

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

John George Ott House

(2) Historic (if applicable)

John George Ott House

II. Location

(1) Street Address

754 Jenifer Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

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III. Classification

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

Building

(2) Zoning District

R-4

(3) Present Use

Multiple Residence

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

(1) Name(s)

R. Richard Wagner

(2) Street Address

754 Jenifer Street

(3) Telephone Number

257-5270

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?

Slightly altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?

Original

(4) Wall Construction

Frame with brick veneer

(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 house consists of a 2½ story main section with 2 story wings to the west and north of the main section. The construction is frame with brick veneer on a sandstone foundation. The main section has decorative brickwork including corner pilasters and corbels under the roof.* Two oculi or round windows gaze at each other in a southern corner on a second story. Window trim includes stone sills for most windows, arched, carved sandstone lintels on the first floor of the main section and incised stone lintels on the second floor of the same section. The fenestration is balanced throughout and totals 37 windows (excluding 3 basement windows but including 2 attic tombstone-shaped windows). There are 9 doors to the outside. On the east and west sides of the house are two-story wooden bay windows. The roof is square-hipped on the main section, gable ended on the north wing and hipped over the bay and wing on the west side. Two small stoop porches are on the front of the house, an open porch on the east side near the kitchen and a glassed-in porch on the northwest corner. This same corner has a small two-story frame section that may have contained an indoor privy.

Alterations over the years have included several changes that have not affected the basic character of the house. The house probably had an original, rectangular cupola on the main section, as one is shown in a photo taken not too many years after the house was built. A flat roof replaced the cupola and more recently a slightly sloped skylight covers the old roof trap opening. An additional flat skylight has also been added on the north side of the west wing tucked under the eaves of the main section. The second story on the east bay was a later addition but probably in the 19th Century. A full porch rather than the existing stoop used to run along the south side of the west wing. Recently, steps have been added to the porch on the east side of the house. It is also possible the second story on the west wing is a later 19th Century addition.

The original parcel included the land all along Livingston Street to Williamson. Though now separate parcels, a brick out-building, possibly a carriage shed or shop building still stands in the middle of the block on Livingston Street.

*Brackets and panels decorate the exterior cornice of the main section, all of which is wood and includes a built-in gutter.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)**

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner
John George Ott

(2) Original Use
Residence

(3) Architect or Builder

(4) Architectural Style
Bracketed Italianate

(5) Date of Construction
1873-74

(6) Indigenous Materials Used
Local brick, sandstone trim

(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 Past and Present
2. Madison City Directories
3. Sanborn Insurance Maps
4. Third Lake Ridge Historic District Plan
5. C. W. Butterfield, History of Dane County, 1880
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title
R. Richard Wagner

(2) Organization Represented (if any)
Self

(3) Address
754 Jenifer Street

(4) Telephone Number
257-5270

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

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

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

John George Ott was one of the early German-Swiss immigrants to Madison, coming directly from his native Schaffhausen, Switzerland, in 1850. He was a successful businessman, entrepreneur of the late 19th Century seizing his chances where the turns of the local economy seemed to dictate. One of his earliest ventures was a brickyard on the Williamson Street property at the corner of Livingston Street. Diggings for fence posts at 754 Jenifer uncovered much red brick and charcoal rubble, presumably from the operation of the brickyard. It is a possible assumption that he made the bricks for 754 Jenifer at the brickyard on the site. For a while, Ott conducted a grocery business on the Williamson Street frontage offering several items including whiskey by the barrel. Later, accident and fire insurance and real estate occupied his attention.

Ott was active in civic affairs and ethnic organizations as a member of the Old Settlers Club, a founder of the German Masonic lodge, a founder of the Turnverein, and a member of the Madison Maennerchor. He was elected to represent the area on both the City Council and the County Board. He also served as a Justice of the Peace and a Notary Public.

A concern for the neighborhood and near east side occupied his attention. He organized Sixth Ward residents in the campaign to turn the old village cemetery into the City's first public park (Orton Park). He platted Ott's subdivision on Dewey Court and Schley Pass providing small inexpensive lots for area workers.

He was an important figure in the development of Third Lake Ridge. The house he built in 1873-74 represents his successful establishment in the New World. He remained on the east side at 754 Jenifer for the rest of his life. His descendents continued to reside in the home until 1973, 100 years of continuous attachment to the neighborhood. The house has historical significance as a building associated with a significant local personage.

In addition, it is not without architectural merit and has been described as "the grandest of the remaining 19th Century mansions in the district." As an example of the High Victorian Italianate mode in an immigrant neighborhood, it shows the patterns of tastes whereby successful immigrants copied the styles of the dominant local and national Yankee upper class.