

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

The Alexander Company Building

(2) Historic (if applicable)

Casserly House

II. Location

(1) Street Address

403 W. Washington Avenue

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

9th Aldermanic District

III. Classification

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

Building

(2) Zoning District

R6

(3) Present Use

Office and apartment

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

(1) Name(s)

Randall P. Alexander

(2) Street Address

403 W. Washington Avenue

(3) Telephone Number

(608) 257-7506

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

(1) Parcel Number

0709-231-2206-7

(2) Legal Description

NE 1/2 NW 1/2 Lot 9, Block 44

VI. Condition of Property

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

Excellent

(2) Altered or Unaltered?

Altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?

Original

(4) Wall Construction

Frame

(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 Casserly house is a two-story, frame residence built in the Queen-Anne style. It is sheathed with 4½-inch clapboard on the first and second stories and with alternating short and long square-butt shingles on the attic gables. The first-floor facade differs from the floor above it with its recessed windows at 45-degree angles below the corners of the gabled wing facing the street. These windows flank a large central window with a leaded-glass upper panel. Above this window is an ornate denticulated cornice at the base of a projecting roof-like feature which is sheathed with square-butt shingles. The entrance is a double door with leaded-glass windows.

Delicate millwork ornament highlights the facade. Gable ornaments found decorating the peaks of both the front and side gables feature friezes of turned spindles supported by brackets. The front porch is built of turned six-inch wood columns supporting a shed roof, a simple cornice and a similar frieze of spindles supported by brackets. The frieze element is repeated beneath each overhang above the corner windows. A balustrade of turned spindles and lattice skirting enclose the three-foot-high porch deck.

When the building was renovated in 1980, the porch, along with the leaded glass of the doors, the spindle friezes and the shingled feature above the center window were added. The new porch and carpentry work was based upon details from similar buildings in the Madison area. The historical plan of the porch was also based, in part, upon brick piers found at the time of removal of a later porch.

On the Broom Street side of the house is a two-story, three-sided bay window ornamented with panels below the windows and denticulated cornices above. A rear wing, originally one story in height, was at one time raised to a second-story level and its side porch enclosed.

The interior is simply ornamented by its painted woodwork including milled casing around doors and windows with rondelles marking the junctures of casings at the upper corners of windows and doors. Simple picture moldings and two-piece baseboards trim the walls. Panelled doors are found throughout. Interesting original interior features are the oak staircase in the foyer and red-and-yellow grained long-leaf southern yellow pine floors in the former parlors and dining room.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner James Casserly	(2) Original Use Residence
(3) Architect or Builder Unknown	(4) Architectural Style Queen Anne
(5) Date of Construction 1891	(6) Indigenous Materials Used Sandstone foundation
(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. Tax rolls
2. City Directories
3. Madison Democrat, February 16, 1913. James Casserly obituary.
4. Wisconsin State Journal, April 10, 1926. Henry Casserly obituary.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Gary Tipler	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) Preservation Services of The Alexander Company	
(3) Address 403 W. Washington Avenue	(4) Telephone Number (608) 257-2318
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared February 15, 1983	

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

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

The Casserly house is significant in that it is a fine local example of a middle-class, late-19th-century Queen-Anne style frame residence.

The interpretation of the Queen-Anne style represented by the Casserly house is set apart from that of houses built only a few years earlier and later in overall design elements as well as in architectural detail. As is the case today, there existed a continuum of stylistic similarities from one year to the next--houses built only two or three years after the Casserly house were often larger, more massive and incorporated elements of classical design. Also, large verandas or porches predominated in the late 1890s in favor of the small porches which characterized the earlier middle-class homes.

Although scores of other similarly designed residences were once found in Madison's older neighborhoods, relatively few remain in such excellent condition as the Casserly house. The majority of these residences were altered with the removal of architectural trim and porches and the addition of sidings and structures unsympathetic to their character. Only a small number of those retaining some semblance of their original character are found in near-downtown neighborhoods while most are found in outlying neighborhoods.

Note:

See Historical Background attachment.

## CASSERLY HOUSE NOMINATION - ATTACHMENT

### Historical Background

The Casserly house was built in 1891 by James Casserly, a foreman and later superintendent of printing at the Madison Democrat which was one of the two major city newspapers of the time.

Casserly had both family and church connections in the neighborhood. He was a member of St. Raphael's Church, the Knights of Columbus and the Catholic Knights. His brother James, also employed at the Democrat as his assistant, lived nearby at 431 W. Washington Avenue.

The house was built on land which was formerly the side yard of the c.1868 brick home of Phineas Baldwin. The house next door at 405 W. Washington Avenue was built by Baldwin about 1883, though the land these houses were on was not parcelled into three separate lots until 1891.

At the time the Casserly house was built, W. Washington Avenue had a variety of residences: cottages dating from the 1850s, imposing large new homes, brick and frame dwellings--all built with varying setbacks and lot widths. Most of the existing residences remaining on the four- and five-hundred blocks of W. Washington Avenue were built during the 1890s and through about 1917. By the turn of the century, low marshy lots in the area were all but filled, lots improved, curb, gutter and sidewalks built and street trees planted. The middle-class residential neighborhood was approaching the height of its development.

Although the neighborhood slowly declined in its attractiveness over the years following the first World War, the Casserly house remained in single-family occupancy until the 1960s when it was rented.

In 1980, Randall Alexander bought the house and renovated it to accommodate offices and an apartment. The deteriorated front porch was removed and another, smaller one, more in keeping with the original character of the house, was built. The interior was refurbished resulting in the removal of partitions, ceiling tiles and carpeting. Floors were refinished, antique lighting fixtures and a mantle were installed and period-style leaded-glass transoms above doors were added. On the second floor, a wall was removed to create a large living room for the second-floor apartment. These improvements were done to enhance the original structure with concern for possible reconversion to residential use.