

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common Chi Omega Annex	(2) Historic (if applicable) John J. Suhr House
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II. Location

(1) Street Address 121 Langdon Street	(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk) Eighth
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III. Classification

(1) Type of Property (building, monument, park, etc.) Building	
(2) Zoning District R6	(3) Present Use Multiple-unit dwelling

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

(1) Name(s) Chi Omega Chapter House Association	
(2) Street Address 121 Langdon Street	(3) Telephone Number

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

(1) Parcel Number 0709-114-1103-1	(2) Legal Description: Orig. Plat, SW 12 ft. of NW 99ft. of Lot 8, all of Lot 7, Block 61
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VI. Condition of Property

(1) Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, deteriorated, ruins) Excellent	
(2) Altered or Unaltered? Slightly altered roof.	(3) Moved or Original Site? Original Site
(4) Wall Construction Brick	

(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 style of the Suhr house is French Victorian. The distinguishing feature of this style as exemplified by the Suhr house is a mansard roof pierced by ornamental dormer windows. The Suhr house is a brick two-story residence with a stone foundation. The shingled mansard roof is pierced by both an ornamental dormer window to one side and a round window in the center. A tower that projects from the mass of the building is set off-center and is topped by ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ cast-iron cresting. A dormer window is also part of the tower design. Paired brackets appear under the eaves of the roof but do not occur in a middle ~~xxxxxxxx~~ section between the tower and a projecting bay of the building on the west. The roof though has been altered. It is not the same mansard roof that originally topped the building. The principal features and placement of the windows, however, remained the same. The projection of the tower element breaks ~~the~~ the plane of the facade ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ as does a slightly protruding bay on the west. The prominent elements in that are the windows -- a bay window in the first story and two windows separated by a band of bricks in the second story and shaded by a pedimented projection supported by columns-like wood members. A one-story wood porch with Ionic pillars graces the front of the house. The original wood railing on top of the porch has been removed. The window treatment varies from squared headed windows to an arched variety to completely round ones. The long windows in the first story at the front are headed by decorative leaded glass. The motif of the porch pillars is repeated in the columns flanking doorway.

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 LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner John J. Suhr	(2) Original Use Residence
(3) Architect or Builder John Nader	(4) Architectural Style French Victorian
(5) Date of Construction 1883-1885	(6) Indigenous Materials Used
(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. Madison Street Directories.
2. Wisconsin Necrology.
3. Madison Tax Assessment Records.
4. American Exchange Bank 100th anniversary publication. 1971.
5. Peat, E. Indiana Houses of the 19th Century.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Marsha Peters	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) Citizens Resource Committee	
(3) Address 415 Wisconsin Ave.	(4) Telephone Number 256-5047
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared 3/1/72	

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

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

The importance of the Suhr house is both architectural and historical. Architecturally it is one of the few examples of the French Victorian mode of building in Madison. And, it is an elegant representative of that style.

The house was built by John J. Suhr, a German immigrant who came to Madison in 1856 and founded what today is the American Exchange Bank. By 1871 Suhr had recognized that a banking institution was needed to serve the wants of the immigrant population. He established the German Bank in Madison. It later was renamed the American Exchange Bank and today is still in family hands. Suhr was a prominent enough citizen in Madison that in 1885 he welcomed President Grover Cleveland to his house. The Suhr family established close contacts with other prominent Madison families. Suhr's daughter Bertha married William J. Hobbins and thus also became related to the Mears family through her husband. The Hobbins family resided at 114 W. Gilman and the Mears at 410 N. Carroll. Thus another link was established in the network of social and family relationships that distinguished the Gilman-Langdon neighborhood in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

John J. Suhr like Timothy Brown and Napoleon Bonaparte Van Slyke is another self-made Madison entrepreneur who made it to the top of the social and economic heap, built an elegant home, and gave credence to the idea of the "American Dream." His house is a fine representative of an era in Madison's history and its preservation as a landmark is important.