

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

Name of Building or Site

Common

Historic (if applicable)

Henry C. and Minnie Wolff House

Location

Street Address

6 South Prospect Avenue

Aldermanic District

Tenth

Classification

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

House

Zoning District

R2 His - UH

Present Use

Single-family Residence

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

Name(s)

Robert Horowitz and Susan B. King

Street Address

6 South Prospect Avenue

Telephone Number

259-2610 (Horowitz)
258-8444 (King)

Legal Description (available at City Assessor's office)

Parcel Number

0709-233-0424-4

Legal Description

Lots 1 and 2, Block 9, West Lawn

Condition of Property

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

Excellent

Altered or Unaltered? Exterior unaltered except for addition of terrace in 1979, and carport in 1989; kitchen remodeled in 1980.

Moved or Original Site?

Original Site

Wall Construction

Stucco and brick on wood frame.

City of Madison Landmarks Commission
LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance.

The Henry C. and Minnie Wolff House is a prairie style single-family, two-story residence with stucco walls, a brick base, and wood trim. The house was designed by Alvan E. Small and was built in 1909. Photographs of the house have been exhibited at Prairie School shows at the Elvehjem Museum of Art and the Minnesota Museum of Art (1982).

The principal facade faces east to Prospect Avenue. The north facade features a pair of tall prairie style stained glass leaded windows with a geometric pattern of green, gold, white and clear panes. The windows are placed between the first and second story and light the stairs.

Interior details include a massive brick fireplace in the living room and a china cabinet in the dining room with leaded windows in a geometric pattern of clear and white panes.

The main mass of the house is in the form of a Greek cross. The cross reappears in small openings in the brick at the base of the house. The cruciform plan allows light to enter almost every room from two and sometimes three sides. On the first floor, a covered entrance is inset in the northeast corner of the cross. Porches are inset in the southeast and southwest corners. On the second floor, a sleeping porch is inset in the southwest corner.

The main mass of the house is constructed of stucco, now painted yellow. Wood trim, now painted brown, includes a belt course at the second floor level and vertical boards at regular intervals. The entire house had been painted white by previous owners. The present colors were selected by the present owners based on Frank Lloyd Wright's Gilmore House (120 Ely Place).

Other than the colors, the only exterior changes to the house have been the addition of a terrace (1979) and a carport (1989) (both designed to complement the original house) and reroofing. The terrace was designed by William Tishler as part of a complete landscape plan. The carport, built in connection with the restoration of the original garage, was approved by the Landmarks Commission. The architect of the carport was Robert Sieger.

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

Original Owner Henry C. and Minnie Rowley Wolff	Original Use Single-family Home
Architect or Builder Alvan E. Small, Architect	Architectural Style Prairie
Date of Construction 1909	Indigenous Materials Used

List of Bibliographical References Used

Written statement of Florence Wolff Hyde (daughter of original owners), November 17, 1989, based on interview conducted by Robert Horowitz and Susan B. King.

Prairie School Architecture in Minnesota, Iowa, Wisconsin (Minnesota Museum of Art, 1982)

Brooks, H. Allen, The Prairie School: Frank Lloyd Wright and his Midwest Contemporaries, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Capital Times, January 18, 1932 (obituary of Small).

City Directories.

Kilgour, Martha, "Lew F. Porter, Architect," Journal of Historic Madison, Inc. 1976, p.30.

Orr, Gordon D., Jr., FAIA, conversations with Katherine Rankin, 1979-1987.

_____, Prairie Architecture in Madison, Wis., Influences, Forms and Form Givers, Madison: University of Wisconsin Master's Thesis, 1971.

_____, National Register nomination form for the Louis Hirsig house, Madison, Dane Co., Wisconsin.

Quaife, Milo M., Wisconsin, Its Story and its People, 1634-1924, Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publ. Co., 1924, v. IV, pp. 284-285 (biography of Small).

Tax records.

Form Prepared By:

Name and Title

Robert Horowitz and Susan B. King, and Katherine Rankin

Organization Represented (if any)

Owners and Preservation Planner, DPD

Address

6 South Prospect Avenue
Madison, WI 53705

Telephone Number

259-2610 (Horowitz)
258-8444 (King)

Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

August 1, 1991 and October 16, 1991

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

Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria:

The Wolff House is significant because it is an excellent example of prairie style architecture adapted to the compact form of a medium sized house. The Wolff House is in the University Heights Historic District, located near Louis Sullivan's Bradley House and Frank Lloyd Wright's Gilmore House. It exemplifies the influence of these architectural leaders on Madison architects of the period.

The architect of the Wolff house, Alvan Small, was born in Sun Prairie on February 23, 1869. His father was a blacksmith of Yankee stock. In 1887 after high school graduation, Small entered the firm of Conover and Porter in Madison as an apprentice. He worked for Conover and Porter until 1899, when he went to Chicago for a year to study. Small worked for Louis Sullivan while in Chicago. In 1900 Small returned to Madison to become the partner of Lew F. Porter. The firm used Porter's name. In 1906 Porter left to become supervisor of construction for the new state capitol building and Small continued the office under his name. In 1922 John J. Flad, Sr. joined the firm as a partner and the firm became known as Small and Flad (sometimes also called Flad and Small or Flad and Associates). In 1927 Flad left and Small practiced alone until his death in 1932. From 1900 to 1932 the office was located in the Ellsworth block, 23 N. Pinckney Street.

In 1905 Small married Katherine Greig. She died in 1916, leaving no children. From 1910 until 1932 Small lived in a prairie style bungalow of his own design at 2208 Rowley.

One of the finest designs attributed to Small is the Randall School, which was completed while Small was working for Porter (1906). He also designed several medium sized prairie style houses, which are distinguished by a superb sense of proportion. The designs quite often have an abstract quality created by expanses of flat, stuccoed wall surfaces and small windows, the trim of which projects only slightly beyond the wall surface. Most houses are devoid of decorative trim, relying solely on the geometric shapes and the relationships between fenestration and wall for their artistic effect. Small did execute a few period revival designs, which, although trimmed with colonial, Tudor or Mediterranean details, share the abstract quality and refined proportions of his prairie style houses. According to Orr, Small was somewhat of a prairie style purist and declined some requests to design period revival houses, sending the clients to Frank Riley, instead.

Small created some very nice Chicago style non-residential designs as well. These include the Nakoma School, the Reedsburg Training School, the

Morris-Olds buildings, the Klueter Company warehouse and the Eddy store building. According to Orr, Small was sickly in the years before his death, which may account for the fact that no designs so far have been attributed to Small after 1926.

The Wolff house is unusual among the works of Alvan Small because it is cruciform in plan. Nearly all of Small's residential commissions were much simpler in massing; most of which, like the Hirsig house (Madison Landmark #30) have gable roofs. The symmetrical design of the Wolff house, with its central, two-story pavilion flanked on each side by one-story porches, gives it an imposing formality and monumentality that most of Small's other houses do not share, even though many of them are in reality about the same size. The symmetrical grouping of masses, held together by low, hipped roofs with wide overhangs, was a popular design scheme for later Prairie School houses in Chicago and other large cities, but was less often used in Madison.

The Wolff house shares with Small's other residential designs, however, an extreme simplicity of exterior decoration, with plain stuccoed wall surfaces, trimmed only by a few vertical and horizontal boards, and a lack of reveal of the windows, putting them in plane with the walls. This use of flat surfaces makes the beauty of the proportions of the design all the more evident. This modernity, coupled with the symmetrical massing and the wide horizontal sweeps of roof, make the Wolff house an excellent example of the prairie style and one of the finest houses of its type in Madison.