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Monroe Street gas station among historic buildings honored

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When it comes to restorations that impress, fancy buildings or miraculous rehabilitations often do the trick. But sometimes it's something as familiar as a gas station.

Parman's Service Station on Monroe Street will be playing with the architectural big boys this week when the [Madison Trust for Historic Preservation](#) hosts its annual awards ceremony Thursday at the Orpheum Theatre. The station, built in 1941, retains most of its original look and will be recognized by the organization for stewardship of the property.

"People tend to think of historic preservation as applying to the stunning and superb high-style architecture," said Jason Tish of the Madison Trust. "But there's a lot of common architecture that is very much of its time."

The station, at 3502 Monroe St., was built by Clayton Parman. Today, his sons Keith and Clayton Jr. run it. The gas tanks out front are gone, but the station looks much as it did when their father built it.

Buildings like this say a lot about a community, Tish said.

"Those are just as much a part of the history of the people and the city as high-style architecture," he said.

It's appropriate that Parman's is part of the celebration. The keynote speakers will be Jim Draeger and Mark Speltz, whose book "[Fill 'er Up: The Glory Days of Wisconsin Gas Stations](#)" came out last year. Tickets are \$20 per person or two for \$35.

The Trust awards also tip their hat to notable buildings in the city. The [Goodman Community Center](#) drew praise for its resurrection of the Kupfer Ironworks building into a neighborhood gathering place.

"It's been an amazing success in attracting events as well as providing community services to residents," Tish said. "And they're doing it from an old building that was once an utter eyesore in the neighborhood and is now it's a beautiful building with a beautiful inviting courtyard."

Another notable building that was worked on this year was the addition to the Frank Lloyd Wright-designed [First Unitarian Society Meeting House](#) on University Bay Drive. A 500-seat auditorium was added to Wright's original 1949 structure.

The Trust noted it as a sensitive addition to a nationally important design.

"The main thing is they didn't want to emulate Wright's design," Tish said of architects Kubala Washatko of Cedarburg. "They didn't want to copy a design that was on the cutting edge for its time."

Another public building honored was the John Olin House at 130 N. Prospect Ave., the chancellor's residence for the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The project updated some older alterations and made some interior modernizations, including an elevator.

The Trust also honors notable buildings in the Madison area, and chose the Eager Economy Building on Main Street in Evansville for the rehabilitation of a 1904 commercial building.

Four homes were also honored by the Trust. Two -- at 1132 Drake St. and 1717 Regent St. -- were done by the owners.

"The owners took their own initiative to do restoration projects that were sensitive to the design without any professional help or without being in a historic district where they are compelled to have their plans OK'd by the Madison Landmarks Commission," Tish said.

Two other properties were done with professional design help -- a restoration of a 1911 cottage at 5807 Winnequah Road in Monona and an addition to a lakeside home at 1004 Sherman Ave.

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