PETER E. AND JOSEPHINE STEPHENS KROEHLER RESIDENCE 126 N. Wright Street Naperville DuPage County Illinois HABS No. IL-1270-A

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY National Park Service Midwest Region 601 Riverfront Drive Omaha, NE 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

PETER E. AND JOSEPHINE STEPHENS KROEHLER RESIDENCE

HABS No. IL-1270-A

Location: The Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler Residence is located at 126 N. Wright Street, Naperville, Lisle Township, DuPage County, Illinois.

The Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler Residence is located at latitude: 41.776463, longitude: -88.138603. This coordinate was taken from entering the physical address in Google Earth on October 20, 2021.

Present Owner/

Occupant: Present owners: RAM West Capital, LLC The buildings are currently vacant. They had been occupied by Little Friends School until December 31, 2020.

- **Present Use:** Educational facility; currently vacant.
- Significance: The Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler Residence is an unusual example of a large suburban residence and grounds, built as a showplace for a local leader of industry. Its distinctive, formally arranged Colonial style with Prairie and Arts and Crafts influences is an outstanding study in the blending of traditional and twentieth-century design influences.
- **Historian:** Andrew J. Elders, Architectural Historian. Independent contractor. The completion date of this report is May 20, 2022.

Project

Information: Those involved in preparing the documentation for this report include Andrew J. Elders and Susan S. Benjamin, of Benjamin Historic Certifications, LLC.

This documentation project was prepared pursuant to Illinois Historic Resources Preservation Act (20 ILCS 3420) and its rules (17 IAC 4180) to address Stipulation I. MITIGATION of the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Regarding Demolition the North and South Dormitory structures at 140 North Wright Street and 619 E. Franklin Avenue along with the Carriage House at 148 North Wright Street (Additions), construct residential units within the Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler Mansion at 126 North Wright Street (Mansion), and construct 41 single-family attached dwelling units on the site bounded by North Wright Street to the west, School Street to the north, Columbia Street to the east, and North Franklin Avenue to the south (Site) in Naperville, DuPage County, Illinois.

Part I. Historical Information

A. Physical History

- **1. Date of erection:** 1907. The date is taken from contemporary news articles describing the construction of the property.
- 2. Architect: Berkeley Brandt was born in Chicago on March 9, 1874 to parents George W. and Helen Augusta Leavitt Brandt. George W. Brandt was a prominent attorney in the city of Chicago, and the family resided at 1316 S. Michigan Avenue. Berkeley Brandt was educated at the private Allen Academy, a co-educational institution located in Chicago's near south side. After studying for a time at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, he went on to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Chicago in 1895.¹ Brandt continued his architectural studies at l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, France. He was evidently a fine scholar, having placed fourth overall among 365 applicants for entry to the school, and first among the sixty American applicants.² Brandt graduated from l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts in 1900 and returned to Chicago, becoming a licensed architect in 1902.

Brandt specialized in large commercial work, producing substantial buildings for public libraries, the Old Ladies' Home in Mt. Carroll, Illinois, the Masonic Home in Sullivan, Illinois, a number of Masonic halls, the Ft. Worth, Texas, Auditorium, and a rubber plant for Firestone. His work was described as being "marked by an originality and broadness of conception that gave it a distinctive individuality." He produced several residences in Chicago which are contemporaneous with and similar to the Kroehler house in Naperville, two of which can be found at 1340 W. Berwyn and 1336 W. Catalpa, within the bounds of the Lakewood Balmoral District of the National Register of Historic Places.

Berkeley Brandt married Grace Emery in 1909, and soon thereafter the couple moved to her hometown of Elmhurst, building a house at 301 S. Arlington Street. The couple went on to have five children. In 1924, Brandt decided to relocate the family to the Ojai Valley of California, where he purchased two ranches and turned his attention to raising orange, pear, and grape crops.³ He continued to practice architecture as well, designing the Ojai Masonic Lodge building in 1927.⁴ Berkeley Brandt died in Ojai on March 7, 1944.⁵

¹ Solomon Neill Sheridan, *History of Ventura County, California vol. 2*, (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1926), 452.

² "Current Events," University Record 1, no. 8 (May 22, 1896), 158.

³ Sheridan.

⁴ "To Build Temple," *Ventura County Star*, February 19, 1927.

⁵ "Death Takes Berkeley Brandt, Ojai Architect," Ventura County Star, March 7, 1944.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

The Legal Description for the property at 126 N. Wright Street is Block 2 in Kroehler's Addition to Naperville, in Section 18, Township 38, Range 10, East of the Third Principal Meridian, according to the plat thereof recorded on May 14, 1906, as document 87553 in DuPage County, Illinois.

The original owners of the property were Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler. Peter Edward Kroehler was born on a farm at Mound Prairie, Minnesota, on April 3, 1872, the son of German immigrants Jacob and Anna Katherine Eberhardt Kroehler. Although being from a farming family, his parents encouraged him in intellectual pursuits rather than farming.⁶ Beginning in the winter of 1888, he began taking classes at a business college in LaCrosse, Wisconsin, and focused his studies in mathematics and accounting.⁷ He came to Naperville in 1890, to study bookkeeping, shorthand, mathematics, and commercial law at the Commercial Academy of North Western College (now known as North Central College). Upon completing his studies, Peter Kroehler took a position as a clerical assistant at a Chicago department store, The Fair.⁸

After less than a year there and a short sojourn back in Minnesota, Peter Kroehler was contacted by Professor J.L. Nichols, who had taught Kroehler at North Western College. Nichols proposed that Kroehler join a newly-formed company called the Naperville Lounge Company, which he had established with furniture maker Fred Long and upholsterer John Kraushar and several other investors.⁹ At the age of 21, Peter Kroehler became an integral part of the business: buying and selling, writing the first catalog, figuring costs, packing furniture for shipment; learning every task in the business.¹⁰ He became the company's president in 1903.

His business career now underway, Kroehler married Josephine Stephens of Naperville on January 1, 1895; the couple had two children, Gladys Virginia (1897-1948) and Delmar Leroy (1902-1982).¹¹ By 1907, Kroehler's public esteem in Naperville was such that he was elected Mayor on the Christian Voter's League ticket.¹² The Kroehlers began building their new \$75,000 house that year. By 1910, however, Peter Kroehler's life was upended. In 1909, he had been frequently seen driving around Naperville with Grace Hubert, a young stenographer at the Naperville Lounge Company, and the daughter of a foreman of the factory. Public gossip was such that Kroehler tendered his

⁶ Delmar Leroy Kroehler and Kenneth Kroehler, *Our Dad*, (Chicago: J.M. Bundscho, 1941), 2.

⁷ Ibid., 3.

⁸ Ibid., 5.

⁹ Ibid., 8-9.

¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹ Ibid., 22.

¹² "Results Elsewhere," The (Freeport IL) Daily Journal, April 17, 1907.

resignation as Mayor in January 1910; however, as his approval in the job was very high, the resignation was not accepted immediately.¹³ His resignation was accepted by the city council on January 28, 1910, with the council's resolution "that the highest appreciation and thanks of the city of Naperville" be bestowed on Kroehler for his three years as Mayor and preceding three years as alderman.¹⁴ In March of the same year, Peter and Josephine Kroehler were divorced, with Josephine receiving the Kroehler house and a reported \$75,000 in cash.¹⁵

In the years immediately following his resignation and divorce, Kroehler devoted himself to the development of the Naperville Lounge Company through expansion and acquisition. The expanded business was renamed the Kroehler Manufacturing Company on April 1, 1915. That year, Peter Kroehler and Grace Hubert were married, and in 1921 they purchased and moved into the Avery Coonley estate, a Frank Lloyd Wright commission in Riverside, Illinois. Peter and Grace Kroehler had one son, Kenneth (1917-1992).¹⁶ Despite no longer living in Naperville, Peter Kroehler remained invested in the city's affairs, donating money for the construction of the city's new YMCA and to his alma mater, North Central College. This allowed the school to develop its campus, and it christened the athletic field "Kroehler Field."¹⁷ Kroehler also took leadership roles in the furniture industry, helping to form the National Association of Furniture Mart, serving as its first Chairman and later as a director.¹⁹ Peter E. Kroehler died in his Riverside home on August 15, 1950, still active in Kroehler Manufacturing as its chairman.²⁰

Josephine Lucille Stephens was born in Naperville on November 24, 1873, to parents Mathias A. and Elizabeth Yost Stephens. After her divorce from Peter E. Kroehler in 1910, she retained ownership of their new house and remained living there with her two children and, later, her mother. Sometime between February 1926 and August 1927, she married Edgar Ramey Frech, who was born in Clarksville, Tennessee, on May 3, 1886. Little is known about Edgar Frech, other than his occupation being listed as "Furniture Salesman" for a furniture manufacturer in the 1930, 1940, and 1950 censuses. The Frechs lived in the Kroehler house until 1945, when they moved to Hinsdale, Illinois, eventually settling in Miami, Florida.²¹ Josephine Stephens Kroehler Frech died at her home in Miami on December 7, 1962, and is buried in the Frech

¹³ "Naperville Gossip Makes Mayor Quit," *The Inter Ocean*, January 26, 1910.

¹⁴ "Mayor Kroehler Praised, But Resignation Is Taken," *Chicago Tribune*, January 29, 1910.

¹⁵ "Divorce is Granted," *The (Streator IL) Times,* March 15, 1910.

¹⁶ "Our Dad," 27.

¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸ Ibid., 50.

¹⁹ Ibid., 51.

²⁰ "Peter Kroehler Dies; Leader in Furniture Field," *Chicago Tribune*, August 16, 1950.

²¹ "Obituary: Josephine L. Frech," *The Miami Herald*, December 9, 1962.

mausoleum in Naperville Cemetery.²² Edgar Ramey Frech died in Miami on April 1, 1973, and is also buried in the Frech mausoleum.

The Kroehler property was purchased by North Central College from Josephine Stephens Kroehler Frech in 1945. What is now North Central College opened in Plainfield, Illinois as The Plainfield College of the Evangelical Association of North America on November 11, 1861, with 40 students studying in a two-story frame house.²³ Plainfield is now a suburb of Chicago, lying 35 miles southwest of the city, but was an independent rural community for much of its history. The college's founders, the Evangelical Association of America, were part of a Protestant organization founded in 1816 that grew from the Methodist Church, with emphasis on simple worship, evangelism, and itinerant ministry.²⁴ The college was co-educational from its founding, with most of the original faculty having been educated at Oberlin College, and the original faculty included a female English instructor named Catherine M. Harlacher.²⁵ At the beginning, most of the college's students were from the surrounding area and of German descent. With an eye toward growth, the school's board of trustees renamed it North Western College in 1864. Its growth was unlikely, however, as the village of Plainfield remained inaccessible by railroad. Needing greater accessibility and more room to expand, North Western College thus moved northeast to Naperville in 1870.²⁶

At the time Peter Kroehler attended the college, an addition was made to Old Main on the Naperville campus and electric light was added to the facility, preparing the school to grow and move into the new century.²⁷ Professor J.L. Nichols, an early mentor of Peter Kroehler, died in 1895 and left \$10,000 to the school, to be used as investments and to construct a new gymnasium called Nichols Hall.²⁸ Despite bequests such as this, the school struggled financially for several decades (fighting successfully to maintain accreditation throughout the 1920s), though its student body and course offerings continued to increase. In 1926, in part to differentiate the college from Northwestern University in Evanston, the name was again changed.²⁹ North Central College flourished for the rest of the century; in 2022 it served over 2,700 students from its 56-acre campus in the Naperville Local Historic District, awarding bachelor of arts and science degrees in more than 50 majors and offering six graduate programs. Though still

²² "Obituary: Josephine L. Frech," *Chicago Tribune*, December 9, 1962.

²³ Clarence N. Roberts, *North Central College; A Century of Liberal Education, 1861-1961*, (Naperville IL: North Central College, 1960), 7.

²⁴ Ibid., 4.

²⁵ Ibid., 8.

²⁶ Janice L. Reiff, Ann Durkin Keating, and James R. Grossman, *Encyclopedia of Chicago* (Chicago, IL: Chicago Historical Society, 2005), 575.

²⁷ Roberts, 125.

²⁸ Ibid., 126.

²⁹ Reiff, 575.

affiliated with the United Methodist Church, a successor to the Evangelical Association, North Central remains nonsectarian in hiring and admissions.³⁰

North Central College sold the Kroehler campus to Little Friends – Sheltered Workshop Inc. in 1975. Little Friends is a private, nonprofit organization founded in 1965 and today is a multi-faceted human services agency serving people of all ages experiencing autism, intellectual and emotional disabilities and their families.³¹ Beginning as a nursery school for five children, they now operate three schools, vocational training programs, community-based residential opportunities, and the Little Friends Center for Autism, a valued resource for diagnosis, comprehensive evaluations, therapies, and trainings for parents and professionals. Little Friends' Krejci Academy serves autistic students from over 60 school districts by providing therapies, small class sizes, and high staff-to-student ratios.³²

- **4.** Builder, Contractor, Suppliers: A.H. Beidelman, builder of the original house and Coach house.³³
- 5. Original Plans and construction: The exterior of the house is basically as originally designed, with alteration of the front porch and balcony being the principal changes. The interior of the house may have been subject to more revision from extant plans, either when it was built or later during the Frech occupancy. The parlor and living room are more classical in detailing than the exterior of the house or stair hall. Architect Brandt's design called for a more cohesive decorative scheme involving built-in bookshelves and beams, among other simpler details. The bedroom floor and attic are typical of an upper-class dwelling of the time and largely unaltered.
- 6. Alterations and Additions: On the exterior, most alterations have been made to the front porch (Figures 6, 7). A set of stairs projecting from between the two westernmost piers of the south side has been removed. There was originally a porte-cochere extending 15'-5" westward over the drive from the main stairs of the porch, supported by two brick piers identical to those extant on the porch. The porte-cochere extension was removed sometime between 1952 and 1959. The piers had originally risen above the porch roof to enclose a balcony above with a balustrade matching that of the first floor, set between the piers. One pier remains, integrated into the wall at the north end

³⁰ Reiff, 575.

³¹ "About Us," Little Friends, Inc., accessed May 18, 2022, https://www.littlefriendsinc.org/about-us-1.

³² "Hometown Heroes," The Daily Herald, May 23, 2008.

³³ Newton Bateman and Paul Selby, eds., "Beidelman, Alvin Herbert," in *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Du Page County*, vol. 2 (Chicago, IL: Munsell Publishing Company, 1913), p. 789, http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/npl/id/12217 (accessed February 5, 2021).

of the porch, while the rest of the piers on the west end of the porch have been replaced with cast concrete lions. What is now an egress door to the balcony in the center bay of the west façade was originally a small window, identical to the extant one to the north of the door and the art glass of the window it replaced has been inserted as a light the door. The balcony also extended over the now-removed porte-cochere. Sometime between 1949-52, the south-facing third floor window grouping was altered to accommodate a door leading to a fire escape. Some third-floor fenestration has been replaced. A small service porch on the north façade was removed when the hyphen connecting the house to Kroehler Hall North was built.

The most significant change to the house is in the north wing of the first floor. What had been a kitchen, pantry, and butler's pantry has been reconfigured to be a wide hall leading to the Kroehler Hall North connection. The east wall of the hallway separates a small kitchen at the northeast corner of the house, a small rest room, and truncates the original dining room footprint to enclose an office. The office on the northwest corner of the house used to be a servants' dining room. To connect the former parlor to the enlarged hall, most of the parlor's east wall has been removed.

B. Historic Context:

The Kroehler Company

What became The Kroehler Manufacturing Company was founded as the Naperville Lounge Company on March 9, 1893. Peter Kroehler was recruited to join the business by investor J.L. Nichols, along with furniture maker Fred Long and upholsterer John Kraushar, and the company began operations in an old one-story frame skating rink.³⁴ Naperville Lounge had a difficult time in the beginning, posting a loss of \$1,100 in their second year of business.³⁵ In 1896, Peter E. Kroehler became one of four full partners in the company after the death of J.L. Nichols, and the company began to be profitable. The following year, the company built their main factory adjacent to the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy railroad tracks in Naperville; the resulting building exists to this day.³⁶ In 1903, with sales having reached \$335,777.34, Kroehler was made president of the Naperville Lounge Company at an annual salary of \$5,000. That year, the company's profit was \$30,000.³⁷ At that time, Sears, Roebuck & Company were large customers of Naperville Lounge. They offered to purchase all interests in the business on an equal partnership basis. The agreed-upon price with stockholders came to \$60,000. Sears purchased half-interest for \$30,000, with Peter

³⁴ "Our Dad," 9.

³⁵ Ibid., 11.

³⁶ Ibid., 13.

³⁷ Ibid., 14.

Kroehler personally purchasing the same. Kroehler was to remain managing the company's affairs.³⁸

Now profitable and well-capitalized, the company expanded eastward to Binghamton, New York, in 1906, founding the Binghamton Lounge Company.³⁹ In 1909, Peter Kroehler invented and patented a new type of davenport bed, a "foldable bed section with removable mattress, housed beneath the seat of a davenport (sofa)", with two iterations, one extending lengthwise, and one extending widthwise.⁴⁰ Due to the success of the davenport bed, in 1910 Naperville Lounge expanded to Kankakee, Illinois, with the construction of the P.E. Kroehler Manufacturing Company facility.⁴¹ New growth was achieved in 1913 through acquisition of the fellow davenport bed manufacturer, D.T. Owen Company of Cleveland, Ohio.⁴²

By 1915, Sears & Roebuck's interests were bought out by Peter Kroehler for a total of \$1,200,000, payable in annual installments of \$100,000 with 6 percent interest on the unpaid balance.⁴³ A unified brand was desired so the company reorganized under a common name as the Kroehler Manufacturing Company.⁴⁴ In that year, expansion was again realized through the acquisition of the Kindel Bed Company with facilities in Brooklyn, Toronto, and Grand Rapids, Michigan. By 1919, it was deemed necessary to streamline manufacturing operations, and the Grand Rapids and Brooklyn plants were sold.⁴⁵ The following year, Kroehler sold the Cleveland plant as well. With westward market footprint desired, Kroehler purchased the Continental Furniture Manufacturing Company of San Francisco and its affiliate, the Southern California Manufacturing Company in Los Angeles. A Texas branch was also established in Dallas in a leased manufacturing facility.⁴⁶ In 1926, expansion of the company's capacity was again made through the purchase of the Inglewood Manufacturing Company of Inglewood, California. An all-fireproof factory was built that year in San Francisco. The following year, the Valentine-Seaver Company of Chicago was purchased, and the manufacturing operations were eventually absorbed into the Naperville factory.⁴⁷ In 1930, competitor Luce Furniture Company of Grand Rapids was purchased; this led to Kroehler's development of dining room and bedroom furniture, and Luce's business was discontinued in 1935.⁴⁸ A new market was opened in 1937 with the introduction of a new theater seating division, called the "Push-Back" model, which allowed

- ³⁸ "Our Dad," 23.
- ³⁹ Ibid., 25.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., 26.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 25.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 27. ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid., 29.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid., 30.

better access of passing in seating rows and greater comfort for the user.⁴⁹ Peter E. Kroehler stepped down as president of the company in 1938, handing control to his son Delmar L. Kroehler.⁵⁰

Kroehler Manufacturing Company joined in the war effort in 1942, partnering with the Doak Aircraft Company in the production of molded plywood aircraft parts. Doak Aircraft provided process and engineering guidance, and while airplane parts were being made in all eight of Kroehler's plants, the company continued to also produce furniture.⁵¹ By the mid-1940s, Kroehler Manufacturing was the second largest furniture maker in the United States.⁵² In 1950, company president Delmar Kroehler displayed a new method of furniture construction at the Furniture Winter Show. This new method integrated steel into the formerly all-wood furniture frame construction, which permitted sectional prefabrication and improved standardization. Part of the Naperville plant had been converted to the new method, with each of the company's ten plants to follow suit by fall.⁵³ In 1954, it was reported in the Chicago Tribune that Kroehler Manufacturing was considered to be America's largest producer of upholstered furniture.⁵⁴ Two years later, the company announced construction of a \$2 million manufacturing plant in Fremont, California, bringing the company's manufacturing facilities to 18.⁵⁵ Another Kroehler innovation was a new substance called "cultured wood," which was a material made of wood that had been chemically reformed to make it moisture resistant. This new product was manufactured with wood scraps, and would "keep drawers from sticking, doors from swelling, and surfaces from warping." The new product was manufactured in a new, 4-acre, \$5.5 million furniture plant in Meridien, Mississippi.⁵⁶ In the 1960s, annual revenues passed \$100 million dollars, and the company employed over 8,000 people.⁵⁷

In 1972, Kroehler Manufacturing decided to form an "in-house" agency for its advertising, moving away from former provider Leo Burnett Co.⁵⁸ To offset the sluggish sales market for furniture in the 1970s, in 1977 Kroehler introduced a new line of moderately priced contemporary furniture designed in collaboration with high-end designer Angelo Donghia.⁵⁹ This move was not enough to stave off the decline in sales, and in 1978, company president and CEO Richard E. Burow resigned, and the company fired between fifty and sixty employees in the Naperville headquarters in a move to reduce general and administrative

⁵³ Joseph Egelhof, "Expect 22,000 at Furniture Winter Show," *Chicago Tribune*, January 8, 1950.

⁴⁹ "Our Dad," 30.

⁵⁰ "D. Kroehler, ex-chief of furniture company," *Chicago Tribune,* October 16, 1982.

⁵¹ "Kroehler Mfg. to Make Wood Plane Parts," Chicago Tribune, April 14, 1942.

⁵² Reiff, 933.

⁵⁴ William Clark, "Chicago Sits High as Maker of Furniture," *Chicago Tribune*, May 14, 1954.

⁵⁵ "W. Electric to Expand at Hawthorne," *Chicago Tribune*, December 20, 1956.

⁵⁶ "New Factory to Be Opened by Kroehler," *Chicago Tribune,* October 20, 1959.

⁵⁷ Reiff, 933.

⁵⁸ "Kroehler 'In-House'," *Chicago Tribune,* December 11, 1972.

⁵⁹ "Joel Grey and Halston own Angelo Donghia furniture," *Chicago Tribune*, April 18, 1977.

expenses. That year, Kroehler Manufacturing reported a loss of \$1.5 million on sales of \$35.7 million. Kenneth Kroehler, son of Peter E. Kroehler, took over as president.⁶⁰ In 1981, the Artra Group of Northbrook, Illinois, purchased a controlling interest in Kroehler, ceasing Kroehler's operations in Naperville and selling off all remaining Kroehler factories.⁶¹ Kroehler's tax losses were applied to benefit the development of another Artra holding called Qonaar, which made fare-taking apparatus for public transit and parking meters.⁶² In 1983, the historic Kroehler factory in Naperville was sold to a developer to be redeveloped into apartments, offices, and retail.⁶³

Part II. Architectural Information

A. General Statement

- 1. Architectural Character: The Peter E. and Josephine Stephens Kroehler house was designed at a time when the Prairie and Colonial Revival were popular styles, especially in the Midwest. The house takes much of its form from a center-hall Colonial configuration, with the recessed center bay being the focus of the entrance front, which was emphasized by the now-removed porte-cochere entrance. The configuration of the house was that of a residence designed to be the site of entertaining. A nod to modernity was added with design overtones of the regional Prairie style, referenced in the low, horizontal orientation of the bulk of the house, the earthy, grey-brown tone of the Roman brick, and broadly overhanging copper eaves. Decorative features such as porch balustrades and art-glass windows are heavily geometric in design and the overall angularity of the composition points to the influence Frank Lloyd Wright wielded over local architectural trends in the first decade of the twentieth century. Most of the interior of the house is far more traditional, with a center stair hall flanked by a long living room and sunroom on one side, and a parlor and dining room on the other. The stair hall detailing clearly ties the interior to the exterior, with the design of the stair balustrade echoing that of the porch railings outside. The dining room is derived from Prairie/Arts & Crafts architecture, with a tall wainscot and hand-painted pastoral frieze.
- 2. Condition of Fabric: The general condition of the house is fair. While much historic detailing is intact and the building is sound, it has been heavily used and insensitively altered with non-historic lighting, fire doors, and a complete demolition of the interior of the former kitchens and pantries at the north end of the house.

⁶⁰ "Kroehler firing 50 on staff here," *Chicago Tribune*, June 21, 1978.

⁶¹ Pat Widder, "Kroehler chairman says future is bright," *Chicago Tribune*, May 19, 1982.

⁶² Pat Widder, "Kroehler takes on new look," Chicago Tribune, June 9, 1982.

⁶³ "Sale of vacant Kroehler plant gets city approval," *Chicago Tribune,* April 7, 1983.

B. Description of Exterior

- **1. Overall Dimensions:** The footprint is an irregular rectangle, measuring approximately 82' x 36'.
- **2.** Foundations: Foundations are of common brick, faced with grey-brown Roman brick on the exterior, slightly battered beneath the limestone water table.
- **3. Walls:** Exterior walls are faced in grey-brown Roman brick measuring 2 ¼" x 12" laid in common bond with ¼" mortar joints.
- **4. Structural System:** The exterior walls, interior walls flanking the stair hall, and the walls between the main house and the north wing are built of brick. Floor joists and interior walls are of frame construction.
- 5. Porches, stoops, balconies, porticoes, bulkheads: Portions of the original wraparound porch and balcony remain at the southwest corner of the house (figure 6). The porch is supported by brick piers rising from ground level and measuring 1'-9" square, built of the same Roman brick as the rest of the house. Set between the piers is a wood balustrade composed of groups of four square balusters with regularly spaced gaps between the groups. These balusters continue through a horizontal stile beneath the rail, consisting of wood X-motifs filling the gaps between the stile and the rail. The porch stops at the north bay of the house and wraps around to the sunroom on the south façade. The porch floor is of poured concrete. A set of concrete stairs recessed between the two northernmost piers on the west side offers access to the main entrance of the house. There is a flat wood cornice present with small brackets supporting the eave. A balcony is set back from the original edges of the porch, enclosed by black metal railings and serving more as a fire escape with egress at the southeast corner of the house. The balcony is accessed from a door on the second floor and wraps around most of the south façade, stopping with the east wall of the sunroom.
- 6. Chimneys: There are two chimneys. The primary one rises along the east façade and is connected to the living room fireplace and the basement boiler flue. There is another chimney on the north façade of the building that served the kitchen and laundry room below.

7. Openings

a. Doorways: The principal entrance is set in the center bay of the west façade. A single door opens into the vestibule and consists of a modern brown metal door with a single clear glass light above a solid metal panel. An original single full-light door in the west wall of the sunroom provides access to the porch. The light is filled

with leaded and stained glass. Another door on the west façade is present where the service wing attaches to the main house. It is set one step above ground level and enters on a landing of the back stairs. It is original, made of wood with a fourlight window placed above a single panel. The second-story door in the west façade opens onto the balcony and consists of an original wood door containing a stained and leaded glass light in the upper third of the door. On the third floor, a nonoriginal wood door was inserted into the center of the grouping of three windows in the gable end, offering access to the fire escape. This door is of wood with a sixpane light in the upper half.

b. Windows and shutters: Most windows are original to the house, and in principal rooms are configured as casement windows opening inward beneath fixed transoms. All primary windows in the west façade are arranged this way. Windows in secondary areas and on the north, east, and south walls are mostly double-hung. All windows originally contained matching art glass in a Prairie-style design incorporating squares, rectangles, and diamonds in clear and white glass. Most windows retain this art glass. The west-facing dormer windows have been recently replaced with vinyl sliding windows on the north and south ends, and by glass block in the center dormer. Windows rest on limestone sills and beneath steel lintels. A grouping of windows which was in the east wall of the living room was bricked in when Kroehler Hall South was connected to the house.

8. Roofs

- a. Shape, covering: The roof of the main block of the house is in a side-gable configuration, as is the service wing on the north. The two first-floor extensions in the sunroom and dining room are flat-roofed. The roof is covered with modern, brown 3-tab asphalt shingles.
- **b. Cornice, eaves:** There is no fascia or cornice on the house. Eaves are thin and simply profiled, executed in brown painted wood. The gutters of the main house are in an unusual arrangement. They consist of wide copper cantilevers extending from the main body of the house and not connected to the bottom of the roof slope, but resting on a slightly projecting course of face brick (figure 8). These cantilevers serve as the gutter system on the east and west sides of the house and are served by decorative square copper downspouts, curved in quarter circles on the north and south walls from the cantilever to the body of the house. These cantilevers read as a decorative cornice from ground level.
- c. Dormers, cupolas and towers: There are six shed dormers present, three each on the east and west roof slopes (figures 6, 9). Each dormer originally contained three

pairs of casement windows. The rear center dormer provides light into the main stairwell, and the others provide light to the servants' rooms of the third story.

C. Description of Interior

- 1. Floor Plans: The original Kroehler is an irregular rectangle in plan, with two primary stories and an attic over a full basement. The basement is divided into rooms by brick bearing walls (figure 5). A furnace room is located beneath the main staircase above, and a long workshop fills the area beneath the original dining room and parlor. The room beneath the north wing of the house is more finished than the rest of the basement, as the walls and ceiling are plaster and windows are trimmed with simple but decorative casings. Multiple plumbing stubs indicate that it served as a laundry. The first floor is bisected by a center stair hall, with a full-length former living room now known as a "gym" to its south and a sunroom (now a classroom) opening off the living room's southern wall (figure 2). A hyphen connecting the house to Kroehler Hall South was added off the east wall of the living room. To the north of the stair hall, a wide hall was cut through former dining room and kitchen space. The remnants of the former dining room occupy a single-story extension to the east facade. What is now termed "front office" was originally a parlor. A servants' dining room now used as an office is situated at the original northwest corner of the house. A lunchroom at the north end of the original house serves as a connector to Kroehler Hall North. The second-floor classroom space retains its original layout as the bedroom floor of the house (figure 3). The stairs open into a cross hall which also provides access to the balcony. The south third of the floor is filled by a master suite, with the bedroom occupying the western half of the space and a master bath at the southeast corner of the house, with a dressing room separating them. Two closets open off the north wall of the dressing room. A guest bedroom opens off the main hall to the west, and an en-suite bath which also opens onto the hall, is situated to the south of the guest room. Bedrooms for the two Kroehler children are positioned off the north and east of the hall, separated by a shared bath. The servant's stair is situated between the north child's bedroom and the guest room. The third floor appears to have originally been living space for servants (figure 4). The stairway opens onto a stair hall, leading southward directly to the fire escape in the house's south wall, flanked by two former bedrooms. A full bath, half bath, and storage room are in the west center of the third floor. The office located at the north end of the third floor was originally bisected by a wall, forming two bedrooms. An attic space over the house's north wing opens from this space.
- 2. Stairways: There are two staircases in the house. The main stair rises at the rear of the house, centered in the main block and reaches the three upper floors in a double-L configuration. The balustrades repeat the exterior porch balustrade motif, groupings of four balusters set with gaps between, with the gaps filled by an X-motif at the top.

These balustrades are set between square newels, with the main newel at the bottom of the stairs having chamfered corners and a turned finial on top. Above the second floor, the balusters retain the grouping-and-gap rhythm, but without the X-motif inset. The entire stairway is of quartersawn oak. A service stair between the basement and second floor runs perpendicular to the main axis of the house's north wing in a halfspace landing configuration. Landings are placed at the floor levels, above the ground-level exit door, and at ground level.

- **3.** Flooring: The most significant flooring in the house is the tile mosaic in the vestibule. This mosaic is bordered by a meander pattern in red, white, and green tiles. The center field of the mosaic is on a white background, with Peter E. Kroehler's monogram in red, green, and ochre tiles as the circular central motif. The monogram is ringed with an elliptical laurel wreath in green with trailing bows and ribbons positioned at the four cardinal points. Floors of the main rooms and corridors of the house are of commercial grade carpeting over original hardwood floors. The first-floor powder room has a floor of modern sheet vinyl, and the pantry area has a floor of 12" square vinyl composite tile. The former first-floor powder room beneath the main stairs has its original floor of 1" square mosaic tile in white and green (figure 12). The second-floor hall bath and former master bath have a modern sprayed-on floor surface resembling terrazzo (figure 19). The children's bath on the second floor retains its original 1" tile mosaic in white and light blue. The third-floor baths are also floored in the same modern sprayed-on flooring as the other bathrooms.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finishes: Walls and ceilings in the house are primarily of smoothfinished plaster. The walls of the vestibule, stair hall, and staircase are covered slightly more than halfway up with paneled, guartersawn oak wainscoting (figure 13). The former dining room has panels of painted canvas set between vertical oak boards beneath a plate rail. The upper part of the dining room walls is painted in a pastoral mural on canvas. The dining room ceiling has oak beams running on the room's northsouth axis, with white-painted canvas panels covering the spaces between. The former parlor has walls of quartersawn oak paneling with inset bookcases (figure 11). Walls in the former under-stair powder room, second floor hall bath, and children's bath are of original subway tile in the form of wainscoting covering the lower two-thirds of the walls (figure 19). The wainscot is capped with a decorative molded edge tile, with two courses of white pencil tile in the first-floor powder room (figure 12), a row of blue-printed pencil tile in the hall bath (figure 20), and a row of blue-and-white nursery rhyme tiles in the manner of the illustrations of "A Baby's Opera" by Walter Crane (figure 25). These are interspersed with printed tiles with a decorative wreath-and-bow motif in the children's bath. The walls and ceiling of the original master bath are fully tiled in white subway tile. A decorative molded edge tile is positioned at the wainscot level, above a band of gold metallic pencil tile, a course of geometric mosaic tile insets in green, white, and metallic gold, and finally another narrow band of geometric mosaic tile in green,

white, and metallic gold (figure 22). There is a band of square mosaic tile at the edges of the tiled ceiling, also executed in green, white, and metallic gold. There is also a decorative tile cornice. The walls of the former master bedroom are defined with historic picture frame molding (figure 21).

5. Openings

- a. Doorways and doors: The only historic doors remaining on the first floor are in the stair hall: the door to the vestibule, which is an oak, full-light door with a plain glass insert; and the door to the former powder room beneath the stairs which is a three-panel door matching other original doors throughout the house. The door trim between the stair hall and living room is an elaborate, classicallyderived surround of quartersawn oak with stylized Ionic columns carved with a rosette motif, a paneled and fluted frieze, and a heavy cornice supported by ogee corbels (figure 13). Other trim around doors is a simple band molding. Modern fire doors have been added to separate the stair hall and the living room and from the hall extending to Kroehler Hall North. The doors in the hall to Kroehler Hall North are modern flat wood doors with ranch molding as trim. The doorway from the living room into the sunroom has been infilled and a single flat door serves as access between the spaces. On the second floor, most historic doors are extant and are divided into three panels with a horizontal stile placed approximately ³/₄ the height of the door and a vertical stile bisecting the upper ¹/₄ panel. These doors are trimmed by flat casings with the inner edges forming an ogee profile (figure 18). The door and trim scheme is repeated in the third floor, with the oak doors retaining their original dark natural finish (figure 27). Shorter closet doors leading to spaces under the roofline are single panel but otherwise identical to the other doors (figure 26).
- **b. Windows:** The windows are wood and most on the first floor retain their natural finish, with simple band trim like that of the doorways above projecting sills and aprons. Second floor windows have flat casings with ogee detail like the door trim, with projecting sills and aprons (figure 17). Third floor windows are finished identically to those on the second floor.
- 6. Decorative features and trim: The most notable decorative feature is a mosaic fireplace surround located at the northeast corner of the living room, which original blueprints indicate was intended as a library alcove. The field of the mosaic is composed of square glazed tile in variegated shades of sage green. Running along the top of the mosaic section is a decorative band of stylized floral cartouches made of square tiles in shades of grey, green, blue, and ochre, with the flowers expressed by kidney-shaped gold tile atop a stem of rectangular grey tiles. There are seven large cartouches interspersed by six narrower versions of the same theme. The fire surround is made of narrow strips of

dark varnished oak surmounted by a narrow mantel shelf. Also present is a historic metal fire screen with applied metalwork resembling a sunrise over rolling hills. The fireplace surround rests on a hearth of square terra cotta tile, not original to the house. The living room also has a decorative cornice in the form of decorative cove molding with bands of lamb's tongue and leaf moldings (figure 10). This cornice may not be original as blueprints call for the ceiling to be coffered. There is a similar cornice molding in the sunroom, simpler in profile with a band of beaded molding. The former servants' dining room to the north of the former parlor has a crisply demarcated cavetto cornice. The inset bookcases in the parlor are topped with oak panels with rectangular carvings of oak leaves and acorns, grape leaves and grapes that flank a fluted center (figure 11).

7. Hardware: The only historic hardware remaining on the first floor is the casement window hardware, the knobs on the vestibule and sunroom exit doors, and the knob on the door leading to the former powder room under the stairs. All other is modern commercial door hardware. On the second floor, most original hardware remains on historic doors, and consists of a simple rounded bronze knob with round backplates and separate oval key escutcheons (figure 18). Window hardware on the casement windows matches that on the first floor. Double-hung windows have pairs of recessed handles along the bottom rail (figure 17). Third floor door hardware is dark grey metal with rounded knobs and rectangular backplates with a hammered finish (figure 28).

8. Mechanical equipment

- a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: The house is heated with original steam radiators on the first two floors, and later baseboard radiators on the third floor. Two modern boilers in the basement control the heating system. Air conditioning is supplied by window units.
- **b.** Lighting: No original lighting is present in the house. All lighting is modern flushmount fluorescent tube fixtures (figures 23, 24) except for two modern pendant fixtures in the vestibule and stair hall.
- c. Plumbing: Plumbing is a mixture of original lines and later alterations completed when the original kitchen and powder room were moved. The first-floor powder room contains a modern sink and toilet, as does the second-floor hall bath, which retains its original white porcelain bathtub (figure 19). A modern toilet is present in the master bath while the tub is the original white porcelain model, and the sink is historic, but likely dates to after the house's initial construction. The children's bath contains a modern toilet and sink and its original white porcelain tub. The third-floor half bath and full bath have modern toilets, and sinks and a tub likely dating to the 1940s when the house became a dormitory.

9. Original furnishings: The dining room suite of furniture present in the house is believed to have dated to the Kroehler family's occupancy and was manufactured by the Kroehler Manufacturing Company. The suite is of varnished oak and heavily carved in the Elizabethan style, and is comprised of a dining table, two armchairs, six side chairs, a sideboard, and a tall cabinet (Figures 14, 15, 16).

D. Site

- 1. Historic landscape design: Several old specimen trees are present on the property, likely dating back to the period when the property was a residence. All other original landscape features have been removed. The house, Kroehler Hall South, and Kroehler Hall North are accessed via a curved drive with a sidewalk on its east edge which follows part of the original drive path to the house (figure 1).
- 2. Outbuildings: There are no outbuildings outside of the four buildings recorded in this project.

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Appendix I - Site Plan

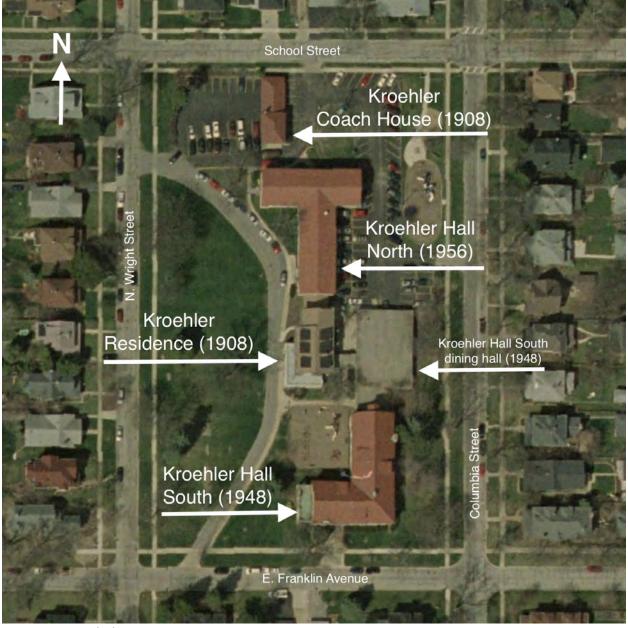


Figure 1: Aerial photo, 2002 *Source: historicaerials.com*

Appendix II – Floor Plans

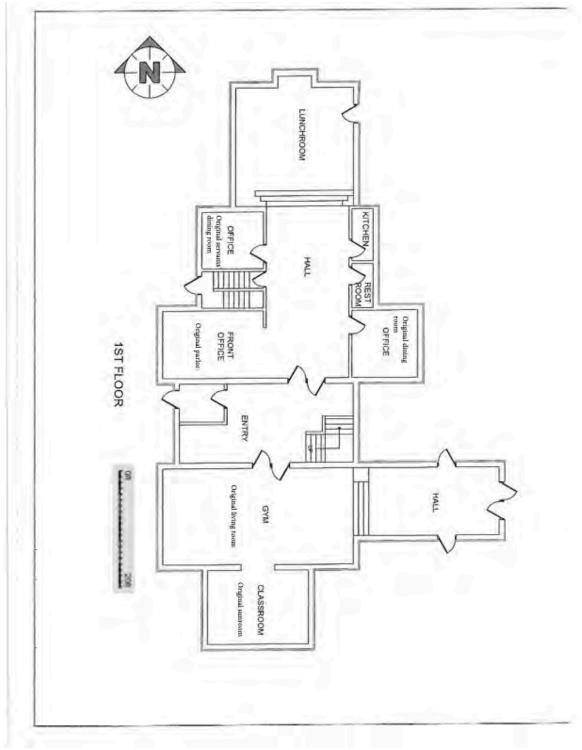


Figure 2: Kroehler residence, first floor

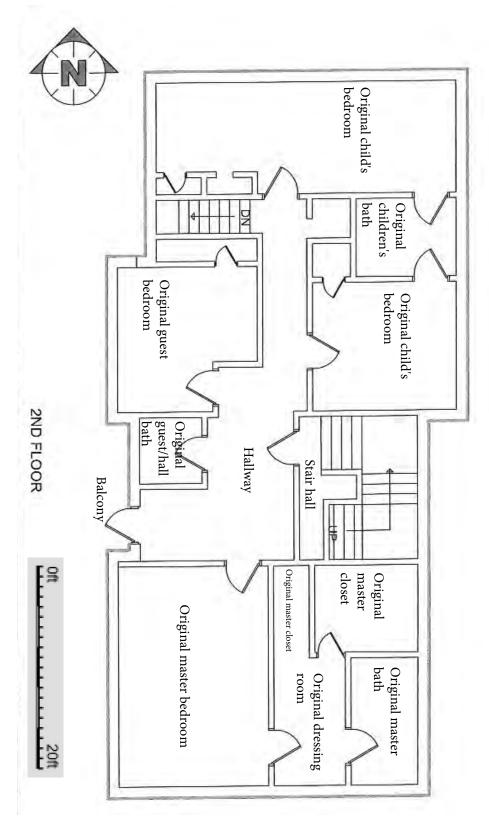


Figure 3: Kroehler residence, second floor

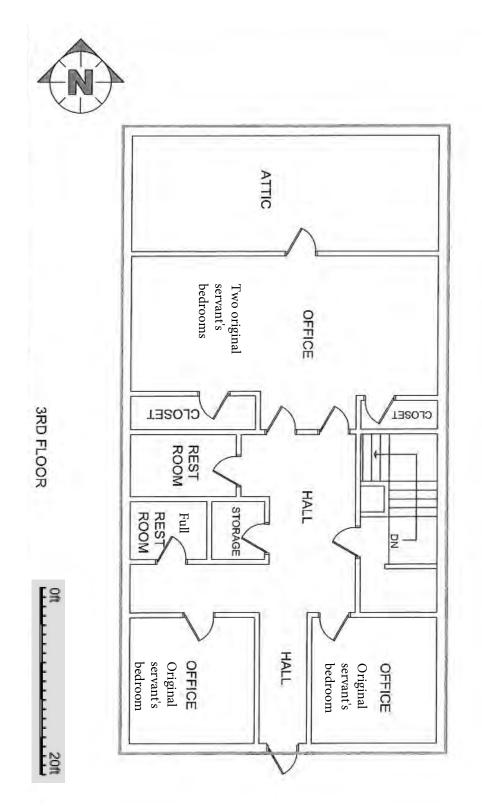


Figure 4: Kroehler residence, third floor

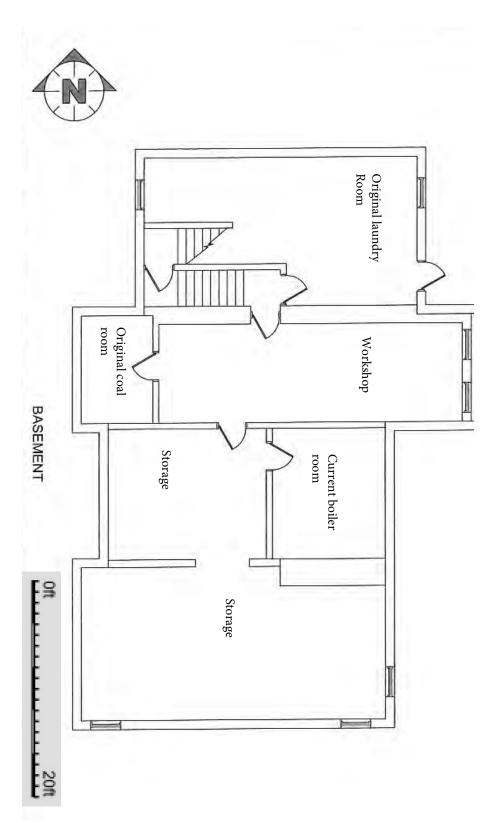


Figure 5: Kroehler residence, basement



Appendix III – Supporting Images

Figure 6: View to northeast *Source: author*



Figure 7: Same view, 1947 Source: The Spectrum 1947, North Central College yearbook, public domain.

All following images taken by author



Figure 8: Detail of exterior cantilevered gutter system



Figure 9: Rear (east) wall, from northeast



Figure 10: Detail of cornice molding in living room



Figure 11: Detail of bookcase carving in parlor

PETER E. AND JOSEPHINE STEPHENS KROEHLER RESIDENCE HABS No. IL-1270-A (Page 28)



Figure 12: Detail of original first floor powder room



Figure 14: Original Kroehler dining room cupboard



Figure 13: Detail of door trim into living room



Figure 15: Original Kroehler dining room chairs



Figure 16: Original Kroehler dining room sideboard



Figure 17: Detail of closet window with original art glass



Figure 18: Original three-panel door in guest room



Figure 19: Hall bath original tile and tub with modern sink, toilet, and floor



Figure 20: Detail of hall bath accent tile



Figure 21: Master bedroom, looking northwest



Figure 22: Detail of master bath tile

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Figure 23: North child's room, looking east



Figure 24: South child's room, looking southeast



Figure 25: Detail of nursery rhyme tile in children's bath



Figure 26: Third floor former bedroom



Figure 27: Single-panel closet door with original finish



Figure 28: Detail of hammered metal door hardware

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

INDEX TO PHOTOGRAPHS

HABS No. IL-1270-A

PETER E. AND JOSEPHINE STEPHENS KROEHLER RESIDENCE 126 N. Wright Street Naperville DuPage County Illinois

Leslie Schwartz, Photographer, December 2020

- IL-1270-A-1 Detail view of the residence's vestibule floor, looking east.
- IL-1270-A-2 Interior view of residence's stair hall from showing original living room through doors, looking east.
- IL-1270-A-3 Detail view of living room fireplace, looking northeast.
- IL-1270-A-4 Interior view of sunroom, looking west.
- IL-1270-A-5 Interior view of parlor, showing remodeled hallway beyond, looking northeast.
- IL-1270-A-6 Interior view of dining room, looking southeast.
- IL-1270-A-7 Interior view of master bath, looking northeast.













