

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common Alpha Xi Delta House	(2) Historic (if applicable) Wootton-Mead House
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II. Location

(1) Street Address 120 West Gorham Street	(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk) 8th District
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III. Classification

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

(2) Zoning District R6H	(3) Present Use Residential
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IV. Current Owner of Property (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Name(s) Building Association of Theta Chapter of Alpha Xi Delta, Inc.

(2) Street Address 120 West Gorham Street	(3) Telephone Number 251-3785 or C. Moskoff, 255-6453
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V. Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

(1) Parcel Number 0709-144-1818-6	(2) Legal Description Lot 13, and the NE 1/2 of Lot 14, Block 62
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VI. Condition of Property

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

(2) Altered or Unaltered? Altered	(3) Moved or Original Site? Original site
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(4) Wall Construction
Brick and stucco

(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 Wootton House
120 W. Gorham Street
Madison, WI

DESCRIPTION

The Wootton House is a large Prairie School residence fronting on West Gorham Street. The main facade of this three story structure faces south. In spite of its urban location, it has a spacious lot allowing for more than ample visual exposure on both east and west elevations. A small brick house is located immediately to the east but adequate side yards exist so that this facade of the Wootton House is not hidden.

Typical of many Prairie School buildings, the stucco walls that rise from a brick base at the first floor window sills to the eaves creates a smooth planer surface with crisp intersections. A one story porch, whose low pitched hip roof is supported on brick columns with cast terra cotta capitals, extends across the north facade at the 1st floor level. Two sets of French doors, glazed with leaded glass in a linear design with a simple radiating motif in the upper corners, provide access and light to the interior. The glass pattern bears some resemblance to those designed by George W. Maher but are later designs, having been installed in 1982. The principal access to the house is from the west, reached by either a short flight of steps from the south or the west to a covered entry.

A stone ogee watertable surrounds the building at grade, and a red brick wall extends to a stone belt course at the first floor window sill height. Basement windows are within this brick wall at grade.

The building's fenestration includes many double hung windows arranged in groups of three, four, and six, creating a distinct horizontal emphasis. The horizontality of the building's composition is further emphasized by a projecting wood belt trim painted an earth red brown color and circling the building at the second floor sill height, and by a broad overhang of the roof. A grouping of six windows on the south facade at the second floor contains double hung windows with leaded glass patterns in a stock pattern. The windows are separated by short multi-faceted columns with cast terra cotta capitals.

The hipped roof, presently covered with asphalt shingles has broad hipped dormers on all four major elevations, each containing three double hung windows again separated by columns, which give a further horizontal emphasis at the third story of the building. The eastern dormer has been modified to provide fire egress to an added fire escape.

A three sided orielled bay of 3 windows projects on the west facade of the second floor of the rear third of the wall.

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VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

(Cont.)

The eastern facade contains three groups of three windows on the second floor, but on the first floor the center group has four windows. The center third of the facade projects about one foot from the plane of the wall.

An interesting landscape feature is located near the side door. What appears to be an oval rock garden is all that remains of a 6 x 12 foot oval goldfish pool which Daniel Mead's son Harold, also a distinguished engineer, built for his mother in the 1920's. The huge goldfish "wintered" in a special tank which can still be seen in the basement floor.

The house has been recently acquired by a sorority organization concerned about its preservation, and is making noticeable progress in restoring the building to a sympathetic and caring use.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Frank M. Wootton	(2) Original Use Private residence
(3) Architect or Builder Unknown	(4) Architectural Style Prairie Style
(5) Date of Construction 1907* *Wisconsin State Journal 12-3-1907, tax records	(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. (See attached bibliography)
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Betty Kurtenacker (Mrs. R. S.)	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) Theta Chapter of Alpha Xi Delta	
(3) Address 120 W. Gorham Street Kurtenacker 5218 Hedden Circle Middleton, WI 53562	(4) Telephone Number 251-3785 Kurtenacker 233-3759
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared March 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 Wootton house is a fine example of Prairie School architecture which survived campus unrest and several remodelings with its lovely leaded glass windows intact as well as the fine stairway in the entrance hall and the oak woodwork and built-in china cabinets in the dining room.

Frank Wootton and his family lived in the house until 1914. Wootton was a well-known Madison attorney and automobile dealer. Born in Madison on May 28, 1867, he lived in Madison his entire life. Following his graduation from the old Madison High School, he attended the University law school, receiving his degree in 1890. After 22 years of legal practice, Wootton, with Stanley C. Hanks and F. S. Brandenburg, founded the Madison Motor Car Co. in 1912, one of Madison's first automobile agencies. The agency was said to have received the 198th car manufactured by the Dodge Bros. Motor Co. Mr. Wootton continued his connection with the agency until 1933 when he returned to the practice of law. At the time of his death in 1937, he was chairman of the Dane County mediation board, a body appointed by circuit judges and the county board to mediate in mortgage foreclosure matters, and he was also justice of the peace for the second ward.

In 1914, Daniel Webster Mead purchased the house, in which he lived until his death in 1948. Mead was born in Fulton, New York in 1862. In 1884 he graduated from Cornell University with a degree in civil engineering. He became a professor of engineering at the university in 1904, a position which he held until 1932. In 1886 he married Katie Ross Gould, who died in 1944. Mead designed water works at Rockford, Illinois, and Fort Worth, Texas, and hydro-electric plants at Kilbourn and Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin. In 1914 he was a member of the Red Cross commission to China on the flood protection of the Huai River. He was also consulting engineer for the \$30,000,000 Miami conservancy district, 1913-1920, and a member of the Colorado River Board. In 1928 he was appointed by President Coolidge to pass on the Boulder Canyon project. Shortly before his death he studied pollution in the Madison area lakes at the request of Gov. Goodland. He was the author of numerous scholarly books and papers, including the first book about hydrology written in English. He was a founding partner in the engineering firm of Mead, Ward and Hunt.

After his death, the house was purchased by Sigma Nu fraternity, which remained in the house until the 1960's.

Bibliography

In order to prepare for this nomination, sorority members and alumni interviewed the following individuals:

Margaret Mead (Mrs. Harold) daughter-in-law of Daniel Webster Mead.

Margery Mead Niemi (Mrs. Allan), D.W. Mead's grand-daughter.

Dorothy and Franklin Jenks, D.W. Mead's grand daughter & her husband.

Bernard Young, owner of 120 W. Gorham when it was Solveig House.

John R. Shaw, advisor of Sigma Nu Fraternity at the time it bought 120 W. Gorham.

Lucien Hanks, Madison historian.

Dr. Alfred W. Swan, Madison clergyman who knew Frank Wooton and D.W. Mead

Frank Custer, Madison historian.

Gordon D. Orr, Jr., Architect.

Eugene Prine, Architect.

Other sources:

Tax records.

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation newsletter.

Capital Times, October 13, 1948.

Capital Times, July 16, 1937.