

HISTORIC PRESERVATION STUDY REPORT

MYRON T. MACLAREN HOUSE

(Written Spring 1991)

I. NAME

Historic: Myron T. MacLaren House

Common: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Alumni House

II. LOCATION

3230 East Kenwood Boulevard

Tax Key Number: 278-0403-000

Legal Description: LAKE PARK ADDN. IN SE ¼ SEC 10-7-22, LOTS 6, 7, 8, 9, 10 AND THE E. 50 FT. OF LOT 5.

III. CLASSIFICATION

Structure

IV. OWNER

Board of Regents
University of Wisconsin
c/o Assistant Chancellor for Administrative Affairs
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee
P. O. Box 413
Milwaukee, WI 53201

V. YEAR BUILT

1920-23

Architect: Fitzhugh Scott and MacDonald Mayer

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The MacLaren House occupies a large landscaped lot in an upper-income residential area about 4 ½ miles north of the central business district. The house is situated on a bluff overlooking Lake Michigan with a large sunken lawn area in the front that was formerly a formally landscaped garden.

The MacLaren House is a rambling, 2 1/2 –story, English Tudor mansion faced with imported brown Plymouth stone. The asymmetrical building is crowned with a tall, gabled, variegated, green and purple Vermont slate roof pierced by numerous chimneystacks with tall chimney

pots. The entry front facing the lawn is fenestrated with numerous leaded casement windows of various sizes placed randomly to respond to floor plan requirements. Many of the window sashes have highly ornamental leaded glazing patterns and some incorporate antique hand-painted armorial panels. The principal features of the façade included an arched loggia opening off the drawing room, the main entrance recessed within an arched portal, the massive staircase oriel with its cartouche emblazoned parapet, and the crenellated corner tower containing the entrance to the service wing.

The north, south and east elevations are all treated in a similar manner to the façade. Each has numerous windows of different shapes and sizes, placed to respond to floor plan requirements. The lakefront, or east elevation, features a large sunroom.

The exterior of the house is finely crafted of high quality materials and displays many hand wrought decorative features. Among the outstanding materials evident are the imported Plymouth stone exterior cladding, the superb slate roof laid in the authentic English late medieval manner of using extraordinary thick rough-hewn slates at the eaves tapering to thinner smaller slates at the ridge and the hand forged lead rainwater heads, gutters and downspouts. High quality workmanship is evident in the carved sandstone window castings, drip moulds, numerous small figural carvings, and the armorial escutcheon over the staircase oriel window. The house's leaded glass is especially noteworthy, particularly the fine collection of antique hand-painted heraldic panels incorporated into the modern leaded glass sash.

VII. SIGNIFICANCE

The Myron T. MacLaren House is architecturally significant as one of the city's finest Tudor style mansions. It displays a fineness of materials and craftsmanship nearly unequaled in Milwaukee. It is also significant as one of the major works of important twentieth century architects, Fitzhugh Scott and MacDonald Mayer.

VIII. HISTORY

Myron T. MacLaren was born in Milwaukee on August 12, 1886, the only son of William MacLaren. Myron MacLaren's mother died shortly after his birth and he lived with his paternal grandparents in Montreal, Ontario until he was nine years of age. He then returned to Milwaukee and attended the old Milwaukee academy and went on to graduate from Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. His father spent most of his career as the general manager of Gimbel Brothers department store, but also worked briefly for the insurance firm of Briggs, MacLaren & Schenk (1894) and was secretary of the Skidmore Shoe and Clothing Company (1897). William MacLaren and his son, Myron, lived for many years at 1730 East Irving Place (razed) near Prospect Avenue.

Myron MacLaren's professional career began in 1909 when he worked as assistant teller at the Fidelity Trust Company located on East Wisconsin Avenue. He subsequently worked in bond sales and is listed at offices on East Wisconsin Avenue and Mason Street. In 1916 he became the vice-president of Fox Hoyt & Co., bonds and mortgage brokers, located in the First Wisconsin National Bank Building on East Water Street. He worked there through 1917. Morris F. Hoyt, William Woods Plankinton and Alfred G. Ellingson were other officers of the firm. In 1917 MacLaren served as the civilian assistant to Major Edward A. Fitzpatrick who was in charge of administering the draft in Wisconsin.

In 1910 Myron and his father took up separate residences with William moving to 2005 North Lake Drive (at the intersection of Lafayette and Windsor Places, now razed) and Myron listed at 1570 North Prospect Avenue, which was the old D. M. Benjamin mansion, now razed. Myron subsequently moved to the North Point neighborhood at 2202 East Woodstock Place (1911-1912) and then Myron and his father shared a residence at 2274 North Summit Avenue (razed) from 1913 until his father's death in 1917.

Myron MacLaren married Gertrude Schlesinger Roller in 1918. Gertrude was the daughter of wealthy industrialist Ferdinand Schlesinger and had earlier married Austrian army officer Oskar Roller in 1909. The Rollers did not live in Milwaukee. Gertrude applied for a divorce in September of 1917 and had resumed living at the family home at 2045 East Lafayette Place (razed). Before the divorce became final in September of 1918, Roller had died, leaving Gertrude a widow.

Myron was soon taken into the Schlesinger family business, Milwaukee Coke and Gas Company, where he was given the position of third vice-president. Gertrude's brother, Henry J. Schlesinger, was president of the company in that year; Charles Ray was first vice-president and treasurer; Armin A. Schlesinger, another of Gertrude's brothers, was second vice-president, while Wilmot Saeger was secretary. Gertrude's father, Ferdinand Schlesinger, was chairman of the board.

As newlyweds, Myron and Gertrude lived at 2015 North Lake Drive, a house originally built for Ida Lane in 1902 and designed by Elmer Grey. The wealthy, young MacLarens soon embarked on an ambitious construction project, the building of a mansion on East Kenwood Boulevard. The permit for the impressive Tudor Revival house was taken out on July 19, 1920, and the permit shows that the estimated construction cost was \$85,000 although the house actually cost several times that amount to complete. Work on the foundation was finished by August and contractors had reached the third story by late November of 1920. Work was delayed the following spring, possibly due to the death of Gertrude's father, Ferdinand Schlesinger, who passed away while en route to California on January 2, 1921. It is likely that part of the Schlesinger fortune went into the construction of the Kenwood Boulevard mansion.

Work on the mansion began again in June of 1921 when the roof was put on and during the remainder of the year the stone veneering was applied and the windows were installed. The finish work on the house slowed in early 1922 and did not resume in earnest until June. Floors were tiled, the chimney was built, and plumbers and electricians were at work on the interior while some interior trim was applied. Plastering was also begun. Finishing work on the interior took most of the spring of 1923, and the city's building inspection department approved the completed building on June 21, 1923. A temporary two-car garage was built later for \$500 in 1936.

Myron MacLaren embarked on a new business career in 1923. MacLaren took the position of first vice-president of the Mitchell Street State Bank, headed by south side contractor Sylvester J. Wabiszewski.

Myron and Gertrude MacLaren were apparently separated and then divorced between 1926 and 1927. Gertrude retained the Kenwood Boulevard mansion while MacLaren moved to the Hotel Astor. City directories indicate he had a new wife, Elizabeth, and that he was working as the manager of Farnum, Winter & Company, a business that handled stocks, bonds, grain and agricultural futures in the First Wisconsin National Bank Building on East Water Street. He

then worked in a similar capacity for Charles D. Barney & Co. and E. A. Pierce Co. City directories show MacLaren with a different wife, Mary, from 1930 through 1934. They lived at 5061 North Lake Drive in Whitefish Bay (1930-32) and then at 1347 North Prospect Avenue (1933-24), the north half of a double house that was later razed for the extension of Ogden Avenue.

Gertrude, meanwhile, had taken a new husband, Clifford L. McMillen, on January 23, 1928. The McMillens lived at the Kenwood Boulevard mansion. Clifford L. McMillen was born in Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin, on November 19, 1889, the son of George Wilbur McMillen and Nellie Gosselin McMillen. The family also had a daughter, Florence (Mrs. Wiedemann).

After attending the public schools in Fort Atkinson, McMillen attended the University of Wisconsin from which he graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1911. He subsequently worked as a special agent and then as a field representative in Madison for the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company. McMillen interrupted his employment to serve in the Army during World War I, but returned to Northwestern Mutual after the war. McMillen was promoted to General Agent in Milwaukee in 1919, which resulted in his moving permanently to Milwaukee. McMillen married Lorraine Hartman of Chicago on October 22, 1912. The McMillens were apparently divorced or Clifford McMillen was widowed around 1927. He married Gertrude Schlesinger MacLaren, as stated above, in 1928. The McMillens vacated the Kenwood Boulevard mansion, leaving Charles Werner as caretaker of the property, while they traveled or lived elsewhere.

Myron MacLaren was single again in 1935 when he moved to the Cudahy Apartments. In the 1930s Clifford McMillen and Gertrude were divorced. Myron MacLaren and Gertrude were remarried in 1936 when they resumed living at the Kenwood Boulevard mansion. With them were their children from their various marriages: Gordon, Mary, Peggy, Douglas and Gertrude. MacLaren continued in the stock brokerage business, as a solicitor with Winthrop Mitchell & Co. and Fenner & Beane.

After being in failing health for two years, Myron MacLaren died at the Kenwood Boulevard house on Sunday, May 18, 1941, at the age of 54. His obituaries indicate that he was widely known in society circles and had been a member of the University Club, Athletic Club, Milwaukee Country Club, and the Milwaukee Club.

Gertrude MacLaren continued to live at the Kenwood Boulevard mansion as a widow through 1947, after which time she married Theron C. MacLeod (also spelled McLead). The name MacLeod/McLead does not appear in the city directories except in 1949; so he was apparently from outside the Milwaukee area, and the MacLeods apparently lived outside Milwaukee after their marriage. Gertrude sold the Kenwood Boulevard mansion to what is now the University of Wisconsin on February 17, 1949 for \$75,000. It is said that the University purchased some of the furnishing for an additional \$5,000. The MacLaren mansion was subsequently known as Downer College Hall from 1950 through 1952 and then as Kenwood Hall, a women's dormitory for the then State Teachers College, now the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. Since the mid-1960's, the building has been used as a conference center and most recently, as an alumni center.

The Architect

Fitzhugh Scott was born in Milwaukee in 1881, the son of Frederick Meyers Scott and Mary Evelyn Caswell Scott. Fitzhugh was one of seven children who included Fred M. Scott,

Laurence Scott, Myrtle Scott West, Enid Scott Holbrook (Mrs. Harold), (Mrs. James T.), and Catherine Scott Merrill (Mrs. William E.). Fitzhugh's paternal grandfather was said to have been in the hardware and feed business on today's Plankinton Avenue until his death in 1884. City directories, however, list no Scott in such a business at that location. Fitzhugh's maternal grandfather had built and owned the old Caswell Building. When John Plankinton agreed to erect a hotel provided a building site be donated, Caswell made the first contribution of \$1,000 toward the purchase price.

Fitzhugh Scott was raised in Atlanta, Georgia and received his early education there in the local public schools. In 1897 he entered the Georgia Institute of Technology, which he attended for three years. He then worked for an architect for a year and a half. He subsequently enrolled in Columbia University in New York City and graduated in architecture in 1905. In 1905, Fitzhugh moved to Milwaukee to which his parents had returned around 1902. Fitzhugh lived with his parents at 2328 East Back Bay, the former Charles Sprague Forsyth House. Frederick M. Scott worked in the real estate, insurance and investment departments of the Wisconsin Trust Company and held this position until his retirement in 1910. Frederick died on September 22, 1922 at the age of 61. Fitzhugh's widowed mother continued to live at 2328 East Back Bay through 1918.

Fitzhugh Scott's architectural career in Milwaukee began with work for the architectural firm of Alexander C. Eschweiler. Scott worked for Eschweiler until 1908 when he opened his own practice with offices in the Pabst Building. Fitzhugh married Elise Landrum in 1909 in Atlanta, Georgia. The couple had three children, Fitzhugh, Jr. (born in 1910), William Frederick (Born in 1911), and Elise Warren (born in 1913). The newlyweds moved to 2728 North Summit Avenue where they lived through 1924.

In 1912 Scott moved his office from the Pabst Building to 730 North Jefferson Street (razed) and shared this space with his brother Frederick M., Jr., who sold real estate. In 1914 the two brothers formed Scott & Scott, an architectural firm. Fitzhugh was on his own again in 1915 when his brother left Milwaukee. Frederick M., Jr., later died in Foley, Arkansas.

Fitzhugh Scott continued to practice on his own at the Jefferson Street office until he entered the U.S. Army in 1918. After the war, Scott re-opened his practice in the Colby-Abbot Building at 330 East Mason Street (a.k.a. 753-61 North Milwaukee Street) in 1919. A year later, Scott took into partnership McDonald Mayer under the firm name Scott & Mayer. In 1924 the firm moved to new offices at 724 East Mason Street (razed). In 1925-26 the partnership dissolved. Little is know about Mayer since he only appears in the city directories during the years of his partnership with Scott.

Scott practiced alone until 1931, when he took Ralph Kloppenburg into his office, first as a draftsman and later as an architect. Like Scott himself, Kloppenburg had worked for Eschweiler and Eschweiler in 1928 and 1929. During the Depression, Kloppenburg was let go. Beginning in 1934 he worked out of his home.

Fitzhugh Scott's obituaries state that Fitzhugh, Jr., was associated with his father's firm beginning in 1935, but city directories show that the son worked as a clerk for the village of River Hills until 1938, after which time he joined his father's practice. The firm name remained "Fitzhugh Scott" until the late 1940's when it was changed to "Fitzhugh Scott-Fitzhugh Scott, Jr."

The firm left downtown Milwaukee to relocate its offices to 5623 North Lake Drive in 1952. In 1956 Ralph Kloppenburg rejoined the Scott's, along with his son, Jack R. Kloppenburg, under the firm name Scott Kloppenburg Scott. Fitzhugh Scott, Sr. died of a heart attack on Saturday, October 12, 1957 at this home at 7800 North River Road in River Hills, where he had lived since 1925. He was 75 years old at the time of this death. His obituaries state that he had been a member of a number of clubs in Milwaukee, but resigned from them after the death of his wife, Elise, in 1951. Scott was known as a quiet man who preferred work to any other activity and preferred functional architecture. In 1948 Scott was honored by the American Institute of Architects for advancing his profession.

Scott's many architectural projects included: the Armin Schlesinger house (1911-12); the Caleb Johnson house (1913); the Harold Seaman house; the W. R. Helmholtz house; the Myron T. MacLaren House (1920) with Meyer; the Dr. Curtis A. Evens house (1923) with Mayer; the Blatz Temple of Music in Washington ark; the south wing of the protestant Home for the Aged (1925); the Y.W.C.A. activities building; the Milwaukee Country Club; the Camp Randall Memorial Practice Building at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; several buildings at the Milwaukee Country Day School; the Allen Bradley Plant; and St. Mark's Church. Scott had a fondness for hospital buildings since he thought that they benefited the largest number of people. During his career he designed an addition to the Milwaukee Infants Home at 2301-07 East Bradford (razed), the tuberculosis hospital on the Veterans Administration Hospital grounds; the Milwaukee Children's Hospital and its addition at Seventeenth Street and West Wisconsin Avenue.

His son, Fitzhugh, Jr., continued Scott's architectural practice, under the name Scott & Kloppenburg in 1958. The Kloppenburgs subsequently set up their own firm and Fitzhugh, Jr., continued on his own at the North Lake Drive office under the name Fitzhugh Scott Architect. In 1966 Scott took David T. Kahler into his practice as a draftsman and later architect. The firm became Fitzhugh Scott Architects and Planners in 1974. In 1975 the firm was reconstructed with Scott as chairman of the board and treasurer, Kahler as president and Thomas M. Slater as vice president and secretary. The firm's new name became Kahler Slater Fitzhugh Scott with offices at 733 North Van Buren Street. In 1977 Fitzhugh Scott, Jr., moved to Vail, Colorado although he remained associated with the firm through 1983, after which time Scott is no longer listed.

In 1979 David N. Torphy assumed the position of secretary and treasurer of the firm; in 1981 Kahler became chairman of the board and retained the presidency while Charles Engberg became a vice president. In 1983 the firm became Kahler Slater Torphy Engberg, Inc. After 1987, when Engberg left the firm, the architectural practice was known as Kahler Slater Torphy Architects.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Myron T. MacLaren House, 3230 East Kenwood Boulevard be designated as a City of Milwaukee Historic Structure as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1, e-5, e-6 and e-7 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 308-81(2)(e), of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

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 restoration and/or replacement of documented original elements.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape and dormers. Skylights and solar collector panels may be added to roof surfaces if they are not visible from the street. Avoid making changes to the roof shape that would alter the building height, roofline or pitch. Retain the existing slate roofing and metal rainwater heads, gutters and downspouts. If replacement is necessary, duplicate the appearance of the existing materials as closely as possible. The slate roof is one of the finest examples of the slater's art in Wisconsin and its preservation is essential to the building's significance.

B. Materials

1. Masonry

- a. Unpainted brick or stone should not be painted or covered. Avoid painting or covering natural stone. This is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint or coating at a later date.
- b. Repoint defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, style, texture and strength. 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 limestone 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.
- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Avoid covering architectural features with new materials that are inappropriate or were unavailable when the building was constructed.

C. Windows and Doors

1. Retain existing window and door openings. Retain the existing configuration of panes, sash, surrounds and sills, doors, and hardware, except as necessary to restore the building to its original conditions. 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 and that obscure the prime windows as little as possible.
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 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 in place of the existing sash or the substitution of units with glazing configurations not appropriate to the style of the building.

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 and appearance.

E. Additions

The north, south and west elevations and roofline are integral to the structure's architectural significance. Additions require 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.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign shall require the approval of the Commission. Approval will be based on the compatibility of the proposed sign with the historic and architectural character of the building.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, walls, fencing and light fixtures shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building.