KENAN HOUSE
MARY BASON BROADFOOT

Kenan House, the imposing mansion at 17th and Market Streets owned by the University of North Carolina at Wilmington, is not yet rooted in history. The house dates back only to the opening decade of this century, but its original owner and subsequent occupants have left us a building which has become a significant part of Wilmington's 20th century history.

The story began in January, 1909, when Mr. and Mrs. Thomas M. Emerson purchased from Miss Mary Bridgers a plot of land beginning 100 feet east of 17th Street, measuring 100 feet on Market Street and 200 feet in depth. At that time the property lay just outside the city limits of Wilmington in an area known as Carolina Heights.

Thomas Emerson, president of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad (now the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad Company), secured the services of an architect. Mr. J. L. Sprunt believes that his uncle, Kenneth M. Murchison of New York City, may have been the architect for the house, since Mr. Murchison was known to have designed buildings in Wilmington during that era. D. G. Rose of Rocky Mount received the construction contract. Built of brick in Colonial style, the interior featured a 55-foot-long entrance hall with a large parlor on the left adjoined by a small hallway and library in the left rear. On the right was a reception room, opening into the dining room and kitchen area on the right rear. A wide stairway near the back of the hall wound to the second floor, where seven bedrooms and four baths surrounded a capacious stair well.

Construction of the house consumed almost two years. In 1911 the Emersoms, with their new baby son Thomas and Mr. Emerson's daughter by his first marriage, Elliott, moved into their fine residence. An older daughter, Ellenor, had married in 1906. A son, Neil, had died in 1909.

Elliott's marriage to Sidney Williams on November 27, 1912 was held at home, and the Wilmington Morning Star the next day enthused over the "Beautiful Home Wedding Solemnisized Last Evening." The Rt. Rev. Robert W. Strange, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of East Carolina, officiated at the ceremony.

The Emersoms lived in their new home only briefly. Thomas Emerson died on November 25, 1913, and soon thereafter Mrs. Emerson moved to Richmond, Virginia to live. She rented the house in 1914 to the Lyman Delanos.

Lyman Delano, executive vice-president of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, had come to Wilmington from Boston in 1910 with his wife, Leila, and son, Warren. Three other children had been born to the family in Wilmington by the time the Delanos moved to 1705 Market Street: Leila in 1910, Frederic in 1912 and Robert in 1913. (Continued on Page 2)
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Meeting

Time: January 26, 1972, 8:00 P.M.
Place: Great Hall of the First Presbyterian Church
Speaker: Mr. Richard F. Gibbs
Subject: The American Revolution Bicentennial

Mr. Gibbs is the Executive Secretary of the North Carolina American Revolution Bicentennial Commission and also chairman of the Bicentennial Council of the Thirteen Original States. A native of Charlotte, Mr. Gibbs now resides in Chapel Hill, where he did his undergraduate and graduate work in American history at the University of North Carolina.

New Members

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Membership dues are payable in May for the year 1972-73 and it will save your Society money and a great deal of effort if you will plan to pay promptly.

Kenan House . . .
(Continued from Page 1)

The Delanos were popular members of Wilmington society. Between the activities of four young children and the social involvements of their parents, the house reverberated with life during the late teens. Two more daughters were added to the roster of young Delanos at the Market Street mansion: Margaret in February, 1916 and Jane in April, 1919.

Lyman Delano was the first cousin of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, his father being a brother of FDR’s mother, Sara Delano, Wilmingtonians who recall the second decade of this century remember Leila Delano as a lady of exceptional beauty and charm. Neighbors relate her many acts of kindness and generosity.

Lyman Delano was transferred to the Atlantic Coast Line’s New York offices in the spring of 1923, and the Delanos left Wilmington in April of that year.

On the 16th of November, 1923, Mrs. Emerson sold the house to Mrs. Sarah Graham Kenan.

Sarah Graham Kenan was born at 110 Nun Street, Wilmington, on February 17, 1876. In 1903 the Kenans moved to a house at 202 South Third Street, the corner of Third and Orange Streets. After Sarah married her first cousin Graham Kenan on December 18, 1912, the couple continued to live at 202 South Third Street. Graham Kenan practiced law in Wilmington in partnership with W. P. Stacy, and was planning to build a home and practice law in New York City just prior to his sudden death in 1920 on a trip to New York.

Sarah Kenan was the younger sister of Mary Lily Kenan, whose marriage in Kenansville, North Carolina on August 24, 1901 to Henry Morrison Flagler had been a social event of considerable prominence. Henry Flagler had founded the Standard Oil Company with John D. Rockefeller and later had developed the east coast of Florida. At his death on May 20, 1913, Flagler’s 46-year-old widow fell heir to a vast fortune. Mary Lily outlived Flagler by only four years, and when she died in 1917, her sisters Sarah and Jessie and her brother William inherited a sizeable portion of the immense Flagler wealth.


“Shortly after her husband died, my sister Sarah decided that she would like to live near our sister Jessie, who had purchased a home at 17th and Market Streets. She was able to purchase a brick house of Colonial type at the corner of 16th and Market Streets. Tom Hastings of Carrier and Hastings, New York City architects4 was employed to make some changes, additions and modernize the house which was done—most successfully.”

The “changes and additions” probably included the solarium, a small glass-enclosed room off the dining room, giving a bay effect to the dining room; plus general decorative improvements to the interior of the house. Mrs. Kenan named her new home “Sunnyside.”

Of great importance to the history of the mansion was a fire which occurred the evening of June 15, 1931. William Rand Kenan describes it thus: “ . . . [Sarah and

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2should be 18th St.
3should be 17th St.
4architect of the Metropolitan Opera, New York Public Library, Frick Mansion, Senate Building.
Jessie had planned a motor trip through Italy and France... when just one week before leaving for New York to sail, a fire broke out in the attic of Sarah's house—probably an electric wire. She was notified by a person passing on the street and seeing a light in the attic window. She was aroused by the continuous ringing of the front door bell. She and the neighbors removed most of the furniture on the first floor. However, everything on the second floor was consumed, including her clothes, etc. The fire had been in progress some time when she remembered that all her jewels were in a safe on the second floor. Much against the firemen's vigorous protest, she went back, worked the combination and brought out all of the contents of the safe...

The Wilmington Morning Star of Wednesday, June 17, 1931, carried the headlines: "Kenan Fire Loss Believed $25,000. Official Estimates Lackading on Damage to Handsome Market Street Residence," and the story read: "Damage to the two-story brick colonial residence of Mrs. Sarah Graham Kenan in a fire that swept the upper portion of the building Monday night was unofficially placed yesterday at between 25 and $5 thousand dollars. Official estimates were lacking.

Yesterday at noon workmen had commenced erecting scaffolding around the front of the house. Two firemen employed by U. A. Underwood were at the house, tearing down some of the ruins which threatened to fall.

The origin of the fire which called out most of the city's fire equipment had not been learned last night. It was thought to have started in the attic during Monday afternoon and to have smoldered until it broke through the heavy slate roof Monday night.

"Mrs. Kenan and her maid were in the house when the fire was discovered. It is said that Mrs. Kenan had been preparing to go abroad in the near future and that she has had much valuable silver stored in local bank vaults. Few of the expensive rugs were badly damaged, it was reported, as they had been rolled and wrapped for storage. They were carried from the house by bystanders. A $5,000.00 piano left at the front door was not damaged as firemen threw canvas over it. The fire did not reach the first floor at all, and only broke through the ceiling of the second floor in places."

Mr. D. C. Padrick, Mrs. Kenan's chauffeur and loyal friend from 1920 until her death in 1968, recalls that most of the damage on the first and second floors was water damage. Mr. Padrick lived in a small house directly behind "Sunnyside," and says that on that June night he saw the light caused by the flames in the attic and turned in a fire alarm before hurrying to the house to aid "Miss Sarah." According to Mr. Padrick, Mrs. Kenan and her maid had been on the second floor in Mrs. Kenan's suite, where the maid was assisting her in trying on clothes in preparation for her trip.

William Rand Kenan records that "Sarah called me on the telephone and explained the situation. I stated that I would come to Wilmington at once, which I did. My advice was to go to New York City, purchase a new outfit and cable Pisa to cut out the first week of the motor trip and that you would take the following steamer. I would file proof of loss and arrange to have the house rebuilt. all of which was carried out. I arrived in Wilmington on a Saturday morning and that afternoon got Mr. Leonard Schultz. An architect of New York (although I had

9Leonard Schultz had designed The Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach for the Kenan family.

...to reach him on the golf course) and he came down, arriving Monday morning. We had some photographs of the first floor made, and as my sister wished the house replaced as near as the original, this was done, except we constructed a fire-proof building by removing everything except the four outside walls, and placing a steel frame inside, and making all floors with slab-concrete construction to support the hardwood floors."

Thomas S. Kenan, III, Mrs. Kenan's great-nephew who visited her frequently during the '50s and '60s, says that "the elaborate woodwork on the exterior was added when the house was rebuilt after the fire... The third floor was expanded and the roof raised so that it could become an important storage area... The entrance hall was made the focal point of the home and Schultz created the decorative treatment of the ceiling, cornice and columns... One might say the entire interior of the home was made more ornate and modern for the thirties. Mrs. Kenan's suite consisting of sitting room, bedroom and oval bath was enlarged and made much more elaborate than it originally was. The dining room was panelled in wood purchased in England, and the solarium was re-created in Italian marble and leaded glass.

Architect Leonard Schultz's hall was indeed the focal point of the mansion. From the entrance, the view extends across the 55-foot expanse through glass doors at the opposite end, looking out onto a formal garden. Sixteen columns outline the hall, twelve molded against the walls and four supporting a rectangle formed by the stairwell, which extends to the height of the second floor. Dentilled moldings border the ceiling, which is designed in squares delineated by decorative moldings. An oval design is centered in the rear ceiling, while a circular pattern surrounds the chain holding the crystal chandelier and another embellishes the center of the front hall ceiling.

When Mrs. Kenan bought the house from Mrs. Emerson, she purchased an additional fifty feet of adjacent property on the west from E. T. Taylor. In 1924 and 1925 she acquired further parcels of adjacent land, including a house facing on 17th Street for Mr. Padrick. In 1937 the house on the corner of 17th and Market Streets was put up for sale. Urged by family and friends to buy it, and fearing that commercial interests might invest in it, Mrs. Kenan bought the property and had the house torn down. Wishing to assure herself of the privacy which she cherished throughout her life, Mrs. Kenan built a 6½-foot brick wall around the entire property, which by then included a square, 200 feet bordering on Market Street and 200 feet bordering 17th Street.

Mrs. Kenan had already owned, before she moved to "Sunnyside," a number of fine furnishings which she brought to her Market Street home. Thomas Kenan notes a few of these valued possessions: 'The large crystal chandelier in the entrance hall formerly hung at Satan's Toe,' the summer residence of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Flagler at Mamaroneck, New York. Aunt Sarah admired this beauty on one of her visits there and Mr. Flagler, who was extremely fond of her, had it taken down and shipped to Wilmington.

"Several other items formerly came from 'Whitehall,' the Flagler winter residence at Palm Beach which is now The Henry Morrison Flagler Museum... The large painting of 'Venus and Cupid' hanging in the entrance hall... most of the Oriental rugs... the small piano..."
[in the hall] was in Mrs. Flagler's upstairs sitting room at Whitehall... the painting of Venice by Ziem also belonged to Mr. Flagler and hung in the Whitehall library... the French furniture in the reception room originally came from the French salon at Whitehall."

Mrs. Kenan travelled abroad each year, usually leaving in May and returning in the fall. Thomas Kenan writes: "Actually Mrs. Kenan spent very little time in Wilmington until the last ten years of her life. She would usually spend Christmas there and have the family up for Christmas dinner. Soon after Christmas she would take the train to St. Augustine, Florida, where she maintained an apartment in the Ponce de Leon Hotel. During the course of the winter she would spend time in Palm Beach, Miami and Havana. She would return to Wilmington in April and spend a month there and then usually go to New York and stay in her brother's apartment... From there she would usually go to Europe; but in later years she would spend the summers at The Lake Placid Club in upper New York State. She would return to Wilmington the first of September and remain there through Christmas."

During her years of travelling abroad, Mrs. Kenan appropriated many art treasures. The marble fountain and benches in the garden are products of one of her trips to Italy. The large marble mantel in the entrance hall was originally purchased by her sister Jessie in Italy, used for many years in Jessie's garden, and eventually acquired by Mrs. Kenan for the entrance hall, which she felt was a "perfect spot" for it. Other noteworthy objects d'art include a Grandfather clock, a gigantic cobalt blue porcelain urn, and a pair of French urns on marble pedestals, all of which remain a part of the present-day furnishings of the entrance hall.

Thomas Kenan describes his relative as a "very quiet, unassuming person." Mr. Padrick says that Mrs. Kenan seldom entertained lavishly, preferring small dinner parties with family or friends when she was at Sunnyside. She did not smoke or drink. Her chief pleasures were reading, travelling, and informal visiting with intimates.

"When the house was in full operation," writes Thomas Kenan, "Mrs. Kenan kept... a head butler, downstair maid, upstair maid, cook, laundry maid, and two gardeners." Mr. Padrick assisted her in running the house in addition to his duties as chauffeur.

By 1958, Mrs. Kenan had become too ill to leave "Sunnyside." She died on March 16, 1968, having spent her last ten years quietly and in near-seclusion in her beloved home.

Mrs. Kenan's nephew, James Graham Kenan, inherited the home and gave the property to Wilmington College—now the University of North Carolina at Wilmington. Since May, 1969, it has been the residence of UNC-W Chancellor William H. Wagoner and his family. Mrs. Wagoner has renovated the kitchen area and has recently converted the dining room into a family room for the benefit of the three young Wagoner sons, Michael, Robin and Mark.

Leonard Schultz's magnificent hall is currently the setting for frequent receptions hosted by the Wagoners for UNC-W faculty, students and visitors. Those who have been guests speak of Mrs. Wagoner's charm as a hostess and comment on her ability to blend a homey atmosphere with the elegance of the mansion. The art treasures and furnishings mentioned above remain in the house, now known as Kenan House.

Kenan House stands as a superb monument to its builder, architects, and owners. Beyond question, it will grow in historic importance and value in the years to come.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Among those to whom I am indebted for help in researching the facts about Kenan House, I am especially grateful to Thomas S. Kenan, III, whose correspondence has been thorough, extensive and delightful, and who has led me to other sources of information; to Mrs. A. W. Patterson (Leila Delano), who has been a very kind and responsive correspondent; to Mr. and Mrs. D. C. Padrick, who gave me an evening of their time; and to Mrs. Herbert Blumenthal, who encouraged me in the project as well as supplying facts about the house. I am grateful to the following Wilmingtonians for helpful information: Mrs. William S. B. Beane, Mr. Leslie N. Boney, Jr., Mrs. James D. Carr, Mr. Champion McD. Davis, Mr. and Mrs. William P. Emerson, Miss Esther Harris, Mrs. J. Haughton James, Mrs. S. C. Kellam, Mr. George E. Kidder, Mrs. E. M. Meachem, Mrs. Louis T. Moger, Mrs. David R. Murchison, Mr. Wallace C. Murchison, Mrs. Virginia T. Oliver, Mrs. William E. Perdew, Mr. J. L. Sprunt, Mr. Kenneth M. Sprunt, Mrs. William H. Wagoner, Mrs. John C. Wessell, Jr., Mrs. Robert W. Williams and Mrs. Sidney Williams (Elliott Emerson). Mr. Frederick Delano was most cordial in answering my letter to him. Other sources: Court records, Church records, Cemetery records, Wilmington Star-News Newspapers. "Incidents by the Way" by William Rand Kenan, Jr., Kenan Family Genealogy and the Wilmington Fire Department.

Ida Brooks Kellam Receives Cannon Cup

The North Carolina Society for the Preservation of Antiquities in December at its annual meeting, presented Ida B. Kellam with a Cannon Cup:

"For her careful and valuable research along numerous lines of historical importance, so essential for authentic preservation and restoration, a 1971 Ruth Coltrane Cannon Cup is awarded to Mrs. Samuel C. Kellam, of Wilmington. An assiduous student, teacher, researcher, archivist, and collector, Mrs. Kellam has assembled for public use vast amounts of source materials, including old books, pamphlets, newspapers, photographs, deeds, wills, insurance policies, diaries, letters, and interviews which provide helpful information for preservationists and restorationists. Especially in North Carolina history and genealogy, her research has had outstanding results. It has led to the publication of her books, *Brooks and Kinded Families, 1950; Wilmington, Historic Colonial City, 1954*; and other volumes and innumerable historical articles. Her extensive files have served well for the Wilmington-New Hanover Museum, of which she is on the Board of Directors; for the Lower Cape Fear Historical Society, of which she was an incorporator and officer; and for the Wilmington Historic District Commission, of which she is a member. This preservation of history and historical records, as well as her notable service in herculean, cultural, and historical groups, make Ida Brooks Kellam a worthy recipient of a Ruth Coltrane Cannon Cup."
Gifts to Latimer House

The Society is deeply grateful for the following gifts and loans received for the Latimer House during the past year:

To Mrs. Herbert Latimer for the gift of laces, gowns and children's clothes which belonged formerly to Mrs. Herbert Latimer, Sr.; books from the Latimer library; brass candlesticks from the collection of Elizabeth A. Chant.

To the Latimer heirs for the gift of three pastel portraits (circa 1850). The subjects are Mr. & Mrs. Timothy Savage and Miss Elizabeth Latimer.

To Mrs. Frances C. Curtzwiler for the loan of an oil portrait of Mrs. Herbert Latimer, Sr. (nee Frances Fielding Empie) painted by J. L. Butler, signed and dated 1896.

To Mr. Samuel Hughes for the gift of an Aubusson rug (circa 1850) made in France for the Spanish market.

To Mrs. David Murchison, Jr. for the loan of an American Empire sofa (circa 1830).

To Mr. & Mrs. Henry Wyche for the gift of a pair of chandeliers (circa 1850).

To Mr. Henry Jay MacMillan for the gift of a sofa (circa 1850), one of the original pieces of Latimer house furnishings; a chandelier (circa 1850) which hung originally in the back sitting room of the Latimer house.

To Dr. & Mrs. Walter Crouch for the loan of an American Empire sofa (circa 1830); an American Empire chest of drawers; a parlor suite (circa 1850) consisting of four side chairs, one slipper chair, one arm chair and sofa; one mid-Victorian sofa (circa 1865); two rocking chairs (circa 1850).

To Mrs. J. Wiley Parker for the gift of an American Empire sofa (circa 1830) given in memory of her daughter Mrs. Pharise Parker Hilgeman of Richmond, Va.

To Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Lewis for the gift of lace curtains from the estate of Mrs. Jessie Kenan Wise.

To Mrs. Paul C. Jennewein for four antique etched glass globes for chandelier.

The Latimer house committee wishes to make known to the Society its desire to have furnishings and objects of art of the period of 1850 or earlier to add to the collection. Suitable gifts for memorials are welcome and the appraised value of the gift is tax-deductable. Anyone having such gifts is asked to contact any officer or member of the board of the Society.