

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

I. Name of Building or Site	
(1) Common "Buell's Folly"	(2) Historic (if applicable) Charles Edwin Buell house
II. Location	
(1) Street Address 115 Ely Place	(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk) 10th Aldermanic District
III. Classification	
(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.) Building (house)	
(2) Zoning District R2	(3) Present Use Single-family residence
IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)	
(1) Name(s) Mr. Robert P. Meyer	
(2) Street Address 115 Ely Place	(3) Telephone Number 238-6944
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) Good (needs maintenance and attention to the exterior)	
(2) Altered or Unaltered? Unaltered	(3) Moved or Original Site? Original Site
(4) Wall Construction Balloon frame, shingled surface.	
(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).	

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

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

The Charles Edwin Buell house is a massive two-and-one-half-story frame house uniformly covered with a layer of exterior shingles on both the walls and roof. Built in 1894, it was the first house in the University Heights plat and was sited with a commanding view to the north. The main facade faces Ely Place and the Eugene C. Gilmore house across the street, designed by Frank Lloyd Wright and built in 1908. The dominating feature of this elevation is the projecting central element crowned by an open gable. The rest of the roof on this house is a hipped roof of relatively steep pitch for the style and period. The dominating element of the north facade of the house is a round tower with a conical roof surrounded, at the first floor, but a one-story circular perch. The house rests on a rusticated smooth stone foundation.

Stylistically, the house is one of the best examples of the Shingle Style in Madison. The Shingle Style was an outgrowth of the Earlier Queen Anne style, and was developed in the East. Its most characteristic elements are a uniform covering of shingles combined with rusticated stone foundations; hipped roofs with broad gable ends as design elements; and a simplified and unornamented quality compared to the Queen Anne. In the Midwest, the Shingle Style was common in the 1880's in to the twentieth century. The decade of the 1890's in Wisconsin is the one in which it most frequently was found.

In appearance, the house is still much like it was originally. In terms of condition, however, it apparently is in need of maintenance and some repairs.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Charles Edwin Buell	(2) Original Use Single-family residence
(3) Architect or Builder Conover and Porter, Madison	(4) Architectural Style Shingle Style
(5) Date of Construction 1894	(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. Wisconsin State Journal, Madison Past and Present (1902)
Scully, Vincent, The Shingle Style, New Haven (1955)
2. Interview with Chas. Buell's daughter.
3. U.W. Archives, Science Hall file.
4. "Pen & Sunlight Sketches of Duluth, Superior & Ashland," Phoenix Publishing Company, Chicago (1892).
5. Wright, Frank Lloyd, An Autobiography, New York (1943)
6. Capital Times, May 24, 1929 (A.D. Conover obituary)
7. "Wisconsin: Its History and Its People," S.J. Clarke Pub. Co., Chicago (1924) Vol 4, pp. 566-71.
8. Letter from Julian D. Conover, January 23, 1967.

[September 26, 1973]

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

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

The Charles Edwin Buell house, once known as "Buell's Folly," conforms to the third criterion among those adopted by the Landmarks Commission and incorporated into Madison General Ordinances 33.01. It may also conform to the second and fourth criteria, but would do so less convincingly.

The house was designed by the architectural firm [Allan D.] Conover and [Lew Forster] Porter for Charles Edwin Buell, and built in 1894. The client was a prominent Madison attorney and educator born in Sun Prairie in 1855 who died in 1938. Buell graduated from the University of Wisconsin in 1878 and entered the field of education, in which he organized Middleton High School. In 1883 he graduated from the U.W. Law School, and practiced law for the rest of his life. He was engaged in private practice when he built this house, which was the first to be constructed in University Heights.

Allan D. Conover, the architect, is perhaps most recognized because he was the first architectural employer of the youthful Frank Lloyd Wright. Wright mentions Conover in his Autobiography (p. 57), where Wright noted he "got a little actual contact with...construction," while working on the construction of Science Hall. Conover also employed Louis Ward Claude during his tenure at the University, and both Claude and Wright went on to work for Louis Henri Sullivan in Chicago.

Conover is also known to students of Wisconsin because he was one of the most important architects in the state during the critical 1880's and 1890's period when much construction was undertaken. He opened an office in Ashland in 1891, and it became the largest firm in northern Wisconsin. He also had a branch office in Fond du Lac for a short period. His main office, however, always was in Madison, where he built the University Armory and Gymnasium in 1894, and the Dane County Courthouse, since demolished, in addition to Science Hall. In Ashland and Madison, Conover and Porter designed numerous residences, many in the Shingle Style, many in Queen Anne, including the Agriculture Dean's house at 10 Babcock Drive. He was Dean of the School of Engineering at the University for many years, in which capacity he became acquainted with Wright.

As perhaps the foremost local exponent of the Shingle Style, a critical style in the evolution of modern American architecture, Conover must be considered one of Madison's most important architects. Due to his wide-ranging practice throughout Wisconsin, which included the design of many major Richardsonian Romanesque buildings, his importance really is statewide. The Buell house is a major monument in the practice of this native Madisonian who seemed to have a facility for influencing young men, like Wright and Claude, who were on their way to establishing their own enduring careers.