

"Kingscote"
(George Jones-William H. King House)
Northwest corner of Bellevue Avenue
and Bowery Street
Newport
Newport County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-307

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PHOTOGRAPHS
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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

"KINGSCOTE"

(George Jones-William H. King House)

Location: Northwest corner of Bellevue Avenue and Bowery Street

Present Owner: Mrs. Gwendolen Ella Rives /
Preservation Society of Newport County

Present Occupants: Owner

Present Use: Museum

Significance: This house was begun in 1839 for George Jones of Savannah. It was acquired in 1863 by William King who named it Kingscote, and the house remains in the King family. The original Gothic revival house was designed by Richard Upjohn, and the dining room addition of 1880-1881, one of the finest rooms of the period, was designed by Stanford White.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:

The building is located in Plat 28, Lot 114. The following is an incomplete chain of title from Newport City Clerk's Records for the city of Newport. Reference is to number and volume of the Land Evidence Books, (LEB.--, p.--).

1835 Deed of September 9, 1839, recorded in LEB. 22, pp.536-537.

From: Executors of estate of Thomas Butler
To: George Jones, Savannah, Georgia
For: \$6,700

"...a certain tract of land, together with all buildings thereon standing...bounded measuring and described as follows to wit: Easterly on Bellevue Street, 627 feet; Southerly on Bowery Street, 496 feet, 11 inches; Westerly on King Street, 583 feet, 4 inches; and Northerly, partly on land late of David King dec., partly on land now or late of Seth Swinburne, partly on land now or late of heirs of Noah Barker and partly on land of Henry Middletown, 475 feet, be the same more or less or however otherwise the same may now be bounded or described..."

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1856 Deed of May 27, 1856, recorded in LEB. 33, p.345.

From: George Jones
To: Joseph I. Bailey ÷ Henry Bull
For: \$18,000

Sells northern corner of original plot.
Plat attached.

1861 Deed of November 2, 1861, recorded LEB. 35, p.666.

From: George Jones
To: Richard Sullivan, Jr.
For: \$20,000

1861 Deed of November 4, 1861, recorded in LEB. 35, p.667.

From: Richard Sullivan, Jr.
To: Sarah Fenwick Gardner, wife of Robert H. Gardner
For: \$1.00 +

This and the above transaction were handled by Robert H. Gardner, Jones' attorney, whose wife then became owner. These legal maneuvers were probably a way of protecting the interests of Jones, a southerner, during the Civil War.

1861 Deed of November 27, 1861, recorded in LEB. 36, p.450.

From: Mary Wallace Jones, wife of George Jones
To: Sarah Fenwick Gardner, wife of Robert H. Gardner
For: \$1.00 +

"...all my right of Dower or power of thirds..."

1863 Deed of April 29, 1863, recorded in LEB. 37, p.271.

From: Robert H. Gardner and Sarah Fenwick Gardner
To: William H. King
For: \$35,000

Sale subject to a lease to John N. A. Griswold, ending on the first day of May 1864. Plat map attached to deed.

1900 Deed of January 22, 1900, recorded in LEB. 75, p.490.

From: George Gordon King, Mary LeRoy King, Louie McCagg and Edith Edgar McCagg, William D. King, Sarah G. K. Birkhead, Annie E. King, Georgiana G. King and Helen M. H. Pomeroy.

To: Ella Rives King, widow of David King
For: \$45,000

Purchases 3/4 of the undivided interests from other heirs of William H. King.

1900 Deed of January 31, 1900, recorded in LEB. 75, p.493.

From: Ethel Rhinelander King, as guardian of LeRoy King
To: Frederic Rhinelander King and Ethel Marjorie King
To: Ella Rives King
For: \$7,500

Three twenty-fourths share of the undivided interests.

1900 Deed of January 31, 1900, recorded in LEB. 75, p.495.

From: William P. Sheffield, Jr., guardian of Samuel
Wyllys Pomeroy, Jr.
To: Ella Rives King
For: \$2500

One twenty-fourth share of the undivided interests.

1900 Deed of February 6, 1900, recorded in LEB. 74, p.105.

From: Maud Gwendolen King
To: Ella Rives King
For: \$2500

One twenty-fourth share of the undivided interests.

1900 Deed of June 20, 1900, recorded in LEB. 76, p.493.

From: Philip W.R. King
To: Ella Rives King
For: \$2500

One twenty-fourth share of the undivided interests.

1924 Probate of October 23, 1924, recorded in the Probate Record Book 88, p. 61, in the Probate Court, City of Newport.

From: Ella Rives King
To: Gwendolen King Armstrong
By: Last will and testament

1968 Deed of September 2, 1963, recorded in LEB. 225, pp.168-169.

From: Raymond H. Trott and Industrial National Bank of
Rhode Island, as trustees under the will of Ella
Rives King
To: Gwendolen Ella Rives
By: Last will and testament

2. Date of erection: Begun in 1839
3. Architect: Richard Upjohn: Addition by Stanford White
4. Builder or contractor: Not known
5. Original plans: There are nine original drawings by Richard Upjohn, in the Upjohn Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York City.
6. Alterations and additions: House enlarged 1880-1881, McKim, Mead and White, architects. The kitchen wing was moved back and the new dining room with bedrooms and nursery above inserted. Additional service rooms then added at the rear. The dining room was designed by Stanford White with stained glass and metal work by Louis Comfort Tiffany. William H. King employed Marcotte to remodel the interiors at an earlier date.
7. Important old views: Mrs. Gwendolen Rives has several early views of the house. An early perspective drawing by John P. Newell shows the house before the dining room addition

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

The site of "Kingscote" has had an interesting history. Prior to the Revolutionary War, it was the site of Malbone's Rope Walk. The Huddy-Records Mill, originally across the street, was located on this site, but not before 1784-1787. In the early nineteenth century The Franklin Observatory was erected. About 1833, the building was converted to a boarding house named the "Claredon." The building was sold at auction on 26 September 1839 with the condition that it be removed from the premises by the first day of November. Moved to Bellevue and State, the building was later altered and owned by Kazanjian Company. In 1856 Jones Avenue was cut through and the property to the north sold. A brown Gothic stable at the northwest corner of the original lot, approached by a straight drive from Bellevue Avenue, was removed by Mr. Paran Stevens. During many summers when the Joneses were absent, the house was let to Mr. Berreda and Mr. Griswold while their summer cottages were under construction.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Records of Deeds in the Newport City Hall.
Records of Probate, Probate Court, Newport City Hall.
Drawings in the Upjohn Collection, Avery Library, Columbia University, New York, Box 4, F-1,12-15, and Box 6, L-4, 1-2 (reproduced for HABS).
Mary E. Powell, "Random Notes on Kingscote, Bowery Street and Vicinity." [notebook prepared c.1910, manuscript at Kingscote, typed copy at Newport Historical Society].

2. Secondary and published sources:

Downing, Antoinette F. and Scully, Vincent J., Jr. The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island.
2nd ed. New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1967.

Moore, Charles. The Life and Times of Charles Follen McKim.
Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929.

Newport Mercury. December 23, 1833.

_____. May 24, 1834.

_____. August 6, 1834.

_____. September 14, 1839.

_____. January 10, 1880.

Upjohn, Everard M. Richard Upjohn, Architect and Churchman.
New York: Da Capo Press, 1968.

3. Likely sources not yet investigated:

The family papers of William H. King. Office records of McKim, Mead and White, architects.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: A key example of Gothic Revival domestic architecture in America, the house is an important work of Richard Upjohn. The dining room addition of 1880-1881 by Stanford White is one of the finest interiors done in his early style.
2. Condition of fabric: The house is in excellent condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: Large irregular plan; original house one-and-a-half and two-and-a-half stories: 1880-1881 addition two-and-a-half and three stories.
2. Foundations: There are large cut granite blocks at the south and east sides. Random ashlar walls at the north and west show on the outside. Stone foundations show in the cellar except for poured concrete foundations in the new laundry wing at the rear.
3. Wall construction: The frame wall construction is covered by five inch wide ship-lap matched siding. Dining room addition has matched siding, five to eight inch widths on lower story and wooden shingles above. The house is painted grey with moldings picked out in red and black, probably the original color scheme.
4. Structural system, framing: The heavy timber frame is mortised and tenoned.
5. Chimneys: There are four plastered brick chimneys with separate stacks on the original portion of the house. Two tall brick chimneys top the addition of 1880-1881.
6. Openings:
 - a. Doorways: The main entrance on the south is centered in a wide entrance porch. The Tudor arched doorway has a two leaf door with tracery patterned paneling.
 - b. Windows: Generally paired casement windows under label moldings, some with diamond patterned mullions. There is colored glass in some windows, notably the Tiffany windows in the new dining room.
7. Roof: The steeply pitched roofs are intersected by numerous gables on the lower portions of the house. Higher roofs are hipped with lower pitches. Red tiles now replace the original red painted wood shingles. The open eaves have elaborately sawn eave boards with pendants, barge boards, and shaped finials at the gable peaks.
8. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: A one story porch on the east side opens to the double parlors through four French doors. The five wooden columns are quatrefoil in section. A cove roof with sawn pendant eaves and Gothic moldings decorates the porch. The entrance porch has three stone steps. The two service entrance porches have three steps.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: The entrance hall is divided by a Gothic archway with two columns that separate the vestibule from the stairhall. A door immediately to the left of the entrance in the vestibule opens to the study at the southwest corner. The old dining room, now library, north of the study opens to the stair hall. A doorway beneath the staircase leads to a wide hall at the east end of the new dining room and provides access to the service areas at the northwest corner of the house. Directly behind the main staircase is the old library. Two doors on the east wall of the stair hall open into the double parlors.
2. First floor rooms:
 - a. Entrance stair hall: The two wooden columns of the gothic archway are quatrefoil in section with octagonal bases and capitals. Parquet flooring of 1 1/2 inch oak strips is arranged in 12 inch squares. Panelled wooden ceiling. Floor and ceiling do not appear to be original, nor the stair railing. Colored glass windows flanking entrance are not original. These alterations may be remodelings for William H. King or Ella Rives King. Papered plaster walls above darkly stained wainscoting of gothic panelling. Dark red paper has a woven textured surface to simulate a heavy fabric. Gothic label moldings surround all openings. All doors to original rooms are four panel with gothic detailing.
 - b. Study: Employed as an office, the wooden floor is of random width boards. Simple gothic trim and panelled wainscoting in pine with papered plaster walls above. The blue and grayish wall paper by Morris and Company has a geometric leaf pattern. Ceiling laid off in large panels by comb faced wooden strips with rosettes at intersections. Interior louvered shutters on both casement windows. Room may have been once used as a downstairs bedroom.
 - c. New library (old dining room): The floor is composed of 4 inch to 8 inch random width wooden boards. Papered plaster walls with a combed face chair rail. Paper is the same used in the study. Plaster ceiling has a large gothic cornice. Bay window on the west wall has casement sashes with small diamond panes and reeded architraves. There is wooden panelling below the window with gothic trim. The painted glass toplights have food and flower motifs. A fireplace in the east wall with smooth brick facing is topped by a wooden mantel with delicate gothic panelling. There are iron fire sides (not back) with a fleur-de-lis pattern. A large door in the north wall with two sliding panelled leaves opens to the new dining room. There is also a door in the east wall to the entrance hall and another in the south wall to the study.

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- d. Dining room: Added in 1880-1881, the wooden floor of 1 1/2 inch oak strips has a herringbone border. Walnut panelled walls in the dining room and the hall to the east. The north wall has a built-in walnut buffet with brass hinges and pulls. Cork tiles on the upper part of the walls in the dining room and the hall are in a herringbone pattern. On the ceiling of the dining room the cork tiles are divided into square areas by thin walnut strips. The hall ceiling is panelled with alternating combed and plain walnut strips. Seven small roundels filled with spool work are located above the buffet and the three entrances to the room. The screen at the east end of the dining area is composed of elaborate spindle work and has two leaves in the center (with brass pulls) that open to the east. Colored glass flowers are the subject matter of the toplights above the five windows in the hall. A huge fireplace, 6 feet 10 inches by 6 feet, with marble facing is located in the west wall. Two windows composed of 3 inch square molded milk glass panes flank the fireplace. Each toplight has two flowers of red and green glass. This feature is continued in the window bay in the southwest corner of the room. Six wall brackets with two lights each, originally gas, illuminate the room. The colored glass windows, wall brackets, and brass hardware were supplied by Tiffany. A large serving table, originally two, stands to the left of the door leading to the butler's pantry.
- e. Double parlors: Both rooms have parquet wooden floors of 1 1/2 inch oak strips laid in herringbone pattern. The decorative borders are not original. Vertical striped wallpaper of alternating green colors covers the plaster walls in the south parlor. A light rose brocade is used in the north parlor. The plaster ceilings have a heavy molded cornice with undercut Gothic profiles. Over the windows and doors are Gothic label moldings. Gothic arched panels in the doors and window aprons are picked out in light yellow graining against dark reddish brown trim. The south parlor fireplace has glazed molded brick facing, a gothic panelled mahogany mantel, and a red and black tile hearth. Between 1910 to 1920, Mrs. Armstrong replaced the original mantel in the north parlor with the present heavy white marble rococo mantel from the King house in lower Manhattan of about the same date. The south parlor has a polygonal bay with double casement windows at the south end of the room. These windows have interior louvered shutters. In the east wall of the double parlors are four windows that extend to the floor and slide into wall recesses with sliding interior louvered shutters. The north parlor has a bay window at the north end of the room with double casement windows and interior louvered shutters.
- f. Old library: Located to the north of the stair hall, this room has wooden floors of random width boards. The walls and trim are similar to the parlor. Plastered ceiling with no cornice. Chandelier converted from gas to electricity. There is a twentieth century powder room and toilet to the north.

- g. Two pantries: The complex consists of servant's dining room, kitchen, rear stairway, laundry and miscellaneous closets to the rear. There are wooden floors and wainscoting in areas with plaster walls and ceilings. The kitchen retains a coal range patented in 1880. In the laundry is a triple bottom sink and stove for heating water and flat irons with ironing table.

2. Second floor rooms:

- a. Stairways: L-shaped, open well stairway with one single landing from entrance hall. Straight run back stairway in service wing that continues to the third floor.
- b. Bedrooms: Plaster walls are papered or painted. Plaster ceilings are divided into panels in some front rooms. Panelled doors, those in more prominent positions have lancet patterned paneling. Woodwork is dark and heavily grained. Original flooring is of random width boards, however the hall and front bedrooms have later hardwood floors.
- c. Southeast bedroom (master bedroom): Located over the south parlor, the room has a panelled ceiling. The fireplace has a Tudor arched opening, brick facing, wooden mantel with raised panelling, colonettes at the corners, and mantel shelf with Gothic detail.
- d. Northeast bedroom: Over the north parlor, the room retains random width wooden floor boards with an oriental woven matting tacked to the flooring. This is probably an original treatment. In 1897, Mrs. Armstrong (then Gwendolen King) had McKim, Mead and White redecorate the room on the occasion of her twenty-first birthday.
- e. Bathroom: Originally an aviary, this room located over the entrance hall had clear windows to the adjoining hallway which have been replaced with frosted glass.
- f. Hallway: Extending above the new library, it retains high panelled wainscoting and plaster walls above, which are painted in vertical stripes. 7 1/2 inch wide cream colored stripes alternate with 1 3/4 inch wide red stripe.
- g. Northwest bedroom: Located over the east end of the new dining room, the room is an interesting example of McKim, Mead and White's work. The fireplace has brick facing with narrow black mortar joints. Green, gold and black tiles decorate the hearth. The wooden mantel has double mantel shelves, lightly scaled spindle bracket and panel work which is painted green with the detail picked out in gold. The casement windows with interior louvered shutters have wooden architraves with combed surfaces and corner blocks. The wooden floor has 3 3/4 inch wide boards.

h. Servant quarters: There are seven servant's bedrooms and bathrooms and closets located over the first floor service areas.

4. Third floor rooms:

- a. East wing: An attic stairway leads to three finished storage rooms in the east wing of the house above the two principal bedrooms over the double parlors.
- b. Service wing: The back stairway continues to the third floor in the new dining room addition which contains a nursery with two rooms and a bath.

D. Site:

- 1. General setting and orientation: The house faces south on a large level lot. Originally residential, the area is experiencing increasing density and growing commercial activity immediately to the north.
- 2. Historic landscape design: Informal landscaping, the original layout survives in general form. Originally there were views to the east, south and west which are now obscured by later buildings and the fully grown trees.
- 3. Outbuildings: Probably in the later nineteenth century the original Gothic stable at the far rear of the lot was replaced by the present well preserved stable nearer the house. The original wooden fence with double palings survives on the east and south sides of the lot

PART III PROJECT INFORMATION

Newport HABS Project -- 1969. Sponsored in cooperation with the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman. Under the direction of James C. Massey, Chief of HABS, and Osmund Overby (University of Missouri), Project Supervisor, Jack E. Boucher, photographer.