KENOSHA HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
HISTORICAL ARTIFACT DETERMINATION

ARTIFACT NAME/DESCRIPTION	*Mathew O'Neill Celtic Cross*
ADDRESS	*Green Ridge Cemetery at 6604 7th Avenue*
CONSTRUCTION DATE	*1906*
ARCHITECT/SCULPTOR/BUILDER	*Unknown*

STANDARDS FOR DESIGNATION - MUST CHOOSE 1 OR MORE		
X	1	Item is a local historical artifact that is at least 50 years old.
	2	Item is associated with a property that meets the criteria for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

STANDARDS FOR DESIGNATION - MUST CHOOSE 1 OR MORE		
	3	Item exemplifies or reflects the cultural, archaeological, political, economic, social, or religious history.
	4	Item is identified with personages, events, or periods of history which personages, events, or periods are significant to the community.
X	5	Item embodies distinguishing characteristics of architecture, an architect, architectural materials, craftsmanship, or works of nature.
X	6	Item is in its inherent historical nature provides the citizenry with educational or aesthetic enrichment.
	7	Check here if the historical artifact is located in a designated local, State, or National Register property or district.

Level of Action	*For Listing*	*No Listing*	*Removal from Listing*
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & INSPECTIONS	**X**		
PUBLIC HEARING DATE: 08/29/2013	*RECOMMENDATION DATE: 08/29/2013*		
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION	**X**		
COMMON COUNCIL	**X**		
DATE OF COUNCIL ACTION: 09/16/2013			

DESCRIPTION

"Be ye steadfast,
unmoveable, always

The Matthew O'Neill Celtic Cross, located in Green Ridge Cemetery, stands twenty (20') feet in height on a five (5') foot base of Vermont gray granite. It was quarried and carved in Barre, Vermont and shipped to Kenosha on a flatcar, then transferred to long drays with low wheels.

Erected in 1906, the monument reflects the Christian faith and O'Neill's Irish birth. The cost of the cross in 1906 was $35,000.00. It was considered so superb a piece of workmanship that it was once photographed in color for the cover of an issue of Monumental News Review.

The upper third of the cross is a true Celtic design. Interlaced straps or ribbons make curvaceous patterns surrounding five bosses on each side, one at the crossing and one on each arm of the cross. On the top of the cross and on the wheel between each of the cross arms are the initials M N with the O interlinking them together. The wheel, symbol of eternity, circles the arms of the cross, connecting and reinforcing them. The letters and interlacing are not incised but raised and rounded – a different process requiring unusual skill.

Engraved on one side of the cross, it states “Matthew O'Neill Born at Drumbirn County Monaghan Ireland, April 5, 1823, Died at Buffalo, N.Y. May 18, 1902”. Engraved on the opposite side is a verse from 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” The base states the O'Neill name. It is said to be the tallest monument located in the cemetery.

Surrounding the base on each corner are stone markers with the O'Neill name. In front of the side which states his birth and death is another marker with the O'Neill name.

SIGNIFICANCE:

According to the family history, the O'Neills were descended from early kings of Ireland, daring 12th century patriots and heroes of the time of Cronwell in England. Charles O'Neill, the older brother of Matthew, emigrated to Quebec, Canada and eventually settled in Kenosha. Matthew, his brother Charles, Charles wife Elizabeth and two of Charles' children, Elizabeth Mary and John Charles are all buried around the Celtic Cross. The history of Charles and his family is also significant due to the proximity of their burials to the Celtic Cross.

Matthew O'Neill was born at Drumbirn, County Monaghan in Ulster Ireland on April 5, 1823. He came to North America at the age of 4, in 1827 with his parents. For many years, he was a schooner captain on the Great Lakes. At the time of his death he was single and retired and was living in Buffalo, New York. His cause of death was noted as senility. While not a resident of Kenosha, he was buried In Green Ridge Cemetery on May 22, 1902 since his brother Charles lived here and also because Kenosha was his favorite port while a schooner captain. His last will called for a 20 ft. granite Celtic cross monument.

Charles O'Neill was Matthew's older brother and was born in Ireland. Charles emigrated to Quebec, Canada in 1833 with his wife Elizabeth. The family then moved to New York State in 1837, and finally to Southport, later to be renamed Kenosha in 1842. Charles was involved in local Whig politics, supporting Zachary Taylor for US president in 1848. For his support, Charles was appointed Southport lighthouse keeper, 1849-1853. After that, the family lived on a farm in rural Somers Township, until 1861, when President Abraham Lincoln reappointed him lighthouse keeper. He again was replaced in 1865. Following the last appointment of lighthouse keeper, the family operated a farm in Pleasant Prairie, another adjoining town.

In old age, Charles and his wife, Elizabeth, lived in Kenosha with their daughter Elizabeth Mary and her husband, Orla Calkins. Charles accidentally drowned in Lake Michigan, near his daughter's home in 1875.

Elizabeth (Douglas) O'Neill was Charles' wife and was born in 1803. She died February 18,1896.

James Richard O'Neill was born in 1833 in Ireland. He was the first of three children, and was the oldest son of Charles and Elizabeth. When James was only four months old, his parents sailed for the United States aboard the 343-ton schooner Rhode Island, arriving at the port of New York on July 8, 1833. He was a “special artist” for the Frank Leslie Publishing Co, and was murdered at Baxter Springs in 1863. He is buried in Baxter Springs, Kansas. His mother and sister in the late 1870's erected a family monument in Green Ridge Cemetery. The monument lists his name, even though he lies in another grave 530 miles to the southwest.

Elizabeth Mary O'Neill, the daughter of Charles, was born in Quebec, Canada on August 28, 1835. She married Orla M. Calkins on June 1, 1874, until he passed in 1909. She then married Colonel Webster Porter Moore. She was very active and prominent in musical and social circles of the City and was one of Kenosha's most highly esteemed residents. She died in 1919.

John Charles O'Neill, son of Charles**,** was born in New York State in 1838. In his adulthood, he spent several years abroad. He died in Salt Lake City at the age of 39 on November 26, 1877.