

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

I. Name of Building or Site

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| (1) Common | (2) Historic (if applicable) B. B. Clarke house |
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II. Location

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|---|--|
| (1) Street Address 1150 Spaight Street | (2) Ward (available @ City Clerk) Sixth |
|---|--|

III. Classification

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

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|----------------------------|--|
| (2) Zoning District R4A | (3) Present Use residence and art gallery |
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IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s)
Andrew D. and Sonja H. Weiner

| | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| (2) Street Address 1150 Spaight Street | (3) Telephone Number 257-4168 |
|---|----------------------------------|

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

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| (1) Parcel Number 0710-073-0928-2 | (2) Legal Description Lot 10, Block 181, Original Plat |
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VI. Condition of Property

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

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|--------------------------------------|--|
| (2) Altered or Unaltered? altered | (3) Moved or Original Site? original site |
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(4) Wall Construction
wood frame

(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:

The B. B. Clarke House, constructed of clapboard, is basically a two-story rectangle, with an irregular third-story attic consisting of three joining "wings" (created by projecting bracketed gable roofs of asbestos) and added picturesque appendages such as bay windows, dormers, and a segmental tower near the southeast corner. From the westernmost of the gable-wings extends a small dormer that is part of the front (south) facade. The entrance is in the far east end of the front facade, which is sheltered by an open porch. The porch is covered by a shed roof supported by small rectangular Tuscan columns and braces. Three lancet windows alternating with thin pilasters are set into the south and east attic-story gables; pointed-arch overlights over rectangular windows in the east bay create a lancet effect. All other windows are rectangular. At one time a small decorative porch was placed at the junction of the south and east third-floor wings, but structural decay led to its removal.

The interior of the house has remained in excellent condition, with only minor alterations. The original dark oak woodwork remains in the ceiling moldings, doorways, window frames, and open dogleg stair. Although part of the fireplace in the parlor has been rebuilt with newer glazed brick, the oak chimneypiece and flanking enclosed bookcases remain. Lead glass in the doors of the book cases (of Prairie School character) and in the lancet windows in the bays is still in place.

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

VII. Significance

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| (1) Original Owner B. B. Clarke | (2) Original Use residence |
| (3) Architect or Builder Claude and Starck (<u>WSJ</u> , Jan. 2, 1900) | (4) Architectural Style Gothicized Queen Anne |
| (5) Date of Construction 1899 (<u>Inland Architect</u> , Jan., 1901) | (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. Inland Architect, v. 36, no. 6, January, 1901. This issue features a photo plate of the house.
2. Madison, Past and Present, 1902, p. 217.
3. Milwaukee Sentinel, March 18, 1929.
4. Thresherman, partial collection in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin archives.
5. Whelan, Charles E., Bascom Clarke: The Story of A Southern Refugee, 1913.
6. Wisconsin State Journal, Jan. 2, 1900; Oct. 7, 1923; June 23, 1926.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

| | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| (1) Name and Title Diane Filipowicz and Terry Shoptaugh | |
| (2) Organization Represented (if any) State Historical Society of Wisconsin | |
| (3) Address 816 State Street | (4) Telephone Number 262-2970 |
| (5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared March 31, 1980 | |

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

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

An early work of Madison architects Claude and Starck, this house was for thirty years the residence of Bascom B. Clarke, one of Madison's leading citizens. A dabbler in a wide variety of ventures, Clarke made his enduring mark in agriculture and communications, particularly journalism. This site is being nominated for its association with a locally significant person.

Born in Virginia in 1851, Bascom Clarke was made a refugee by the Civil War until he was literally adopted by the 2nd Indiana Artillery battery: the first in a lifetime of instances in which Clarke was able to constantly impress people.¹ After the war, Clarke moved to Indiana and before he was twenty years old became the publisher of a local newspaper. During the next several years, he invested in and promoted the production and sale of threshing machines, and made a sizeable fortune in the process.² In 1890, Clarke moved to Madison, Wisconsin to extend his interests to the farm areas of the state. In Madison, he also continued his interest in communications. In 1895, he, together with Robert M. LaFollette and others, organized the Dane County Telephone Company, which extended service to many rural areas for the first time.³ Three years later, Clarke began the American Thresherman, a magazine devoted primarily to farming, but that gained a large readership from the non-farming population as well. This was due to Clarke's own wit and his wide-ranging column; the aphorisms of "Uncle Silas" were the magazine's most popular feature.⁴ A notable authority on agriculture, Clarke gave most of the space in his magazine over to the development and use of farm machinery. The Thresherman was at the time the only agricultural journal to give its primary attention to the increasing mechanization of farm operations, and this played an important role in the modernization of the farm industry. Readers were advised, for example, on the best types of machines for particular tasks, on the ways to select the right machine for the right job, and so on.⁵ This naturally enabled Clarke to have influence over the manufacturing interests (of which he was a member with his threshing machine investments) as well as the rural community. The Thresherman was purely Clarke's own; after his death in 1929, his family chose to discontinue it.

Clarke once referred to his first residence in Indiana as "furnished with a borrowed table and borrowed bedstead."⁶ The like could hardly be said of the residence he died in. Constructed in 1899, the B. B. Clarke House cost \$4,500.⁷ Clarke employed the firm of Claude & Starck to produce the design. Versatile designers in many styles, architects Louis Ward Claude and Edward F. Starck practiced together from 1898 until 1929. One of the firm's earliest works, the B. B. Clarke House is a transitional design conceived as a Gothicized version of the then-current Queen Anne Style, with elements indicating the future course of the firm. Publication of a photograph of the house in the Inland Architect and News Record in 1901 indicates that the imposing house was also considered to be noteworthy in its day.

SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

NOTES

1. Clarke's early life is detailed in a biographical novel by Charles E. Whelan, Bascom Clarke: The Story of a Southern Refugee, (1913).
2. Wisconsin State Journal, June 23, 1926.
3. Ibid., October 7, 1923; Madison, Past and Present, p. 217.
4. Madison, Past and Present, p. 211: Milwaukee Sentinel, March 18, 1929. A partial collection of the Thresherman is in the State Historical Society of Wisconsin collections.
5. Wisconsin State Journal, October 7, 1923; Thresherman issues in Society collection.
6. Ibid., June 23, 1926.
7. Ibid., January 2, 1900.