

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

Thoreau House

(2) Historic (if applicable)

Curtis House; Curtis-Kittleson House

II. Location

(1) Street Address

1102 Spaight Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

Sixth District

III. Classification

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

Building

(2) Zoning District

C-31

(3) Present Use

Group home

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

(1) Name(s)

Walden Homes, Inc.

(2) Street Address

2038 Pennsylvania Avenue
Madison, Wisconsin 53704

(3) Telephone Number

241-3621

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

(1) Parcel Number

0710-073-0916-7

(2) Legal Description

Original plat S.W. 16 ft. of Lot 17,
all of Lot 18

VI. Condition of Property

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

Exterior excellent; interior showing signs of deterioration: attic roof
being propped up, wall cracks below

(2) Altered or Unaltered?

Unaltered

(3) Moved or Original Site?

Original site

(4) Wall Construction

Red 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 plan of the Curtis-Kittleson house is basically rectangular. A large tower with a conical roof intersects the S.E. corner and a large unenclosed porch extends across the front, around the tower and halfway down the Ingersoll St. side. The porch roof is flat and supported by square tapered wood columns with Doric caps. The porch entrance projects slightly, is crowned with a pediment and supported by double columns.

The house rests on a high foundation of rectangular light gray stone. The main body of the house is of smooth reddish brown brick interrupted with horizontal bands of smooth stone directly above and below the second floor windows. These bands form the lintels and sills for the windows. Banding on the tower continues to the third floor level.

The roof is deeply pitched with a large gable on each of three sides and a smaller one on the back providing for a third story or roomy attic. Palladian windows with diamond shaped panes appear on the ends of the three largest gables. A projection below the gable on the Ingersoll St. side provides for 1st and 2nd floor bay windows. The projection is capped above the 2nd floor windows with a stone cornice. On the north side is a narrower projection with bays just to the left of the gable. This forms an interior stairway leading from the entry hall to the second floor. Windows are of leaded glass.

Other decorative elements include dentil molding below the eaves, ornamental brick work above bay and Palladian windows, two cut stone panels on the Ingersoll St. side and two fluted brick chimneys. An acanthus leaf frieze also appears beneath the large gables.

The main body of the house appears to be structurally unchanged. Sometime between 1908 and 1942 what appears to have been a porte cochere on the north side was bricked in - becoming a room in the house.

The original roof treatment is unknown but today it is of varigated reddish brown shingles. Original paint color is also not known but an early photograph suggests that it was light and of the same color value as the stone. Present wood trim is light green.

According to a 1950's article by Alexis Baas, the interior was elegant, some of the carved woodwork was overlaid with gold leaf, bordering panes of the staircase windows were colored glass, and many other windows had leaded upper panels. According to the Wisconsin State Journal, June 12, 1901, the cost of the finished house was estimated to be close to \$20,000 - nearly \$8,000 more than the original estimate. Inside the original woodwork is intact. The present owners have closed off the entrance hall and elaborate staircase to the second floor to prevent damage. The main entrance still has its original red flocked wall covering and matching cut velvet seat cushions.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner

William D. Curtis

(2) Original Use

Residence

(3) Architect or Builder

Gordon & Paunack

(4) Architectural Style

Eclectic

(5) Date of Construction

1901

(6) Indigenous Materials Used

None unique to area

(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. Whiffen, Marcus - American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to Styles, MIT Press, 1969, Cambridge, Mass.
2. Maass, John - The Victorian Home in America, Hawthorne Books, Inc. 1972, N.Y.
3. Wisconsin State Journal - Madison Past and Present, 1902
4. Quaife, Milo - Wisconsin, Its History and Its People, 1924
5. Wisconsin Necrology, Vol. 36, pp. 125-26 - State Historical Society of Wisconsin
6. A Study of Madison Architecture from the Madison Papers 1838-1900, Wis MSS/25BX/boxes 6 & 7, SHSW Archives - Manuscripts Reading Room
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

Jane Graff

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

(3) Address

Apt 3, 3106 Bluff St.
Madison, Wisconsin 53705

(4) Telephone Number

233-2042

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

10/15/77

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

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

The Curtis-Kittleson house meets two of the criteria for landmark designation. The house is significant both because of the historical contributions to the city by its inhabitants and the architectural style and taste it represents. Its greatest importance lies in its identity with Mr. and Mrs. William Dexter Curtis and Mr. and Mrs. Milo Kittleson.

The house was built for the family of W. D. Curtis, manager of the Dexter Curtis Co. and son of its founder, Dexter Curtis. The company was well known for zinc horse collar pads and specialties for the saddlery trade and, at one time, maintained plants in Birmingham, England and Troyes, France. W. D. Curtis also served as chairman of the Board of Directors of the Union Trust Co., as V.P. of the 1st National Bank and V.P. and Financial Manager of the L. L. Olds Seed Co.

Curtis was elected mayor in 1904 by a large majority but chose to serve only one term due to business pressures. He was a believer in City Manager form of government. During his term, he obtained for Madison new passenger and freight stations of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. A lover of horses, he was interested in expansion of the park and drive system and served as President of the American Saddlery Association. W. D. Curtis was born in 1857 in Chicago, moved to Madison at about age 3 and died in 1935 at the age of 78.

The house was purchased by Isaac Milo Kittleson after the death of Curtis' third wife in 1949. Kittleson, of Norwegian descent, was born in 1874 on his father's Green Co. farm. He attended high school in Monroe, taught for 6 years and graduated from the Univ. of Wisc. Law School in 1902. That same year he entered the employ of the Savings Loan and Trust Co. and became Secretary and Director of that company. In 1906 he married Ida Johnson of Mt. Horeb, also of Norwegian descent. Mrs. Kittleson became a leader in civic circles serving as treasurer of the Public Welfare Assn. and of the YWCA and, for many years, President of the Dane Co. Humane Society. Mr. Kittleson served as alderman from 1912 to 1914 and in 1920 began the first of his three terms as mayor. He died in 1958.

The house was subsequently owned by The Rev. Richard Larson of Bethel Lutheran Church. His wife was a well known puppeteer and director of the Bethel Players and Children's Theatre of the church. The house is now a group home, owned by Walden Homes, Inc. and known as Thoreau House.

Architecturally, the house is eclectic, rather pedestrian, but sturdy, impressive and representative of fine craftsmanship. It is representative of the taste of the era in which it was built and its imposing chateau-like appearance suggests something about the position of its well-to-do original owner. It was designed by the firm of Gordon and Paunack. Other buildings credited to this firm include the Wisconsin Building (corner of State and Carroll), the Jackman Bldg., Old Bethel Lutheran at N. Hamilton and Butler, the home of Halle Steensland on N. Carroll, the D. K. Tenney house on Langdon and others. J. O. Gordon arrived in Madison from western New York in 1857. He established his architectural firm in 1890 and in 1892 formed a co-partnership with F. W. Paunack. Paunack, born and reared in Madison, was the son of a stonemason August Paunack.