

**HISTORIC DESIGNATION STUDY REPORT
JANUARY 2013**

I. NAME

Historic: George Knowles, Jr. House

Common Name:

II. LOCATION

1879 North Cambridge Avenue

Legal Description - Tax Key No. 3550034000
CAMBRIDGE SUBD PART LOT 6 SEC 21 & LOTS 15-16 BLK
198 ROGERS' ADDN IN NE & SE ¼ SEC 21-7-22 BLOCK 242
LOT 4

III. CLASSIFICATION

Site

IV. OWNER

Susan E. Ellman
1879 North Cambridge Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202

ALDERMAN Ald. Nik Kovac 2nd Aldermanic District

NOMINATOR Susan E. Ellman

V. YEAR BUILT

1879 (Tax Rolls 1874 through 1886)

ARCHITECT: Unknown

VI. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

THE AREA

The George Knowles, Jr. House is located on the city's Lower East Side, just over a mile from the Central Business District. The neighborhood is predominantly residential with nearby Brady Street forming a modestly scaled commercial district that runs from west to east between Humboldt and Prospect Avenues and forms the southern boundary of Cambridge Avenue. The area historically has been a mix of mansions and working class cottages with distinctive boundaries between the economic classes. To the east Prospect Avenue was known as one of the city's premier residential thoroughfares with mansions lining the street from Juneau Avenue through to Summit Avenue. Prominent middle class and upper middle class residences were found to the west. Cambridge Avenue, once a mix of architect designed mansions and upper middle houses formed the dividing line between rich and poor. Immediately west was Warren Avenue, built up by Polish Immigrants. Houses there were smaller, more cottage like in appearance and there were often two or more buildings per lot. Known today as East Village, this Polish enclave was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2004.

The houses constructed on this portion of Cambridge Avenue, south of Boylston Street, were mostly frame. Fire insurance maps show that seven were clad in brick or stone. These were fairly sizable dwellings and were occupied by well-to-do families: Charles B. Manville whose firm would later merge with the Johns company and become the building products industry giant Johns Manville; Harold S. Falk of the Falk Corporation (number 315 later 1869); Henry C. Quarles investments and securities (number 265 later 1763); Frederick C. Best vice-president of First Wisconsin Trust (number 285 later 1819). Kossuth Kent Kennan lived at Number 309 later 1859 North Cambridge. He was a prominent attorney who was famous for his early railroad cases as counsel for the Wisconsin Central Railroad. He was the originator of the Wisconsin Tax Commission and help to lay the foundation for modernizing Wisconsin's Tax System. His son, George F. Kennan (1904-2005) was "one of the giant figures in modern American diplomatic history. George Kennan was one of the authors of the "containment" doctrine that shaped American policy toward the Soviet Union during the Cold War era, and he served as ambassador to the Soviet Union from 1950 to 1953." ([Wisconsin Lawyer, The Kennan Family online history at www.wisbar.org/am/template.cfm?section=wisconsin_lawyer&template=/cm/conten](http://www.wisbar.org/am/template.cfm?section=wisconsin_lawyer&template=/cm/conten))

Changes to Cambridge Avenue began occurring in the 1920s when two apartment buildings, 1743 North Cambridge (George Zagel architect 1928) and 1755 North Cambridge (George Zagel architect, 1928), were built in response to the growing density of the neighborhood. Many of the prominent families began to relocate and the large houses were converted into apartments and rooming houses. Between 1959 and 1964 nine additional apartments were constructed on the sites of the grand old houses. Groom family history relates that the owner of 1903 North Cambridge (Emily Groom) and the owner next door at 1879 North Cambridge were both approached by developers but refused to sell the houses and see them get demolished for apartment buildings.

Description

The George Knowles, Jr. house was built in 1879 at a time when Milwaukee was expanding rapidly and fine cream brick houses were being erected at a staggering rate. Nevertheless, relatively few houses of this design remain in Milwaukee today. Today the house is an outstanding structure in its lower east side neighborhood and catches the attention of passers-by.

The house is located on a 40-foot by 150-foot lot on the west side of Cambridge Avenue and is set back behind a grassy lawn and foundation plantings. To the north (right) is the matching house addressed as 1903 North Cambridge Avenue also built in 1879 and to the left (south) is a 1960s apartment building.

The George Knowles, Jr. house is an exceptional 2-1/2- story, combination gable/hip roof, cream brick (brick veneered), Victorian Gothic style house that retains nearly all of its original character. The house rests on a cut limestone foundation and the roof currently has asphalt shingles. The focal point of the east-facing front elevation is a hip-roofed porch topped with iron cresting. The front and side gables retain their Gothic-inspired details, a fine trefoil paneled form. The side elevations facing north and south are fenestrated with randomly placed double hung windows placed according to the needs of the interior. The rear elevation is simple in character with a few small double hung windows and an exit door which once had some form of enclosure.

Alterations have been made to the house but do not lessen the significance of the building. All or nearly all windows have been replaced. Based on the matching house next door (Murdock / Groom house), the George Knowles Jr. House would have originally had two-over-two windows. At some point in time the current one-over-one sash have been installed. A rectangular window on the north elevation at the second story was cut in at some undetermined date to ventilate a bathroom on the second floor. A small rectangular window was added to the north gable at some time in the 20th century. The original cream brick has been left in its weathered state. The

current owner decided to retain this appearance when the house next door was cleaned during Barbara Nestingen's ownership. The house originally had a wood shingle roof according to fire insurance maps from 1888 through 1926. Today the roof is topped with contemporary dimensional asphalt shingles and the main chimney has been modified. The chimney originally would have had a corbelled top and possibly paneled sides which was typical of the era for a fine house.

Exceptional details of the house include the front windows which are trimmed with segmental-arched brick window heads, limestone sills and corbelled brick aprons beneath the sills. The apex of the front gable features a fine trefoil paneled gable ornament. While these types of features were once common in Milwaukee they now remain on only a few cream brick houses in Milwaukee. The front double doors, which are original to the house, are trimmed with elaborate bolection moldings which project significantly from the face of the door and add shadow and visual interest. This type of treatment seems to have generally passed out of favor by the mid 1880s. These doors are now painted in contrast to the doors next door at 1903 North Cambridge Avenue. The current owner rebuilt the missing front porch railings and consulted with Historic Preservation staff and the staff's publication As Good As New. While the porch posts still stand the decorative arches and brackets were removed long ago. The porch cresting is original. The current owner added a rear deck with railings to match the front porch

The few minor alterations to the exterior do not have a negative impact on the overall significance of the house. Historic photos and fire insurance maps show that an open terrace was located to the south of the covered porch in the early 20th century. This was probably a later addition since the stone foundation at the front is clearly meant to be seen and not covered. It is not known when the terrace was built or when it was removed.

There is no driveway or garage with the house as the building occupies most of its lot. A wood privacy fence surrounds the back yard, installed in the 1980s.

HISTORY OF 1879 NORTH CAMBRIDGE AVENUE

The lot occupied by 1879 North Cambridge Avenue was once part of a 129-acre tract owned by Joel Parker and his wife, Mary. An East Coast investor, Parker never lived in Wisconsin. Joel Parker (1795-1875) was born in Jaffrey, New Hampshire, and began the practice of law in 1816 in Keene, New Hampshire. He went on to become a chief justice of New Hampshire and spent his later years in Massachusetts where he was a professor at the Harvard Law School. (S. G. Griffin, A History of the Town of Keene (Keene, New Hampshire: Sentinel Printing Company, 1904), pp. 633-634) Parker began acquiring property in Milwaukee in 1847. The 1858 Walling Map (Milwaukee County Historical Society collection) shows that Parker's tract was irregular in shape and roughly bounded by today's Warren Avenue, Brady Street, Prospect Avenue, Kane Place, Newhall Avenue, North Avenue, and the Milwaukee River. (Abstract of title, 1741 North Farwell Avenue; H. F. Walling, Map of the County of Milwaukee, Wisconsin (New York: M. H. Tyler, 1858)

The land was platted as the Cambridge Subdivision in 1868 and was probably named after the residence of Judge Parker in Massachusetts. (Milwaukee Sentinel, June 26, 1875, p. 8, col.1) The land remained undeveloped, however, until 1874 when the demand for residential property in this part of the city led to an auction of lots in the vicinity of the intersection of Brady Street and Farwell Avenue. In an article entitled "Extraordinary Success of the Auction Sale of Lots in Cambridge Subdivision," the Milwaukee Sentinel described the lively bidding on lots in Blocks 236, 237, 239, 240, 241, and 242 {the location of the house that is the subject of this nomination} and concluded that what "was thought a hazardous venture by many" turned out to be overwhelmingly successful. The article also reminisced about how a portion of the property was once part of the old Civil War Camp Sigel and later used as a baseball park. The baseball park's enclosure had been removed in 1871 and thereafter used by amateur players who had to share the grounds with roaming pigs and cows. ("Extraordinary Success of the Auction Sale

of Lots in Cambridge Subdivision. The site of Camp Sigel and the Base-Ball Park Under the Hammer";: Milwaukee Sentinel, June 15, 1874, p. 8, col. 3; February 18, 1871, p. 4, col. 2; July 8, 1872, p. 4, col. 4; August 29, 1873, p. 8, col. 2)

The west side of Cambridge Avenue, Block 242, was platted as one long uninterrupted street from Brady Street to Boylston Street. Block 242 of Cambridge Subdivision consisted of 32 lots. Lot 1 (today's 1913 N. Cambridge, formerly 963 then 331) was at the north end of the subdivision, just north of where Kane Place terminates at Cambridge Avenue. Lots at this time were valued at \$600 and in the 1880s that value increased to \$800 with lots closest to Brady Street assessed at over \$1,000.

The construction of single family houses began in the 1870s and continued through the turn of the Twentieth Century. North of 1913 N. Cambridge Avenue, the land was later subdivided as part of Cambridge Subdivision No. 2 and a series of duplexes were constructed north to Boylston Street between 1908 and the mid-1920s.

Tax rolls show Mr. McLaren owned all but three of the lots in 1875. Two of those, Lots 24 and 25 (Number 879 and 875), showed modest improvements of \$250 each, equivalent to a small one story frame cottage. These lots were closer to Brady Street. The Milwaukee Sentinel records that owners M. T. Massey and Harry/Ira Odell had built one story cottages on their lots for \$800 each and that the builder was E. Hertzler. (Milwaukee Sentinel. 1874 December 31, p. 2, col. 4)

In 1876 Lots 20 and 21 (Number 893/269 and 889/265) were owned by Henry Bussey and a \$1500 improvement was constructed there. This improvement was documented in the Milwaukee Sentinel and indicated that James Douglas had prepared plans for a "neat cottage" for Mr. Bussey. (Milwaukee Sentinel 1875 December 4, p. 8, col. 2).

In 1877 Lot 1 (formerly 963/331, today's 1913 N. Cambridge) showed an \$1800 improvement and the city directories show that Thomas B. Oliver, relative of Joseph B. Oliver who lived nearby, was the owner and occupant.

KNOWLES OWNERSHIP 1879-1902

With four houses already on the block, George Knowles Sr. purchased Lots 3 and 4 around 1878 or early 1879. The 1879 tax rolls show improvements of \$3500 on each of the two parcels. These were the first brick houses on the block. Later years would see a handful masonry or partial masonry houses being built. The two houses were identical or virtually identical in form and detail. They apparently were given as wedding presents to Knowles' son George, Jr. and daughter Sophia and their respective spouses a few years after each had married. The two siblings may have been close and enjoyed living in close proximity to one another. George Knowles Sr. was shown as owner of these two properties into the 1880s and his widow Louise was still shown on the tax rolls as owner of 1879 North Cambridge Avenue in 1902. (City of Milwaukee Tax Rolls, 1892, page 1024, Box 42-D)

George Knowles Sr. (May 18, 1822-November 27, 1894) was born in London, England in 1822 and with his parents came to America at the age of 12. They first settled in New York. George then moved to Wisconsin in the 1840s and took up farming. George relocated to Milwaukee in 1864 and worked as a grain commission merchant with offices in the Chamber of Commerce Building downtown. He was elected arbitrator of the Chamber of Commerce in 1872 and his purchase of 300,000 bushels of wheat was said to be the largest on record at that time. Newspaper accounts show him traveling to London, England to see his brother in 1879. Upon his return to the grain exchange on September 4, 1879, he was ushered "into the pit with hearty grips and cries of "Speech, speech". This was the same year he commissioned the two houses on Cambridge Avenue for two of his children.

Knowles was described as “venerable” and also as a retiring person who disliked publicity. He retired from the Chamber of Commerce on January 1, 1891. He was in poor health during his last year and died at his Cass Street home on November 27, 1894 at the age of 72. Funeral services were at the home and the burial was private, in keeping with the family’s dislike of attention. (Milwaukee Sentinel 1872 April 2, p. 4, col. 6; 1873 September 6, p. 8, col. 1; 1879 May 19, p. 5 col. 2, May 22, p. 8, col. 4, August 29, p. 2, col. 4, September 5, p. 8, col. 3, “George Knowles Is Dead. A Once Familiar Figure on ‘Change Passed Away Last Evening.” November 28, 1894 p. 3, col.2; November 29, 1894; 35th Annual Report of the Milwaukee Grain & Stock Exchange / 35th Annual Report of the Trade and Commerce of Milwaukee for the year ending December 31, 1892, and the fiscal year of the Chamber of Commerce, ending April 3d 1893, Milwaukee (Evening Wisconsin Company, 1893) accessed on line January 4, 2012)

George Knowles’ widow Louise eventually moved to an apartment on Prospect Avenue and died on Saturday May 30, 1908 at the age of 76. The funeral services were held at George Jr.’s house. He was by then living on Marietta Avenue. Interment was at Forest Home Cemetery. (Milwaukee Sentinel Sunday May 31, 1908 p. 6 col. 1; Milwaukee City Directories)

Known children of George Knowles Sr. included Francis A. (Frank), Charles, George Jr., Sheridan, Richard H., Sophia and Jennie. A James Knowles, listed as working in the grain and wool and fur business independent of the rest of the family, may also have been a son or brother to George Knowles Sr. The Knowles family lived for many years at 495 Cass Street (today’s 800 block between Wells Street and Kilbourn Avenue). George Knowles Sr. and his wife Louise never lived on Cambridge Avenue. After George’s death in 1894, various family members continued to live at the Cass Street house with his widow Louise.

Daughter Sophia Knowles married Lafayette Murdock (May 25, 1848 – August 29, 1892) at the First Baptist Church in Milwaukee on August 21, 1876. Her story is related in the study report for 1903 North Cambridge Avenue.

Son George Knowles Jr. (November 1853 – December 23, 1916) married Mary Black in 1877 and had six children: Louise (born c. 1878), George K. (born 1879), Mary Belle (born 1880), William A. (born 1882), Elmer (born 1887) and Eleanor (born 1888). Another person, Jesse Knowles (born 1879) was living with the family later and was of unknown parentage. When the George Knowles Jr. family moved into their new Cambridge Avenue house from 344 Walker Street (today’s 316 West Walker Street) they has two housemaids living on the premises, Allena Lang age 23 in 1880, and Minnie Fennel age 21 in 1880. Allena Lang had been born in Germany while Minnie Fennel had been born in Wisconsin. (Census records 1880) As more children were added to the family, the house must have been a lively place

George Jr. worked for his father’s commission house in the Chamber of Commerce building and is listed variously as a clerk or bookkeeper. He joined the Chamber of Commerce in 1876 at the age of 23. George Jr. became the secretary and later the vice-president of the Autonomic Fire Service Company in 1888. In 1891 George Jr. returned to his father’s business to take over when his father retired. The business employed a number of the family members at different times including brother Francis Knowles and brother Sheridan Knowles. Sheridan later worked as an insurance agent.

George Jr. established a new business entity in 1894, the same year his father died, with a new partner, Cassius C. Rogers, called Rogers & Knowles. His brother Francis worked for the new firm as well. The following year, 1895, George Jr. formed a different partnership once again called Gee & Knowles, stock brokers on Broadway, with Warren Gee. George Jr.’s son George K. was also part of business.

The person of Warren Gee requires additional research. Warren Gee appears in the list of members of the Chamber of Commerce in 1868 and 1874. He is listed as “capitalist” in 1868 then as produce broker in 1874. Gee was from Spring Lake, Michigan. His relationship to the

Knowles family is not known at this time but he lived a couple doors down from George Jr. on Cambridge Avenue. Gee later moved to today's 2859 North Marietta Avenue in 1897 and the records show he took out the permit for construction of this house on October 3, 1896. Interestingly, Warren Gee stops being listed in the directories in 1903 and that same year the George Knowles Jr. family moves to Gee's Marietta Avenue home. There is a burial marker at Spring Lake, Michigan that lists a Warren Gee 1830-1905. It is perhaps the same person who partnered with George Knowles, Jr. (Spring Lake Cemetery (East Side) Spring Lake Township, Sec 14. Accessed on line at <http://ottawa.migenweb.net/cemeteries/springlake/SpringLakeEast.html>; Tenth Annual Statement of the Trade and Commerce of Milwaukee for the year 1867 reported to the Chamber of Commerce by Secretary J. Langston, Secretary. (Milwaukee: J. H. Yewdale, 1868), page 73; 35th Annual Report of the Milwaukee Grain & Stock Exchange. 35th Annual Report of the Trade and Commerce of Milwaukee for the Year ending December 31, 1892, and Fiscal Year of the Chamber of Commerce, ending April 3d 1893. (Milwaukee: Evening Wisconsin Company, 1893), page 12, 14)

It is not known why the Knowles family moved from Cambridge Avenue to the Marietta Avenue house. The latter was newer but was a clapboard sided house and somewhat less impressive. Its architectural details have been obscured by asbestos siding and the removal of the front porch so maybe it was a house more appealing to the Knowles's in 1903.

George Knowles, Jr. died December 13, 1913 at the age of 60. His widow Mary and children Eleanor B., William, Mary Belle continued to live on in the Marietta Avenue into the 1930s. (City Directories)

NORRIS OCCUPANCY 1903-1916

The Henry F. Norris family became the next owners/occupants of the Cambridge Avenue house. They had previously lived at today's 1444 North Marshall Street, no longer extant. Henry F. Norris shows up in the city tax rolls and the city directories at the Cambridge Avenue house in 1903. Henry worked as the superintendent of agencies at the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company at their Broadway Street building.

Norris died on May 28, 1916. His widow Jennie D. subsequently moved to an apartment at 454 Wyoming Place (today's 2314 East Wyoming Place).

CONNELL OCCUPANCY 1917-1919

Matthew J. Connell and his family were the third occupants of the Cambridge Avenue house. They lived here from 1917 through 1919. Connell was the cashier of the Cudahy Brothers Company, beef and pork packers. The company had its packing house in Cudahy and a wholesale market on Jackson Street as well as retail markets on Brown Street, Locust Street and Kinnickinnic Avenue. The Norris's previously lived at 403-1/2 Greenwich Avenue (today's 1915 East Greenwich). They moved to 526 Murray (no longer extant) in 1919 when Connell became the treasurer of Cudahy Brothers.

TAPPING OCCUPANCY 1920

Edgar J. Tapping Jr. was a special agent for the Northwestern Mutual Life Insurance Company and had Roswell H. Pickford as a partner (Tapping & Pickford). He and his wife Marion and children John S. and Watson G. lived on Cambridge Avenue briefly in 1920 then moved to 191 Prospect Avenue (today's 1619 N. Prospect no longer extant) in 1921.

VAN BRUNT OCCUPANCY 1922-1936

Bradlee (sometimes spelled Bradley) Van Brunt family moved to Cambridge Avenue from 491 Jefferson (today's 825 N. Jefferson) in 1922. Bradlee worked at the Whitney & Thomas agency. He was district manager and sold insurance for Mutual Life Insurance Company of New York.

Van Brunt and his wife Laura would move to River Hills in 1936 and 1879 North Cambridge Avenue is listed as vacant that year.

MAXON OCCUPANCY 1937-1950s

Glenway Maxon, Jr. is listed in the directories as managing the Glenway Maxon estate then working as a construction engineer with T. L. Smith Co. His wife Frances and daughter Elizabeth M. (an artist) are listed in the directories but the directories also show that there were six occupants on the premises in 1942. The Maxon's sold the property to the Milwaukee Lay Community in 1960.

COMMUNITY OF ST. MARTHA / MILWAUKEE LAY COMMUNITY / CAMBRIDGE HOUSE

Cambridge House was the first and only non-family entity to occupy 1879 North Cambridge Avenue. In 1956 three Episcopal women, including founder Ruth Morrison, called others to join them in dialogue and Bible study in a downtown apartment. They called themselves the Community of St. Martha. Ruth Morrison had training in theology, education and psychology and she established the Milwaukee Lay Academy in 1958, basing the name on lay academies in Europe. The Lay Academy provided work on human relationships and group leadership and offered church people counseling, prayer, study groups and retreats. Over time the academy provided training for clergymen of three denominations, United Church of Christ, Methodist and Episcopal.

The concept grew rapidly and the group purchased its first building at 1879 North Cambridge Avenue in 1960. Two staff lived on the premises and used the third floor as a chapel. Concerns from neighbors in 1966 about the house being used as a place of assembly were allayed when building inspectors found that only two people lived on the premises and that the chapel was for personal and not group use. (Milwaukee Building Permits)

The training here coincided with another new concept in community building that was becoming popular in church circles called sensitivity training or encounter. In order to accommodate expanding programming, the organization purchased a second house at 1900 North Cambridge Avenue in 1966. Morrison resigned as executive director in 1968 and the academy's name was changed to Cambridge House. Her assistant Sandra Badtke became the next director.

The "human potential" movement was spreading across the country by the late 1960s, influenced by centers like Esalen in California. Cambridge House became the first such center in the Midwest. Training was given in gestalt therapy, bioenergetics, transactional analysis and sensory awareness. Cambridge House had to combat unfounded criticisms of mind rape, brainwashing and nudity that may have taken place at other centers but not here. Cambridge House had a policy of no nudity, no drugs and no alcohol. Exercises to release tension did involve some screaming which led neighbors to call the police. From a high of about 250 such centers in the country in the early 1970s, the popularity of such centers waned and by 1979 Cambridge House was one of only six. By this time half of its programming was for mental health professionals who worked with other groups or individuals. The other half of its programming was for the lay person who wanted personal growth. Participants stayed in the house when they attended longer seminars ("Cambridge House fills need, survives," Milwaukee Journal November 22, 1979, Accent Section page 1; "Place to Rest And Release," Jaunts With Jamie, Milwaukee Sentinel, April 14, 1966, part 1, page 13; 'She's Expert In 'Renewal'," Jaunts With Jamie, Milwaukee Sentinel, April 15, 1966, part 1, page 15)

Cambridge House decided to sell 1879 North Cambridge Avenue in 1982 when they dissolved their organization. One potential buyer wanted to use the house as a clinic for the treatment of sexually transmitted diseases but the city's Board of Zoning Appeals denied this use on April 1, 1982.

BOERNER (1982-1988) AND ELLMAN OCCUPANCY (1988 to present)

James Boerner, an architect and member of one of Milwaukee's foremost gardening families purchased the house in 1982 and erected the stockade fence in the rear yard. In 1988 Boerner sold the house to newlyweds Barry and Susan Ellman who raised three children in the house. The Ellman family continues to own the house today.

VIII. THE ARCHITECT

The architect has not yet been identified for the George Knowles, Jr. House. Research in the Milwaukee Sentinel from 1879 through February 1880 did not turn up any project lists that showed 1879 and 1903 North Cambridge Avenue. This may be attributed to the private nature of George Knowles, Sr. We do know that architects such as James Douglas, Edward Townsend Mix and Charles Gombert were designing houses in the area.

SOURCES

Abstract of title, 1741 North Farwell Avenue, part of the Cambridge Subdivision.

"Cambridge House fills need, survives." Milwaukee Journal. November 22, 1979, Accent Section page 1.

"Extraordinary Success of the Auction Sale of Lots in Cambridge Subdivision. The site of Camp Sigel and the Base-Ball Park Under the Hammer": Milwaukee Sentinel. June 15, 1874, p. 8, col. 3.

"George Knowles Is Dead. A Once Familiar Figure on 'Change Passed Away Last Evening." November 28, 1894 p. 3, col.2.

Griffin, S. G. . A History of the Town of Keene. Keene, New Hampshire: Sentinel Printing Company, 1904.

Groom, Elizabeth, Johnston, Helen Groom, and Poser, Mary Groom. Emily Parker Groom Wisconsin Artist 1875-1975 prepared by daughters of Samuel and Helen Groom. Submitted with the nomination for 1903 North Cambridge Avenue and available on line. No Date.

Milwaukee City Building Permits. 1879 North Cambridge Avenue.

Milwaukee City Directories.

Milwaukee Tax Rolls.

Milwaukee Sentinel

"Place to Rest And Release," Jaunts With Jamie, Milwaukee Sentinel, April 14, 1966, part 1, page 13.

Rascher's Fire Insurance Maps of the City of Milwaukee. Chicago: Rascher Fire Map Company, 1888.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Co., 1894, 1910.

'She's Expert In 'Renewal.' Jaunts With Jamie. Milwaukee Sentinel. April 15, 1966, part 1, page 15.

Spring Lake Cemetery (East Side) Spring Lake Township, Sec 14. Accessed on line at <http://ottawa.migenweb.net/cemeteries/springlake/SpringLakeEast.html>.

Tenth Annual Statement of the Trade and Commerce of Milwaukee for the year 1867 reported to the Chamber of Commerce by Secretary J. Langston, Secretary. Milwaukee: J. H. Yewdale, 1868.

"The Kennan Family." Wisconsin Lawyer, online history at www.wisbar.org/am/template.cfm?section=wisconsin_lawyer&template=/cm/conten)

35th Annual Report of the Milwaukee Grain & Stock Exchange / 35th Annual Report of the Trade and Commerce of Milwaukee for the year ending December 31, 1892, and the fiscal year of the Chamber of Commerce, ending April 3d 1893, Milwaukee (Evening Wisconsin Company, 1893) accessed on line January 4, 2012)

Walling, H. F. Map of the County of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. New York: M. H. Tyler, 1858.

IX. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the George Knowles, Jr. House be given historic designation as a City of Milwaukee Historic Site as a result of its fulfillment of criteria e-1 and e-5 and e-9 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 320-21(3) of the Milwaukee Code of Ordinances.

- e-1 Its exemplification and development of the cultural, economic, social or historic heritage of the city of Milwaukee, state of Wisconsin or the United States

Rationale: The house at 1879 North Cambridge Avenue was home to Cambridge House from 1960-1982, an organization devoted to spirituality and self improvement that provided training to clergy and mental health care professionals in the latest methods of treatment as well as non-professionals seeking personal renewal. Inspired by the work of the Esalen center in California, Cambridge House was in the forefront of such centers and was the first in the Midwest. Such centers once numbered over 250 across the country but Cambridge House was one of the last to survive and eventually closed in 1982.

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

Rationale: The George Knowles, Jr. House is an excellent example of the hybrid designs being produced in the 1870s that joined the form of the Italianate with its combination hip/gable roof, segmental arched windows, window hoods, with the pointed Gothic window in the rear gable, and the Gothic detailing of the cresting, gable ornament and pierced and incised details on the chamfered porch posts. This form is often referred to as Victorian Gothic and examples in Milwaukee can only be found in 1870s and very early

1880s. The George Knowles, Jr. House retains its most of its architectural integrity and stands out in a neighborhood that has seen a lot of demolitions and insensitive remodeling.

- e-9 Its unique location as a singular physical characteristic which represents an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community or the city of Milwaukee

Rationale: The George Knowles, Jr. House is a striking building in its Lower East Side neighborhood and attracts attention due to its architectural integrity. The fact that it has a twin next door adds to the mystique as to why these houses were constructed. It helps to preserve the story of two siblings who lived next door to each other in matching houses for over a decade.

Preservation Guidelines for the George Knowles, Jr. House

The following preservation guidelines represent the principal concerns of the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the historic designation of the George Knowles, Jr. House at 1879 North Cambridge Avenue. The intent of the commission is to preserve the historic, existing exterior features of the building. There was no coach or carriage house on the property historically.

Building maintenance and restoration must follow accepted preservation practices as outlined below. Any exterior changes including tuckpointing but exclusive of routine painting will require a certificate of appropriateness. Most certificates are issued on a staff-approved basis and only major new construction or alteration requests typically will go before the Historic Preservation commission. The Commission reserves the right to make final decisions based upon particular design submissions.

A. Roofs

Retain the roof shape. The installation of skylights where they would be visible from the street are not permitted as they would have a negative impact on the building. Skylights however may be added to roof slopes if they are not visible from the street or public right of way. No changes can be made to the roof shape which would alter the building height, the roofline or its pitch. Locate mechanical systems and vents on portions of the roof not visible at all from the public right of way and paint them out to minimize impact. If the building gets re-roofed, consultation with historic preservation staff is required to review and approve the new roofing material, flashing, and gutters. The minimum standard for re-roofing is a 3-tab asphalt shingle. Very light colors or very dark colors such as black are not permitted. Architectural shingles are permitted, but they must resemble wood shingles which were original to the house. Use of these materials is on a case-by-case basis as some of the products are not compatible with Victorian-era houses. Any new gutters should be of the half-round style as they function and look best on a house with crown moldings on the eaves. Should a satellite dish be installed it should be placed where it is not visible from the street, preferably at the rear, southwest corner of the house. The chimney at the south side of the roof should be retained although it appears to have been rebuilt at some time in the past. No rooftop construction or addition is allowed, as this would have a negative impact on the historic character and proportions of the building. The construction of other rooftop features requires review by Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

B. Materials

1. Masonry
 - a. Unpainted brick or stone must not be painted or covered. Painting masonry is historically incorrect and could cause irreversible damage if it was decided to remove the paint at a later date. Covering masonry with other materials (wood, sheet metal, vinyl siding, etc.) is not allowed.
 - b. Re-point defective mortar by duplicating the original in color, hardness, texture, joint finish and joint width. See the masonry chapters in the books, *As Good As New* or *Good For Business* for explanations on why the use of a proper mortar mix is crucial to making lasting repairs that will not contribute to new deterioration of the masonry. A house of the 1870s was built with lime mortar and that is only type of mortar that should be used for any necessary patching or replacement work. Using much harder, contemporary Portland cement mortar will not make a lasting repair and can damage the historic brick and stone. Replaced mortar joints should be tooled to match the style of the original. Do not use mortar colors and pointing styles that were unavailable or were not used when the building was constructed. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before starting any re-pointing.
 - c. The brick exterior has not been cleaned but appears to be in excellent condition. In the future should masonry cleaning be necessary it should be done only with the gentlest method possible. Sandblasting or high pressure water blasting or the use of other abrasive materials (baking soda, nut shells, dry ice, etc.) on limestone, pressed brick or cream brick surfaces is prohibited. This method of cleaning erodes the surface of the material and accelerates deterioration. The use of accepted chemical products to clean masonry is allowed and a test panel is required before general commencement of the work. Work should be done by experienced individuals as the chemical cleaning process can have a negative impact on the masonry. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before any cleaning would begin.
 - d. Repair or replace deteriorated masonry with new material that duplicates the old as closely as possible. The use of EIFS (exterior insulation and finish systems) which is synthetic stucco is not permitted. Consultation with historic preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness is required before attempting work on the masonry
 - e. The chimney, which was rebuilt at some point in the twentieth century could be rebuilt in a corbelled brick design in cream brick according to historic photographs if the owner would choose to do so.
2. Wood/Metal
 - a. Retain original material, whenever possible. Do not remove architectural features that are essential to maintaining the building's character and appearance. The front porch and gable ornaments are

important features to be retained. Historic photos show an open terrace to the left or south of the front porch that no longer exists. Reproducing this terrace is not mandatory and it is not known if this feature was original to the house, but it does appear on relatively early fire insurance maps. However, should the owner want to build a new terrace in the footprint of the original sometime in the future, historic preservation staff will assist in the design.

- b. Retain or replace deteriorated material with new material that duplicates the appearance of the old as closely as possible. Covering wood or metal with aluminum or vinyl or other substitute material is not permitted. Spot replacement or spot repair of any deteriorated elements is encouraged rather than complete removal and replication. Structural wood epoxies are suggested for the lasting repair of damaged or decays areas of wood trim. Any new elements must replicate the pattern, dimension, spacing and material of the originals.

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 them to the original condition. Do not make 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. Do not change the size or configuration of the original window panes or sash. Use storm windows or protective glazing which have glazing configurations similar to the prime windows and which obscure the prime windows as little as possible. The use of structural wood epoxies is strongly encouraged to repair any minor damage or decay to wood windows.
2. Most of the windows currently visible on the building appear to be replacements. In the event windows need to be replaced, they must match the original design and materials (wood) which would have been two-over-two sash. New glass must match the size of the historic glass. Do not fill in or cover openings with inappropriate materials such as glass block or concrete block. Glass block is permitted in basement windows on the rear elevation where they are not visible from the street. Do not use 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.

Any original windows on the building must be retained and repaired if at all possible. Vinyl, vinyl clad, metal, and metal-clad or fiberglass prime window units are not permitted for replacements. Wood combination/storm screen units or fixed storm windows that fit the shape of the original opening are permitted. The front double-leaf doors with etched glass lights are original and are to be retained. Any replacement doors on other elevations must be appropriate to the historic period of the building and based on historic photographic evidence. Any changes to doors and windows, including installation of new doors and windows, require consultation with Historic Preservation staff and a Certificate of Appropriateness.

3. Steel bar security doors and window guards are generally not allowed where they are visible from the street. If permitted, the doors or grates must be of the simplest design and installed so as to be as unobtrusive as possible. A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for this type of installation.

D. Trim and Ornamentation

There should be no changes to the existing historic trim or ornamentation except as necessary to restore the building to its original condition. A replacement feature must match the original member in terms of scale, design, color and appearance. Existing historic trim, located at the gable ends, front porch and corbels, must not be removed unless it is for the purpose of repair. Spot repair is preferable to wholesale replacement of details. Wood epoxy repair is often highly desirable for permanently repairing smaller areas of decay or damage to wood trim. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before any changes or repairs are made to the building.

E. Additions

No additions will be permitted on the front and side elevations as this would greatly alter the character of the building. Any rear addition requires the approval of the Commission. Ideally an addition should either compliment or have a neutral effect upon the historic character of the building. Approval shall be based upon the addition's design compatibility with the building in terms of window proportion and placement, building height, roof configuration, scale, design, color, and materials. Additions must be smaller than the original building and not obscure the historic building.

F. Signs/Exterior Lighting

The installation of any permanent exterior sign or light fixture on the front of the building or its lawn 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. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required to assist in the selection of exterior fixtures. Plastic internally illuminated box signs with a completely acrylic face are not permitted.

G. Site Features

New plant materials, paving, fencing, on the front elevation shall be compatible with the historic architectural character of the building. Should a new fence be built in the future examples of appropriate fencing can be found in As Good As New and Living With History. There is currently a rear deck. Any new deck installation requires a Certificate of Appropriateness. No retaining wall is permitted along the front of the property. Consultation with Historic Preservation staff is required before starting any work that would involve the landscape features, parking, walkways, or driveway. Victorian front yard landscaping was traditionally very simple and the raised limestone foundation was allowed to be seen rather than covered by shrubs. The front lawn may have once featured a raised flower mound and perhaps a specimen planting. That does not mean to limit today's landscaping to those parameters but they are desirable in terms of maintaining the historic character of this architecturally significant house.

H. Guidelines for New Construction

It is important that new construction be designed to be as sympathetic as possible with the character of the structure. Small-scale accessory structures, like a gazebo, garage or fountain, may be permitted depending on their size, scale and form and the property's ability to accommodate such a structure. Any request to construct a new garage would be subject to review for code compliance and appropriate design and would require a Certificate of Appropriateness.

1. Site work

New construction must respect the historic site and location of the building. It should be accomplished so as to maintain the appearance of the building from the street as a freestanding structure. Any new construction would be located to the rear since the lot lines and character defining features of the house would prevent any construction at the side elevations.

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. New construction is to be smaller in size and shorter in height than the historic 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.

4. Materials

The building materials which are visible from the public right-of-way and in close proximity to the historic building should be compatible 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 and materials not available when the building was constructed should be avoided.

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. This would generally be in case of a major fire or a natural catastrophe.

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. The house is largely original on the exterior and is of prime architectural importance.

3. Location

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

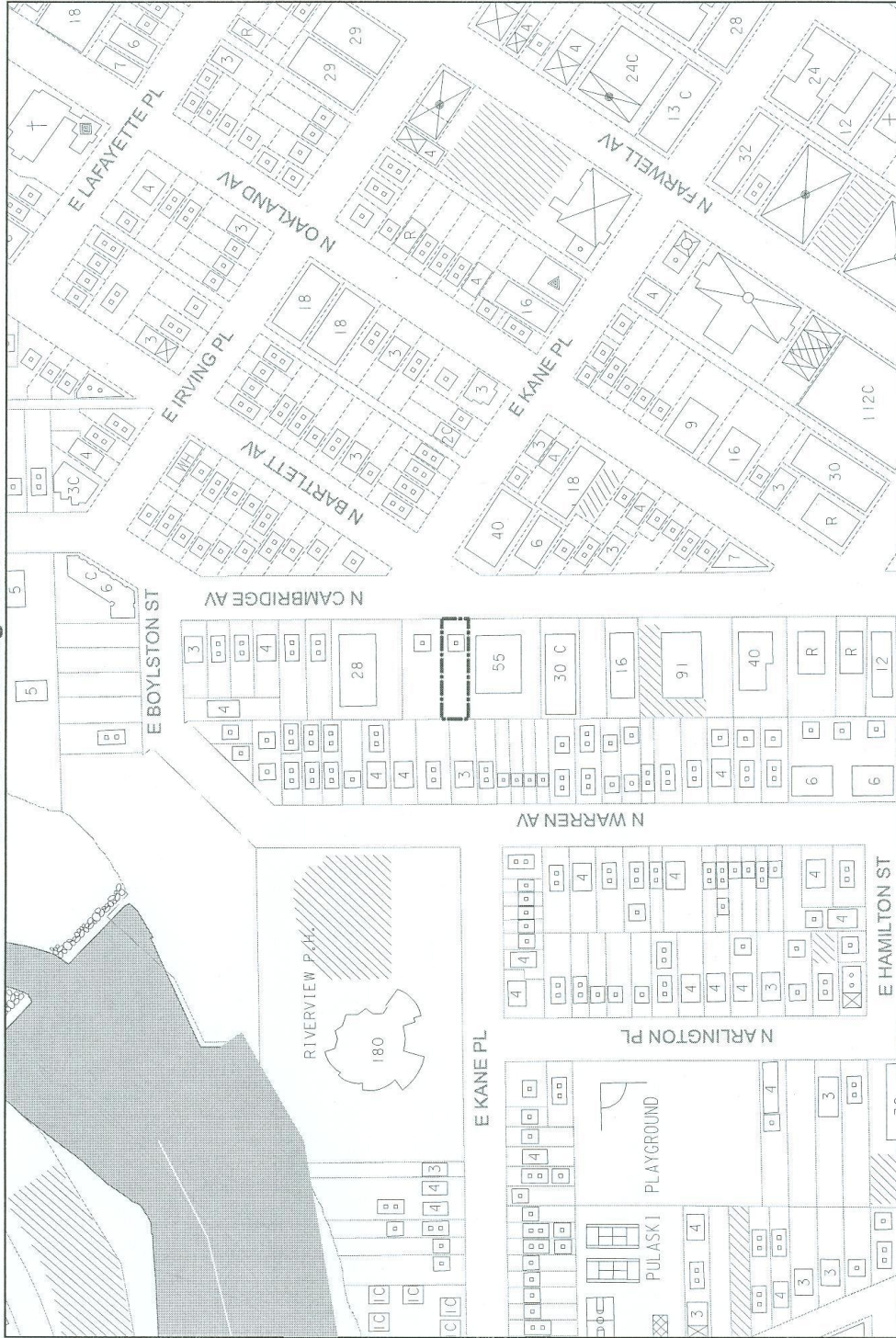
4. Potential for Restoration

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. On the George Knowles, Jr. House there is really no part of the house that would be a candidate for demolition based on this criterion.

**George Knowles, Jr. House
1879 N. Cambridge Avenue**



City of Milwaukee 12-14-12
144722.mxd, RTW



Proposed Historic Property



1879 North Cambridge (left) 1903 North Cambridge (right) with awnings