

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

I. Name of Building or Site

(1) Common
Miller house

(2) Historic (if applicable)

II. Location

(1) Street Address
649 East Dayton Street

(2) Ward (available @ City Clerk)
Second Aldermanic District

III. Classification

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

(2) Zoning District
C-3, Commercial

(3) Present Use
residence

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

(1) Name(s)
Lucile Miller

(2) Street Address
649 East Dayton Street

(3) Telephone Number
256-5391

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

(1) Parcel Number
0709-133-0901-3

(2) Legal Description
original plat NE 1/2 of NE 1/2 Lot 8, Bl. 135

VI. Condition of Property

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

(2) Altered or Unaltered?
unaltered since moved except for siding installation

(3) Moved or Original Site?
moved from North Pinckney Street in 1908.

(4) Wall Construction
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 (3)

VII. Significance

(1) Original Owner

William M. Miller

(2) Original Use

1908-1919 rooming house, later a res.

(3) Architect or Builder

(4) Architectural Style

(5) Date of Construction

originally 1870's? moved in 1908

(6) Indigenous Materials Used

(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. manuscript: I AM THE DARKER BROTHER, Barbara Shade, 1977.
2. Interviews with Lucile Miller and Mae Mitchell, September & October, 1978.
3. Tax Rolls, City of Madison
4. City Directories
5. Minutes of the Book Lovers Club, Division of Archives & Manuscripts, S.H.S.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

IX. Form Prepared By:

(1) Name and Title

Gary Tipler

(2) Organization Represented (if any)

Design Coalition, Inc.

(3) Address

2124 Atwood Avenue

(4) Telephone Number

241-2104

(5) Date Nomination Form Was Prepared

October 25, 1978

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT
MILLER RESIDENCE - 647 EAST DAYTON STREET

The William Miller house, in its earlier years, served as a rooming house, one among only a few and most of which are gone, for the many Negroes then emigrating from the South to Madison seeking a better life. This fact coupled with its association, for the greater number of its years, as the home of a prominent Black family which has been active in the community should make it worthy of Landmark designation of the basis of its historical significance.

William M. Miller and his wife, Anna Mae, were two of several key figures in the development of Madison's growing Black Community in the early years of this century. They, along with their family, have worked toward the advancement of the Negro through their efforts in everyday situations as well as in their participation in the development of local and national institutions, the improvement of housing opportunities in Madison, and in lobbying against discriminatory policies and legislation.

William Miller came to Madison in 1901 to work as a messenger for Governor Robert M. LaFollette. In 1902 he, along with John Turner and others, organized the African Methodist Episcopal Church, secured a building, and had it moved to 625 East Dayton Street, near Turner's boarding house. This became the focus of the small Negro enclave which grew over the following decades. Miller became a member of the Niagara Movement (1905-1908), participated in the development of the NAACP by serving as the Wisconsin contact, and was a financial backer of the forerunner of the CRISIS, the NAACP publication. His admiration for the outspoken leader of the Negro intelligentsia, writer, and CRISIS editor W. E. B.

DuBois led him to name a son after him and to have him as a guest in his home upon several occasions.

In 1909, just months after the National Negro Conference in New York, Anna Mae Miller organized the Book Lovers Club, a kind of literary society in which members participated in recitations of Negro poetry, song, the presentation of essays, and the discussion of political writings and current topics. This came about fully ten years before the Negro Renaissance in Harlem began to contribute to a widespread awareness and appreciation of the Negro contribution to the arts. One member of the club, Mr. J. Anthony Josey, later published, in 1917, the Wisconsin Weekly Blade, Wisconsin's first Black newspaper. The organization seems to have been short-lived -- it stopped meeting only a few weeks after the formation, in New York, of the organization which became the NAACP in May, 1910. Mrs. Miller later became a member of the Utopia Club, a social club affiliated with the National Colored Women's Club, and served as a treasurer of the local chapter of the NAACP.

The Miller's first child, Lucile, also became active in local matters. In 1941 and 1942, she and friend Demetra Shivers formed the Madison Civic League to campaign against the establishment of a segregated USO at the Truax Air Force Base. Their efforts lead to the organization in 1943 of the local chapter of the NAACP. Lucile Miller also served as the Second Ward Precinct Committeeman for the renewed Democratic Party in the late 1940's, worked on the Monona Terrace Committee in the 1950's and on the NAACP Housing Committee which in 1959 published NEGRO HOUSING IN MADISON, a pamphlet which bared discrimination in housing in Madison and surveyed the housing needs and desires of Negro residents.

Lucile Miller has lived in the house at 647 East Dayton Street since her family first occupied in in 1919, the third of the Miller residences. In 1904, William Miller first bought a small house at 645 East Dayton for his family and an investment house at 643 East Dayton Street, They soon moved into the latter to accomodate their growing family. The existing building at no. 647 was moved to the site in 1908 replacing the smaller house and was rented to transient families and individuals (including the Hills) until it was occupied by the Millers. Although William Miller died the following spring, members of his family have continued to live ^{there} ~~their~~ to date, thus it has the added distinction of being the longest continuous ownership of an existing dwelling by a Black family in Madison as well as the earliest known of Black owned buildings extant in the City.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The building at 647 East Dayton Street is a two story frame dwelling with an asbestos shingle siding. When moved to the site in 1908 from North Pinckney Street and original side wing was removed and added to the Miller house at no. 643. The rear wing of the house has the appearance of being, perhaps, the original modest house to which the bulk of the house was added. The existing front porch shelters the double door with carved embellishments and front parlor windows which run from the floor to within a few inches of the ceiling. The interior of the house still has an attractive slender spindled stair rail and pine plank and hardwood floors.