

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common  
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(2) Historic (if applicable)  
Richard T. Ely house

II. Location

(1) Street Address  
205 North Prospect Avenue

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)  
10th Aldermanic District

III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.)  
Building

(2) Zoning District  
R 2

(3) Present Use  
Single-Family Residence

IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s)

Dr. Harvey L. Barash

(2) Street Address  
205 N. Prospect Ave.

(3) Telephone Number  
238-4448 (home)  
255-6731 (office)

V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number

(2) Legal Description

VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins)  
Excellent

(2) Altered or Unaltered?  
Unaltered

(3) Moved or Original Site?  
Original Site

(4) Wall Construction  
Frame

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

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

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The Richard T. Ely house is a two-and-one-half-story frame house. It is a straight-forward and faithful example of the Neo-Colonial mode of the Georgian Revival. Its main facade is strictly symmetrical, and its plan is rectangular. It has a hipped roof with eaves decorated as a classical cornice. The roof is topped with a flat deck. Chimneys are placed at either side of the roof so as to contribute to the overall symmetry though they are not strictly symmetrical. The central part of the facade projects slightly and is crowned with a pediment over supporting Ionic pilasters. A central one-story Ionic portico with railing above projects from this central part of the facade to cover the main entry. The doorway has an elliptical fanlight and ordinary sidelights. All the windows are double-hung sash of which three on the main facade, two flanking the entry on the first floor and one on center above the entry on the second floor, have elaborate broken pediments. Dormer windows project from the roof hips.

The Richard T. Ely house, because it so faithfully incorporates the Georgian Revival design formula, is possibly the best example of this style in Madison. This is most likely due to the fact that its architect was a relatively sophisticated Chicago eclectic designer, Charles Sumner Frost.

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

VII. (7) Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The Richard T. Ely house is doubly significant, because of its historical associations and architectural excellence. Specifically, it conforms to the second and third landmarks designation criteria as adopted by the Landmarks Commission and incorporated in Madison General Ordinances 33.01.

The client for the house, Richard T. Ely, was one of Wisconsin's foremost economics scholars. He was born in 1854 and received his PhD degree in 1879 from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, where the study of economic theory was far in advance of that in America during Ely's time. In the early 1890's, the University of Wisconsin raided the faculties of some Eastern universities, primarily Johns Hopkins. From thence came Richard T. Ely to Wisconsin in 1892, induced by a large salary upon the recommendation of Ely's former student, Frederick Jackson Turner, a nationally-renowned historian. Ely was a progressive economist, for American temperament, and was considered by some in Wisconsin a radical -- even dangerous. His discussions of Marxian socialism, which had hitherto had little academic recognition, and his strictures upon corporate abuses made him very controversial. In 1894 a committee of investigation was appointed after Ely became involved in a labor disturbance. There was a formal trial which was a debacle for the accusers and a complete vindication of Ely and his teaching practices. The declaration of academic freedom which accompanied the committee's findings and exoneration of Dr. Ely still rings today through the hallowed halls of Bascom:

WHATSOEVER MAY BE THE LIMITATIONS WHICH TRAMMEL INQUIRY  
ELSEWHERE, WE BELIEVE THE GREAT STATE UNIVERSITY OF  
WISCONSIN SHOULD EVER ENCOURAGE THAT CONTINUED AND  
FEARLESS SIFTING AND WINNOWING BY WHICH ALONE TRUTH  
CAN BE FOUND!

Naturally, Ely was also a progressive politically, and was a staunch supporter of Robert M. LaFollette. They, however, had a falling out over the American entry into World War I, as did just about all of LaFollette's former university supporters. Ely was married twice, and a daughter of his first marriage was Anne E. Morehouse, the wife of the client of George Fred Keck's 1937 Edward W. Morehouse house, just a few blocks away.

In his Autobiography, Ely even saw fit to comment on architectural design and the University of Wisconsin campus: "They [the architects] constructed buildings with no regard for the natural surroundings. It seemed as if the architects were only interested in showing off all they know about the architecture of ancient Greece and Rome." This truly progressive condemnation of contemporary eclectic architecture by Ely apparently did not extend in his own mind in 1896 to copying Georgian Colonial styles, for this is precisely what he did in his own residence which is the subject of this nomination.

The well-known Chicago architect, Charles Sumner Frost, was a graduate of the M.I.T. architectural program who moved to Chicago in 1882. In the 1890's he designed several University of Chicago buildings, and he was primarily known as the architect of major Chicago structures, such as office buildings, hospitals, and railroad stations. He first came to Madison when commissioned to design the Law Building on Bascom Hill for the University of Wisconsin, which was built in 1893, and has since been demolished. Apparently Dr. Ely and Architect Frost made their acquaintance at that time, for it was only three years later that Ely's house was built. The architecture of the house is more fully described in Sect. VI.(5) of this form. For purposes of significance, it is probably the finest example of the Georgian Revival in the City of Madison.

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

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Richard T. Ely	(2) Original Use Single-Family Residence
(3) Architect <del>or Builder</del> Charles Sumner Frost, Chicago	(4) Architectural Style Georgian Revival
(5) Date of Construction 1896	(6) Indigenous Materials Used (None)

(7) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the significance of the nominated property and its conformance to the designation criteria of the Landmarks Commission Ordinance (33.01), limit of 500 words.

VIII. List of Bibliographical References Used

1. Ely, Richard T., Ground Under Our Feet: An Autobiography. (N.Y., 1938).
2. Blueprints for the original house in the possession of the owner.
3. Pyre, James F. A., Wisconsin. (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1920.)
4. Withey, Henry F. and Elsie R. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, 1970.)
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- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

[September 26, 1973]