71-2

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common
Pierce House

(2) Historic (if applicable)
Garnhart or Pierce House

II. Location

(1) Street Address
424 North Pinckney Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)
4th ward

III. Classification

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

(2) Zoning District R6

(3) Present Use
apartment house

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

(1) Name(s)
James Korb

(2) Street Address
1244 Sherman Avenue

(3) Telephone Number
255-3020

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

(1) Parcel Number
0708-144-0704

(2) Legal Description
ORIGINAL PLAT NW 88' OF LOT 8 AND NE 26' OF NW 88' OF LOT 9 BLOCK 93.

VI. Condition of Property

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

(2) Altered or Unaltered?
Exterior unaltered, but interior altered

(3) Moved or Original Site?
original

(4) Wall Construction
Stone walls two feet thick held by steel pins.

(5) On a separate sheet of paper, describe the present and original physical construction and appearance (limit 500 words).

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (2)

VI.(5) Describe Present and Original Physical Construction and Appearance:

The architectual style of the Pierce house is considered to be Romanesque according to a Wis. State Journal writer in 1938, Betty Cass. At one time this house was thought to be th most beautiful in Madison with its sweeping lawns, ornate wrought iron from Sweden and stables and bardn which were located behind it. Originally, the house was built in a grove of butternut trees and the first owner was Alexander A. McDonald or McDonnell who commissioned the architectual firm of Kutzbock and Donnel to build it in 1858. They were instructed to build "the finest house money could buy." Mr. McDonald enjoyed being the first resident of what was later to be known as "Big Bug Hill. It is said that the architect designed the house to look like a castle in Scotland with beautifully arched windows. From Carrara, Italy came the marble for the fireplaces and from Venice the glass over the front door. The carved entrance door and baluster and rail of the spiral staircase which winds four flights from basement to supola are solid mahogany and carved in Madison by a man named Grandfather Frederickson. The spiral staircase is supported by a 3x5 stone pier in the basement.

There originally was a wrought iron fence around the house, and also wooden sidewalks.

An anonymous writer in describing the house wrote:

"As Donnel built this house, he used his designs from the capitol. The foyer of the house is similar to the corridors of the old capitol. There is statuary niches built into the walls outlined in gold leaf and flower paintings on the walls. The room on the left, which was the living room is a replica of the Assembly Chamber; the handmoulded leaf frieze work and the high rosette medallion on the ceiling which matches the one on the mantle are the same as were in the Assembly Chamber. The room on the right, which was the parlor, has a frieze and a ceiling medallion which replicates the Senate Chamber. Another room on the first floor is a replica of the Governor's Reception Room. In the original house, the kitchen was in the basement and the dining room next to it. Before the other houses were built around it, 424 had a barn behind it. A tunnel connected the house and the barn so that occupants could be safe from such dangers as Indian attacks."

There originally was a total of 21 rooms in the house.

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LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner	(2) Original Use
Alexander A. McDonald or McDonnell	private home
(3) Architect or Builder Samuel Hunter Donnel and August Kutzbock	(4) Architectural Style Romanesque [Victorian Gothic JMD]
(5) Date of Construction 1858	(6) Indigenous Materials Used Prairie du Chien sandstone

(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. Anonymous writer, A Brief History of 424 North Pinckney
2. Wisconsin StateJournal, "Madison Day by Day", by Betty Cass, Oct. 1938.
3. Dean, Jeffrey and Custer, Frank, "Sandstone and Buffalo Robes," City Planning Dept., 1969.
4. Holmes, Wisconsin, "Wisconsin in the Fine Arts," Vol. II., pp.
5. 564-565.
6. Wisconsin State Journal, Alexius Baas, June 22, 1947.
7.
8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

Lois Stoler (Mrs. Norton Stoler,) Master of Science

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

(3) Address	(4) Telephone Number
1129 Frisch Rd.	271-2548

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

April 2, 1971

City of Madison Landmarks Commission

LANDMARKS AND LANDMARK SITES NOMINATION FORM (4)

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

The Pierce house deserves to be nominated as a Madison landmark under items 1, 2 and 3 of the designation criteria.

Holmes's Volume II History of Wisconsin states:

"Madison's most beautiful home from an architectual point of view is the house at the southwest corner of E. Gilman and N. Pinckney St. Variously known as the Garnhart or Pierce house, it was built as a residence in 1858 for Alexander A. McDonnell, contractor for the second State Capitol, who is said to have brought skilled Italian stone cutters from the East to make its beautiful stone carvings. A circular stairway leading to the top floor added to its equally beautiful interior. In its delicate and ornate carvings and traceries it was Madison's nearest approach to an "architectual dream."

The booklet "Sandstones and Buffalo Robes," further states,

"The house is full of discoveries. Its large double windows incorporate a wooden version of Gothic plate tracery and the side pediments contain quatrefoil windows. Parallel rows of corbel tables run under a roof line formed by three intersecting gable roofs. At the corners are vestigial mediaeval bastions resembling large torches. The house is trimmed with intricate wrought ironwork and the whole package is topped off with an octagonal Italienate cupola. Inside, a superb spiral stairway soars from the basement to the cupola."

Mr. Oscar Jensen, a former owner of the Pierce house has photographs of the interior before it was remodeled.

In 1868 the house was sold to the Garnhart family and one of the Garnhart girls(there were five) married a justice of the Wisconsin Supreme Court named Orasmus Cole and they lived in the house until 1887. In that year Sarah Fairchild Dean Conover, sister of the Republican governor, Lucius Fairchild, moved into the house with her husband who was a professor of Greek at the University of Wisconsin. The house was the scene of many elegant dinners and receptions. Sarah's brother, Charles owned the house for a few years, and then in 1900 it was sold to the Griffith family. They were the last family to live in it because in 1906 it was sold to Carrie L. Pierce and she turned it into a rooming house filled with many interesting people. In 1938 Mr. Oscar Jensen bought the house and it was he who remodeled it into apartments, although he tried to keep as much as possible. For instance the parlor doors were sealed into the walls with the keys in case the house should one day be restored. In 1955 the house was sold to Orlando Richards, and he sold it in 1957 to Helen Oakland. In 1967 Mrs. Oakland sold it to James L. Korb.