

MINNESOTA HISTORIC PROPERTIES INVENTORY FORM

HISTORIC NAME:	Kniss House	COUNTY:	Rock
CURRENT NAME:	Welch House	CITY/TWP.:	Luverne JAN 8 1980 80002153
LEGAL DESC.:	N. 194' of E. 240', excluding E. 160' of N. 90' Block 14, Warren and Kniss Addition	ADDRESS:	209 N. Estey

CLASSIFICATION:	CONDITION:	SIGNIFICANCE:	THEME/S:
Building <u> X </u>	Excellent <u> X </u>	Local <u> X </u>	Primary <u> Architecture </u>
Structure <u> </u>	Good <u> </u>	State <u> </u>	Secondary <u> Commerce </u>
Object <u> </u>	Fair <u> </u>	National <u> </u>	Others <u> </u>
District <u> </u>	Deteriorated <u> </u>		

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC:	Yes <u> </u> No <u> X </u> Restricted <u> </u>	PRESENT USE:
VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD:	Yes <u> X </u> No <u> </u>	Residence
OCCUPIED:	Yes <u> X </u> No <u> </u>	

DATE CONSTRUCTED:	1878-1879	ORIGINAL USE:
ORIGINAL OWNER:	P.J. Kniss	* Residence
		ARCHITECT/BUILDER: George Soutar and Joseph H. Jones

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:	ACREAGE: Less than one acre <u> X </u>
Richard V. and Noreen E. Welch 209 N. Estey Luverne, MN 56156	
LOCAL CONTACT/ORG.:	UTM REFERENCE:
	14 / 724890 / 4837200
FORM PREPARED BY:	Luverne, Minn.; 1:24,000
DATE:	
Thomas Harvey	
November 1978	

DESCRIPTION: * Jones and Soutar built the original portion of the house. In 1900-1901, Luverne architect W.E.E. Greene was commissioned to remodel the home.

The large, two-story Kniss/Welch house sits in the center of the block at 209 N. Estey Avenue. From its location it overlooks downtown Luverne. At one time it was the only house on the block. Land to the rear and sides of the house has been sold for newer house construction, but the house retains a long yard leading from the street in front. The major portion of the house was built in 1878-79.

In form, the house consists of a 2½ rectangular block with a truncated hip roof and a three story square tower in the NE corner. A 2½ story wing with bay and a double-pitched roof extends from the south side of the building. Off the rear are two-story and one-story appendages, both having hipped roofs.

The basic style of the house is Italian Villa. This is evidenced in the asymmetrical grouping of the major blocks of the building, an off-set three story tower, a smooth wall surface of painted brick, and wide eaves supported by brackets. Eastlake details have been applied in wood, particularly noticeable are the carved paneling and perforated gable details above the second floor paired windows.

In 1901, columned classical porches and a porte cochere were added to the house. At the same time some interior remodeling was done. Today the interior retains its integrity. Fine woods are used in the formal rooms of the house; mahogany in the living room, butter-nut in the dining room, and oak in the library. The custom woodwork is finely executed. Of particular note are classical columns in the living room, an ornate stair rail, and a massive built-in buffet in the dining room. In addition to several painted ceiling borders, there is a landscape mural in the dining room painted by Simon Edwards, who painted a number of murals in the state capitol. A good number of original lighting fixtures remain in the house.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Kniss/Welch house stands as one of the finest homes in southwestern Minnesota. Few homes in the area display such a commanding presence. Probably no other house in Rock County is as nicely finished inside.

In addition to architectural significance, the house is associated with two important county personalities, a noted early building firm, and the county's best known early architect.

(see continuation sheet)

JAN 8 1960

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SIGNIFICANCE - continued

The partnership of Joseph H. Jones and George Soutan built the original house for P.J. Kniss in 1878-79. They also built the First National and Rock County banks and a number of other early business establishments. Kniss is often regarded as one of the founders of Luverne. His 1870 log cabin was the second house in the future town. Kniss surveyed the original townsite. He became the city's leading entrepreneur. He ran a real estate office, opened the first bank in the county, contracted to build railroads in the area, and served in the State House of Representatives.

Judge P.E. Brown bought the mansion in 1896. In 1901, he commissioned architect W.E.E. Greene to remodel and expand the house. Greene also designed Holy Trinity Church, the Carnegie Library, and Maplewood Chapel.

The Richard Welch family bought the house in 1969. They have worked diligently to restore the house.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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**Note: These changes apply to
Kniss House in Rock County,
Minnesota.**

REFERENCE NUMBER: 80002153

STATE: MINNESOTA

COUNTY: Rock

RESOURCE NAME (HISTORIC): Kniss, Pierce J., House

CITY:

VICINITY OF:

ADDRESS:

CERTIFICATION DATE:

REMOVED DATE:

COMMENTS:

Nina M. Archabal

Nina M. Archabal
State Historic Preservation Officer

JUN 17 1988

Date