison Planning Department. Biographies of Madison Architects.

Wisconsin State Journal. 17 December 1922, 18 March 1923, 12 April 1923.