



Date: July 31, 2013

From: Diane Krause-Stetson and Jim Stetson

Subject: **Letter of Intent for Our 1118 Sherman Avenue Renovation Project**

### **Summary**

This 1905 Claude & Starck house has seen better days. After suffering substantial water damage and years of neglect, on July 13, 2013, the structure was valued by the City Assessor and the Board of Review at merely \$13,200. We are passionate about breathing new life into old houses. We bought this “project” in November of 2012 for \$470,000. It is our intention to preserve and restore what makes these old houses so special and to renovate and update the house to make it a home we can live in for many years to come.

Ultimately, we want this house to satisfy the standards for the National History Registry as it is a contributing structure to the Tenney-Lapham Historical District. We have gone through this before and are familiar with the requirements and process.

### **History**

Thanks to the Wisconsin Historical Society, the Madison Landmarks Commission and the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association, we were able to learn more about the history of the house and the neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

The house was built in 1905 by Joseph C. and Francis E. Schubert. Joseph C. Schubert served as the mayor of Madison for three terms—from 1912-1920. The house was designed by the firm of Claude and Starke, a well-known and prolific architect firm based in Madison from 1896-1929.

The house was listed in the National Registry on March 22, 1987, under the Sherman Avenue Historic District and the Wisconsin state register listing on January 1, 1989.

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<sup>1</sup> The Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood: A Walking Tour, written by Timothy F. Heggland and edited by Katherine H. Rankin (published by Madison Landmarks Commission and the Tenney-Lapham Neighborhood Association, 1987) and Wisconsin Historical Society, [www.wisconsinhistory.org](http://www.wisconsinhistory.org), Property Reference Number 78072.

We purchased the house from Vera Lee, who lived in the house for over 90 years. In a conversation with Ms. Lee in December of 2012, she explained that her parents, who had moved here from Indiana, purchased the house shortly before 1920. Her father was a pharmacist who had several pharmacies in Indiana and Illinois. She was born in Madison and lived in the house most of her life. She inherited from her parents, who lived in the house until their passing. Ms. Lee lived alone and had no children.

About three years ago, Ms. Lee, who is in her early 90s and who suffers from dementia moved into residential care. During the winter about three years ago, the furnace stopped working, the radiators and water pipes throughout the house burst and the house sustained major water damage. Because no one was taking care of the house, the damage was undetected until months later when Ms. Lee was sent an exorbitant bill from the Water Commission. It was too late. The house was declared uninhabitable and Ms. Lee's trustee made minimal repairs in order to list it for sale.

### **Our Purchase of the Property**

In November of 2013, we purchased the house for \$470,000. The house sits on a .17 acre lot that is 7562 square feet. The estimated square footage of the usable space in the house is 2,332. The house has three bedrooms, one bath and a make-shift kitchen. In order for the City to deem the house habitable, the trust needed to install a functional bathroom and a kitchen sink.

To clear the way for our renovation project, our first projects were substantial mold remediation from the basement and parts of the first floor, removal of asbestos in the attic, and replacement of knob and tube electrical with standard electrical wiring.

### **Our Intentions for the Restoration**

Our intention is to restore and preserve as much of the original character of the house as possible. Our plans include an addition to the back (lake side) of the house. Where we are adding to the structure, our intent is to make it appear as if it were always a part of the original structure.

We will repair the existing windows, or where necessary, replace the windows with double hung window. We will refinish the existing wood front door. We are working with a stucco artisan specialist who will repair the cracks and cover

the entire house with an elasticized stucco finish that will expand and contract to prevent future cracking. The stucco finish will be matched on the addition.

The house currently has almost no insulation or modern weather-proofing. We intend to bring the house up to a high standard of energy efficiency, except where this is inconsistent with the architectural design. Principally, the existing window will not be efficient, but we can make-up for that with extensive use of foam insulation throughout the house.

In the interior, we plan to restore the original woodwork, to the extent possible. The walls and ceiling in the interior of the addition will be plaster. We are restoring plaster, where there is a paper tile ceiling. We are adding three bathrooms; the house now has one.

We are committed to preserving the original interior, especially on the first level where there are two small parlors and a charming dining room with wonderful detailed trim. The original fireplace will be restored to working condition and the original frieze above the fireplace will be cleaned and repaired. We intend to use the current kitchen space as an office and install a larger, more functional kitchen in the lake side addition. We are adding a wood-burning stove to the addition and a gas fire place in the master bedroom/bath. We intend to match the maple floors throughout the house.

We will not be doing much to the front exterior other than maintenance. All of the double hung windows and the leaded glass window are in need of major repair. The metal grate door, that is not original to the house, will be removed. The wood front door will be restored. There are areas where the stone foundation requires patching, filling and tuck-pointing. The stone foundation of the side porch stucco porch has shifted and may need to be repaired, filled or rebuilt. The large front porch will require extensive repair. This is not original to the house and not consistent with the original stone foundation. The concrete platform and the brick are crumbling. The previous patch jobs have not held up. We are researching whether brick, stone or some other material would be more historically appropriate. If the platform of the porch is rebuilt, we may replace the wrought iron rails and spiral design handrail. These are also not original, nor period-appropriate. We would like to replace these with arts and crafts style.

The biggest change will be to replace the existing lakeside sunroom 1950's-ish addition which was not well-built. The new addition will extend approximately 6 feet, 2 inches further toward the lake. Based on the surveyors' review of the

neighboring properties, the current setback rules would permit this. We will add a basement and a sump system below the addition.

The design of addition will mimic the architectural lines and details of the front of the house, including the roof. Because the current roof line is 6-inches taller than is currently permitted, the roof on the addition will be 6-inches shorter. We have been advised that this will not be discernible from the ground.

The attic will be a finished space. The roof line will be the same pitch with the slight flare and have the detailed wood trim stays. There will be a rounded dormer with the same double-hung windows with the leaded glass detail, except the lower window will be longer so that they go to the floor of the attic level to bring in more light and lake view. There will also be a European balcony under the dormer.

Pursuant to fire code, there will be an emergency exit door installed on the east side, above the garage. There would be a small platform to access a staircase that would lead to the top of the garage. The plans show a spiral staircase. We have not researched the fire-escape alternatives, and may select a rectangular version. Whatever is selected will be an iron design that will be period appropriate.

On the second story, there will be two sets of double-doors, each to a lakeside balcony. The doors will have the same leaded glass design above the doors as the front of the house. The doors will open up to a European balcony which is mostly decorative and will offer only standing space. These doors are off of the master bedroom and the master bath.

From the first story, there will be double-door French doors leading outside from the addition to the backyard. There will be a small deck leading from that doorway that will be the width of the stairs. The stairs will be perpendicular and not straight out to the lake.

The footprint of the garage will remain the same. We will remodel the back wall (lake side) to have a decorative, period-appropriate garage door, instead of a regular sized door. This will provide access to the backyard for the building equipment. Later, it will give us a way to take in our small watercraft and lawn furniture for storage. The style of both garage doors would be architecturally appropriate to the house

The sides of the house will be largely unchanged except that we will add steps to the side porch that would lead toward the back yard. These will be similar to the existing steps that lead to the street side. These will not be closer to the adjacent lot line.

## **Landscaping**

We have begun to work with an architectural landscape design professional. The landscape design has just begun and no plans have been drawn. It is our intention that the backyard will be planted with native species and, despite its size, will be a “jewel-box” of flowering plants, bushes and trees.

## **Our History**

We have always loved old homes, both having grown up in older homes as children.

Our first home, in 1982, was the Stickney School, an 1890s school house located on Hollywood Avenue in Chicago. We, along with five unit owners, participated in a condominium development project to convert an old red brick school house.

Ten years later, we renovated a floor of a turn-of-the century row house on LaSalle Street. In 1990, we purchased a modest cottage on Elkhart Lake, Wisconsin that was built between 1906 and 1908. It was built in pine tree pilings surrounded by a wooden “skirt”. We had the house hydraulically lifted and put a field stone foundation underneath, so that we could winterize the cottage. We retained as much of the original structure and details as we could, even matching the original Dutch lap wooden siding. We also restored the old pine floors and original woodwork, matching the style and replicating the bead board ceilings elsewhere in the house. We removed a driveway that went down to the Lake and replaced it with a large and “wild” English-style garden, that continues to be admired by many who walk the lake path.

Most recently, we restored a 1932 Mediterranean Revival home in the Azalea Historic District in Tyler, Texas. Following that restoration, in 2012, we were successful in listing it as a Historic House with the National Registry and we received a Historic Plaque from the City of Tyler. We also allowed our house to be included that year on the Historic Tyler, Inc. annual historic house tour, where over 2,500 visited our home along with four other historic residences. This annual fundraiser offers grants to home owners in the historic district who do not have the means for major home repairs in order to preserve the neighborhood.

Our history with old homes should serve to demonstrate that our intentions are backed up with commitment and action.