

William Knowles House
1228 30th Street, N.W.
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-163

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

WILLIAM KNOWLES HOUSE

Location: 1228 30th Street, N.W., (Georgetown), Washington, D.C.
The house is located on the West side of 30th Street (formerly Washington) at the intersection of Olive Street.

Present Owner: Mrs. Gordon Gray

Present Occupant: Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Steiner

Present Use: Private Residence

Statement of Significance: The house is generally of the Federal plan and character but demonstrates the assimilation of certain features of the Greek Revival. Although the back section has been extensively remodelled, there is indication that part of this was originally a separate two story frame building with a single chimney. This is further supported by the fact that the first known resident was listed with his carpentry shop at this address.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: The buildings is located in Square 1209, lot 843 of old lot 15. The following is an incomplete chain of title to the property. The references are to the Recorder of Deeds, Washington, D.C.

1802 Deed December 20, 1802, recorded April 23, 1803 in Liber I folio 292

Thomas Beall et ux Nancy

To

Nicholas Hedges

Part of lot 15

1827 Deed May 23, 1827, recorded May 26, 1827 in Liber WB 19 folio 459

Tench Ringgold, Marshall

To

Bank of the United States

Parts of lots 14 and 15 were purchased October 13, 1824 by Daniel Bussard in behalf of the Bank of Columbia for \$1095 to apply towards a debt of \$3302.92 owed by Nicholas Hedges to the President and Directors of the Bank of Columbia. The bank requested the conveyance to the Bank of the United States.

1828 Deed December 15, 1828, recorded December 27, 1828 in
Liber WB folio 174
Bank of the United States
To
John Laird

1849 Deed April 25, 1849, recorded May 25, 1849 in
Liber JAS 4 folio 215
Robert Leslie, Trustee
To
Richard W. Redin
Consideration: \$229.50

1852 Deed November 5, 1852, recorded January 29, 1853 in
Liber JAS 56 folio 444
William Redin, 1st party
James Goddard, 2nd party
To
William Knowles, Jr.

This deed recites that Robert Leslie conveyed the premises to Richard W. Redin who died unmarried and intestate. His sisters and heirs at law conveyed the premises to the first party above. Further, the second party sold all his interest in the premises to the third party having contracted with the first party for the purchase of the land.
Consideration: \$200.00

1905 Deed August 3, 1905, recorded August 4, 1905 in
Liber 2875 folio 56
Heirs of William Knowles
To
John A. Neuhaus

1940 Deed January 12, 1940, recorded January 15, 1940 in
Liber 7431 folio 436
John A. Neuhaus
To
August William Neuhaus
Louis William Neuhaus

Deed March 23, 1940, recorded March 27, 1940 in
Liber 7454 folio 491
August William Neuhaus
Louis William Neuhaus
To
Lee R. Baker

1958 Deed November 25, 1958, recorded November 28, 1958 in
Liber 11152 folio 377
Lee R. Baker
Charles R. Baker
To
Nancy Maguire Gray

2. Date of erection: Probably after 1852 and before 1858. It would seem that William Knowles first established his carpentry shop in the back part of the premises and then his residence in front. (see list of tenants)
3. Architect: Unknown
4. Original plans, construction, etc: None known.
5. Alterations and additions: In 1964 the front stairs were changed from wood to brick and the side porch was removed when the kitchen was remodelled. The original chimney in the back part was removed on the second floor.
6. Important old views: None known.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

1. Washington city directories provide the following tenant information:

1858 William Knowles, carpenter. 123 Wash. dw. 35 Green (This indicates his carpentry shop at the present site with his dwelling at 35 Green, now 29th Street.)

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- 1860 William Knowles, carpenter. 75 Wash. h. 123 do.
(The carpentry shop was located at 75 Washington Street which was south of M Street and his Residence was at 123 Washington, the present building.)
- 1882 William Knowles, Jr. 1228 Washington
- 1907-40 John Neuhaus, baker
- 1941-42 James Macgill
- 1943-54 Charles Baker
- 1956 Ellsworth Bunker
- 1962 Andre Van Compenhout
- 1964 vacant
- 1965 Daniel Steiner

- 2. The Georgetown Assessment records (National Archives Micro-copy 605, Group 351, roll 12) list the following for 1865-70 for William Knowles, Jr:
Part lot 15 25' Washington Street 120' deep 500
Improvements 2 story and attic frame house 1600

Prepared by Ellen J. Schwartz
Architectural Historian
Commission of Fine Arts
August, 1968

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

- 1. Architectural character: 1228 30th Street is a good example of a transitional, Federal-Greek Revival building of the middle of the 19th Century. The house is modest in size and restrained in detail both internally and externally. The major "experience" of the dwelling is that of entry, beginning with the two column portico and ending with a view up the finely detailed staircase.
- 2. Condition of fabric: The house has been renovated and restored. Both the interior and the exterior are in excellent general condition.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 1228 30th Street is a 2 1/2 story frame facing East onto 30th Street between M and N Streets and with the South wall located on the extended center line of Olive Street.
2. Foundations: The brick foundation wall is exposed below the wood siding 3'1" on the East elevation and is approximately 6" above grade at the West elevation of the main section. Perpendicular to the South wall there are two pairs of brick walls which support the chimneys above. These walls are spanned at the first floor level with wood lintels to support the hearth.
3. Wall construction: The house is a wood frame, with clap-board siding painted gray covering most of the surface. One notable exception is that the attic story at the East elevation is sided with flush horizontal boarding painted gray.
4. Framing: As visible from the basement, framing of the first floor is with 3" x 8" joists hand hewn on one side and spanning East - West. A wood girder now supported at third points by two steel pipe columns spans from North - South foundation walls at approximately 13' from the East basement wall.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc: A wooden frame 2 column porch fronts the East elevation entry. The 7'-4" x 4'-5" brick platform with its six risers running North - South is a mid-20th Century renovation replacing the former wooden steps and platform. The columns and porch roof, however, appear to be 19th Century.

The two 10" diameter and 7'-10" high fluted Tuscan Doric columns have echinus projections but not abacus blocks. The porch roof has a simple flat cornice board and eaves supported by a modillioned band. The wood porch railings and balusters are of simple section.

At the narrower rear section of the house an "L" shaped

roof deck and railing is located over the first floor kitchen area and extends along the South and West sides of the second floor elevations. This replaced a 19th Century cantilevered second floor porch along the South side.

6. Chimneys: Two brick chimneys are at the South gable end wall at approximately the first and third quarter points of the wall length. They are approximately 3'-4" x 1'-9" in section with a simple two course brick caps. An item of special note is an attached brick buttress at the West chimney extending from approximately the second floor line down to grade.

During renovations of 1963 the chimney at the center of the West wall of the dining room was removed.

7. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: The entry door is a four panel 2'-10" wood door of 20th Century date. It is framed by five fixed sidelights and a three light transom. Crowning the interior trim of the doorway is a modillioned cornice of wood.

At the West wall of the living room a pair of center closing 20th Century twelve light metal frame doors give access to the rear yard.

- b. Windows and shutters: Typical windows at both the front (East) elevation at the first two floors and at the South elevation are 6/6 light double-hung sash. At the attic level of the East elevation, however, pairs of two light center closing sash are used for each 3'-0" x 2'-5" opening.

Each of the five windows on the first two floors of the East elevation is crowned by a molded ogee straight line cornice board supported by a dentil band. The attic casements have no projecting trim or cornice features.

A window of special note is at the Northwest corner of the rear section at the second floor level. It

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is a 4/4 light double-hung sash window of 1'-10" x 4'-6" size and appears to be of early 19th century date. It is simply trimmed and set in a wall covered by 19th century clapboarding.

Shutters at the second floor East elevation are single panel fixed horizontal louver units painted black. On the first floor are two panel shutters painted black; the upper panel is fixed louver, the lower a plain panel. The shutters at the lower floor may be 19th century and the shutter stops at both floors are 19th century cast metal.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: The main East section of the house has a gabled roof with its ridge running North-South. The West narrower section has a shed roof pitching up from South to North and the two are linked by a flat roofed unit with skylight. Roof covering is standing seam metal.
- b. Cornice and eaves: At the East elevation the roof cornice has an under eaves band of dentil scale but consisting of small brackets. Eaves are of wood but downspouts and gutters are of metal.

At the sill level of the casement windows a simple molded cornice band separates the attic story from the first two clapboard sheathed floors.

- c. Cupolas, dormers, towers: None

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The basic plan shows a main block with front and back rooms and a North side stairway. Attached to this is a narrower two story section to the West rear.

The first floor Eastern section has a side stair and entry hall full depth and a large living room full depth at the South. Evidence suggests that this room was originally separated by a North-South cross wall at approximately the mid-point into two rooms. The extensively remodelled rear section contains a dining room, kitchen and lavatory.

2. Stairways: The main stairway is of the half-turn type with landings at the Northwest corner of the main section. From the first floor the 2'-8" wide stair ascends twelve 7" risers from East to West to the landing and back four risers to the second level. To the third floor the run is nine risers from East to West and then back up six risers.

This stairway also gives access to the second floor of the rear section. Because of the difference in floor levels there is only one riser from the first floor landing to the second floor level of the rear block.

Major features of the stair are the various turned newel posts at each level. To support the railing as it curves up at each floor and makes an angular turn at each landing and floor level there are nine newels; one at the beginning at the first floor, paired newels at each landing and at the second floor, and one each at the top of the flight at the second and third floors. All of these are approximately 3 1/2" in diameter except for the first floor newel which is approximately 4 1/2". There are two rectangular balusters for each tread and the stringers are adorned with wave pattern wood appliques at the end of each tread. The under stair area at the first floor is completely enclosed with 10" wide vertical panelling.

A second stairway occupies the Northwest corner of the rear section beginning at the West wall of the main gabled block. It is a half-turn stair with corner winders at both the beginning and the end of the run. The stair opening to the second floor is now blocked but the 2'-0" wide stair is twelve 8" risers from the East to the West along the North wall. The newel posts and the balusters of this stair appear to be replacement of original wood members. The stringer features here are also of a wave pattern wood appliqué differing from that of the main staircase.

The straight run stair to the basement has an ascent from East to West of 13 risers directly under the main stair.

3. Flooring: Floors are of pine throughout. Some of these especially in the upper floors of the main (East) block appear to contain 19th century boarding.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Wall and ceiling finish throughout the East section is painted plaster.
5. Doorways and doors: Doors throughout the house are four panel and most appear to be 20th century in date. However the four panel door from the dining room to the hall and the pair of two panel center closing door from the living room to the dining room all appear to be 19th century.
6. Decorative features and trim: The two upper floors of the main gabled block and the present dining room have 2 1/2" wide door and window trim that appears to be early 19th century. Both the window and door trim have upper corner square blocks. Those in the dining room and on the third floor front bedroom have hollowed out bull's-eye ring patterns, while the others are plain solid blocks. Windows have simple stools while doorways use 6" high coved edge plinth blocks.

The 6" baseboard in the third floor appears to be 20th century but the 8" molded top baseboard on the first and second floors is probably 19th century.

7. Notable hardware: There are several fine pieces of 19th century hardware present. Among these is a 6" x 4" lock box on the living room side of the pair of doors to the dining room. This lock has a brass knob and a brass keyhole on the dining room side. At both the door from the hall to the dining room and at the second floor East bedroom door there are 3 1/2" x 5" high lock boxes with aplayed edges. At the front door there is a fine large 7" x 5" lock box with a brass knob and brass vertical edge of the catch box.
8. Lighting: The house has a variety of mid-20th century fixtures.
9. Heating: Ornamental mantelpieces are found in several rooms in the present living room both of the mantelpieces

have the fireplace opening surrounded by a simple wood molding above which are paired vertical fluted feature blocks under an 8" mantel shelf.

In the dining room the mantelpiece has been relocated from 1224 30th Street against a chimney at the West wall. It is an early 19th Century 4'-3" x 3'-9" high enframement with an 8 1/2" mantel shelf. Under the mantel shelf there are two vertically gouged reeded blocks and two end blocks with urn-flower and swag features of ornamental putty.

On the upper floors the only 19th Century mantelpiece is at the front bedroom of the main block's second floor. It is a wood enframement 4'-1" by 4'-2" high with a 7" wide mantel shelf. The under shelf area has a central fluted band and end sunburst features of carved wood.

Modern central heating has radiators in every room.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The residence lies on a busy residential street near a major commercial street of Georgetown. It stands next to a frame structure to the south renovated in Greek Revival style in the 1920's and is directly abutted by a brick Victorian apartment house on the North.
2. Enclosures: The rear yard is surrounded by various fences and walls. On the South and the West there are brick walls while on the North there is a metal grid fence and a wooden vertical board fence near the kitchen.
3. Outbuildings: none
4. Walks: Extending directly from the East elevation wall to the curb is a brick paved public sidewalk.
5. Landscaping: The rear yard slopes up several feet toward the West and is formed into a series of terraces. Up 2' from the flagstone paved area at the South of the rear

porch is a brick paved patio directly abutting the West end of the porch and the kitchen wall. A brick 2' curving retaining wall and four brick risers mark the edge of a second terrace of pebbled paving. Surrounding this terrace on the West and the North and marking the North edge of the lower brick is a 3" rubble stone retaining wall. The final terrace above this wall is a small garden area reached by a flight of flagstone steps at the Southwest corner of the yard.

Prepared by William P. Thompson
Architect
Commission of Fine Arts
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