

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

Name of Building or Site
Common Name

Emily Thompson House

Historic Name (if applicable)

Emily Thompson House

Location
Street Address

101 S. Franklin St.

Aldermanic District

District 6

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

Building

Zoning District

R5

Present Use

Single Family Residence

Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's Office)
Name(s)

Zane & Mary Williams

Street Address

101 S. Franklin St., Madison, WI 53703

Telephone Number

256-5776

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office)
Parcel Number

0709-133-1705-8

Legal Description

SW 1/2 of Lot 1, Block 115,
 Original Plat

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

Very Good

Altered or Unaltered?

House is recently restored and the exterior is very intact

Moved or Original Site?

Original Site

Wall Construction

Exterior walls are cream brick

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

Historical Data

Original Owner

Emily Thompson

Original Use

Single Family Residence

Architect or Builder

Unknown

Architectural Style

Gable Ell

Date of Construction

1872

Indigenous Materials Used

not applicable

List of Bibliographical References Used

City of Madison Real Estate Tax Rolls.

Fire Insurance Maps of Madison, WI. New York: Sanborn-Perris Co., 1885, 1892, 1898, 1902.

Madison City Directories.

Tipler, Gary. *The First Settlement Neighborhood: A Walking Tour*. Madison: Madison Landmarks Commission, 1988.

Form Prepared By

Name and Title

Timothy F. Heggland

Organization Represented (if any)

for the Department of Planning and Development

Address

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Telephone Number

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Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

September 7, 2001

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

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

The Emily Thompson House is a fine, highly intact cream brick vernacular single family residence of unusually gracious design. The house is located four blocks from the south corner of the Capitol Square. It occupies a corner lot that comprises the east corner formed by the intersection of E. Main and S. Franklin streets. Tax rolls strongly suggest that the house was built in 1872 although a much more modest structure on this lot that had been owned by the Thompsons since 1867 may have either been moved off the lot or else incorporated into the house we see today.

The Thompson house is an excellent example of a T-plan gabled ell building and its main facade faces southwest onto S. Franklin Street. The gabled (upright) wing forms the left half of the facade, the ell forms the right half, and the design is somewhat unusual in that the width of the gabled wing is actually equal to the length of the ell, thus giving an even greater prominence to the gable wing than would normally be the case. The house rests on stone foundation walls, the exterior walls above them are clad in cream brick, and the house is sheltered by a multi-gable roof that has overhanging eaves with a wide frieze board placed just below it. The gabled wing portion of the main facade is three-bays-wide. Each story of each bay consists of an unusually tall window opening that has a large stone lintel above it and contains a four-over-four double-hung wood sash window. The only exception to this is the first story of the right-hand bay, which contains the main entrance door to the house. A full-width open one-story front porch that has a very shallow-pitched hip roof shelters the first story of this wing.. It is original to the house although it now contains historic elements that came from a demolished house located at 341 W. Washington Ave.

Interestingly, Sanborn-Perris maps show that the wing (ell) portion of the house was originally just a single story in height but that it was raised to a full two stories between 1885 and 1892, thus bringing it up to the height of the gabled wing portion. This was actually a quite typical transformation for a house of this type. Historic research in Madison and elsewhere in the state has found that gabled ell houses were often built one wing at a time and expanded as needed and as the means became available. The windows that were used in the added story of the ell, which is two-bays wide, match those in the original portion. The only other change to the exterior of this facade has been the enclosing of a front porch that originally extended the length of the ell and which was added to the house between 1892 and 1908. This shed-roofed porch is now clad in narrow clapboards and has a group of five three-over-one windows facing onto Franklin Street. Although the date of its enclosure is not known it is believed to pre-date World War II and may even date to the 1920s.

In addition to the brick-clad main block of the house there is also a wood frame one-story kitchen wing attached to the rear elevation of the house. This shed-roofed clapboarded wing was in place as early as 1885 according to Sanborn-Perris maps, and it is still in use as a kitchen today. Yet another smaller 11 x 12-foot addition across the back of the kitchen wing is an enclosed porch that is a modern reconstruction of the badly deteriorated original, which was replaced in the early 1980s.

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

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria.

The Thompson house is a fine cream brick gabled ell vernacular form single family residence. It is eligible for designation as a Madison Landmark under Criterion 3 as a fine, largely intact and quite early example of the gabled ell form, cream brick examples of which are now especially rare in the city. It is also one of the best of the small group of houses of similar age that are located in the area immediately surrounding it.

The Thompson House was built in 1872 for Emily Thompson. Emily Thompson (1840-1912) came to America from Norway with her parents, Nels and Mary Torstensenseim, in 1844. In America, Emily would later marry a fellow Norwegian immigrant, Ole Thompson, who would build a successful career in Madison as a hotelier and businessman. By 1868, Thompson had established Thompson's Hotel at 123 S. Butler St. (this was later known as the Simon House and is now demolished), and in that year had been elected an alderman and had had constructed the Italianate style cream brick Thompson's Block Building at 119 E. Main St., a three-story commercial building that is now a Madison Landmark. Thompson died between 1868 and 1872, and his widow, Emily, then had either a new house or a greatly enlarged older house constructed for herself and her four children. Mrs. Thompson and her descendants continued to occupy this house until at least 1930, which probably helps account for its excellent state of preservation. The house has since been sensitively restored by its current owners, photographer Zane Williams and his wife, Mary.

The Thompson House is a fine example of what is now called the gabled ell form. A common nineteenth century residential vernacular form, the gabled ell form combines elements of both front and side-gabled vernacular buildings and resembles them in construction materials, simplicity, and proportions. The gabled ell includes cruciform plan buildings as well as those with the more common "L" or "T" plans. The usual appearance of the main facade of the house is that of two gable-roofed wings of equal or unequal height (this is more typical) joined perpendicularly to each other. Gabled ell houses were built in a variety of heights, though the most common is the one-story longitudinal wing connected to a one-and-one-half story gable wing or "upright." The main entrance to these buildings is usually through a porch placed at the juncture of the ell on the main facade. The porch may reveal the only ornamental details, such as brackets, turned posts, and a balustrade. Window openings on gabled ell houses are generally regular. These buildings typically rest on low foundations and porch stairs are short. Clapboard was most commonly used on gabled ell buildings, although brick, and less frequently, stone examples exist as well.

Gabled ell houses are not all that common in Madison anymore because of the changes that have taken place in the downtown area since the 1870s. Front gable, side gable, and gabled ell vernacular houses were among the earliest houses built in Madison and were thus most densely concentrated around the Capitol Square and in the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to it. As the city grew, however, these areas were also the most susceptible to change and the result has been that disproportionate numbers of these small houses have been lost to new and more dense development. Consequently, the examples that have survived tend to be located either in still intact neighborhoods near the Capitol Square or else in what were originally rural settings that have now become suburban ones. The recently completed Madison Intensive Survey found that the best and least altered surviving examples in the city are almost all clad in brick, and of those

listed in the report, the Mrs. Emily Thompson house is the second oldest and one of the best and most intact.

101 S FRANKLIN ST



