Historic Designation Study Report

Sanford Kane House
1841 North Prospect Avenue

HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT

SANFORD R. KANE HOUSE

(Written Winter, 2003)

I. NAME

Historic: Sanford R. Kane House

Common: Kane House

II. LOCATION

1841 N. Prospect Avenue

Tax Key No.: 355-0312-000

Legal description: Continuation of A. L. Kane's SUBD of NE ¼ SEC 21-7-22 Block 237 Lots 6 & 7

Aldermanic District

Third District, Alderman Michael S. D'Amato

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

William D. & Margaret A. Huettner and Bruce W. & Lorna L. Mueller

Nominator

Bruce Mueller

V. YEAR BUILT

1883 [1]

ARCHITECT
James Douglas[2]

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Sanford Kane House is located on Prospect Avenue between East Royall Place and East Kane Place on the city's lower east side approximately one and one-half miles northeast of Milwaukee's central business district. The house occupies a 60-foot-wide by 143-foot-deep lot, and the main elevation faces southeast toward Prospect Avenue. The

[1] Milwaukee Sentinel, January 1, 1883; Evening Wisconsin, March 8, 1883.
[2] Ibid.

Kane House is set back from the sidewalk on a grassy berm planted with shrubs. A driveway extends along the south end of the property and accesses the rear alley. There is a narrow side yard to the north and a yard at the rear, which is surrounded by chain link fencing. Although Prospect Avenue was once lined with elegant mansions from Juneau Avenue to Kane Place, much of this historic fabric has been lost to the construction of apartment buildings and nursing homes. A modern apartment building, constructed in 1950, is located to the north of the Kane House while to the south is a nursing home constructed in 1960. Across Prospect Avenue is the large St. John's Tower built in the 1970's that has apartments for the elderly and nursing home facilities.

The Sanford Kane House is an exceptional example of an ornate, large-scale, Queen Anne style house that retains practically all of it original decorative features. The rectangular two-and-one-half story house rests on a high, rock faced random ashlar limestone foundation. The first story is veneered in red brick and the second story is sheathed entirely in decorative cut shingles in a staggered-but pattern. The hip roof is intersected with numerous gables and dormers and is sheathed in asphalt shingles. Three brick chimneys with corbelled caps project from the roof: one exterior chimney at the north wall is braced by a decorative iron tie rod, one is located near the peak of the roof in the center of the house, and one is located at the rear. The house is articulated with a large bay window on the front façade, a large bay window on the south elevation, and a two-storied gabled oriel on the north elevation. A pedimented wooden porch on the front façade, a small covered balcony, and a projecting bay on the south elevation contribute to the building's picturesque quality. Each elevation has distinctive detail.

The main façade of the Kane House is an asymmetrical composition consisting of a projecting front porch and gabled attic dormer and chimney stack on the north half of the front elevation, balanced by a large, two-and-one-half story, gabled bay window on the south half. These projecting elements are visually unified by the use of triangular shapes on the pedimented front porch, the gabled bay window and the pedimented dormer. Each gable is ornamented with different decorative elements including cut shingles, foliated ornament, and half-timbering. The fenestral variety also contributes to the picturesque quality of the house. Many different sizes of narrow, one-over-one sash are utilized as well as large, single-light, plate glass windows and small, ornamental, twelve-paned, Queen Anne sash. Original eight-light wood storm windows add scale to the overall design. Most of the windows are accented by decorative surrounds featuring geometric panels or shaped enframements, sunburst motifs, or relief foliated swags. The most striking ornamental element of the front façade is a second story vertical panel on the bay window featuring a bas-relief carving of a sunflower growing out of a pot. The porch is an elaborate example of Eastlake-inspired spindle work while additional spindle fretwork and massive, shaped brackets ornament the attic gable over the bay window.

The south elevation is also asymmetrical and features a gabled attic dormer, a small second story balcony, a two-and-one-half story gabled bay, and a first story bay window that merges into a small rear porch. Like the main façade, the fenestration is varied with many different sizes of windows and sash configurations. In general, the windows on this elevation are more simply enframed than those on the front façade. Turned posts and spindle work resembling that of the front porch are used on the balcony and the rear porch. Massive incised brackets support the balcony.

The north elevation is as carefully and picturesquely designed as the south and east facades. The dominant decorative feature is the broad, two story, gabled oriel window that lights the staircase. It is flanked by a sculpturally enriched red brick chimneystack on the east and a broad, gabled bay of ornamental windows on the west. The north wall of the rear service wing is slightly recessed from the main block of the house and has a lower

gabled roof and simple detail. The red brick chimney stack features two panels of ornamental stone carving, one in the shape of a triangle incised with a sunburst motif and one in a lozenge-shape carved in high relief with a flower and foliage. The wooden oriel window is supported on decorative brackets and is paneled on its sides and above the windows on its north face. Four, tall, narrow sash, surmounted by a small, rectangular window, complete the glazing. From historic photographs, the oriel windows appear to have always been simple beveled glass with no leaded or stained glass panels. The windows on the balance of the north elevation are more symmetrically placed than on the other elevations with most of the second story sash being aligned above first story windows. Stone lintels and sills are used at the first story windows. The various sash types include one-over-one, thirty-two-light fixed sash, and twenty-eight-over-one sash.

The rear elevation is the least ornate and simplest in composition of any side of the house. It is slightly inset on the north and south sides from the main body of the house. The south elevation of the second story is cantilevered over the first story and supported by an ornamental bracket. The first story niche created by this cantilever shelters the bulkhead doors to the basement. The other main features of the rear elevation are a projecting enclosed service entrance on the first story and a gabled dormer at the attic story through which passes a chimney flanked by two windows.

A historic photograph dating from the late 1880's or early 1890's shows that the exterior of the house has remained virtually unchanged since its construction.[3] In 1991 while doing repairs to the porch, the owners at the time replaced the original, Queen Anne style spindle work balusters with more stock item classical balusters, which are heavier in design. They also removed the bottoms of the sleek chamfered posts and replaced them with stocky square bases.[4] Other alterations occurred many years ago and include the removal of the simple, scalloped roof ridge cresting, the removal of the porch roof railing, the replacement of some Queen Anne multi-paned, bordered sash, and the shortening of the rear chimney and slight modification of the north chimney. A one-and-one-half story, frame carriage house stood at the rear of the property, but this was razed in 1976.[5]

Although Milwaukee's Historic Preservation Ordinance does not extend to the interiors of buildings, it is important to note that the interior of the Kane House retains a high degree of architectural integrity. The floor plan remains intact with entry/living hall, two parlors, a dining room and a pantry and kitchen on the first floor while the second floor has a sitting room, master bedroom, two full sized bedrooms and a bath and maids room at the rear. The interior is noted for its original stained and varnished woodwork, many early gas/electric fixtures and an abundance of fireplace mantles. The Aesthetic Movement sunflower/flower motifs from the exterior are carried through on the interior with tiles and woodwork embellished with sunflowers and other floral decorations. It is a rare surviving example from Milwaukee's most flamboyant era of house building.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Sanford Kane House is significant as one of Milwaukee's finest remaining examples of a Queen Anne house and an early example from the first flowering of the style. The Kane House is also an important work of locally prominent architect James Douglas and

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[3] Milwaukee Public Library. Historic Photograph Collection.
[4] City of Milwaukee Historic Preservation Section. Slide collection. 1991.
[5] Rascher's Fire Insurance Atlas of the City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. (Chicago: Charles Rascher, 1888), vol. 3, p. 169. Milwaukee City Building Permits, 1841 North Prospect Avenue, 1936 through 1988); Milwaukee City Building Permit Records, 1841 N. Prospect Ave.

marks an important stylistic shift in his work away from the complex, towered Italianate and Victorian Gothic styles for which he was known in the 1870's. In recognition of its importance architecturally, the Kane House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on September 13, 1991.

VIII. HISTORY

The original owner of 1841 North Prospect Avenue, Sanford R. Kane, led a quiet existence. Although he was affluent and somewhat socially prominent, he did not receive a great deal of attention in the press. He and other members of the Kane family dabbled in numerous business ventures. By all accounts his brother Alonzo initiated many of the real estate and business dealings while Sanford participated as an officer or investor in the various schemes. Sanford, like other members of his family, moved around frequently and only later in life did he settle down in the prominent house now under consideration for local historic designation. How local architect James Douglas was chosen to design the Prospect Avenue house is not known at this time although he had designed an earlier house just a few lots away, titled in brother Alonzo's name.

Sanford Kane was born around 1826 in New York State, the son of Philander and Lydia Kane and brother of Alonzo L., Charles I., George B., William H., and Andrew J. [6] In 1846 Philander Kane brought his family to Milwaukee from Waterloo, New York. He and his sons engaged in the hotel business, running an establishment called the American House that stood on the West Wisconsin Avenue site now occupied by the Plankinton Arcade Building.[7] Alonzo and Sanford were partners with their father and lived at the hotel, as did George, William and Andrew. The latter two ran a grocery business in the adjoining Birchard Block. The hotel burned in 1861 and Philander, Alonzo and William subsequently opened a produce and commission business on today's Plankinton Avenue. Alonzo later became the proprietor of a livery stable on East Clybourn Street while his brother Andrew moved to Denver City where he died in 1863.[8]

City directories in 1862 and 1865 show that Sanford lived with his father and several brothers on North Broadway and later on North Milwaukee Street. Sanford's occupation was not always listed in the directories and it is likely that he worked for one or more of the family businesses during this period as well as working as a clerk at the Post Office. These may have been difficult years for Sanford in his personal life. His only daughter, Mary Sanford Kane, died at the age of eleven months on April 6, 1861, and his wife, Caroline Cleveland Kane, six years his junior, apparently also died in the early 1860's after a marriage of only six or so years.[9] Sanford later remarried in 1865.

City directories and later obituaries confirm that many members of the Kane family left Milwaukee by the late 1860's. Charles Kane moved to New York, only to return in 1895. Philander and Alonzo Kane moved to Chicago. Interestingly, Philander Kane died at his son Alonzo's Chicago home in 1869, but his remains were brought back to Milwaukee for burial at Forest Home Cemetery. It seems evident that business and real estate interests kept Milwaukee the home base for the family. Sanford's whereabouts between 1866 and 1872 have not been pinpointed but in 1873 his name reappeared in the Milwaukee City Directory.

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[6] Milwaukee City Directory; Sanford R. Kane Death Notice, Milwaukee Sentinel, April 10, 1894, p. 3, col.5.
[7] Philander Kane Obituary, Milwaukee Sentinel, January 18, 1869, p. 1, col. 8.
[8] Milwaukee City Directory; Andrew J. Kane Death Notices, Milwaukee Sentinel, March 10, 1863, p. 1, col. 7 and March 11, 1863 p. 1, col. 5 and March 16, 1863, p. 1, col. 6.
[9] Mary Sanford Kane Death Notice, Milwaukee Sentinel, April 9, 1861, p.1, col. 6; U.S.Census, 1860, Milwaukee County, City of Milwaukee, Fourth Ward; Notice of Marriage Milwaukee Sentinel, December 12, 1854, p. 2, col. 5.

His new business venture was the Siloam Mineral Spring Company, a company that bottled the mineral water from a spring near the intersection of North Oakland and East North Avenues. This venture, established with his brother Alonzo, was also to have included a large resort hotel, but the project was never carried to fruition.[10]

Sanford and Alonzo Kane were to enter a particularly active period in their business life. In addition to managing their considerable real estate holdings they took over the publication of the Milwaukee News in 1874 and ran the paper for four years. Alonzo became a loan broker while Sanford became one of the partners of Pearson, Kane & Co., a wood, coal, and firebrick company, in 1881. He subsequently became one of the incorporators for his brother Alonzo's Brewster Carriage Company and served as the business' bookkeeper-secretary and then secretary-treasurer from 1885-1890. Sanford's final years, from 1891 until the time of his death on April 9, 1894, were spent as a partner in the A. L. Kane and Company real estate firm.[11]

After his return to Milwaukee in the early 1870's, the restless Sanford Kane lived at a variety of addresses. He spent about two years on North Jackson Street between East Michigan Street and East Wisconsin Avenue then lived for a couple of years next door to his brother Alonzo on the west side of North Farwell Avenue just south of East Kane Place, a street named after the family. In 1877 Sanford moved to a new Victorian Gothic house on prestigious North Prospect Avenue at what would be addressed as 1825 North Prospect Avenue today. This spacious brick house was designed by local architect James Douglas. Interestingly, the house was titled in Alonzo's name. The Kane family's occupancy of their imposing new home was marred by the scandalous suicide of their maid at the house in April of 1879, an event reported in the Sentinel. Kane sold the house to Captain S. Clement in late September of 1882 for $23,000.[12]

By that time Kane had already commissioned a new residence from James Douglas. It was built a few lots north of the old house and was completed in 1883. According to newspaper accounts, the new brick and shingle house cost approximately $15,800 to build and the carriage barn cost an additional $1,200.[13] Sanford Kane's two houses, both by Douglas, are a study in contrasts and show how the architect had moved away from the tall, towering Victorian Gothic to the more intimate, informal and light filled Queen Anne. Sanford Kane was 57 years old at the time his new home was completed. His family at that time consisted of his wife, Ellen (a.k.a. Helen or, in the Census, "Nellie"), whom he had married in 1865, his daughter Flora, then 17 years old, and his daughter Pearl, who was 9 years old. Flora was apparently adopted since the 1880 Federal Census showed her birthplace as England and her parents as English. Both Sanford and his wife were born in the United States.[14]

The Kane's fashionable Queen Anne style house was the scene of several notable social events that were chronicled in the Sentinel's society columns. A reception to celebrate the Kane's twenty-fifth wedding anniversary took place there in late February of 1890 and was attended by many Milwaukee notables including the O.P. Pillsbury's, the George W. Peck's and the Joseph Berthelets.[15] Daughter Flora (Florence) married James Duff at the house on November 4, 1890 and later resided at La Salle, Illinois.[16] Daughter Pearl and Harry

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[10] Philander Kane Obituaries, Milwaukee Sentinel, January 18, 1869, p.1, cols. 6 and 8 and January 19, p.1, col.3 and January 20, p. 1, col. 4; Milwaukee Sentinel Index; H. Russell Zimmermann, Magnificent Milwaukee Architectural Treasures 1850 - 1920, (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public Museum, 1987), p. 65.
[11] Milwaukee City Directory.
[12] Zimmermann, p. 66; Milwaukee Sentinel, April 17, 1879, p. 2, col.4 and September 28, 1882, p. 5, col. 4.
[13] Milwaukee Sentinel, January 1, 1883; Evening Wisconsin March 8, 1883
[14] U.S. Census, 1880, Milwaukee County, City of Milwaukee, First Ward.
[15] Milwaukee Sentinel, March 2, 1890, p. 12, col. 1
[16] Ibid., October 5, 1890, p. 9. col. 3 and November 2, 1890, p. 12, col.6 and November 9, 1890, p.16, col. 6.

DeSteese, after their wedding ceremony at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, had their reception at the Kane family home on the evening of Wednesday, April 27, 1892. Nearly 500 guests were said to have attended the gala society event that included refreshments and the music of DeBona's orchestra. The young couple subsequently made their home with the elder Kane's.[17]

Sanford Kane enjoyed his home only a few more years. He died at home at the age of 68 from Addison's disease of the kidneys on April 9, 1894. Unlike his brother Alonzo Livingston Kane, who merited a lengthy article when he died in 1899, Sanford's death was only briefly mentioned in the Journal, Sentinel and the Milwaukee Daily News where he was said to have been well known among the old settlers and known as the proprietor of a hotel.[18]

Sanford's widow, his daughter Pearl and son-in-law Harry DeSteese stayed on at the Prospect Avenue house for an additional year. Mrs. Kane moved to Lake Drive in the North Point area in 1896, and around 1900 moved to Marietta Avenue between East Locust and East Linnwood Streets. DeSteese apparently left the city around 1896, and Pearl's whereabouts after 1898 are unknown. Ellen/Helen Kane was last listed in the city directory in 1910. There is no record of her death or re-marriage in Milwaukee.[19]

The house on North Prospect Avenue passed through a number of hands after the Kane's moved out. Jane Follansbee, the widow of Alanson Follansbee, her daughters Emily and Mary, occupied the house from 1896 through 1898.[20] The Society Blue Book of 1897-1898 also listed a number of other individuals who lived at the house including Herman W. Heinrichs, Miss Clara L. Heinrichs, John Schmahl, and Herman Schmahl. The Heinrichs and the Schmahls were associated with the Bradley-Metcalf Leather Company. Oddly, the city directory shows these individuals residing at different addresses before, during, and after 1897-1898, so the Blue Book either erred or the families were related to the Follansbees and perhaps stayed at the Prospect Avenue house for the social season.[21]

In 1901 the house came into the ownership of G. Stanley Mitchell. A native of Plover, Wisconsin, Mitchell had lived in Ripon and Stevens Point, Wisconsin and Dubuque, Iowa, before moving to Milwaukee in 1885. Mitchell was said to have made his money in the lumber business and was one of the incorporators of the Beaver Lake Lumber Company and the Champagne Lumber Company of Merrill, Wisconsin. He was also vice-president of the First National Bank of Waupun and was an officer of the William Becker Leather Company of Milwaukee. Mitchell died at home at the age of 60 on January 30, 1910 from angina pectoris.[22] Mitchell's widow and his son, Howard E., continued to reside at the Prospect Avenue home for some time. Flora (Florence) Mitchell died on February 16, 1923, and Howard died in 1937.[23] Howard Mitchell left his estate to his cousin Ceylon A. Lyman and Lyman's children.[24]

At this point in time Prospect Avenue was undergoing change. Modifications to the city's zoning codes allowed for the construction of apartment buildings and a more transient population and the well to do fled up the north shore. Once the gold coast had lost its allure,

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[17] Ibid., April 28, 1892, p. 3, col. 3.
[18] Ibid., April 10, 1894, p. 9, col. 3; Milwaukee Journal, April 9, 1894, p. 2, col. 2; Milwaukee Daily News, April 10, 1894, p. 4, col. 4.
[19] Milwaukee City Directory.
[20] Ibid.
[21] The Milwaukee Blue Book of Selected Names (Milwaukee: Milwaukee Elite Directory Company, 1897-1898), p. 124.
[22] "G. Stanley Mitchell Dead", Milwaukee Journal, January 4, 1910, p. 3, col. 3
[23] Milwaukee County Register of Deeds, 1923; Steve Liska, Research on the Stanford Kane House for a course at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, no date.
[24] Liska.

proud mansions, like the Kane House, became the home for social service agencies, rooming houses, restaurants or offices for small businesses and were run by absentee owners. The next twenty years were hard on the Kane House, but amazingly it remained intact. The Lyman's did not live at 1841 North Prospect Avenue but rented it out, first to Mrs. May Sette in 1937 and then to Mrs. Anna Schmidt in 1938, both of who operated a rooming house on the premises. In 1939 the Bunyons operated a rooming house there and purchased the property in 1940. Christine and Hedley Bunyon sold the premises to John Daley in 1947. He lived in the house along with Jennings B. Alcorn and his family. They were followed by Charles H. and Ann Cowals in 1950. John and Pearl Bessert acquired the premises in 1953 and maintained a rooming house there through 1957 when the property was sold to Mrs. Clara Lange and Mrs. Cecelia Lange Wimmer. In 1959 they converted it into the Mary Clare Nursing Home, and the nursing home remained in operation until June 1976.[25]

In 1976 Mrs. Jean Bartels acquired the building. She had previously organized the Lakeshore Montessori School in 1972 at Kingo Lutheran Church in Shorewood and had been seeking new quarters for the school. The city and state granted the necessary zoning variances for the Prospect Avenue residence in August and September of 1976. After razing the old carriage barn to comply with orders for a side drive and rear play area, occupancy was finally granted to the school in late October of 1976. The long-time director of the school, Sam Rondone, purchased the premises in 1984 and with his wife, Mary Jo Rondone, operated the Lakeshore Montessori School at the house until 2002. The Kane House was purchased by the new owners in September 2002 and they plan to use the building for offices.[26]

The Queen Anne Style

Interest in the Queen Anne Style was fostered in this country by the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia at which the British government had erected two half-timbered buildings for its offices and staff quarters. The buildings drew a great deal of favorable attention from the press. That, coupled with the burgeoning interest in America's Colonial past, inspired architects in America to embark on more than two decades of almost unprecedented creativity in design. Despite the name Queen Anne, which became associated with the architecture of this era, the buildings were actually inspired by the late medieval rural vernacular architecture of Tudor England.

English architect Richard Norman Shaw drew upon these sources to create a new design idiom in the 1860's, and his work was much published in the United States in the 1870's. American architect Henry Hobson Richardson was influenced by Shaw's designs and utilized Shavian elements in his own work, incorporating at the same time American Colonial features. Richardson's work was also well published. In contrast to the cold formality of High Victorian Italianate and High Victorian Gothic design, the Queen Anne style was thought to convey a sense of domestic warmth and coziness and strike a comfortable balance between usefulness and ornamentation. This new trend toward domestic informality was reflected in the interior planning of the Queen Anne house. Gone were the center or side hall plans with narrow stair halls and discrete, formal, box-like rooms. In its place was the large, inviting living hall into which guests entered and from which radiated the other principal public rooms of the house. These irregularly shaped rooms were interconnected through wide doorways or archways. The free-flowing spaces, shorter ceiling heights and open grand staircases were considered the height of modern design in their day.

The Queen Anne style was a very popular and common one in Milwaukee, since it coincided with a major boom period in the city's growth. Hundreds of examples were built throughout

[25] Milwaukee City Directory; Milwaukee City Building Permits.
[26] Milwaukee City Directory; Liska; Milwaukee City Building Permits.

the city from the early 1880's through the turn of the twentieth century. It was a style favored by a wide spectrum of the population from the wealthy to the working class. The style was characterized by an irregular, asymmetrical plan and picturesque massing enlivened with projecting bays, towers, turrets, porches and balconies. It found its most exuberant expression in wood, and the architects of the period stretched the limits of frame construction and woodworking technology in their striving for originality. The style also featured a rich and heavily textured surface treatment that combined such disparate materials and textures as brick, clapboarding, ornamental shingling, stucco, wood, and stone. Rooflines were prominent and complex and were frequently composed of tall, broad, multiple-gabled concoctions that were often combined with hip roofs. Very characteristic of the Queen Anne style was the use of a massive gable on each elevation ornamented with multiple windows and shingles, decorative panels, or half-timbering. Elaborate chimneystacks also featured prominently and contributed to the dramatic silhouette. Windows appeared in an almost infinite variety of shapes and sizes, and frequently included sash divided into numerous small lights in ornamental patterns. Leaded and stained glass sash was much utilized in the later 1880's and 1890's. Not to be dismissed is the role of technology in the popularity of the style. The wood products industry came into its own during this era and the variety of cut shingles, elaborate staircase components and interior millwork, exterior spindle work and wraparound porches would not have been possible without the mammoth amounts of raw materials being harvested from the forests and the machinery that could turn trees into house parts. Likewise, advances in glassmaking allowed for the seeming endless variety of shapes, sizes and color of windows that enlivened even the most modest of houses.

In Milwaukee these intricate elements were employed to a greater or lesser degree depending upon the wealth of the client and the taste of the architect. Well-to-do clients had larger frame houses or masonry ones embellished with generous detail. Middle class residents had smaller dwellings mostly of frame construction.

The first Queen Anne houses in Milwaukee, appearing in the early 1880's, tended to be restrained, but virtually all incorporated the projecting front bay window topped by a gable and a prominent spindle work porch with turned posts and balusters. Flower patterns and sunbursts were popular design motifs in this phase of the style. By the late 1880's, corner towers and turrets were also frequently incorporated into the design as well as Romanesque details. Numbers of Queen Anne houses remain in Milwaukee, the majority of which are cottages and middleclass frame residences. Large-scale houses from the early 1880's have all but vanished. Most of the extravagant, large-scale houses still extant date from the 1890's when the emphasis in Queen Anne design had shifted from rich surface texture and sculptural detailing to bold geometry and the expression of volume. Unfortunately, since the majority of the city's Queen Anne buildings were of frame construction, most have lost their descriptive features such as cut shingles, spindle work, and carved ornament either through neglect, poor maintenance or active removal, especially during the era when Victorian era buildings were reviled. Those that survived the first wave of defacement were later resided with modern materials. The Kane House remains one of the best preserved of Milwaukee's early, high style Queen Anne houses.

The Architect

The Kane house also reflects the design evolution of locally significant architect James Douglas. James Douglas (1823-1894) was a prolific architect who started out as a bridge and house builder in the 1840's and developed into one of the city's more respected and popular architects. He took part in the construction of the first bridge across the Milwaukee River at the foot of East Water Street and later built a bridge across the river at Kinnickinnic Avenue.

As a master builder, he directed work on the Old City Hall, the first St. Gall's Church, Holy Trinity Church, St. John's Cathedral and other early buildings.[27]

With his younger brother Alexander, James Douglas established a building company in 1847 and later established the firm of J. & A. Douglas in the late 1850's. The brothers listed themselves as carpenters, sometimes as builders and sometimes as architects-builders. For sixteen years the two brothers had a lucrative business. Douglas then left the trade and between 1863 and 1872 worked for the Northwestern Mutual life Insurance Company where his expertise in property values enabled the company to place loans and invest in real estate. Douglas' love of architecture led him to return to that profession in 1872, and he continued as an architect until the time of his death.[28]

Douglas' commissions came from both private homeowners and investors building income properties. Although he designed some churches and institutional buildings like the South Baptist Church and the Protestant Orphan Home (razed), he is chiefly known for his residential design. Much of his work consisted of middleclass clapboard cottages and remains undocumented. The bulk of Douglas' projects were built on the city's lower east side. It was said that a part of this area was nicknamed "Douglasville" because so many houses were of his design.[29] Douglas popularized some of his house design concepts by writing two articles on the subject for the Milwaukee Monthly Magazine in 1874.[30] Local historians James Buck and Howard Louis Conard credit Douglas as the founder of a distinct architectural style called, maybe somewhat tongue-in-cheek, "Termes Mordax" or anthill by people in the trades, because the complicated roofs supposedly resembled the complicated cone-shaped colonies of African termites. Douglas' plans were said to be popular throughout the state and from Florida to California although no out-of-state Douglas commissions have been identified.[31]

In his later years Douglas became increasingly involved in real estate speculation and was known to have a real flair in timing his purchases and sales. He founded and was treasurer of the Savings and Investment Association, was the first vice-president of the First Avenue Land Company and the Lincoln Heights Land Company. Douglas owned large land holdings south of Oklahoma Avenue called Douglasdale. He also served as the first president of the Northwest Chapter of the American Institute of Architects.[32]

Douglas' architectural practice served as a training ground for a later generation of architects including Alfred C. Clas, Cornelius Leenhouts, Fred Graf and Otto C. Uihling. One of his apprentices, James W. Naughton, returned to Brooklyn, New York after four years with Douglas and went on to become the Superintendent of Buildings for the Board of Education of the City of Brooklyn from 1879 to 1898 where he was responsible for the design and construction of over 100 schools.[33]

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[27] Howard Louis Conard, ed., History of Milwaukee County from Its First Settlement to the Year 1895 (Chicago: American Biographical Publishing Company, [1895]), vol. 1, pp. 463-464.
[28] Ibid.; [Frank A. Flower], History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1881), p. 1500.
[29] Annabel Douglas McArthur, "Memories of Yankee Hill," Milwaukee Sentinel, June 5, 1963, part 3, p. 1.
[30] James Douglas, "A Modern Home", The Milwaukee Monthly Magazine, April, 1874, pp. 166-168 and "Modern House," The Milwaukee Monthly Magazine, May, 1873, pp. 208-210.
[31] James S. Buck, Pioneer History of Milwaukee from 1840 to 1846 Inclusive (Milwaukee: Symes, Swain and Co., 1881), pp. 160-161; Conard, p. 464.
[32] Conard, p. 464; McArthur; Douglas Family Newspaper Clipping Collection, Milwaukee County Historical Society, Reel No. 85.
[33] Milwaukee City Directory; Milwaukee's Leading Industries (New York: Historical Publishing Co., 1886), p. 142; Landmarks Preservation Commission of New York City Designation List 235, April 23, 1991, Public School 86 (Irvington School) designed by James Naughton.

In 1893 illness forced Douglas to take his young son Earl J. into partnership under the name James Douglas & Co. and another son, R. Bruce, was put in charge of handling the real estate activities of the company. James Douglas died of spinal trouble at the age of 71 on August 31, 1894 at his residence at 1325 N. Jackson Street (razed) where he had lived since 1867. Earl J. Douglas continued his father's architectural practice through 1900 while R. Bruce Douglas went on to successfully conduct a real estate, mortgage, insurance and appraisal business and built over one hundred homes during his career.[34]

Douglas seems to have been a facile designer who kept up with the changing architectural styles and tastes of his clients. During the 1870's Douglas designed in the High Victorian Gothic and High Victorian Italianate styles. Extant examples include the Elias A. Calkins Double house built in 1875 at 1612-1614 W. Kane Place, a wood frame house that still retains its prominent gothic detail. (NRHP 1/18/1990) The Collins-Elwell-Cary house is a striking combination of Victorian Italianate and Victorian Gothic built in 1876 at 1363 N. Prospect Avenue. It is the last known Milwaukee example of the towered and turreted style for which Douglas was famous in his day and was prominently featured in illustrations of Prospect Avenue that appeared in many of the city's promotional publications of the time. (NRHP 4/7/1990)

Of the numerous commissions he is known to have executed in the 1880's, only about a dozen attributable extant examples have been identified. Most of these have been considerably altered. A number of his large-scale houses survive from the early 1890's, but these are less ornamented than his 1880's work and instead emphasize size and complex massing rather than detail. Towers feature prominently in their design. The Willard Merrilll House at 1425 N. Prospect (NRHP 4/7/1990) is an example of Douglas' later and more sedate Queen Anne design from 1889. The Charles Quarles House at 2531 N. Farwell (NRHP 7/27/1979) is an example of his later towered Queen Anne form. The Kane House is clearly the most intact and important example of his extant buildings remaining from the 1880's. It is also the most richly textured and detailed of his surviving projects. This reflects both his knowledge of the latest developments in the Queen Anne style and perhaps the influence of one of his staff architects such as Alfred C. Clas. Clas had worked his way up from draftsman to architect to partner the Douglas firm between 1880 and 1886, and seems to have designed almost exclusively in the Queen Anne style prior to the time he formed a partnership with George B. Ferry. Douglas' later work after Clas left the firm in 1887 tends to be heavier-handed, more boldly massed, and juxtaposes the disparate materials and design elements in a less confident manner.[35]

In summary, the Sanford R. Kane House ranks among the best of the city's early Queen Anne style houses, retaining virtually all of its exterior and interior features. The Kane House is the best-integrated Queen Anne design from this period known to have come from Douglas' office.

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[34] Douglas Family Clippings; Conard, p. 464; John G. Gregory, History of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Chicago and Milwaukee: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1931), Vol. III, pp. 277-280.
[35] Milwaukee City Directory; Milwaukee's Leading Industries, p. 142.

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IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Sanford Kane House at 1841 North Prospect Avenue be given historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-3, e-5 and e-6 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

e-3. Is identified with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the culture and development of the City of Milwaukee.

Sanford Kane along with his brother Alonzo epitomized the restless entrepreneurial spirit of 19th century Milwaukee. He was involved in the operation of one of the

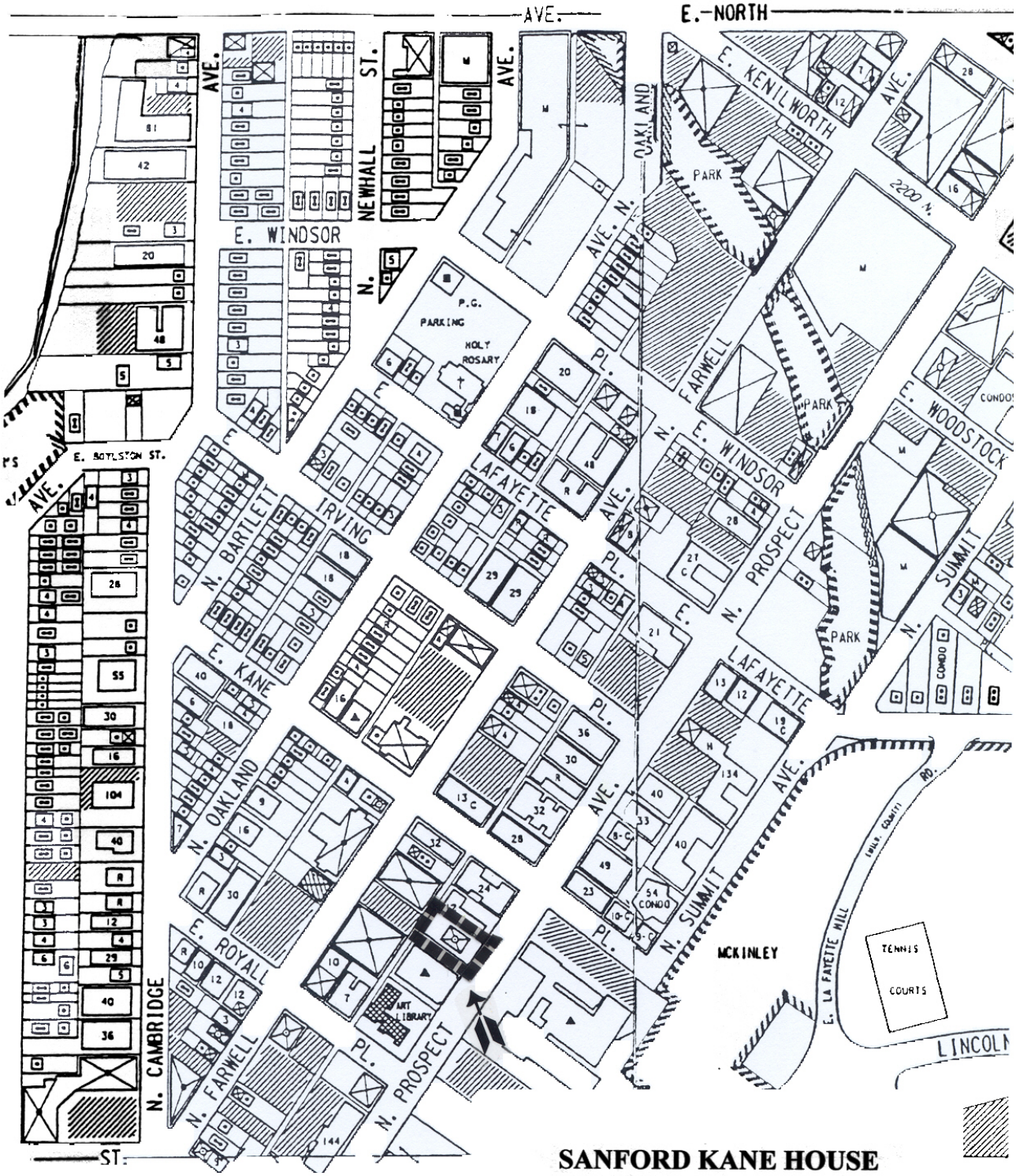
famous early hotels (American House), a mineral spring company (Siloam Mineral Spring Company), a newspaper (Milwaukee News), a building products company (Pearson, Kane & Co.) a carriage company (Brewster Carriage Company) and real estate (A.L. Kane & Co.). Aside from the street named after the family (Kane Place) no other structure can be personally tied to the life of Sanford Kane aside from his residence on Prospect Avenue.

e-5. Its embodiment of the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type or specimen.

The Kane House remains one of the best, if not the best-preserved examples of Milwaukee's early, high style Queen Anne houses. This period of house emphasized complex profiles, asymmetrically, and a profusion of building materials to create rich surface textures and a stimulating visual feast. The Kane House's use of dormers, bays, spindle work, cut shingles, brick, projecting oriels, elaborate chimneys and porches and a multitude of decorative windows tie it to mainstream design across the country. Revolutionary for its day, the early Queen Anne was the first move toward an open floor plan and less formal interior spaces. Sadly, while once common on Milwaukee's Lower East Side and Near West Side and Near South Side, most early surviving Queen Anne's have lost their detail or been altered or demolished. The Kane House is a striking example from a period when architectural design was at its most creative and flamboyant.

e-6. Its identification as the work of an artist, architect, interior designer, craftsperson or master builder whose individual works have influenced the development of the City of Milwaukee, State of Wisconsin or of the United States.

Milwaukee architect James Douglas was a prolific designer who transformed his early construction career into an architectural practice much sought after by local and regional clients. Only a limited number of identified extant examples of his work survive in Milwaukee. The Kane House was a significant commission and marks an important stylistic shift in his work away from the complex, towered Italianate and Victorian Gothic styles for which he was known in the 1870's. It shows him to be a masterful designer and one that kept up with new and rapidly changing architectural fashions



SANFORD KANE HOUSE
1841 N. PROSPECT AVENUE

X. PRESERVATION GUIDELINES

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding this historic designation. However, the Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions. Nothing in these guidelines shall be construed to prevent ordinary maintenance or the restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape since the complex profiles are an essential part of the building's Queen Anne design. The addition of skylights or new dormers are discouraged but may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street or public right of way and if they do not impact or diminish original dormers. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the appearance of the original roofing material as closely as possible. Existing dormers are to be retained. Mechanical systems and vents are to be located on portions of the roof not visible from the public right of way and should be painted out to minimize impact.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

a. Unpainted brick, terra cotta, or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural terra cotta or stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date.

b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture, strength and composition. Avoid using mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed.

c. Clean masonry only when necessary to halt deterioration and with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials on limestone, terra cotta, brick or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. Avoid the indiscriminate use of chemical products that could have an adverse reaction with the masonry materials, such as the use of acid on limestone.

d. Repair or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. Avoid using new material that is inappropriate or was unavailable when the building was constructed.

2. Wood/Metal

a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Avoid removing architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance such as the porches, balcony, oriel window, etc.

b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible and that uses appropriate wood species. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that do not duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Covering wood trim with aluminum or vinyl is not permitted.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, except as necessary to restore to the original condition. Avoid making additional openings or changes in existing fenestration by enlarging or reducing window or door openings to fit new stock window sash or new stock door sizes. Avoid changing the size or configuration of windowpanes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing that have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows or which duplicate the original, wood, 8-light configuration and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. Any leaded/stained glass windows will be retained in their present locations. Removal of Queen Anne style sash is not permitted.

2. Respect the building's stylistic period. If the replacement of doors or window sash is necessary, the replacement should duplicate the appearance and design and material of the original window sash or door. Avoid using inappropriate sash and door replacements. Avoid the filling-in or covering of openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Avoid using modern style window units, such as horizontal sliding sash or casements, in place of double-hung sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building. Vinyl or metal clad prime window units are not permitted. Glass block basement windows are not permitted but may be approved on a case-by-case basis on elevations where they will not be visible from the street.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed. If permitted, the doors or grates shall be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. Replacement features shall match the original member in scale, design, color appearance and material. Given the extraordinary level of detail on the building, the intricate spindles, shaped shingles, brackets, etc., it is recommended that existing trim be repaired with epoxies or consolidants or by inserting matching species of wood rather than entirely removed and replicated.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the east (front), south or north elevations as this would destroy the unique character of the building and its detail. Any other addition requires the approval of the Commission. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of height, roof configuration, fenestration, scale, design, color, and materials, and the degree to which it visually intrudes upon the principal elevations or is visible from the public right of way.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign or light with the historic and architectural character of the building. Plastic internally illuminated box signs are not permitted.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, or accessory structures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building if visible from the public right of way.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction, such as garages or carriage barns or accessory structures, be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure.

1. Siting

New construction must respect the historic siting of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure.

2. Scale

Overall building height and bulk, the expression of major building divisions including foundation, body and roof, and individual building components, such as overhangs and fenestration that are in close proximity to a historic building must be compatible to and sympathetic with the design of the building.

3. Form

The massing of the new construction must be compatible with the goal of maintaining the integrity of the building as a freestanding structure. The profiles of roofs and building elements that project and receded from the main block should express the same continuity established by the historic building if they are in close proximity to it.

4. Materials

The building materials that are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the building should be consistent with the colors, textures, proportions, and combinations of cladding materials used on the historic building. The physical composition of the materials may be different from that of the historic materials, but the same appearance should be maintained.

I. Guidelines for Demolition

Although demolition is not encouraged and is generally not permissible, there may be instances when demolition may be acceptable if approved by the Historic Preservation Commission. The following guidelines, with those found in subsection 9(h) of the ordinance, shall be taken into consideration by the Commission when reviewing demolition requests.

1. Condition

   Demolition requests may be granted when it can be clearly demonstrated that the condition of a building or a portion thereof is such that it constitutes an immediate threat to health and safety and is beyond hope of repair.

2. Importance

   Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is of historical or architectural significance or displays a quality of material and craftsmanship that does not exist in other structures in the area.

3. Location

   Consideration will be given to whether or not the building contributes to the neighborhood and the general street appearance and has a positive effect on other buildings in the area.

4. Potential for Restoration

   Consideration will be given to whether or not the building is beyond economically feasible repair.

5. Additions

   Consideration will be given to whether or not the proposed demolition is a later addition that is not in keeping with the original design of the structure or does not contribute to its character.