

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

Grimm Book Bindery

(2) Historic (if applicable)

Grimm Book Bindery

II. Location

(1) Street Address

454 W. Gilman Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

Fourth Aldermanic District

III. Classification

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

building

(2) Zoning District

C2

(3) Present Use

14-unit apartment building

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

(1) Name(s)

Grimm Book Bindery Apartments, c/o Mr. Randall P. Alexander

(2) Street Address

802 Regent Street
Madison, WI 53715

(3) Telephone Number

257-7506

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

(1) Parcel Number

0709-232-0215-8

(2) Legal Description

NE 28' of Lot 17, Well's Subdivision of
Block 9, University Addition

VI. Condition of Property

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

excellent

(2) Altered or Unaltered?

altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?

original site

(4) Wall Construction

brick faced concrete block

(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 Grimm Book Bindery sits on a commercial street in downtown Madison, Wisconsin. Designed by local architect Alvan Small, and constructed in 1926, the one-story red brick building with a raised basement is considerably smaller than many of its neighbors. It was built for the long-time Grimm family book binding business and is a plain commercial building featuring simple Neo-classical details such as a "classical" frontispiece; an applied metal cornice with large modillions; and large front facade windows topped with fanlights. The long, narrow building extends back to a neighboring street and the rear features a half-story loading dock. There is also a tall, plain red brick chimney visible from the rear. The original windows on the rear facade are six-over-six-light metal sashes, while on the north wall they are paired, six-over-six-light metal sashes. The south wall is of solid tan brick, probably built with the anticipation of new construction on that side at some time in the future. Basement openings are nine-light metal windows which are covered with decorative iron grills on the front facade. The main front windows are constructed in three sections: a lower eight-light metal casement, topped with a four-light metal casement, then topped with the fanlight. These windows have the appearance of the central portion of a large palladian window. The building has a flat tile roof, except where the front facade rises above the roofline. This raised facade is a steeply pitched metal gable section with stepped gable ends trimmed with concrete. The building's entrance has a simple concrete classical frontispiece with a complete pediment and brackets. A "lantern" light fixture extends from the center of the pediment. The wooden door has six panels and six lights and is decorated with a transom. Two bronze plaques inscribed, "Grimm Book Bindery Established 1874" are placed under each front window and have brick surrounds. A "colonial" style business sign is applied to the upper facade, completing the building's exterior details.

The interior is almost entirely unaltered, despite the firm's use of the structure for 60 years. The entrance leads up a staircase, decorated on each side with ceramic tile, either to the small office on the left, or to the binding room on the right. The small office is well lit by the large arched window and has its original wood floor, plain woodwork consisting of wooden wall trim and plate rail. The binding room is not plastered (exposing the brick walls) and has most of its original trim, doors, and wood floor. The basement, now used as a sewing room, has the original furnace, and the ceiling is exposed, revealing the early use of pre-stressed concrete for the first floor foundation.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Grimm Book Bindery	(2) Original Use book bindery
(3) Architect or Builder Alvan Small, architect	(4) Architectural Style neo-classical
(5) Date of Construction 1926	(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

- A. Custer, Frank, "Five Generations of Grimms Have Been Bookbinders Here," The Capital Times, May 8, 1962, "Green" Section, p. 1.
- B. Grimm, Gottlieb. Biographical Sketch. In, History of Dane County Wisconsin, Part 2 (Chicago: Western History Company, 1880), p. 994.
- C. Grimm, John J. Biographical Sketch. In, History of Dane County Biographical and Genealogical (Madison: Western History Association, 1906), pp. 340-341.
- D. Grimm, Henry G., Jr., Interview, July 25, 1985.
- E. Quaife, Milo. Wisconsin. Its History and Its People 1634-1924, Vol. IV. (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 284-285.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Carol Lohry Cartwright, Historic Preservation Consultant, and Katherine Rankin	
(2) Organization Represented (if any) owner	
(3) Address 4481A Hackett Road Whitewater, WI 53190	(4) Telephone Number 414-473-6820
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared 10/1/86 and 6/27/89	

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

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

The Grimm Book Bindery is significant for architecture because it is an attractive and unusual example of a small commercial building with Neo-classical details in Madison, and because it is the work of a locally important architect, Alvan Small.

The building was constructed in 1926 as the new facility for a successful family business with roots extending back to the earliest days of the development of commerce and industry in Madison. In 1850, Charles Weed brought Gottlieb Grimm, a recent German immigrant, to Madison as his bookbindery employee. Reportedly, Grimm bound the first book in Madison while under Weed's employ. In 1855, Grimm left Weed and with Daniel Maul opened the Madison New Bookbindery. The Panic of 1857 forced Maul and Grimm to sell their business to the publishers of the Wisconsin State Journal, but Grimm remained as a bookbinder in their employ. In 1860, B. W. Suckow established the Madison Book Bindery and employed Grimm as foreman. In 1874, Grimm became head of this firm and changed its name to the Grimm Book Bindery. The firm was located in the Journal Block for a significant number of years (until 1909), then in two other locations until 1926, the date of the Grimm Book Bindery building's construction. By this time, the second and third generation of the Grimm family firm had an expansive business, binding volumes for the state government, the university, other community libraries, city directories, student theses, and private libraries. Throughout their history, they were the only firm in Madison to exclusively bind books. Other firms advertised bookbinding, but only as an adjunct to their printing or other business activities. Throughout the years, the Grimm business maintained a high reputation for its quality work. Today, the family still owns and works in the business, binding books, theses, private libraries, and magazines and journals. Five generations of the Grimm family have been involved in the business since 1874. Their "new" building on Gilman Street was the culmination of the family's success and hard work and took advantage of a location between the University of Wisconsin campus and the State Capitol building from where much of its business was generated. While the business existed well before and beyond the 1926-1936 period of significance, the Grimm building is important because it was the only bulding expressly constructed for the business, and because the nature of the business has remained constant almost throughout the entire history of the firm.¹

Reported to be a replica of Benjamin Franklin's old Philadelphia print shop, the design of the Grimm Book Bindery building does seem to be a revival of earlier colonial/classical architectural forms as well as being an interpretation of the Neo-classical style, popular at the time of its construction date, 1926. The simplicity of the red brick building with the interesting raised facade suggests the Federal style of architecture, but the applied metal "classical" cornice, large arched front windows, and classical frontispiece are features belong to both the early twentieth century Neo-classical style as well as the earlier Federal style the building revives. The result is a good example of how a

well-executed architectural design can enhance even the smallest of commercial buildings, contributing to the architectural quality and diversity of Madison's business district. The level of preservation of the building is exceptionally high, considering its continuous use for a small industry for 60 years. There have been no alterations of the exterior and only minor alterations in the interior, resulting in a high level of integrity.

The Grimm Book Bindery is also significant because the design was the work of a locally important Madison architect--Alvan Small--who designed a number of high-quality buildings in Madison in both the Prairie and Period Revival styles. Small (1869-1932) began his architectural career with Conover and Porter in Madison, in their employ between 1887-1899. He spent the year 1899-1900 in Chicago, reportedly working for Louis Sullivan, then returned to Madison, working for Lew Porter from 1900-1907. Between 1907 and 1922, he practiced alone in Madison and between 1922 and 1925 was partnered with John J. Flad, who had worked for him in 1916 and 1917. It was at the end of this partnership that the design for the Grimm Book Bindery was done. Between 1927 and his death in 1932, Alvan Small practiced alone in Madison. Small is particularly noted for his modest Prairie style houses, and of this group, the Louis Hirsig house (1914), 1010 Sherman Avenue, Madison, has been listed on the National Register (1974). Another of Small's Prairie designs is a three-story commercial building, the E. W. Eddy Store Building, at 317 State Street, Madison (1914), only a few blocks from the quite different Grimm Book Bindery. The Eddy Building features Sullivanesque medallions and decorated capitals on a relatively plain brick facade. Small's emphasis in his career on Prairie designs does not mean, however, that the Grimm Book Bindery design is entirely an exception within the scope of his works. He also designed a number of buildings in the popular Period Revival styles, of which the Grimm Book Bindery is one example, being an interpretation of the Neo-classical Revival style. Two of Small's designs represent his work in the Tudor Revival style in Madison and are the Louis Perlman house (1924), 802 Drake St., and the J. C. Collins house (1925), 620 S. Brearly St., a "Cotswold Cottage" design. While the range of Small's architectural designs is wide, one common element is illustrated in all of his buildings: the overall quality of the design, regardless of the elaborateness or size of the building. The Grimm Book Bindery does stand out, though because of its diminutive size (Small's other commercial/institutional designs are significantly larger), and its high level of integrity. It is a good example of an architect's ability to create a pleasing design, while not necessarily a strictly academic one, for what is basically a modest industrial building. Because the Grimm Book Bindery, built for a long-established family business, represents a high-quality, attractive design by a locally important architect, which has maintained its 1926 date of construction appearance successfully, it is a significant element in Madison's architectural history.²

Landmark Nomination - the Grimm Book Bindery
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¹City Directories for Madison, Wisconsin, 1858-1955; Custer, Frank, "Five Generations of Grimms Have Been Bookbinders Here," The Capital Times, May 8, 1962, "Green Section", p. 1; Grimm, Gottlieb, Biographical Sketch, In History of Dane County Wisconsin, Part 2 (Chicago: Western History Company, 1880), p. 994; Grimm, Henry G., Jr., interview, July 25, 1985; Grimm, John J., Biographical Sketch, History of Dane County Biographical and Genealogical (Madison: Western History Association, 1906), pp. 340-341; Quaife, Milo, Wisconsin. Its History and its People 1634-1924, Vol. IV (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1924), pp. 284-285.

²Architectural Files, City of Madison Preservation Planner, Municipal Building, Madison, WI; Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI; Hirsig, Louis, house, National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1974, on file, Historic Preservation Office, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.