

A Look Back in Time

The William Donley House, 5953 Fifth Avenue, embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the Queen Anne Architectural style, thus meeting necessary criteria for individual historic designation as a Kenosha Historic Structure as determined by the Kenosha Landmark Commission in 1990. Re-designation as a local historic landmark was granted by the Common Council on November 18, 1996.

The William Donley House is a two-story building constructed in the Queen Anne style. The building has an irregular plan with a steeply-pitched intersecting gable roofline. The gable-peaks of the house are decorated with cross pieces in a cut-out pattern, and applied stickwork of vertical and angled boards decorate the gable surfaces. The walls of the house are covered with clapboards and punctuated by primarily single-light, double-hung sashes, some paired. They are decorated with cornice lintels, wood surrounds, and footed sills. There are two larger single-paned windows with transoms on the west and south elevations that are decorated with elaborate window hoods of vertical and angled stickwork, wood surrounds, and footed sills attached to stickwork panels.

The front entrance consists of a single door decorated with a cornice lintel and a wood surround. It is covered by a curved veranda that features wide eaves, a plain and spool-and spindle frieze, massive turned posts with knobs, and a spool-and spindle balustrade. Under the porch deck the base is trimmed with framed lattice panels. The entrance on the south elevation is also a single door decorated with a cornice. It is covered by a shed-roofed porch that has a spool-and spindle frieze and balustrade and narrower turned posts. The entire building sits on a brick foundation.

The house was constructed in 1884 for Donley, who was a salesman. During the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, the house was the home to George and Margaret Hudson. The Donley House is architecturally significant because it is a fine and very well-preserved example of the Queen Anne style. It is typical of the way the style was interpreted on hundreds of middle-class, medium-sized houses throughout Wisconsin, but due to remodeling and alterations, few examples of the quality are still extant.

The Queen Anne style was popular in Wisconsin between 1880 and 1910, and is seen in the state in large numbers. Often called "Victorian," the Queen Anne style is characterized by asymmetry and irregularity of plan and massing, a variety of surface materials, and complex rooflines with many projections and bays. Other details related to the style include elaborate window moldings, turrets or oriels, and large, wrap-around verandas. The Donley House has the irregular plan, variety of surface materials, complex roofline, elaborate window moldings, and veranda typical of the Queen Anne style. Also, its Queen Anne details have a high quality of construction methods and materials and are impressively well-preserved. More importantly, though, the Donley House is a fine example of how the Queen Anne style was interpreted in moderately-sized, middle-class homes. There are a number of larger and more

elaborate Queen Anne style houses in Kenosha, but this house is as significant because it can show us what typical modest Queen Anne style houses looked like in the late nineteenth century. Because of its high level of preservation and its high quality of construction, the Donley House is an important historic resource in the City.

We hope you will take the time to drive or walk by this wonderfully preserved Queen Anne style home. You will be pleasantly rewarded as the owners have maintained the historic integrity of this home down to the smallest detail.

