

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common Robert M. and Belle Case LaFollette house

(2) Historic (if applicable) Peter and Cleantha Parkinson house

II. Location

(1) Street Address
314 S. Broom Street

(2) Aldermanic District
Fourth District

III. Classification

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

(2) Zoning District
R6

(3) Present Use
Two-unit residence

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

(1) Name(s) Jerome and Carol Mullins

(2) Street Address
401 N. Carroll Street
Madison, WI 53703

(3) Telephone Number
608-257-0681

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

(1) Parcel Number
0709-231-3003-6

(2) Legal Description
SE 59' of the NW 193' Lot 9, Block 47,
Original Plat

VI. Condition of Property

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

(2) Altered or Unaltered?
Altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?
Original

(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:

This house was built in 1854 by Peter and Cleantha Parkinson. When the Parkinsons owned the property, the house sat alone on two lots extending from Wilson Street to the lake. Mr. Parkinson maintained an apple orchard on the property and neighboring houses on the block were similarly gracious and imposing. Bob La Follette bought the house in 1881 to house his family, which included his mother, his sister, Jo, and her new husband, Robert Siebecker. Belle La Follette moved in the night of their wedding on December 31, 1881. She remembered the house as a "dignified old residence" with "good architecture, high ceilings, French windows and marble mantels".¹ The first task when spring arrived was to spruce up the grounds, which had become extensively overgrown since the Parkinsons had not lived in the house for many years. A barn was built across Wilson Street (gone) to serve the La Follette and Siebecker family cow and horses.

In 1883, the lot next door was split off of the property for the Siebeckers. In Belle La Follette's biography of her husband, she noted that in² that year the La Follette house was "made over. . . into two separate homes".² Exactly how this was accomplished is a mystery, but old bird's-eye maps show that the general appearance of the old house remained intact.³

The house is a two-story, wood frame structure in the Italianate style with a hipped roof and a two-story side wing to the west. The front facade, which faces Wilson Street, has two windows and an entrance vestibule (dating to the La Follette era)⁴ on the first floor and two windows symmetrically placed on the second floor. The side facade, facing Broom Street, features a large picture window with transom, added during the La Follette's tenure.⁵ Above, a double-hung window was converted, probably in 1967, into a second exit door with a simple wood jump basket. To the left, the rear corner of the house is graced by a two-story bay window. The bay is trimmed with carved woodwork over the windows on the first and second floor and cornice brackets on both the first and second story cornices. Paired brackets also trim the main frieze on the house. A hipped roof over the bay was removed sometime in the twentieth century.

The siding on the house appears to be the original clapboards. The original porch extended across the Wilson Street side of the house and was trimmed with delicate Victorian posts and simple carved woodwork.⁶ Sometime in the early 20th century (shortly after 1902), the porch was replaced with one that wraps around the Wilson Street and Broom Street sides of the house. The porch posts are square with simple classical bases and capitals.

The La Follettes sold the house in 1906. After the La Follettes and Siebeckers moved out of the neighborhood, their old lots were subdivided and more houses and apartment buildings constructed both behind and in front of them, dating to the 1910s and 1920s. The La Follette house was converted from a single-family residence to a two-unit in 1967.⁷

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

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

¹Belle Case La Follette, Robert M. La Follette, v. I., P. 54.

²Ibid.

³1867 and 1885 bird's-eye maps of the City of Madison.

⁴Photo of house in Madison Past and Present, 1902, p. 27.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Building permit and City directories.

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

VII. Significance

<p>(1) Original Owner Peter and Cleantha Parkinson</p>	<p>(2) Original Use Single-family residence</p>
<p>(3) Architect or Builder Unknown</p>	<p>(4) Architectural Style Italianate</p>
<p>(5) Date of Construction 1854</p>	<p>(6) Indigenous Materials Used None</p>

(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. (Please see continuation sheet)
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

<p>(1) Name and Title Julie Johnson and Katherine H. Rankin</p>	
<p>(2) Organization Represented (if any) Madison Area Technical College - Historic Preservation class and City of Madison</p>	
<p>(3) Address 319 2nd Avenue New Glarus, WI 53574</p>	<p>(4) Telephone Number 257-2807 and 266-6552</p>

and P. O. Box 2985, Madison, WI 53701
(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared
 11-29-89 and 4-4-90

La Follette House Landmark Nomination
Bibliographic References

"Belle Case La Follette", Capital Times, Aug. 8, 1931.

Biographical Review of Dane County, Wisconsin, Chicago: Biographical Review Publishing Company, 1893, pp. 575-576.

"Boom Mrs. La Follette for Husband's Seat in Senate," Wisconsin State Journal, June 19, 1925.

Building permits.

Burdick, Mary Livingston, "Wilson St. Home was Scene of Earliest La Follette Triumphs", Capital Times, Aug. 25, 1931.

City directories.

"'The Counselor' Succumbs", Milwaukee Journal, Aug. 19, 1931.

Custer, Frank, "Canadians Buy Early La Follette Home Here: Planning Restoration", Capital Times, Dec. 8, 1962.

_____, "History Made in Old La Follette Broom Street Home", Capital Times, Aug. 20, 1960.

Dane County Register of Deeds, mortgage for purchase of house on W. Wilson Street, Oct. 24, 1881.

"End Comes at 1:21; Family at Bedside", Wisconsin State Journal, June 18, 1925.

Freeman, Lucy, Sheery La Follette and George A. Zabriskie, Belle, New York: Beaufort Books, 1986.

History of Dane County, Biographical and Geneological, Madison: Western Historical Assn., 1906, pp. 533-535.

History of Lafayette County, Chicago: Western Historical Company, 1881, pp. 634-635.

La Follette, Belle Case, Robert M. La Follette, New York: MacMillan Co., 1953.

La Follette, Philip Fox, Adventure in Politics, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1970.

"A Leader of Men", Wisconsin State Journal, June 18, 1925.

Madison Past and Present, Madison: Wisconsin State Journal, 1902, pp. 27, 50.

Mollenhoff, David, Madison: A History of the Formative Years, Dubuque: Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, 1982, pp. 296, 414, 263.

continued

Nesbit, Robert C., Wisconsin, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1973.

"Old Days on West Wilson Street", Capital Times, December 15, 1922.

Schroer, Blanche Higgins, "Robert M. La Follette House", National Historic Landmark nomination, National Park Service, 1976.

"Senator's Widow Succumbs after Hasty Operation", Milwaukee Sentinel, Aug. 19, 1931.

"Simple Service Conducted for Mrs. La Follette", Milwaukee Journal, Aug. 21, 1931.

State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Robert M. La Follette: Guide to a Microfilm Edition", pp. 8-11.

Tax records.

Wisconsin Necrology, v. VI, newspaper obituary for Peter Parkinson, newspaper name obscured, dated June 2, 1895.

Wisconsin State Journal, Dec. 27, 1883; Dec. 7, 1889; June 6, 1895.

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

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

The house at 314 S. Broom Street is historically significant for its association with Robert M. "Fighting Bob" La Follette, Sr., whom the State Historical Society has called "Wisconsin's outstanding political leader".¹ It is also significant for its association with Belle Case La Follette, a leader in the Progressive, peace and womens' movements.

The house was built in 1854 for Peter and Cleantha Parkinson. Peter Parkinson was born in Tennessee in 1813. He was one of the first farming settlers in Wisconsin, arriving in the Town of Fayette in Lafayette County ca. 1832. He owned this farm for the rest of his life. In 1847 he married his second wife, Cleantha S. Welch, who was from Madison. They moved to Madison ca. 1853 and lived in a smaller house on this site before erecting this one in 1854. Parkinson served in the state legislature in 1854. Cleantha died in 1862. Shortly thereafter Parkinson returned to his farm in Lafayette County, where he died in 1895. The house in Madison remained in Parkinson's ownership until Robert M. La Follette, Sr., purchased it in 1881.

La Follette was born in a log cabin (gone) in the Town of Primrose, Dane County, in 1855. In 1873, he, his mother, and his sister, Jo, moved to Madison so that La Follette could attend college preparatory classes and then the University of Wisconsin. The family lived in several different rental houses during this time. La Follette graduated from the university in June of 1879. By that time, his name was already quite well known in the city, however, because he was editor and joint owner of the University press and because he had won the Inter-State Oratorical Contest in May of that year. Judging from the congratulatory celebrations that ensued, including a brass band, a procession of hundreds of carriages, an evening celebration at the state capitol and a separate day-long celebration at Beloit College, winning the oratorical contest must have been a greater collegiate achievement than the Badgers winning the Rose Bowl. As soon as he graduated, La Follette was already being asked to give addresses and readings in public places and private homes throughout the Madison area. Meanwhile, he was studying for the bar and serving as an assistant to local attorney Robert M. Bashford. He was admitted to the bar in 1880. Shortly after receiving his license, La Follette ran for district attorney. Despite the fact that he was not politically connected, La Follette won the race, in part because of his previously-earned name recognition and in part because he tirelessly rode door-to-door introducing himself to the citizenry.

The district attorneyship was a part-time position. Because of his early success in the office, La Follette soon had more private practice work than he could handle. In the Fall of 1881, he took on his brother-in-law, Robert Siebecker, as his partner. In December of 1881, he married Belle Case and brought her home to the house he had recently purchased on West Wilson Street. In the next year, they had their first child, Fola, and the following year, Belle began the study of law. In 1885 she became the first woman graduate of the University of Wisconsin Law School.

In 1884, Bob decided to run for the U. S. House of Representatives. Despite the fact that the local political machine, run by Boss Keyes, actively campaigned against him, La Follette won the Republican nomination and was

elected to congress. For six years he served in the House, during which time he became a national figure in the Republican party through his work on the Mills and McKinley tariff bill among other things. It was in these years also that La Follette came to realize that many legislative decisions were based on the pursuit of private interests to the detriment of the public interest, and he openly clashed with some of most senior members of congress who had ties with lumbering, meat-packing, railroad and shipping interests. In 1890, due at least in part to the backlash against Republicans for their part in the Bennett law, La Follette lost his fourth bid for the House and returned to Madison to practice law.

In 1891, a significant event occurred that was to have a profound effect on La Follette. In September of that year, he was asked by Sen. Sawyer, the most powerful political boss in the state, to speak to him privately in Milwaukee. The topic of the conversation turned out to be a case to be heard by La Follette's brother-in-law, Siebecker, who had become a circuit court judge. Sawyer stood to lose hundreds of thousands of dollars if the judgment went against his side. Since it was a private conversation, the exact content of it will forever be unknown, but La Follette came out of the meeting convinced that he had been offered a bribe. After Siebecker tried to quietly withdraw from the case, the story became public and a violent storm erupted. It was this controversy that caused La Follette to begin his lifelong campaign against corruption and special privilege.

La Follette began by assisting other anti-machine politicians, such as Governor Hoard, Nils Haugen, Albert Hall and local judge Anthony Donovan to get elected and to forward reform legislative measures. Among Republican circles, La Follette was an ostracized outcast, but presidential nominee McKinley remained a friend and stayed at the West Wilson Street house when he came to speak at the Monona Lake Assembly. Theodore Roosevelt also was received in the West Wilson Street home in 1893. By 1896, La Follette had regained some of his standing in the Republican party. In that year, he was elected a delegate to the National Convention, at which he gave a memorable nomination speech. In the fall of that year, he announced his candidacy for governor, but he lost the nomination to a machine candidate. The loss of the nomination caused

La Follette to begin a new crusade, the direct nomination of candidates by the voters. In Chicago in 1897, he delivered one of his most famous speeches, "The Menace of the Machine", which advocated the direct primary election. Four hundred thousand copies of the speech were distributed throughout the state. In that year, La Follette began a series of county fair speeches throughout the state for his cause. In the 1898 state convention, La Follette again lost his bid for governor to the machine candidate, but the platform of the party contained many progressive reforms, and the succeeding legislature passed several progressive acts. By the year 1900, the success of these reforms and La Follette's rising popularity among the voters made it clear that the Republicans could not choose anyone else as their candidate. La Follette won the general election by an unprecedented plurality, and was sworn in as governor in January, 1901.

By the time his family moved into the Executive Residence on Gilman Street, three more children had been born, future U. S. Senator Robert M. Jr. (1895), future Governor Philip Fox (1897) and Mary (1899). The old house on Wilson Street was rented out for four years until it was sold in 1905 to finance the purchase of the farm in Maple Bluff.

If La Follette had died on the day he took office, he would still have been a leading figure in the history of Wisconsin politics. His biography has been given in some detail up to this point to demonstrate that he was truly a significant figure in local, state, and national politics during the time that he lived in the West Wilson Street house. As it was, La Follette went on to be a leader in the service of the public interest for another 24 years.

As governor, La Follette oversaw the establishment of the direct primary in Wisconsin. He was influential in railroad anti-lobby, corrupt practices, civil service, workmen's compensation and insurance regulation reforms, and was a leader in the development of the "Wisconsin Idea". In 1905, he was elected to the U. S. Senate, where he furthered his progressive causes. In 1907, he was a candidate for the Republican nomination for President, but he did not become the party's choice. In 1909, he founded La Follette's Magazine, a major national organ for progressive causes. In 1911, he again was nominated for President, but health problems caused him to lose the nomination once again. He also ran unsuccessfully for President in 1916 in order to bring his Progressive reform platform to the people. At the time, he was also trying to work toward a peaceful resolution to the war in Europe. In 1917, he was one of six senators to vote against the declaration of war, for which he was denounced from almost all quarters. The Senate conducted an investigation of alleged disloyalty and after nearly two years, finally cleared him of all charges. Despite his loss of popularity during the war, he was re-elected to the Senate in 1922, instigated the famous Teapot Dome investigation and campaigned again for the Presidency on an Independent ticket in 1924. He received 5,000,000 votes, but the only state he carried was Wisconsin. On June 18, 1925, he died at the age of 70. He was so popular that the public immediately called for his wife, Belle, to take his seat. If she had done so, she would have been the first woman to serve in the Senate. Instead, at her suggestion, their son, Robert M., Jr., was appointed to complete his father's term.

The house at 314 S. Broom Street is also historically significant for its association with Belle Case La Follette. Belle Case was born in Juneau County in 1859 and grew up on a farm in Baraboo. Graduating from the University of Wisconsin in the same year as her future husband, she won the Lewis award for the best commencement oration. After teaching school for two years, she married Bob and moved to Madison in 1881. An early indication of her progressive nature was that she eliminated the word "obey" from her marriage vows! She took an active interest in the legal books that Bob was reading and soon decided to enter the UW Law School, from which she graduated as the first woman graduate in 1885. In the early years, she often assisted her husband in legal research and drafting briefs. When he was a member of the House, she served as his clerk and secretary. At the same time, she was an accomplished writer and contributed many articles for publication in newspapers and magazines. In Madison, she was the organizer and inspiration for the local chapter of the Emily Bishop League, a physical education organization that stressed healthy eating and uncorsetted fashions.

As the years went by, Belle became more and more active in campaigning for her husband. In her speeches, she often combined themes of support for her husband's candidacy with progressive reform issues and women's suffrage. She has been credited with making Wisconsin the first state in the nation to bring

equal suffrage to the Republican national convention.² When La Follette's Magazine was founded in 1909, Belle became editor of the "Home and Education" section and wrote hundreds of articles for the publication. After her husband died, she took over the management of the magazine.

A Wisconsin State Journal article reporting on the call for her to run for Senate described her significance as follows:

Mrs. La Follette is an experienced politician. She has always had an active part in the senator's campaigning and policies and is a long-practiced speaker. . .She also has written much of public questions and has been a national leader in the American woman's movement.³

In addition to her public career, she also gave birth to four children in the house on West Wilson Street, one of whom became governor of the state and one of whom became a long-term U. S. senator. There is no doubt that Belle Case La Follette was one of Wisconsin's most historic figures.

¹State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Robert M. La Follette: Guide to a Microfilm Edition, p. 8.

²Capital Times, August 19, 1931.

³Wisconsin State Journal, June 19, 1925.