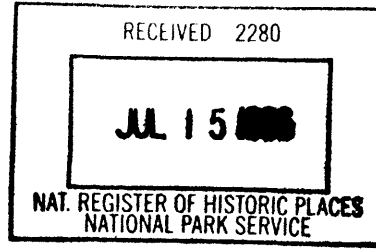


NPS Form 10-900  
(Rev. 8/86)  
Wisconsin Word Processor Format (1331D)  
(Approved 3/87)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries. Use letter quality printer in 12 pitch, using an 85 space line and a 10 space left margin. Use only 25% or greater cotton content bond paper.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name KERWIN, JUDGE J. C., HOUSE  
other names/site number N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 516 East Forest Avenue N/A not for publication  
city, town Nee Nah N/A vicinity  
state Wisconsin code WI county Winnebago code 139 zip code 54956

**3. Classification**

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property		
		contributing	noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u>	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

No. of contributing resources  
previously listed in the  
National Register N/A

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

*[Handwritten Signature]* 7/2/96  
Signature of certifying official Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet

*[Handwritten Signature]* 8.16.96

\_\_\_ determined eligible for the National Register. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet

\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the National Register.

\_\_\_ removed from the National Register.

\_\_\_ other, (explain:)

*[Handwritten Signature]* Signature of the Keeper Date

**6. Functions or Use**

Historic Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions  
(enter categories from instructions)  
DOMESTIC/single dwelling

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

**7. Description**

---

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Materials  
(enter categories from instructions)Queen Anne

---

---

foundation Limestone

---

walls Brick

---

Shingle

---

roof Asphalt

---

other Wood

---

Stone

---

---

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Judge J. C. Kerwin House is situated on approximately one half acre of land on the south side of Doty Island in the City of Neenah. Located on the northwest corner of East Forest Avenue and Fifth Street, the Kerwin House lies about one half mile north of the central business district in a loose cluster of late 19th century residences. The Kerwin House marks the western boundary of this neighborhood, which includes several notable houses listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The building is a two-story, Queen Anne residence built of masonry in 1885. The plan configuration is a rectangular main block with a rear wing. The roof form is a truncated hip, surmounted by a deck with two low cross gables and a large rear gable. The foundations are rock-faced ashlar limestone, the walls are yellow brick with a stretcher bond, and the roofing materials are contemporary asphalt shingles.

The design includes three two-story bays: an integral polygonal bay at the north corner of the west facade, a polygonal bay on the main south facade, and an integral rectangular bay at the north corner of the east facade. A one-story rectangular bay is located on the east facade of the rear wing, and a polygonal oriel window is located near the south corner of the west facade. A verandah extends across the south and east facades with a semi-circular pavilion and turreted roof on the southeast corner.

The building has two later additions. An historic two-story rectangular addition is attached to the north facade of the rear wing. The foundations are ashlar limestone, the walls are brick on the first floor and shingled on the second, and the roof is flat. A small, one-story contemporary addition is attached to the west facade of the rear wing. Here the foundations are concrete block, the walls are paneled wood, and the roof hipped with contemporary asphalt shingles.

The roofline has four dormers and five chimneys. A large pedimented dormer is located directly over the south facade bay, which forms the base of a railed balcony. Smaller hipped dormers are located at the corners of the south, west and east facades. Two interior chimneys are located on the east facade, one on the west facade. Two other interior chimneys are located on the east and west facades of the rear wing.

The fenestration of the Kerwin House is functional and consists of double-hung, single-paned sash. Stained glass mantle lights are located on each floor of the east

X See continuation sheet

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KERWIN, JUDGE J. C. HOUSE  
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rectangular bay. Leaded glass sidelights are located on the first floor of the south polygonal bay. A leaded glass transom is located over the west facade landing window. The entrance to the front hall is located on the south facade bay. It opens onto the verandah and is composed of a single paneled oak door with flanking leaded glass side lights. Another single lighted door also opens onto the verandah from the sitting room. This door is located on the south wall of the east facade bay. Two rear entries are on the north facade of the rear wing. They are located side by side at ground level and have single paneled doors. One provides access to the basement, the other leads up to the kitchen and pantries. The contemporary addition on the west side of the rear wing includes a third ground level entry.

Character-defining decorative features on the verandah include the pedestaled porch supports, turned balusters, denticulated cornice, and pedimented entrance gable with fish scale shingles. This combination of Classical Revival and Queen Anne Style references are repeated at the roofline with cornice modillions, turned balcony balusters, and pedimented gables with fish scale shingles. A turned balustrade of similar design once edged the roof deck. This element is currently represented by a contemporary aluminum railing of similar height and proportions. Less typical but equally noteworthy are the incised limestone keystones above each of the segmentally arched windows.

The interior retains a high degree its historic appearance. The south entrance opens into a corner reception hall with cascading staircase, inglenook, and slender balusters. Parlor, sitting room, and library open into the hall and each other through a series of sliding doors. Less typical than the reception hall, the parlor and sitting room include heavy ornamental ceiling medallions, borders, and brackets. The parlor mantel is also incised black marble. The dining room, located beyond the sitting room, is more typically paneled and enriched by a built-in buffet and mirrored china cabinets. This room is also noteworthy for its diamond beamed ceiling. On the second floor six bedrooms roughly follow the first floor room arrangement. Several include heavy ornamental ceiling medallions.

The Kerwin House has experienced moderate alterations. In the 1960s its carriage house was demolished and the site subdivided for new construction. In the 1970s the house itself was renovated into a duplex. The library was converted into a kitchen, and the rear staircase was opened into the dining room. Two two-car garages were also constructed at that time. In spite of these changes the Kerwin House retains exceptional integrity of site and form, appearing very much as it did when first constructed. The current owners have returned it to single-family occupancy and are in the process of reversing the contemporary alterations.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:  nationally  statewide  locally  
Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions) Period of Significance Significant Dates

POLITICS/government 1885-1921 (1)

ARCHITECTURE 1885 (2)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Cultural Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_ N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

Architect/Builder

Kerwin, Judge James C. (3)

Wieckert, Ernst F., builder (4).

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Judge J. C. Kerwin House is nominated to the National Register for its local significance under criteria B and C. The Kerwin House is nominated under criterion B for its association with Judge J. C. Kerwin, one of two figures in Neenah history elected to statewide political office. The property is also nominated under criterion C for its local architectural significance. The Kerwin House embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Queen Anne period of design addressed in Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, and it reflects a significant period of growth and achievement in the community.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Neenah began in 1835 as an industrial and agricultural mission for the Menominee Indians. Its early white settlement, attracted by the Fox River water power, followed several years later. Neenah's growth lagged behind other villages in the area until after the Civil War, at which time rail transportation and renewed economic vigor encouraged a boom in local industry. Neenah's role in Wisconsin's paper industry began during this period and included the formation of the Kimberly-Clark Corporation in 1872.

The phenomenal success of Kimberly-Clark and later paper companies produced a social structure dominated by some of the most influential families in the Fox River Valley and the state. This social structure and the industry that sustained it reached a plateau around the turn of the century, when labor activism and community consciousness began to emerge. After World War I, industry turned to manufacturing consumer products, creating more jobs and greater wealth. This provided Neenah with a stable economic environment throughout the Great Depression.

X See continuation sheet

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Neenah's 19th century industrial base created a sharply drawn social structure that revolved around not one, but three prestigious neighborhoods. The first dates to the formation of the village and centered around Church Street. Within walking distance of the commercial and milling districts, this neighborhood was home to many early flour millers and businessmen. The second neighborhood developed after the creation of Riverside Park in 1872. Originally called Park Place or Park Row, this area was home to Neenah's prominent paper manufacturers.

A third neighborhood developed in the 1880s on the south side of Doty Island. This area along East Forest Avenue was home to Menasha's paper and woodenware manufacturers. The Gilbert, Smith, Whiting, Strange, and Kerwin families all built elaborate homes here, many of them larger and more astonishing than the houses around Riverside Park. Through the creation of this neighborhood, Neenah acquired a remarkably large population of mill owners whose consolidated manufacturing interests shaped the economic development of the Fox River Valley.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

In spite of the area's industrial wealth and influence, Neenah and the Fox River Valley produced few politicians elected to statewide office. According to the Legislative Reference Bureau, only three state constitutional officials were elected from this part of Wisconsin during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Two were residents of Neenah, both closely associated with the city's industrial oligarchy. Of these only Judge Kerwin established a long-standing career in public service.

James C. Kerwin(1850-1921) was born in the Irish settlement that located in the Town of Menasha following the construction of the Fox-Wisconsin waterway. Studying the law under Judge Collins of Menasha, Kerwin graduated from the University of Wisconsin law school in 1875 and set up practice in Neenah. In 1880 he married Helen Lawson, daughter of Menasha industrialist P. V. Lawson Sr. Two of Kerwin's children later married into the Clark and Sensenbrenner families of the Kimberly-Clark Corporation.(5) Two other children maintained the family home until the 1960s.

During his career, Kerwin distinguished himself as both a jurist and a public official. Recognized as one of the leading attorneys of Winnebago County, he won widespread popular acclaim as a successful litigator in cases opposing railroad and utility interests.(6) In 1889 he opened a branch law office in Milwaukee, where eventually he represented the utility interests he had once successfully opposed. In addition to a notable private practice, Kerwin was elected to twelve consecutive terms as Neenah City Attorney and was appointed in 1901 to the University of Wisconsin board

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of regents by Governor LaFollette. In 1904 he was elected to the state supreme court where he served with Justices Cassoday, Marshall, Dodge, Timlin, Winslow, and Vinje. Unopposed in 1914, Kerwin served on the supreme court until his death in 1921. (7)

Only one other resident of Neenah was elected to a state constitutional office. John Strange (1852-1923), a neighbor of Kerwin on East Forest Avenue, founded the John Strange Paper Company in Menasha and was elected to one term as Lieutenant Governor in 1908. (8) The third state official from the Fox River Valley was Oliver E. Wells of Appleton, who served as state superintendent of public instruction from 1890 to 1895. (9)

In Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin, the study unit on state government identifies the homes of prominent officials as an important resource type, but does not specify locational patterns or context considerations. A locational pattern for homes associated with state officials would most probably include a primary or secondary residence in Madison. The principal context considerations would then logically be the association of career to place of residence, and the existence of extant local resources with association to the individual or theme of state government.

Consistent with the suggested locational pattern, Kerwin maintained a second home in Madison at 111 E. Gorham, which he occupied while court was in session. (10) This property, while closely associated with his career as a supreme court justice, is no longer extant. The Neenah home of Lieutenant Governor John Strange has also been demolished. Within this context, the Judge James C. Kerwin House is the only extant residential property associated with Judge Kerwin.

ARCHITECTURE

According to Cultural Resource Management in Wisconsin the Queen Anne style was popular in Wisconsin from 1880 to 1910 and is characterized by an irregularity of plan and massing. The style includes a variety of surface textures, roofs, and wall projections. The roofs are steeply pitched, usually with a dominate front-facing gable. Bays, towers, and wrap around verandahs are also frequently applied to the asymmetrical facades. Architectural details are often Classical Revival and tend to be overwhelmed by the building mass.

The Kerwin House deviates from this general norm in significant ways, but broadly reflects the period of construction in its overall character. The numerous bays and cross gables create the sense of an irregular massing, as does the oriel window and

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the wrap-around verandah with its turreted corner pavilion. The roof is steeply pitched, and in lieu of a dominate front-facing gable is a large pedimented dormer. The placement of smaller dormers, chimneys, and the broad entrance pediment reinforce the asymmetrical composition of the facades. The use of fish scale shingles and both stained and leaded glass are also typical, as are the Classical Revival porch columns, pedestals, balusters, and cornice modillions. The corner reception hall floor plan reiterates the irregular exterior features.

What distinguishes the Kerwin House from the bulk of Queen Anne construction is its underlying Georgian Revival formality. Queen Anne elements appear applied to an almost cubic mass of brick largely devoid of diversified ornamentation. The front character defining facade in particular has the semblance of formal fenestration, broken by the polygonal bay and entrance pediment. The prominent cornice modillions reinforce the notion of Georgian Revival formality, as does the historic roof deck balustrading. Equally uncharacteristic are the incised keystones and the extensive use of heavy ornamental plasterwork inside.

These last elements are the principal features that attribute the Kerwin House to the work of builder Ernst F. Wieckert. Wieckert operated a planing mill and later entered into the construction field. (11) Hired to build structures designed by Oshkosh architect William Waters, Wieckert is also believed to have constructed buildings of his own particular design. These designs included elements similar to Waters, incorporating them with features from older periods of construction. Both the Kerwin House and the 1881 Ernst F. Wieckert House (303 High Street) include heavy ornamental plasterwork typical of the Italianate period of construction.

The likelihood of Wieckert's involvement in the Kerwin House design make the combination of Georgian Revival formality and Queen Anne exuberance all the more remarkable. On the one hand its architectural context lies with the Queen Anne 1883 Ellis Jennings House (711 E. Forest Ave., NRHP) or 1891 Charles R. Smith House (824 E. Forest Ave., NRHP), both of which are the work of William Waters and slightly more enriched with architectural detailing. On the other hand, the Kerwin House may be more appropriately compared with the Georgian Revival 1893 Franklyn C. Shattuck House (547 E. Wisconsin Ave., NRHP), which is the work of Ferry & Clas of Milwaukee and shares the same underlying massing and design elements.

In either case the Kerwin House compares favorably with the work of notable Wisconsin architects found in Neenah. It is a fine example of the Queen Anne period of construction as strongly influenced by the Georgian Revival style. Its architectural distinction, its integrity of site and form, and its association with a



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prominent family active in the political and social life of Neenah, collectively illustrate an important period of growth and achievement in the community.

NOTES

- (1) The period of significance covers Kerwin's residence of the house from its construction to his death.
- (2) Adams, 67.
- (3) Ibid.
- (4) Attribution is made by comparison with the 1881 Ernst F. Wieckert Home at 303 High Street, Neenah.
- (5) The Daily News, 1/29/1921, 1:6.
- (6) Shattuck, 353.
- (7) Dictionary of Wisconsin Biography, 203.
- (8) Titus, 428.
- (9) Post-Crescent, 1/2/1995, B3:1.
- (10) Wisconsin State Journal, 1/30/1921, 10:1.
- (11) Titus, 486.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):  
 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Specify repository:  
Neenah Landmarks Commission

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of property Less than one acre

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UTM References

A	<u>1/6</u>	<u>3/8/4/1/6/0</u>	<u>4/8/9/3/8/4/0</u>	B	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	D	<u>/</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>	<u>/ / / / /</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

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Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 2 & 3 of Block 2, Ostenfeldt's First Addition. Volume 136, p. 418.

See continuation sheet

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Boundary Justification

Boundaries are based on the legally recorded boundary lines of the two lots historically associated with the nominated property.

See continuation sheet

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title	<u>Peter J. Adams</u>	date	<u>February 25, 1995</u>
organization	<u>N/A</u>	telephone	<u>414/725-1945</u>
street & number	<u>636 East Doty Avenue</u>	city or town	<u>Neenah</u>
state	<u>Wisconsin</u>	zip code	<u>54956</u>

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##### Newspapers

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- Post-Crescent, V 2/1995, B3:1.
- Wisconsin State Journal, V 30/1921, 10:1.

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Photographic Materials - Identification

KERWIN, JUDGE J. C., HOUSE  
Neenah, Winnebago Co., WI  
Photos by Peter J. Adams, September 1994  
Negatives at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin

Photo #1 of 8: Exterior, view from southwest.

Photo #2 of 8: Exterior, view from south.

Photo #3 of 8: Exterior, view from southeast.

Photo #4 of 8: Exterior, view from northeast.

Photo #5 of 8: Exterior, view of west garage.

Photo #6 of 8: Interior, reception hall staircase.

Photo #7 of 8: Interior, sitting room with ceiling detail.

Photo #8 of 8: Interior, dining room with ceiling detail.

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Wayne and Ruth Struck  
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Neenah, Wisconsin 54956

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