



# HISTORIC KENOSHA

## Library Park Historic District

The Library Park Historic District is one of four historic districts designated in the City of Kenosha. The district contains many individually outstanding examples of nineteenth century and early twentieth century architecture. Most of the structures in the district have been well maintained with a minimum of alteration.

Shortly after the first settlers arrived in Kenosha in 1835, the land around Library Park was acquired by Charles Durkee, a New Englander, and George Kimball, a Canadian. Both donated a portion of their land for a New England type commons, which was first known as “City Park” or, simply, “The Commons.” Charles Durkee served as a U.S. Senator from Wisconsin from 1855 to 1861. His large home, now part of Kemper Center, is located in the Third Avenue Historic District.

Most of the early homes built around the park were small- to modest-sized structures. The **Lucien Scribner House at 6003 – Seventh Avenue (1843)** and the **Volney French House at 6044 – Eighth Avenue (1846)** are examples of this early construction. Settlement around the park continued during the 1850s, until by 1861, available lots were almost entirely occupied. Houses constructed during this period range from the modest home at **530 – 61st Street (1855)** to the elaborate Italianate **Edward Bain House at 6107 – Seventh Avenue (1860)**. Many of the earliest homes built around the park were lost during several periods of redevelopment the area experienced through the years.

During this period before the Civil War, the neighborhood around the park was involved in the “Underground Railroad,” a network of people who assisted slaves escape from bondage in the south to freedom in Canada. Reuben H. Deming was one of the most active Kenoshans in the anti-slavery movement. His house was located near where the **Louis Thiers House at 6027 – Seventh Avenue** is now located. The original house on the site of the **Hale-Farr House, 6028 – Eighth Avenue**, was also a place for hiding slaves awaiting transportation north aboard ships departing the Kenosha harbor. Today a plaque marks the site of the former Deming house as a stop on the Underground Railroad.

In the 1870s, two important religious buildings were constructed: the Gothic Revival stone **St. Matthew’s Episcopal Church, 5900 – Seventh Avenue (1872-79)**, and the cream brick Gothic Revival **First Congregational Church, 5934 – Eighth Avenue (1874)**.

In 1888, the first representative structure of the Queen Anne era, the **Frederick Gottfredsen House at 711 – 61st Street**, was built in the district. Around 1890, **Nathan R. Allen, Jr.** built an impressive Queen Anne house at **5918 – Eighth Avenue**. At the same time, prominent surgeon **William M. Farr** rebuilt his house in an interpretation of the

German Renaissance Revival style peculiar to Wisconsin’s German population. The **Urban J. Lewis House, 6019 – Seventh Avenue (1892)** and the **Louis Thiers House, 6027 – Seventh Avenue (1893)** complete nineteenth century construction in the district.

The new century brought with it changes for the neighborhood. Proximity to the downtown commercial area forced an increase in density in the neighborhood. Residences built during this period were much smaller than their predecessors built in the late nineteenth century, and many lacked a specific architectural style. Examples of this infill construction range in appearance from the vernacular **Charles Stuart House, 6201 – Eighth Avenue (1907)** to the two well-maintained American Foursquare houses at **6118-20 – Seventh Avenue (1907)** and **6122-24 – Seventh Avenue (1913)**.

Some stylistic houses were built during this era, but they did not match the size and exuberance of nineteenth century construction. Typical of these are the craftsman **C. Ernest Dewey House, 519 – 61st Street (1910)** and the small Georgian Revival **William T. Flatley House, 521 – 61st Street (1930)**.

The early twentieth century also brought changes to the district in the form of construction of large public buildings. The first to appear was the **Gilbert M. Simmons Memorial Library, 711 – 59th Place (1900)**. With the new library came a new name for City Park: Library Park. The landscaping of Library Park is based on an 1899 landscape plan designed by Ossian Cole Simonds, a nationally prominent landscape architect. Simonds’ plan can still be detected in the park today. Most of the curving walks are in their original configuration as well as combinations of open space, trees, and shrubs. The Neo-Classical Revival design of the library was repeated in the **Masonic Temple, 807 – 61st Street (1924)** and the **Jewish Community Center, 6050 – Eighth Avenue (1927-28)**. The Neo-Classical style was also used less elaborately in the two apartment buildings located in the district, the **Terrace Court Apartments, 6207 – Seventh Avenue (1928)** and **The Allis, 6004 – Eighth Avenue (1915)**. The **YMCA, 720 – 59th Place (1930)** completed the construction of public buildings in the district.

Since World War II, the district has seen relatively little new construction or alterations. The Library Park Historic District has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



**#1 YMCA  
(Formerly Kenosha Youth  
Foundation)  
720 – 59th Place  
(1930) Tudor Revival**

This four and one-half story building towers over the north end of the district. Designed by Chicago architect Charles H. Walcott, this stone ashlar Tudor Revival style building has a square plan. At the southwest corner is a “tower” decorated with battlements. Entrances to the building are highlighted by projecting pavilions with stone Tudor arches. New additions have been made to the east side of the building.

The YMCA was built in 1930, through a contribution of \$400,000 from Charles W. Nash, which the city more than matched through donations. The facility operated from November 15, 1930 until 2009.



**#2 ST. MATTHEW'S  
EPISCOPAL CHURCH  
5900 – Seventh Avenue  
(1872-79) Gothic Revival**

The Episcopal congregation of St. Matthew's was organized in 1840, the fourth Episcopal church to be organized in the old Northwest Territory.

A.H. Ellwood, an architect from Aurora, Illinois who specialized in designing churches, schools, and public buildings, was selected to design the church. Begun in 1872 and completed in 1879, the church is built of Joliet (Illinois) and Racine (Wisconsin) limestone in the Gothic Revival style. Ellwood's work is distinctive in its duplication of historic Gothic architectural details – far more than is usually seen in works of this period.

The rusticated stonework of the church is done in a random ashlar pattern with dressed stone trim. The nave has a steeply pitched gable roof and shed roofs cover the side aisles. The west facade wall features wall buttresses that end above the roof line and are decorated with stone finials and support flying buttresses at each corner, a clock, a louvered belfry, and a parapet with battlements. Completing the building plan is the polygonal apse on the north facade. A sacristy wing is on the west facade and a chapel wing projects from the east facade. In 1987, large Gothic windows on the south facade were replaced with contemporary stained glass windows.



**#3 LINCOLN STATUE  
Library Park  
(1909)**

The bronze statue of Abraham Lincoln shows the President sitting, with his legs crossed. The statue was executed by well known sculptor Charles Henry Niehous of New York in 1909. Niehous' Lincoln is warm and relaxed, somewhat in contrast to the imposing figure erected in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. several years later. The statue was a gift from local businessman Orla Calkins, an admirer of Lincoln, to commemorate the 100th anniversary year of the President's birth.



**#4 KENOSHA COUNTY SOLDIERS'  
MONUMENT, “WINGED VICTORY”  
Library Park  
(1900)**

The Soldiers' Monument in Library Park, dedicated along with the new library in 1900, was designed by Daniel Burnham. It consists of a 60-foot monolithic granite Corinthian column capped by a Winged Victory statue, executed by Italian sculptor Decco.



**#5 GILBERT M.  
SIMMONS  
MEMORIAL  
LIBRARY  
711 – 59th Place  
(1900) Neo-Classical  
Revival**

One of Kenosha's prominent Neo-Classical Revival civic buildings, the Simmons Library was designed by nationally acclaimed architect Daniel H. Burnham. In Chicago, Burnham was chief of construction and director of works for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. The exposition's “White City” did much to fuel the Neo-Classical Revival in architecture in the early twentieth century in America.

Built for \$150,000, the library is a one-story building sitting on a raised foundation. It has a cross plan and is built of Bedford limestone, decorated with marble, bronze, mosaics, and frescoes. At the center is the building's dome, sitting on a drum and decorated with a running swag design. Steps lead to monumental bronze doors. Visitors are invited inside the building to view the beautiful marble interior.

In 1899, Z.G. Simmons, a local industrialist, offered to build a free public library and give it to the city. He stipulated that the library be named for his late son and that the city levy a tax to support its operations. The city agreed, and on May 30, 1900, the new library was dedicated.



**#6 LUCIEN SCRIBNER HOUSE**  
**6003 – Seventh Avenue**  
**(1843) Greek Revival**

The Lucien Scribner House is a smaller version of the Samuel B. Scott House (#11 below), most

probably built at an earlier date. It has a two-story cube form, is of white-painted brick construction, and has a hipped roof topped with a deck and metal cresting. Under the eaves is an undecorated frieze. Window openings are small to medium, of the Greek Revival type. The entrance is decorated with a terra cotta frontispiece, probably an alteration dating from the early twentieth century. There is an elliptical fanlight over the front door.

Lucien Scribner was a local architect and contractor who only lived in this house for a brief time. His widow, Sally, owned the property until 1878, when it was sold to Sarah Royer, and then to Nicholas Pirsch. Pirsch was a blacksmith who built his business into a wagon-manufacturing shop. His son, Peter Pirsch, became more successful as the inventor and manufacturer of the Pirsch Patent Trussed Fire Ladder and other fire fighting equipment. The Peter Pirsch & Sons Company later became known nationwide for its quality fire trucks. The Pirsch family lived in this house until 1987.



**#7 URBAN J. LEWIS HOUSE**  
**6019 – Seventh Avenue**  
**(1892) Queen Anne**

This large, decorative Queen Anne house is of frame construction with a rusticated stone first floor. It has a steeply pitched hipped roof

and wide eaves decorated with modillions. A conical tower with conical roof, topped by a hip knob and finial, decorated with projecting dormers, is at the southwest corner of the house. Large projecting gables add asymmetry to the side and front facades of the building. A large veranda wraps around the northwest corner of the house and is constructed of stone piers topped with sets of round columns. This house is probably the best example of Queen Anne style architecture in the City.

Urban J. Lewis was a native of England who came to the United States as a child. He came to Kenosha in 1875 to become cashier of the Dan Head and Company Private Bank. Besides banking, Lewis had many other business interests. In 1920, the house was acquired for the Hansen-Lendman Funeral Home, which occupies the building today.



**#8 LOUIS THIERS HOUSE**  
**6027 – Seventh Avenue**  
**(1893) Queen Anne**

The Thiers House is a two and one-half story Queen Anne style house with clapboard siding, a hipped and gable roof, and a polygonal

turret with tent roof at the northwest corner. A veranda wraps around the northwest corner of the house. Original details of the veranda are, however, now missing.

Louis Thiers was born in Kenosha in 1858. He was educated in Kenosha schools and became a photographer. He worked for six years in Chicago and, in 1895, opened a photo gallery in Kenosha. The gallery operated for five years, until Thiers went into semi-retirement. He had other business interests, particularly successful farms elsewhere in Wisconsin. Thiers lived in this house until the mid-1930s.



**#9 SITE OF AN "UNDERGROUND RAILROAD STATION"**  
**6027 – Seventh Avenue**

At this address, a bronze plaque in the curbing marks the original site of the home of the Reverend Reuben H. Deming, a Methodist lay-preacher and early educator, whose house was one of four known Kenosha "Stations"

on the Underground Railroad. The attic of the Deming home was used in the period before the Civil War to harbor fugitive Southern slaves in their flight to freedom in Canada via Great Lakes sailing ships. Reverend Deming's original house was moved from this site and is now on 61st Street, between 11th and 12th Avenues.



**#10 HERMAN REINHOLD HOUSE**  
**6035 – Seventh Avenue**  
**(1864) Greek Revival**

This simple frame Greek Revival house has a two-story front-gabled plan, low-pitched gable roof with returned eaves, and medium-sized, symmetrically-placed window openings. The full-facade front porch has turned posts with a spool and spindle balustrade and frieze.

The house was built by Herman Reinhold, who owned it until 1868. In 1891, the house was acquired by William H. Saunders, a prominent physician and surgeon. Saunders lived in the house until 1909, when it was purchased by Francis and Sarah Lyman.



**#11 SAMUEL B. SCOTT HOUSE**  
**522 – 61st Street**  
**(1855) Greek Revival**

This large, square two-story painted brick house was built in the proportions and details of the Greek Revival style. The shallow-pitched hipped roof has moderately overhanging eaves under which is a frieze and small, flat brackets. Windows are symmetrically placed and of the medium size found in Greek Revival houses. A small porch with classical columns covers an entrance decorated by sidelights and a transom.

Samuel B. Scott, an early banker, was the first owner of the house. Real estate developer Hugh Spear purchased the house in 1861 and owned it until late in the nineteenth century. During the first two decades of the twentieth century, the house was a fashionable boarding house known as the "Southern." Between 1918 and 1920, it also housed the "Kenosha Grand Conservatory of Music." In 1923, prominent attorney Alfred L. Drury purchased the home and lived there with his family until 1957. He served as district attorney and circuit court judge. From 1957 to 1987, the house was owned by Milton B. Steinmetz, an executive with Snap-On Tools and his wife Margaret.





**#12 WILLIAM T. FLATLEY HOUSE**  
521 – 61st Street  
(1930) Georgian Revival

One of the last homes to be built in the district is this two-story red brick Georgian Revival style house. Under its gable roof, a modillioned frieze can be seen. The entrance is decorated with sidelights and a fanlight, and is covered with a semi-circular portico supported by plain columns. The portico's frieze is decorated with modillions and topped with a balustrade. Windows are symmetrically placed on the house.

William T. Flatley was a local dentist and lived in the house until around 1935. It was then occupied by Herbert E. Sawyer, an executive with the McWhyte Company. Later residents include the families of Charles Nash Miller and Robert Wells, both affiliated with local industries in the community.



**#13 EDWARD BAIN HOUSE**  
6107 – Seventh Avenue  
(1860) Italianate

This large, two and one-half story rambling Italianate house has many decorative details. It has a large hip roof with deck from which project two front gables and a south side projecting wing gable. The wide eaves are supported by paired scroll brackets with pendants. The front gables have lunette windows with arches and tall keystones. The front porch has large Doric columns and a decorated frieze.

The house was built for Edward Bain, who in 1852, bought a wagon-making shop and built it into the Bain Wagon Works. Bain's company became one of the largest industries in Kenosha, and one of the largest wagon-making firms in the state. Harriett Bain, Edward's widow, lived in the house until 1906. From that year on, the house was owned by several people. Between 1925 and 1931, it housed the Kenosha Hospital Training School for Nurses dormitory.



**#14 TERRACE COURT APARTMENTS**  
6207 – Seventh Avenue  
(1928) Neo-Classical Revival

Built by a local contractor, the Larson Brothers Contracting Company, the Terrace Court Apartments is a three-story red brick building which features architectural details of the Neo-Classical Revival style. The U-shaped building has a courtyard leading to the recessed main entrance. The cornice line defining the building's parapet roof is decorated with balustrade sections and topped with urns.

Terrace Court Apartments was built as an apartment complex for middle- and upper-class Kenoshans who wanted a downtown address, but not the upkeep of a downtown single-family residence. Original tenants included doctors, dentists, attorneys, business managers, and other white-collar professionals.



**#15 JOHN T. YULE HOUSE**  
6128 – Seventh Avenue  
(1866) Italianate

This Italianate house is typical of smaller houses of this style built in Wisconsin. It features square main block with wings and a low-pitched hipped roof with wide eaves. Under the eaves are brackets and a frieze. The front porch, with classical details, is probably an addition from the early twentieth century. An unusual feature of this house is the wooden quoins at the corners; that is, wood scored to look like the corner stone quoin construction of many stone buildings.

John T. Yule was born in Scotland in 1831 and came to rural Wisconsin in 1840 and to Kenosha in 1849. He worked in two wagon works in town before beginning at the Bain Wagon Works. By 1874, he was assistant foreman at Bain and a city alderman. By the turn of the century, Yule was a foreman at the company.



**#16 ORSON WELLES BIRTHPLACE**  
6116 – Seventh Avenue  
(1880) Second Empire

Noted actor, writer, and director, Orson Welles, was born in the upstairs flat of this building on May 6, 1915. Mary Head Welles Gottfredsen (Mrs. Frederick Gottfredsen) was Orson's paternal grandmother. Orson's parents, Richard Welles (from Mary Gottfredsen's first marriage) and Beatrice Ives Welles lived first at the Frederick Gottfredsen house and moved into this building just before Orson was born. Richard Welles worked at the American Brass Company in Kenosha. Young Orson's first stage was the platform in the third floor ballroom of the Frederick Gottfredsen House. The Welles family moved to Chicago when Orson was about five years old.

**Did You Know?** Library Park is the host of many special events. Log on to [www.VisitKenosha.com](http://www.VisitKenosha.com) for a list of Kenosha Area events.



**#17 JACOB  
GOTTFREDSSEN HOUSE**  
705 – 61st Street  
(1869-71) Italianate

The Jacob Gottfredsen House is a two-story painted brick Italianate house with a low-pitched hip roof common to the style. Several brick chimneys with elaborate corbeled caps project from the roof. Under the wide overhanging eaves are paired brackets and a decorated frieze. The window openings are all tall, narrow sashes with round arches decorated with heavy hood moldings with keystones. The windows also have sills with small brackets. The east facade features a tall, narrow decorative leaded glass window with an elaborate flat arch.

Jacob Gottfredsen was a Danish immigrant who operated a vinegar mill, cigar store, and flour mill after coming to Kenosha in 1846. In 1856, he purchased a one-half interest in a malt house, which he built into a successful brewery that operated until 1890. In the early twentieth century, this was the home of the Mathias Werve family. Werve was a superintendent at the N.R. Allen Tannery.



**#18 FREDERICK J.  
GOTTFREDSSEN HOUSE**  
711 – 61st Street  
(1888) Queen Anne

The house has a basic Queen Anne form, but features details suggesting both the Richardsonian Romanesque and the Shingle styles. The two and one-half story house has a rusticated stone first floor and shingled upper stories. The most distinctive features of the house are the semi-circular arched openings that form the entrance porch and almost completed arch that forms the first floor window. The “nogging” of the half-timbering in the gable includes pieces of beer bottles, reportedly from the Gottfredsen Brewery, embedded in the stucco.

Frederick Gottfredsen was born in Kenosha in 1857. Following his education at Lake Forest Academy and Northwestern College in Watertown, he joined his father, Jacob’s, brewery in 1876. In 1890, when the brewery closed, he took over a branch of the Pabst Brewing Company in Kenosha and operated it along with other business interests.



**#19 MASONIC  
TEMPLE**  
807 – 61st Street  
(1924) Neo-  
Classical Revival

The Neo-Classical Revival style Masonic Temple was designed by Chicago architect Richard Gustave Schmid, a specialist in designing Masonic Temples. The front and east facades are made of smooth ashlar limestone, while the rear and west facades are of tan brick. The two-story building features a stone cornice on the front and east facades, above which is a parapet with balustrade surrounding a

third-story built of brick under a hipped roof. Two Ionic columns support a partially enclosed entrance portico. The building today is under private ownership.



**#20 JEWISH  
COMMUNITY CENTER  
BETH-HILLEL TEMPLE**  
6050 – Eighth Avenue  
(1927-28) Neo-Classical

The two-story temple building was designed in the Neo-Classical style by Chicago architect Abraham Epstein in 1927. The building is built of brick with a limestone facade that wraps slightly around the sides. The first floor windows are multi-paned case-ment types elaborately decorated with hoods supported by brackets and prominent sills, under which are carved swags. The recessed entrance features entry doors topped with a transom and an elaborately carved surround.

The Jewish Community Center began as the Young Men’s Hebrew Association around 1922. First a social group, the members reorganized as a temple in 1923. The Beth Hillel congregation has been associated with Reform Judaism in Kenosha since the 1920s.



**#21 VOLNEY FRENCH  
HOUSE**  
6044 – Eighth Avenue  
(1846) Greek Revival /  
Italianate

This small house provides an excellent representation of the transition between the Greek Revival and Italianate styles of the mid-nineteenth century. The two-story typically square main block is brick, with a low-pitched hipped roof. A wide frieze with simple brackets can be seen under the overhanging eaves. The ell is totally covered in the front by a projecting three-sided bay with tall, narrow windows. The main block and ell have the proportions of the Greek Revival style, but the details of the frieze and the bay of the ell are clearly Italianate. Some evidence suggests that this house was originally built as a simple Greek Revival structure and later remodeled around the time of the Civil War, giving it its Italianate details.

Volney French was one of the early settlers in Kenosha and was one of only three attorneys in the city before 1841. He served also as a county judge. Later in the nineteenth century, the house was the long time home of livery owner, Theodore I. Meyers, and his wife and widow, Anna. The house was recently converted to office use, and is a good example of adaptive reuse of an historic building.



**#22 FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, SCIENTIST**  
6032 – Eighth Avenue  
(1927-28) Colonial

The First Church of Christ, Scientist was built in the Colonial style. The body of the structure is constructed of Vermont seam faced granite trimmed with Bedford stone. The side walls and rear of the church are made of pressed brick.

Various groups of Christian Scientists are known to have held services in Kenosha as far back as 1894. In 1925, members voted to purchase the lot on which the church was eventually built. In 1927, a Chicago architect, Charles D. Faulkner, was engaged to erect the church building at a cost of approximately \$60,000. Church members continued to read and worship in the building for the next 30 years. In July 1977, the building was purchased by the Board of Directors of the Kenosha Day School for the establishment of an independent day school in Kenosha. The Board established Armitage Academy to continue some of the traditions of the recently closed Kemper-Armitage Hall School. The building today is used for a child care facility.



**#23 HALE-FARR HOUSE**  
6028 – Eighth Avenue  
(1848, remodeled/enlarged 1890) Italianate

Built around 1848, remodeled and enlarged about 1890, possibly using some of the exterior of the old house on this lot constructed for local

businessman Samuel Hale, this two and one-half story house has a main square block of brick construction with Italianate-type window openings. The projecting gables at the side facades are decorated in the German Renaissance Revival style. A similar gable at the front of the house has been removed. Large leaded glass windows are also found on the side facades. At the rear of the house, a large meeting room was added in the middle of this century by current occupants, the Kenosha Woman's Club.

William Farr, a surgeon for the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad and a local politician, and his family lived in the house until about 1916. Between 1916 and 1923, the Horace Johnson family lived in the house. Johnson was the inventor of the "closed crotch" used in modern men's underwear, and worked for Cooper's Kenosha Klosed Krotch Underwear Company, a forerunner of Jockey International, a leading Kenosha industry in the twentieth century. The Kenosha Woman's Club acquired the house in 1923, remodeled and expanded it, and have occupied it since then.



More information on the history of Kenosha can be found at the Kenosha History Center on Simmons Island. Visit [www.kenoshahistorycenter.org](http://www.kenoshahistorycenter.org) for details.



**#24 FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH**  
5934 – Eighth Avenue  
(1874) Gothic Revival

This cream brick Gothic Revival church was built by local contractor Chris George beginning in 1874. The building has a rectangular plan with a steeply pitched gable roof. Towers flank each side of the front facade and are decorated with corner buttresses and brick corbelling. The south tower rises to a 150-foot spire. Stained glass windows all have stone gothic arches and stone sills, except for round windows in the towers, a teardrop window in the

front facade, and the massive rose window dominating the streetfront.



**#25 NATHAN R. ALLEN, JR. HOUSE**  
5918 – Eighth Avenue  
(1890) Queen Anne

The Nathan Allen, Jr. House is two and one-half stories high, with a gambrel-roof and squat central tower. Although the house retains many of

its original features, its level of integrity was reduced by an unsympathetic remodeling of the porch at the front of the structure. Still, the house retains enough of its historical fabric to be associated with an industrialist of Allen's stature.

This grand Queen Anne residence was built by Nathan R. Allen, Jr., owner of the Allen Tannery in Kenosha. Founded in 1856 by Nathan's father, Nathan Allen, Sr. and Levi Grant, the Allen Tannery grew throughout the 1850s and 1860s. When Nathan Allen, Sr. died in 1890, Nathan Jr. and his brother Charles began enlarging the business. By 1916, the Allen Tannery employed 1,000 workers.

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