

original - do not remove

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

Machinery Row

(2) Historic (if applicable)

Brown Brothers' Business Block

II. Location

(1) Street Address

601 - 627 Williamson Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

Sixth District

III. Classification

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

Building

(2) Zoning District

M-1

(3) Present Use

Service industries and warehousing

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

(1) Name(s)

Seven J's, Inc., c/o Henry Reynolds

(2) Street Address

301 S. Blount Street

(3) Telephone Number

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

(1) Parcel Number

0709-134-2001-7

(2) Legal Description

Block 126, Original Plat, Lots 1-4

VI. Condition of Property

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

Good

(2) Altered or Unaltered?

Altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?

Original Site

(4) Wall Construction

Cream brick with Ableman stone and tile trim

(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:

Machinery Row is a large commercial block, actually a series of structures, on the shore of Lake Monona at one of the major intersections in central Madison. Replacing a set of wooden structures that housed similar functions, the block was described in accounts of the day as being "solid," "grand," "elegant," "magnificent," and "handsome." The October 22, 1898 Wisconsin State Journal mentioned the "great deal of power and tact" required to put the heavy timbers in place. White brick with "abelman stone and tile trimmings" were used, the brick now tarnished to a black color with age and pollution.

The most distinguishing features are the facade and the corner tower. Designed in a sort of late commercial Romanesque Revival style, the uniform facade linked all the sections of the block. The watertable is of rusticated sandstone. The rectangular door and window openings of the ground floor correspond to the fenestration of the second floor and each is capped with a flat arch of brick. The second floor has a long arcade of twenty-five tall half-rounded arched windows. The arches are accentuated with a row of raised bricks. Stone stringcourses run the length of the facade beneath the arches, window sills, and cornice.

A rounded tower at the northwest corner of the building curves gently from the main (north) facade with the same scheme of window fenestration mentioned previously. On the western side of the building, the rounded tower abruptly meets the flat wall and is linked to it on the ground floor by an oblique wall. The side wall, which once had a more limited visibility has an ordinary segmental arched window treatment.

The heavy corbelled cornice of the facade once served as the base for a crenellated tower and a triangular parapet which stone above the cornice of the original, six-bay section of the building. The base remains of another smaller more slender turret-like feature at the other end of the facade. It was taller, capped by a conical roof, and flanked by a side stepped wall and front stepped parapet above the cornice.

Alterations occurred sometime after 1950. They include window and entrance changes on the ground floor facade, the bricking in of the arched portions of the second story facade windows, and the bricking in and alteration of east side wall windows. The back of the block has undoubtedly undergone several changes. Originally a railroad spur track ran between the building and the lake for shipping purposes. Today a parking lot accomplishes a similar function. The back of the block never was uniform, and is less so today with a series of loading platforms, sheds and additions.

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

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Estate of Timothy Brown (Frank G. and Frederick M. Brown)	(2) Original Use Commercial Block - rental
(3) Architect or Builder Conover and Porter	(4) Architectural Style Romanesque Revival
(5) Date of Construction 1898 - ca. 1914	(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. Alexis Baas, "All Around the Town," Capital Times, August 13, 1949.
2. Madison and its Points of Interest, Madison: Commercial Publishing Co., 1899.
3. Madison City Directories.
4. Madison, Past and Present, Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902, pp. 26 and 139.
5. Madison Tax Rolls.
6. Perspectives of a University, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1978, p. 76.
7. Sanborn-Perris Maps for Madison, 1885, 1892, 1898, 1902.
8. Wisconsin State Journal, 9-19-1896, 2-28-1898, 4-25-1898, 9-2-1898, 10-22-1898, 5-26-1899, 1-5-1900, 5-29-1901, 1-10-1903, 1-31-1903, 10-10-1905, 9-21-1907, 7-9-1912.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Robert J. Shockley and Katherine H. Rankin	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) Madison Landmarks Commission	
(3) Address 351 W. Wilson Street	(4) Telephone Number 266-6552
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared October 5, 1977 and March 6, 1980	

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

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

Machinery Row deserves landmark status for various reasons:

- (1) its key role in the commercial history of east Madison, especially as a major structure in that area's agricultural implement trade;
- (2) as one of Madison's few remaining 19th century business blocks;
- (3) as a large surviving commercial work of one of Madison's foremost architectural firms; and,
- (4) as a stylistically interesting survivor among Madison's commercial buildings and as a virtual cornerstone of one of the City's major intersections.

The development of the railroads and changes in manufacture technology and in marketing techniques preceded the development of the Machinery Row building and the area in which it was located. Early in Madison's history the 1858 "Business Advertiser" bemoaned the fact that Madison's manufacturing industries were either nonexistent or on a "scale far too limited for the wants and necessities of both present and future" populations, which included agricultural implements. But by 1866 the City Directory could report that agricultural implement shipments from Madison had reached 70,760 pounds eastward and 2,686,330 pounds westward. From its small beginnings, Madison was recognized for its central location and it developed into a major distributing center for agricultural implements. Railroad lines reaching in nine directions tied it to the prosperous communities and fertile farmlands of Wisconsin and northern Illinois. The large manufacturers found it more profitable to have branch locations from which their stock could be supplied without delay, rather than shipping directly from the factory.

An "Implement Row" area of Madison developed around the East Madison railroad depots, the core of which was roughly bounded by Lake Monona, East Washington Avenue, South Blair Street and South Livingston Street. Located here were the jobbers and large implement manufacturers' branch houses. A key property was the Daggett and Gill lake property, containing old frame buildings used as tobacco warehouses, ice houses, and produce storage. By 1888, they had converted their ice buildings and were easily renting space to implement dealers - in 1889 the Advance Thresher Co. became a long term resident of the site. The Sept. 19, 1898 Wisconsin State Journal reported that few Madisonians knew of the industrial implement row district, but that it was a million dollar a year business, with fifteen implement companies in a two block stretch. Within a few years the Daggett-Gill property was being referred to as "Machinery Row." By 1903, Madison had thirty implement companies trading in two million dollars worth of business, a doubling in a little over six years.

There was not enough suitable space available for these businesses during this period. For example, when the McCormick Harvesting Machine Company opened a local branch in 1895 it was unable to find an adequate building. They built their own in 1898, equipped with the latest machinery handling equipment. It was considered the "King of Implement Row." In response to the demand for space, the Estate of Timothy Brown purchased the Daggett-Gill property in April, 1898. Listed in 1902 as Madison's second largest taxpayer, the Brown Estate was based

on the banking - utility fortune of Timothy Brown, and managed by his two sons, Frank G. and Frederick M. Brown, after his death in 1879. The Browns immediately began to replace the wooden structures with substantial brick buildings. The importance of this block was indicated in 1898 by the railroad's motivation to raise and improve the spur track that ran along the back of the property, and by the City's filling in of Blair Street at the lake. The original section of the building occupied by Advance Thresher was described in 1899 as a "magnificent building... which is the finest and most complete of any implement branch house in the country, ... sufficient to stock ten ordinary implement houses."

Machinery Row was designed by the prominent architectural firm, Conover (Allan D.) and Porter (Lew F.). The firm was formed in 1887 and dissolved in 1899, shortly after the first sections of Machinery Row were built. After the dissolution of the firm, Porter supervised the remaining work. During their partnership Conover and Porter constructed three jails, thirty schoolhouses, six churches, eight banks, three large hotels and one hundred residences. Prominent among these were the old UW boathouse, the Old Red Gym on campus, the Senate Tavern, the Ag Dean's residence at 10 Babcock Drive, and the Fred Brown house at 121 E. Gilman. The firm was a training ground for young architects, including Louise Claude, John Flad, Alvan Small and Frank Lloyd Wright.<sup>1</sup> Porter later designed the Fauerbach Brewery, just down the street from Machinery Row.

John Fay was listed for the foundation and masonry work for Machinery Row. He had also worked on the Brown house. Carpentry was listed as having been done by the Starck Manufacturing Company in 1898, and Swenson Brothers in 1903. The block was built piecemeal as brick buildings replaced the older frame ones: 601-607 Williamson in 1898, 621-623 in 1899, 613-615 circa 1901, 625-627 by August, 1902, 609-611 after August, 1902 - ca. 1903. The center of the row at 617-619 remained frame, despite earlier intentions, as late as July 9, 1912 when a fire struck that attracted a crowd of thousands. After an estimated \$12,000 worth of damage, new buildings were erected in replacement, finally completing the row.

At the same time, locations adjacent to the railroads became crucial for other businesses as well. Machinery Row was never used exclusively for agricultural implements. In the history of the present building, the main implement section was always the original (601-607) and 609-611. Implement businesses were found there until 1954 when Allis-Chalmers vacated the building. The other rental units from the beginning housed a wide variety of different businesses, factories and warehouses that were tied to the railroads. The businesses included (at least through the 1930s); fruits and produce, building materials, plumbing and heating, engines and machines, tools, ladies' underwear, printing, electrical supplies, chemical, paint and candy factories. More than a few businesses started there or leased space for a time before moving to their own buildings, for example the Madison Candy Company which built its own structure at 744 Williamson in 1903.

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<sup>1</sup>Perspectives of a University, UW-Madison, 1978, p. 76.