

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common

Wiedenbeck Apartments

(2) Historic (if applicable)

Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse

II. Location

(1) Street Address

619 W. Mifflin Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)

Ninth Aldermanic District

III. Classification

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

building

(2) Zoning District

C3

(3) Present Use

apartments

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

(1) Name(s)

Wiedenbeck Historic Prop,
c/o 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

0709-232-2909-5

(2) Legal Description

see attached

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 load-bearing

(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 Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is a large, U-shaped building consisting of three sections: the original two-story tan brick structure, a tan brick addition, and a modern steel-frame, steel-clad addition. The building sits on a fairly large lot just west of Madison's downtown commercial center. This area has a concentration of small industrial-commercial buildings with businesses approximately the same size as the Wiedenbeck company. The area is also close to one section of Madison's railroad corridor, an area originally bustling with railroad activities, but largely vacant now.

The original two-story tan brick structure on the site was built in 1907 and designed by the Madison architectural firm of Claude and Starck. It is a plain rectangular building with a very low-pitched, almost flat gable roof. The building has an industrial appearance; its only detail being segmental arches, sometimes multiple arches, over openings of the building. The building has a concrete foundation punctuated with small, square windows. Most of the original openings of the building have been retained and windows are tall, four-pane sash types decorated by multiple segmental arches. Doors are varied, some being simple industrial-type wooden doors. The only alteration to this section of the building is a brick and glass one-story addition over the main entrance at the northwest corner of the building.

The first addition to the main building is directly to the west at the south end of the original structure. It is almost totally obscured by a steel-frame loading dock which covers it. It was built in the 1910s and may also have been designed by Claude and Starck. The type of construction of the addition is similar to the main building. It is one-story in height, of tan brick, and has a concrete foundation, flat roof, and multi-paned metal and glass industrial-type windows. There is no decoration over the openings as seen in the original structure, though. Attached to the west facade of this addition and running north to form a U to the entire structure is a steel-frame, steel-clad addition built in 1963. This plain section of the building is non-contributing. There is a "courtyard" created by the U shape of the complex which is paved and used as a parking lot for the business.

The original Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse has an almost intact historic interior. On the first floor there is an office and counter area, along with warehouse space. Beyond the counter, which is located immediately after entering the building is the office area. The counter area and office area received their present appearance in the mid-1950s when the area was remodeled. There are paneled and plaster walls, lowered ceilings, and glass and paneled wall partitions in this area. The warehouse area of the first floor exposes the plain brick exterior walls and large wooden support beams of the original building. The second floor is almost entirely vacant and the original brick exterior walls and large wooden support beams are exposed as well. It is on this floor that the building reveals most of its original "warehouse" interior. The first addition has the same utilitarian appearance as the original building and its support beams and exterior walls are also revealed. Other than the steel-frame additions and the remodeling in the office and counter area, the building has been little altered during its history.

Landmark Nomination, 619 W. Mifflin Street
Legal Description

ORIGINAL PLAT. ALL OF LOTS 4, 5, & 6 BLK 24
ORIGINAL PLAT & PART OL 7 UNIV ADD DESC
AS FOL. BEG ON SE LN W. MIFFLIN ST WHERE
E SD LN INTER E LN OL 7, TH SELY ALG ELN
SD OL TO A PT WH IS 310 FT N OF SE COR
SD OL, TH NWLY ALG LN-THE EXT OF SD LN W
OULD INTER W LN SD OL AT PT 364 FT N OF
SW COR SD OL- TO PT OF INTER WITH SE LN
W. MIFFLIN ST, TH NELY ALG SD SE LN W.
MIFFLIN TO POB.

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

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Co.	(2) Original Use warehouse
(3) Architect or Builder Claude and Starck, architects	(4) Architectural Style vernacular
(5) Date of Construction 1907 and ca. 1915	(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

- Madison Past and Present, Wisconsin State Journal Semi-Centennial, 1902.
- Mollenhoff, David V. Madison A History of the Formative Years. Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982.
- Rankin, Katherine H. Addendum to Landmark Nomination for the Hoffmann-Kennedy Dairy Horse Barn, February 11, 1986. On file in the Madison Preservation Planner's Office, Municipal Building, Madison, WI.
- Wiedenbeck family papers. In possession of the Wiedenbeck family, Madison, WI.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title Carol Lohry Cartwright, consultant, and
 Katherine H. Rankin, secretary, Landmarks Commission

(2) Organization Represented (if any)
 owner

(3) Address
 Route 2, 4481A Hackett Road
 Whitewater, WI 53190

(4) Telephone Number
 414-473-6820

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared
 Oct. 7, 1986 and June 27, 1989

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

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

The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is significant for commerce because it was the main building for an important and unique business in Madison, the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Company, a long-time wholesale supplier of blacksmith and wagon-making materials to these industries. The building is one of a few in Madison that has a relationship to the horse transportation era and the important commercial activities that served the era. The company was also part of the important regional commercial trade that Madison developed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The building is also significant for architecture because it is an intact example of a turn of the century commercial-warehouse building designed by an important Madison architectural firm, Claude and Starck. It is one of the best examples of its type of construction in Madison.

Architecture

The original section and brick addition of the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is significant for architecture because it is one of the best and most intact early twentieth century commercial warehouse buildings in Madison. It has a simple, functional design with a high quality of construction similar to that of an industrial building instead of a commercial block that would be found on main street. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many utilitarian buildings of this type were built in Madison, some of wood and others of brick. Most have had significant remodeling or are no longer extant. The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse has the best integrity and best represents this type of construction.

The architects of the warehouse were Claude and Starck, one of the most important and prolific architectural firms in Madison. Between 1896 and 1929, Claude and Starck practiced in Madison. They were progressive architects who were influenced by Prairie School designers such as George Maher and Frank Lloyd Wright. Their most important work lies in their designs for homes and libraries in the midwest. They are particularly known for their fine work in the Prairie Style. Claude and Starck also designed commercial or other non-residential buildings as well, although these designs have not been as lauded as their Prairie houses. The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is not the best of Claude and Starck's work, but it is important as a relatively intact example of the firm's non-residential work. In particular, the exposed interior support system is of interest to those who would study the firm's structural support design concepts.

The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is not important as a fine example of a particular architectural style, rather it is significant because it is an intact example of a type of construction important to a community growing in its importance as a regional commercial center. The design met the needs of a specific business without frills but with a quality suitable to durability and function.

Commerce

The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is locally significant for commerce because it was the most impressive structure built for the firm and it is the only extant building associated with the firm that was an important and unique business in Madison. The firm was a specialty supplier of materials to blacksmiths and wagon-makers in the area and is one of only a few resources remaining in Madison to be directly related to the commercial activities surrounding the horse transportation era. The first was also a part of the development of Madison as an important commercial center in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

After working for the hardware firm of Sumner and Morris in Madison, Theodore E. Wiedenbeck, along with another Sumner and Morris employee, Charles W. Dobelin, began their own business called the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Company in 1896. The firm specialized in supplies for blacksmiths and wagon-makers. There were no other specialty firms of this type listed in the city directories prior to 1896. Wiedenbeck and Dobelin saw a need for a specialty business serving these important industries and they were the only firm to do so between 1896 and the 1920s. Wiedenbeck and Dobelin's firm rapidly became successful. By 1902 they had three warehouses serving their blacksmith and wagon-making customers. Their main building was located near their current complex in the railroad corridor off West Washington Avenue, a major thoroughfare at the turn of the century, and close to the extensive railroad connections important to their regional trade. In 1907 the firm incorporated their business and built the original section of this building. After construction was completed the firm consolidated their spread-out operations and between 1907 and the mid-1920s, Wiedenbeck-Dobelin achieved considerable success, building an addition to their original structure during the 1910s. By the mid-1920s, the automobile and related equipment began to permanently replace horses and wagons and blacksmiths and wagon-makers were less in demand. While remaining in the blacksmith and wagon-making supply business, Wiedenbeck-Dobelin branched out into the "heavy hardware" line. Heavy hardware supplies are used in the construction industry. The firm has continued in the heavy hardware business up to the present time.¹

There are two historic themes that apply to the commercial significance of the building. The first is the importance of horses and horse-drawn equipment to the economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is one of only a few extant resources connected to this era left in Madison today. The second theme is that of the development of Madison as an important commercial center during the period of significance and the development of specialty businesses meeting a regional need. The development of the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin company was indicative of Madison's growing role as a large trade center, large enough to support specialty businesses.

Horses and horse-drawn equipment were a vital part of the lifestyle and economy of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The dominance of the automobile and its related equipment has eliminated the horse and horse-related resources from the American scene other than for recreation. Because there are so few historic resources connected to the horse economy extant today, the ones remaining take on increased

significance. In Madison, only four other buildings have been identified as the most important and intact resources related to the historic horse and wagon era. These are the Wisconsin Wagon Company (602 Railroad Street), the Heitkamp wagon and blacksmith shop (811 Williamson Street), the city horse barn (202 North Blount), and the Hoffmann horsebarn (2049-1/2 Atwood Avenue). The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse can be added to this group of important extant horse-era buildings because the firm provided materials to two important horse-era industries: blacksmiths and wagonmakers. The success of the firm indicates that their specialty service of providing supplies to blacksmiths and wagon-makers was a significant and important commercial activity in the horse-era economy of Madison.

The Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is also an important extant example of Madison's growing commercial activity during the period of significance, and an important indicator of the type of activity taking place in the business community. During much of the nineteenth century, Madison attempted to find that one economic base that would make the community prosperous. By the late nineteenth century, most economic boosters reluctantly accepted the fact that Madison's economy would be a diverse one based on small industries, university and state government services, and commercial activities. And, during the 1880s and 1890s, Madison merchants and businesspersons worked to develop a successful regional commercial trade. Madison's good railroad connections during this era helped foster this regional trade. As Madison drew more trade, its businesses were able to grow and specialize. There were enough customers to spread out merchandize generally found in small town general stores to several businesses. Then each business could expand the specialty line to include more and diverse merchandize, further enhancing the commercial draw to the community. This is exactly what Wiedenbeck and Dobelin did in 1896. No doubt many blacksmith and wagon-making supplies were available at retail prices from hardware stores. Wiedenbeck and Dobelin worked for a large hardware store before they began their own business. By expanding one specific line of merchandize and offering it at wholesale prices, Wiedenbeck and Dobelin were able to grow and develop into an important business, serving a wide range of clients. Their business was supplemented by two other related activities in Madison going on at the time they developed their firm. Beginning in 1890 a thriving horse trading market was held in Madison. The people this market brought to Madison, no doubt, were the type of customer that would possibly make use of Wiedenbeck and Dobelin's services. Also in the 1890s, Madison had a boom in wholesale and retail implement distribution activity; again, attracting a customer that might likely buy from Wiedenbeck and Dobelin. In any event, the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin firm represents the wide range of business services available to customers coming to Madison to engage in trade. It also represents the increasing specialization of commercial activity going on in Madison during the period of significance.³

The original section of the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse and the first addition to this building have maintained their original appearance over the years despite the change in the firm's business activities. The interior of the building is much as it would have been in the early twentieth century. Because of the significant historical associations of the firm, the Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse is an important historical resource in Madison's commercial history.

Notes:

¹ Madison City directories, 1886-1937, Library, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison; Madison Past and Present, Wisconsin State Journal Semi-Centennial, 1902, p. 223; Wiedenbeck-Dobelin Warehouse file, Madison Preservation Planner's Office, Municipal Building, Madison, WI; Wiedenbeck family papers in possession of family, Madison, WI.

² Katherine H. Rankin, Addendum to Landmark Nomination for the Hoffmann-Kennedy Dairy Horse Barn, February 11, 1986. On file in the Madison Preservation Planner's Office, Municipal Building, Madison, WI.

³ David V. Mollenhoff, Madison A History of the Formative Years, Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982, pp. 178-180.