

William F. Kuehneman House
1135 South Main Street
Racine
Racine County
Wisconsin

HABS No. WIS-153

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Division of Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia 6, Pennsylvania

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

WILLIAM F. KUEHNEMAN HOUSE

Location: 1135 South Main St., Racine, Racine Co., Wisconsin.

Present Owner: Mrs. William F. Kuehneman, 1135 S. Main St., Racine, Wisconsin.

Present Occupant: Mrs. William F. Kuehneman.

Present Use: Residence.

Brief Statement of Significance: The house has been described as, "as refined an example of the Greek manner as is to be found in the state" (Newcomb, The Architecture of the Old Northwest Territory,).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The first entry on the abstract is 1850 when Samuel M. Johnson deeded the property to John A. McHenry. Eli R. Cooley acquired the property in 1851. Cooley sold to Elias Jennings in 1854. A long list of subsequent owners follows: Charles E. Dyer, E. C. Deane (1891), George W. Morris, Sir James Horlick, and George W. Taylor. Many of these people were prominent in commercial and political affairs in Racine. The Kuehnemans acquired the property from the Taylors ca. 1945.
2. Date of erection: Probably 1853. This is based on the fact that Eli Cooley bought the property in 1851 for \$800 and sold it May, 1854 for \$3,500 to Elias Jennings. Also a city map of 1858 shows a house on the lot as belonging to Orlando Jennings, a member of Elias Jennings' family.
3. Architect: It is reasonably certain from the above that the house was built for Eli R. Cooley. The architect is unknown but the character of the house indicates it might have had professional planning and there are two possibilities: a man named Butterfield and Lucas Bradley, who built the First Presbyterian Church.
4. Notes on alterations and additions: The house has been completely restored by Mrs. Kuehneman after it had become

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greatly run-down during the time of the Taylors. Except for the installation of modern conveniences such as bathrooms, the main body of the house appears to be little altered. There seems to have been an extension of the south wing at some undetermined date, and the Kuehnemans have added a sun room on the rear.

5. Sources of Information

- a. Rexford Newcomb, Architecture of the Old Northwest Territory (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950).
- b. Richard W. E. Perrin, Historic Wisconsin Architecture (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: The Wisconsin Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, 1960).
- c. Richard W. E. Perrin, "Historic Wisconsin Buildings, A Survey of Pioneer Architecture, 1835-1870. III. Frame Buildings," Lore vol. XI, no. 1 (Milwaukee: Friends of the Museum of the Milwaukee Public Museum, Winter, 1960), pp. 2-21.
- d. Interview with Mrs. William F. Kuehneman, 1135 South Main Street, Racine, Wisconsin.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Building: No specific event of historic importance occurred here but some of the owners were prominent in the history of Racine. Eli R. Cooley, was the third Mayor of the city. Charles E. Dyer, a U. S. Circuit Judge, entertained a number of prominent people here during the 1870's and 1880's.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural character: This is an example of the late Greek Revival of the type common in the Middle West before the Civil War and closely related to certain examples in Michigan and Ohio.
- 2. Condition of fabric: The building has been very carefully and thoughtfully restored and is in excellent condition.

B. Technical Description of Exterior

1. Overall dimensions: 54' x 55', 2 stories.
2. Foundations: Roughly coursed stone.
3. Wall construction: Wood frame with siding on the exterior and plaster on wood lath on the interior.
4. Chimneys: Three: two at the ends of wings and one in the center of the main block, all brick.
5. Openings
 - a. Doorways and doors: Front and rear doors have two long panels with side lights and leaded glass transoms. Exterior of front door has reeded Greek Revival trim.
 - b. Windows: First floor windows 2' - 11" x 6' - 6", 12 light double hung sash. Second story windows similar except slightly less in height. Other windows, of various types, seem to be later additions.
6. Roof
 - a. Shape, covering: Gabled roofs on both main block and the wings; now covered with cement-asbestos shingles.
 - b. Cornice: Complete classical Greek entablature on both main block and wings. Gable ends are treated as classical pediments except on south wing which has apparently been altered.
7. Exterior portico: Front porch is treated as a tetrastyle Greek Doric portico of classically correct proportioning. All of the moldings carefully follow the Greek practice and the wood pilasters of the various building corners are detailed as classical Greek Antae.

C. Technical Description of Interiors

1. Floor plans: First floor consists of stair hall running through north side of center block, front to back. Living room occupies entire north wing to the left of stair hall. At the right of the stair hall to the south, there were, apparently, originally four large rooms but the southeast room has been altered to form a modern bathroom, and extended toward the east to form a modern kitchen. A modern sun room has been added to the rear. The second floor

occupies the main block and the south wing only. Two large rooms open on to the upper stair hall, and a single room with bath is located in the south wing.

2. Stairways: Main stair has newel and baluster rail designed in the late Victorian style but there is little doubt that it is contemporary with the house. The service stair is located in the south wing, and a basement stair off the kitchen. The basement, which now occupies about 2/3 of the house area, has been so altered at various times that it is difficult to determine its original form and extent.
3. Flooring: Flooring is wood throughout, either painted or covered with wall-to-wall carpeting.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls are plaster throughout, now either covered with canvas and painted, or wallpapered. The living room has rather elaborate cast plaster cornice; other rooms of the main floor have simpler plaster cornices.
5. Doorways and doors: Most of the original doors are missing. Where they exist they seem to have been two panel, stained and varnished.
6. Trim: Except in the living room, the trim throughout is simple 4" unmolded. Living room windows and doors have Greek trim with pilasters and entablature, pilasters with sunk panels and decorated with carved anthemium-type ornament. Living room and room to the right of the stairs on the lower floor, have identical chimney pieces in marble, late Victorian in style.
7. Hardware: Front and rear doors have elaborate cast brass knobs and eschutcheon plates in intricate, almost oriental, design. Other hardware is modern.
8. Lighting: Electric.
9. Heating: Central.

D. Site

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces west and is situated on a medium sized plot, set back from a principal residential street.

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2. Outbuildings: A modern garage occupies the northeast corner of the lot.
3. Walks: Walks are either concrete or flagstone. Flagstone terrace at the northeast rear corner of the house. Asphalt drive.
4. Landscaping: Simple but carefully planned. A number of large trees surround the building which is set off with low juniper hedges. A small flower garden is in the rear.

Prepared by Henry C. Edwards,
Architect, National Park Service,
143 South Third Street, Phila. 6, Pa.
August 1960.