

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

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**Name of Building or Site**

*Common Name:* Doris House  
*Historic Name:* James Doris Farmhouse

**Location**

*Street Address:* 605 W. Main St.  
*Aldermanic District:* District 4

**Classification**

*Type of Property:* Office  
*Zoning District:* PUDSIP  
*Present Use:* Office

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

*Name(s):* PVILLE-78-2 LLC  
*Street Address:* Registered Agent:  
Steven L. Jacobson (Fairway Mortgage)  
771 Lois Drive  
Sun Prairie, WI 53590

**Legal Description (available at City Assessor's Office or online at [cityofmadison.org](http://cityofmadison.org))**

*Parcel Number:* 0709-234-11759  
*Legal Description:* 4TH WARD LOFTS CONDOMINIUM, UNIT 605 & A %  
INTEREST AS DECLARED AND RECORDED IN DANE  
COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS AS DOCUMENT NO  
3851807.

**Condition of Property**

*Physical Condition:* Excellent  
*Altered or Unaltered:* Altered  
*Moved or Original Site:* Original  
*Wall Construction:* Brick

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

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**Historical Data**

*Original Owner:* James Doris Family (Original Deed: John Doris and Bridget, his wife, James Doris, John Doris Jr., and Patrick Doris)

*Original Use:* Residence

*Architect:* Unknown

*Builder:* Unknown (perhaps John Doris, mason)

*Architectural Style:* Greek Revival

*Date of Construction:* 1857-1858

Indigenous Materials Used: Unknown

**List of Bibliographical References Used**

*City and State Archives, Newspapers:*

Rankin, K., and T. Heggland, Unpublished manuscript on Madison architectural styles. No date, pp. 2-4.

Rankin, K. and T. Heggland. Madison Intensive Survey Historic Themes. For the City of Madison and the Historic Preservation Division of the State of Wisconsin Historical Society. Unpublished manuscript, 1994.

Madison City Directories, various companies, 1858-1879.

Noll, Henry. "John Doris Home, Built 96 Years Ago, Still A West Main Street Landmark". *Wisconsin State Journal* - 4/18/1948.

*Periodicals, pamphlets, and web sites:*

Housing redevelopment Case Studies Dane County, Wisconsin: 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Lofts in the city of Madison. Dane County Better Urban Infill Development Program.  
<http://www.co.dane.wi.us/plandev/build/>.

McGrath Associates Current Projects: The Doris House.  
[http://www.mcgrathprojects.com/current\\_projects/doris\\_house/dorishousemain.htm](http://www.mcgrathprojects.com/current_projects/doris_house/dorishousemain.htm)

Glen, Sheridan. Downtown Dialogue, Special Edition: Working, Playing Living. Capitol Neighborhoods, Inc. [www.capitolneighborhoods.org/pdf/specialedition.pdf](http://www.capitolneighborhoods.org/pdf/specialedition.pdf) .

Peterson, Jessica. "Basset-Area Developments Discussed". *The Badger Herald*, 4/11/2002.

**Books:**

McAlester, Virginia and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Knopf, 1984.

Mollenhoff, David V. *Madison: A History of the Formative Years*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003.

**Form Prepared By:**

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*Organization Represented:* Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

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Madison, WI 53701-0296

*Telephone Number:* 251-2547

*Date Form Was Prepared:* February 10, 2006

## Landmarks Commission

### LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

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#### Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance

The Doris House is located at 603-605 W. Main Street, on the corner of W. Main and Bedford Streets. Because of the 45-degree angle of the street grid on Madison's isthmus, the house is oriented on a northeast-southwest axis.

The Doris House is a two-story, side-gabled example of the Greek Revival style that was popular both nationally and locally for civic and residential buildings from about 1830 to 1860.

Today the house has a simple rectangular plan with a small cross-gabled addition on its southwest end. The building has undergone external and internal modifications since its construction in 1857 but still displays much of its historic form.

The current structure represents several building episodes. The original 1857 structure was clad in deep red brick, and today can be differentiated from an addition built in 1930 using a lighter, cream colored brick. The original structure has solid brick structural walls, while the 1930 addition has wood stud walls faced with brick. The addition is one bay wide and two bays deep, and the spacing of the windows does not mirror the original portion of the house. There are no windows in the gable of this addition. An exterior stair tower was constructed on the south side of this addition shortly after the addition, and later clad in brick. The stair tower is one bay wide with a gable perpendicular to that of the main house. It is topped by a roof with a pitch similar to the original section. These two additions are extant.

The building sits on a masonry foundation with a full basement. The stonework along the exterior of the foundation was added in the late 1880s when the street was lowered to accommodate railroad tracks. It has the moderately pitched side-gabled roof typical of the Greek Revival style, and features a simple wood cornice with a wooden frieze and architrave below. The cornice, frieze and architrave all return on the gable ends of the roof. As is typical of Greek Revival Stagecoach Inn design, it is five bays wide and two bays deep. Two half-round, three-part windows pierce the east gable. The west gable features only one half-round window – a unique aspect of this house's construction that was incorporated into and highlighted by the interior restoration in 2002. An entry porch, still extant, stretched the length of the facade. It is currently not roofed. The height of the original porch and the form of its support columns has not been determined.

In 2002 the Doris house underwent a sensitive renovation that replaced deteriorating historical elements with sympathetic replacements. A gambrel-roofed addition was removed because of severe structural shortcomings. The date of this addition is uncertain. It appears to be present as early as 1867 in a bird's eye view of Madison. An appraisal in 1934 recorded a 5' x 5' porch and a 6' x 12' porch. One of these was on the rear of the house and has since been removed and a new porch constructed.

The main entrance has been altered. Instead of the traditional single opening common in Greek Revival homes, there are two separate, side-by-side entrances. The more westerly door is very likely a remnant alteration from the time the house was divided into rental units, and was a window opening in the original house. According to an 1867 bird's eye map, the original house had one central doorway. The entrances lack the typical framing or transom light panels often associated with Greek Revival entrances. Modern doors are present. The spacing of the window openings is unaltered from the original design as are the flat-arched lintels, and header brick sills. The glass in the windows was fully replaced during the recent renovation with replicas of a 12-pane style common in masonry examples of Greek Revival houses. The renovation also provided a new cedar-shingled roof, copper drains and downspouts, and exterior lighting. The brick veneer on the south face of the house was also renovated and refinished. The interior was extensively modernized, although original brickwork and timbers were incorporated into the modern interior. The brick stair tower was incorporated as space for bathrooms.

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

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**Significance of Nominated Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria**

The Doris House is being nominated under criteria 1 and 3 of the City of Madison Landmarks Ordinance (33.01). It is a representative example of a Greek Revival style house built in the five-bay-wide, two-bay-deep "Stagecoach Inn" mode, and it is a significant remnant of the mid-nineteenth-century development of the Bassett Neighborhood.

*Criterion 1*

The Doris House is a remnant of the social development of the Bassett neighborhood. Besides being one of the earliest homes built in the Bassett neighborhood the Doris House is one of the few remaining examples of an Irish homestead whose owners opened their doors to visitors and residents of the growing Bassett Neighborhood. Railroad hotels were once well represented in Madison but most of them are now gone. In the West Depot area only one other building that once housed a railroad hotel is intact.

The Doris House was built at a time when the Bassett district was experiencing an influx of industrial and construction workers and their families, primarily Irish, fueled by the developing railroad system. John Doris Sr., originally of County Longford, Ireland, moved to Madison from Providence, Rhode Island with his wife and children in the mid-1850s. He and his sons built the family's homestead two blocks from the west railroad depot, where inbound passenger and freight trains provided a steady stream of workers, visitors and immigrants to the area.

It is likely that the Doris House served as a boarding house or hotel for a period (ca. 1858-1870) in its early history, as did several Irish homes in the 4<sup>th</sup> ward. Two bachelor sons, John Jr. and James, are listed as residents of the house from the 1850s until their deaths around 1900. The 1860 census listed James Doris as a hotelkeeper and an 1866 city directory listed a J. Doris as a hotelkeeper at the corner of Main and Bedford. Another son, Thomas, also ran the *Providence House* Hotel located in the 500 block of West Main. Between 1858 and 1873 Doris family members were associated with other hotels, boarding houses, saloons, and grocery stores in the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward.

From the time of the 1870 census onward, the Doris House is described only as a residence and John Jr. and James Doris are listed as farmers. They farmed large gardens on lots surrounding the Doris House and ran a farmer's market and a small truck farming operation. After the two brothers passed away, the house remained the property of two related families – the Dorises and the McNamaras – for the majority of its history. It was also home to at least one long-term tenant family – the Olsen Family. The community influence of the Doris House and its owners continued for many decades. Throughout the first half of the twentieth century the Dorises and McNamaras continued to own property and run businesses in the 4<sup>th</sup> ward. They were also supporters of St. Raphael's congregation. In fact, in 1953 when then owner, Julia McNamara, passed away she willed the house to St. Raphael's. The house was then deeded back to William Doris the following year. From the 1930s to the 1950s the Doris House was home to two families with a number of children. According to past residents the backyard and porches of the

property were popular gathering places for neighborhood children and their families. They fondly recall large campouts in the backyard and warm summer evenings on the spacious porches.

Upon the death of William Doris in 1981 the house passed to his wife Margaret Doris who sold the property out of the family in 1988. After passing from the Dorises it was used for a period as rental property and later purchased by another private owner who sold it to McGrath Associates in 2002. By that time the condition of the house had been severely compromised, neighbors had feared that it would be demolished. Its renovation was seen as an attractive addition to a new condominium project that had received a positive reaction from the neighborhood. The construction of the 4<sup>th</sup> Ward Lofts next door to the renovated Doris house fits well with the goal of the Bassett District Master Plan to create a neighborhood with, “a pleasant blend of the old and new.”

### *Criterion 3*

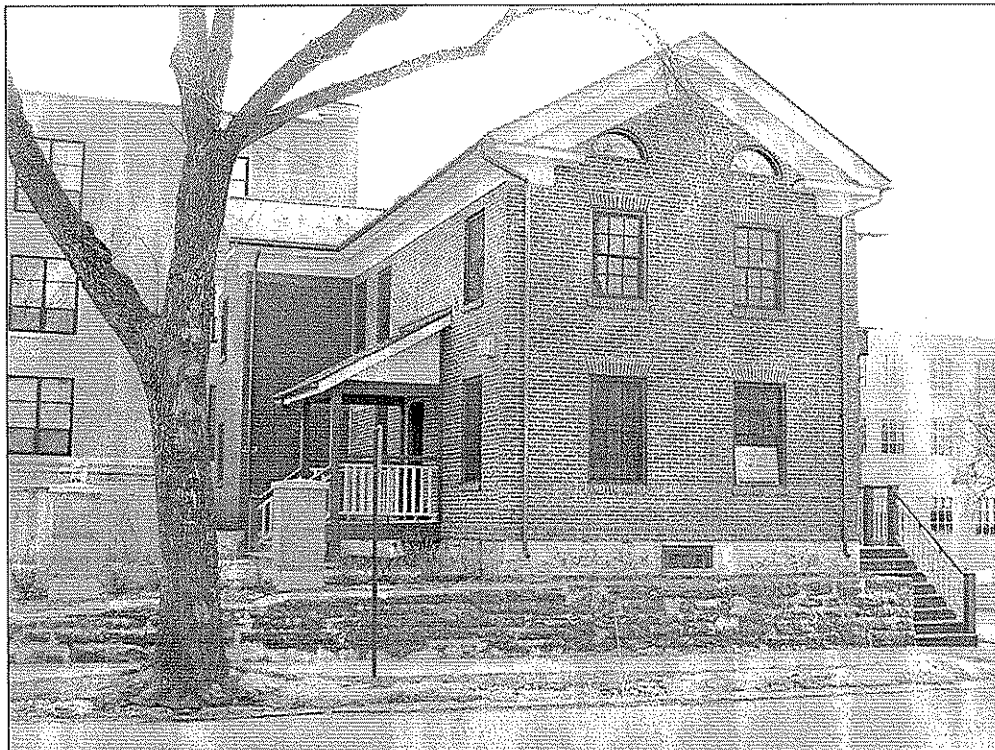
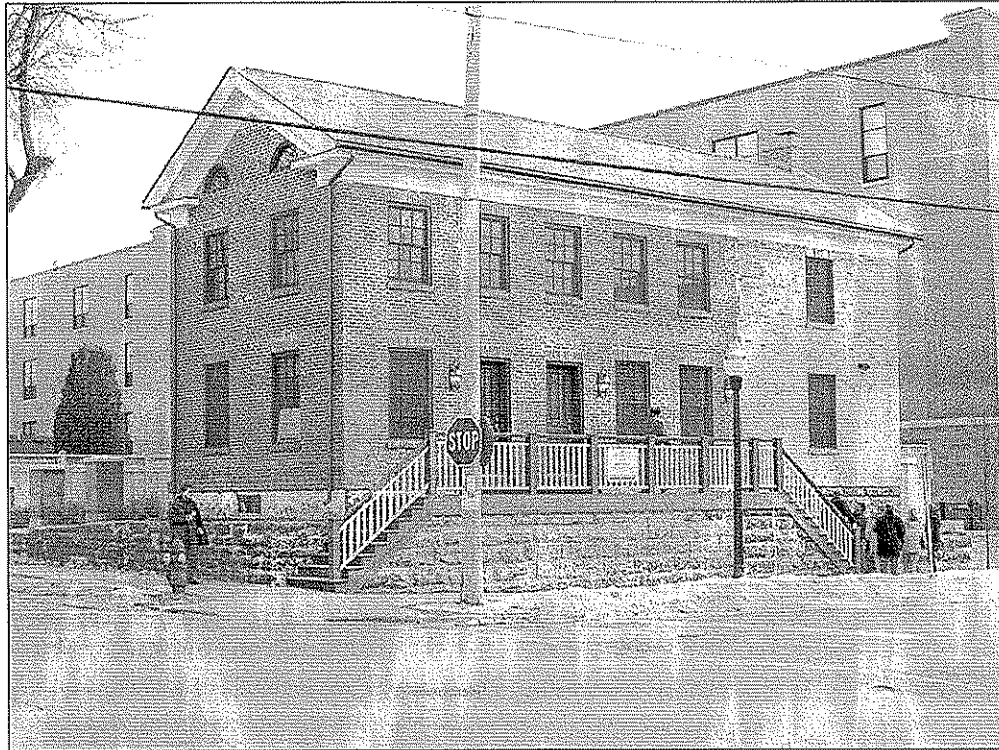
The Greek Revival style was the first formal architectural style to be widely used in Wisconsin and in Madison. The style was used for many of Madison’s first public buildings including the first State Capitol, the first Dane County Courthouse, and many early hotels. The style was also used for many of Madison’s early residences. Greek Revival buildings that were built in the heart of downtown have almost all been replaced by larger structures, and many of the city’s finest examples have been demolished.

The Doris House compares favorably with extant examples of Greek Revival residential architecture in Madison, both in form and historic integrity.

Since most Greek Revival houses are very old and were built of wood frame, most have undergone significant alterations that have compromised their ability to portray their original design and craftsmanship. The Doris house is no different in that regard. However, the recent restoration project removed unsympathetic additions and replaced some of its materials in a way that creates a feeling that is more similar to its original construction than can be found in most other Greek Revival houses in Madison.

Of Rankin and Heggland’s four categories of Greek Revival houses in Madison the Doris House falls into that of two-story, side-gabled. Four such designs have been surveyed. Additionally, the house bears the 2-bay-wide, 5-bay-deep “Stagecoach Inn” design of which there are only two others in Madison: one at 4117 Dwight which has been extensively altered, and the Old Spring Tavern at 3706 Nakoma Road. The latter example was originally much smaller and faced what is now the rear facade, but over the years it has been expanded in the form of a common stagecoach inn.

The Plough Inn at 3402 Monroe St was built in a similar style but is classified, according to Rankin and Heggland, as a 2-story, front-gabled Greek Revival, and its original brick has been covered with stucco.





# 603 West Main Street

