

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 29 1976
DATE ENTERED	JUN 7 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Kemper Hall *Wh*

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

6501 Third Avenue

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Kenosha

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

1st

STATE

Wisconsin 53140

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE  
55

COUNTY  
Kenosha

CODE  
059

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Not currently in use.

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Kemper Hall, Inc. c/o Mr. Fred D. Hartley

STREET & NUMBER

611 56th Street

CITY, TOWN

Kenosha

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Wisconsin 53140

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Kenosha County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

912 56th Street

CITY, TOWN

Kenosha

STATE

Wisconsin 53140

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Structures

DATE

1971

\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

CITY, TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE		CHECK ONE	
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED	DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED			
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED				

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## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Kemper Hall is a group of cream brick buildings constructed over many years in an additive way. The complex is sited in the center of seven acres of shady, landscaped grounds on the shore of Lake Michigan. The buildings are Gothic Revival in style, except for the oldest structure in the complex, the Durkee House. This 2-1/2-story mansion was constructed in 1861 in the Italianate style. The windows are long, elliptically-arched openings with continuous brick moldings and stone sills and keystones. A belt course divides the second story and the attic, which is lit by small eyebrow windows. On the west facade the attic window is an elliptical, stone-trimmed bull's-eye under a curved Renaissance Revival roofline. The south facade features a projecting central pavilion with returned eaves and a bull's-eye window. In the southwest corner between the pavilion and the main mass of the house is a small frame entrance porch with carved spandrels on arched soffits. This is the last remnant of a large veranda which until sometime after 1891 wrapped around the west and north facades of the house. On the north is a two-story polygonal bay. The whole is covered by a very low, hipped roof. Since the first class graduated in 1874, each class has inlaid a copper box, faced with stone, into the brick walls of the Durkee mansion. These hold traditional graduating class records and memorabilia.

In 1871, a three-story wing at the east end of the building was completed, making the east-west length 175 feet. At the same time the inside structure of the third story of the front (west) part was entirely remodeled. This enabled the Durkee building and wing to house dormitories, classrooms, and offices.

In 1875, the chapel was built north of the Durkee mansion. It is in a Ruskinian version of the Gothic Revival style, popular with the Episcopalian ministry. The chapel features light-colored stone window trim and red brick polychromy in the form of string courses and window moldings in contrast with the cream brick walls. Architectural details include a steeply-sloped roof with parapet gables, wall buttresses, pointed-arch openings and a polygonal narthex. In 1906-1908 the original bell tower was removed, stone coping was placed on the front parapet gable, a baptistry was added to the narthex, and the interior was altered.

The following summer the cloister-music house was added, linking the Durkee house and the chapel. This 89-by-20-foot structure is a simple, 1-1/2 story, gabled building with a row of narrow dormers. The lower story retains seven original music rooms but the upper story has been converted into an infirmary.

In the early 1890's a small wing for the parson's study was added to the southeast of the existing structures. This little Gothic Revival building with a polygonal end is the only architecturally significant structure on the lake (east) side of the complex. In 1894, a large, four-story dormitory building was built to the south of the Durkee complex. It is very simple in design with flat stone lintels and a five-story octagonal observatory tower.

In 1901 this structure, with stone drip moldings on the windows and an arched passageway, was extended further south. This extension connected the older part to the new Simmons gymnasium, a four-story building with a symmetrical Gothic Revival facade having carved stone window trim, a decorative brick cornice and stone string courses.

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A parapet gable crowns a projecting central pavilion with a two-story frame bay and a castellated entrance. Inside, a painted adaptation of the Bayeaux tapestries adorns the walls.

Behind the entire complex (to the east) is a functionally-designed boiler room, added in 1905. In 1911 a convent was erected to the north of the complex. This three-story structure was also Gothic Revival in style. Three parapet gables adorn the front, with two-story castellated bays flanking a projecting central entrance porch supported by stone columns. Stone also was employed for copings and drip moldings over the windows. A one-story cloister (1911) links the nun's residence to the chapel. This flat-roofed structure has a five-bay facade with stone-trimmed pointed-arch windows, and a cornice decorated with carved stone plaques.

Finally, a one-story bakery was built in modern times. Almost hidden, on its west facade, is a large mosaic composed by one of the past art teachers of Kemper Hall.

The Kemper Hall complex has been abandoned due to the closing of the school which had occupied it. The buildings are all vacant, therefore, and a local private preservation group hopes to secure its preservation as a municipal facility.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Association with historically significant person.		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES	1861; 1871; 1875-76; 1894; 1901; 1911	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

As an institution, Kemper Hall dates to 1855, when St. Matthew's Episcopal Church and some Kenosha citizens signed a charter launching the "Kenosha Female Seminary," although it was not until 1865 that it opened temporarily under the name of St. Claire's Hall. That year the founders purchased the mansion of U. S. Senator Charles Durkee. Always supported by the Episcopal Church, the school was named Kemper Hall in 1870 in honor of Bishop Jackson Kemper, known well as an Episcopalian missionary priest in Territorial Wisconsin and as Wisconsin's first Episcopal bishop. Kemper Hall graduated its first class in 1876 in its new chapel.

Although it never had a large student body or graduated a great number of students, Kemper Hall existed as a girls preparatory school--affiliated with and supported by the Episcopal Church but never restricted to students of any creed, race, or color--for 105 years with a total of some 1600 alumnae over that period of time, some of whom became illustrious pioneers in their fields. To mention but two of several, Frances Willis, of the class of 1916, was the first woman career diplomat to be placed in charge of an American Legation. Bojan Hamlin Jennings, of the class of 1937, was the first woman to be awarded a doctorate from Harvard University. Hence Kemper Hall became prominent in young women's preparatory education. Beginning in 1970, it became a coeducational elementary school, serving well as always but unable to keep up with expenses. In December, 1974, it was announced that Kemper Hall would close in June, 1975.

Architecturally, the buildings of Kemper Hall form a picturesque and imposing complex. Individually, they present some interesting variations on the Gothic Revival style. The chapel is one of the oldest surviving churches in Kenosha. It is a notable local example of the Episcopalian predilection for simple medieval English chapels. It also features the Ruskinian use of brick polychromy. The convent and gymnasium exemplify the turn-of-the-century version of the Collegiate Gothic. The earlier Durkee house, on the other hand, is in the Italianate style. It is one of the oldest remaining residences in the city of Kenosha and was the city's first house built in the Italian Villa style. The Durkee house is the surviving Wisconsin building most closely associated with Charles Durkee, its builder, who was a prominent Kenosha civic leader; active promoter of the development of the Kenosha harbor; Wisconsin territorial legislator; U. S. Representative, 1849-1853; U. S. Senator, 1855-1861; and territorial governor of Utah beginning in 1865, when he left Kenosha.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY seven

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Katherine E. Hundt, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

April 15, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

816 State Street

TELEPHONE

608/262-2970

CITY OR TOWN

Madison

STATE

Wisconsin 53706

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

S.H.P.O. Signature

*James Horton Smith*

4/15/76

TITLE

Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*NOTED*

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

6/9/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

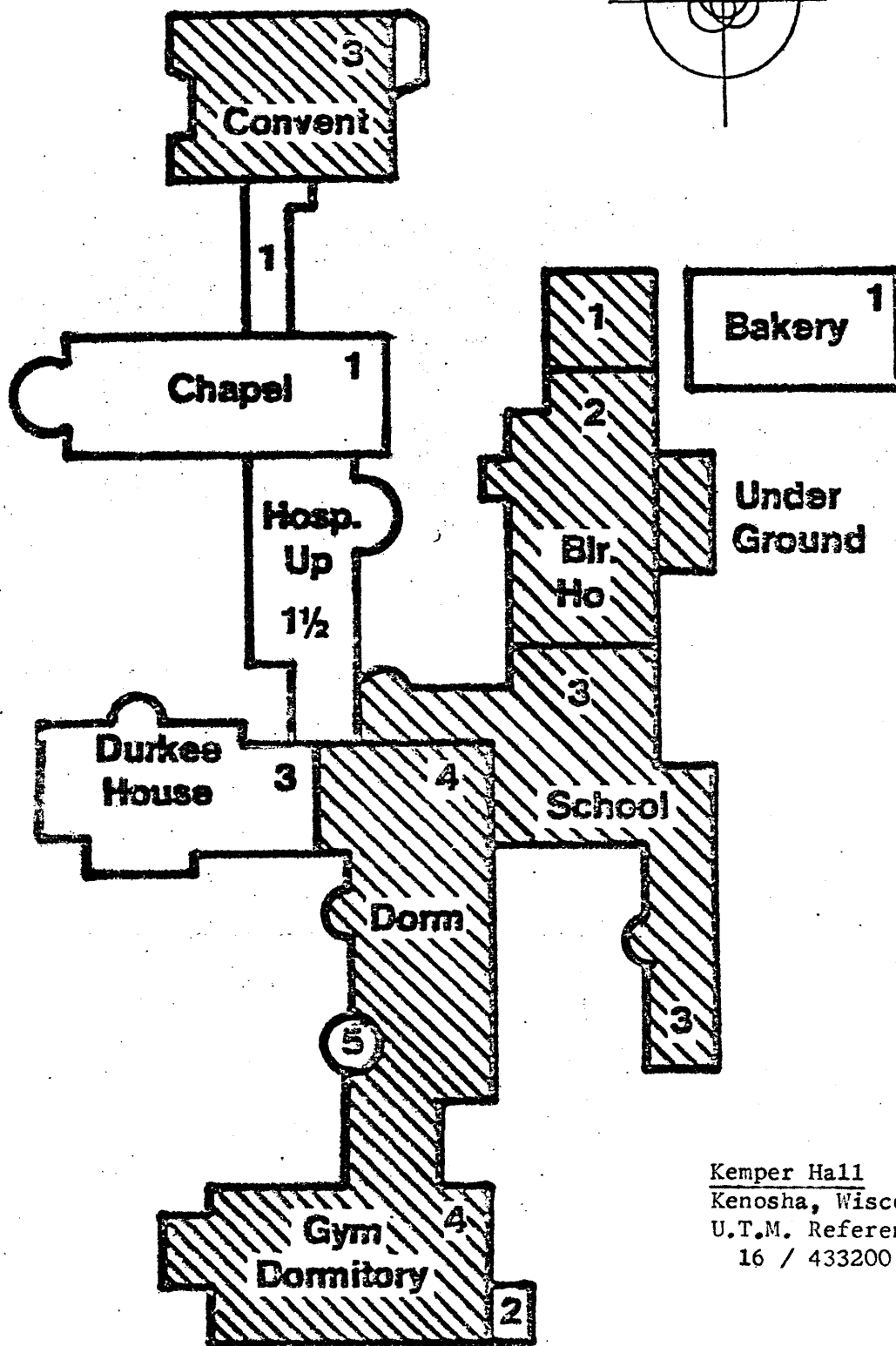
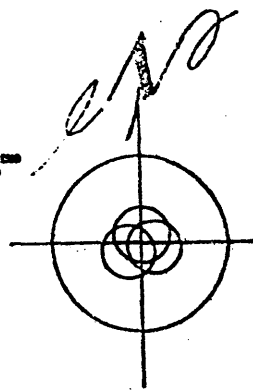
5.28.76

RBR for WJM 5/28/76



Rec'd 5/11/76  
RCH

# -KEMPER HALL-



Kemper Hall  
 Kenosha, Wisconsin  
 U.T.M. Reference:  
 16 / 433200 / 4713870