

## ISTHMUS

### What will happen to Knapp house, the original Wisconsin governor's mansion?

State officials mum on plans for historic landmark

by

on Tuesday 11/18/2014 1:08 pm

The future of the Wisconsin governor's mansion is in doubt.

Not the current one, where 14 governors have lived. It's the earlier one, home to 18 governors from 1883 to 1950, that is a few blocks from the Capitol.

The mansion may be sold by the Wisconsin Department of Administration, but officials have been vague about what they're considering. The potential sale has some fretting about the landmark's future.

"It's such an important piece of the city's history, and the land around it is significant in that history," says Ald. Ledell Zellers, whose district includes the mansion.

The mansion, 130 E. Gilman St., is on the National Register of Historic Places. The date of its completion is unknown, perhaps as early as 1854. At the time, the entire UW consisted of North Hall. Madison was two years from incorporating as a city.

For many years the home was jokingly called "The White House" for its first owner, Julius White, later a Civil War general. Officially, it was the "Executive Residence," named by Belle Case La Follette, wife of governor and later U.S. Sen. Bob La Follette. She felt the term "mansion" distanced the public.

The property totals 63,462 square feet. In 1950 the state transferred the property to the UW Board of Regents for \$60,000, drawn from a UW trust fund created by Kemper Knapp. The building has since served as the Knapp Graduate Center, a living and learning facility for doctoral students. In 1967, UW built on the shoreline its Lifesaving Station, a base for rescue crews monitoring boaters on Lake Mendota.

But the Knapp house has become expensive to maintain. "It was getting to the point where we needed to upgrade the facility" to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act, says Gary Brown, director of campus planning and landscape architecture. "The Knapp program didn't have the funds to do that."

The UW declared the mansion surplus, leaving its fate to be determined by the DOA. However, the UW still wants to keep the Lifesaving Station.

In order to do so, the UW has to subdivide the property. "We wanted to go through the official process with the city of Madison," Brown says. On June 17, 2013, the city Plan Commission was scheduled to take up the proposal.

"The staff at DOA started having second thoughts about it and then just pulled it off the agenda," Brown says.

With no subsequent word from DOA, the UW again submitted its proposal to the Plan Commission on July 27 this year. Again, the DOA interceded. Since then, Brown says, "We've not heard anything from them on what their plan is."

The property is on a June 30 DOA list of state assets "for potential sale or lease," including "underused acreage" at Madison's Hill Farms State Transportation Building on the west side.

Stephanie Marquis, DOA spokeswoman, had few details to offer when asked about the mansion. "It is too early to speculate on the potential sale or lease of any of these properties because the state has just begun the review process," she says.

More than review is apparently going on, however. *The Capital Times* has submitted an open records request to learn

about developers interested in the Hill Farms property. The DOA refuses to release the information "until a negotiation of the contracts is completed."

Brown doubts the grounds around the old mansion would be deemed historic, meaning it's possible something could be built there. But a deed covenant will protect the building, at least, from demolition.

Says Brown: "I hope someone gets it that can really take care of it and make it a great shining example of historic preservation."

## Old Governor's Mansion 1855-56

**Inscription.** Constructed of locally quarried sandstone and designed in the Italianate style, this house was originally built for Julius T. White, secretary of the Wisconsin Insurance Company. Governor Jeremiah Rusk acquired the house in 1883 and sold it to the state of Wisconsin two years later. It was the executive mansion for seventeen Wisconsin governors from 1885 to 1950.



By William J. Toman, June 29, 2010

**1. Old Governor's Mansion Marker**  
The marker was partially buried in the grass.

**Erected** 1972 by Madison Landmarks Commission. (Marker Number 7.)

**Marker series.** This marker is included in the [Wisconsin, Madison Landmarks Commission](#) marker series.

**Location.** 43° 4.784' N, 89° 23.203' W. Marker is in Madison, Wisconsin, in Dane County. Marker is on East Gilman Street 0.1 miles east of North Pinckney Street, on the left when traveling east. [Click for map](#). The marker is on the ground by the sidewalk in front of the Old Governor's Mansion. Marker is at or near this postal address: 130 East Gilman Street, Madison WI 53703, United States of America.

**Other nearby markers.** At least 8 other markers are within walking distance of this marker. [Kendall House](#) (about 300 feet away, in a direct line); [Bashford House](#) (about 300 feet away); [Timothy Brown House](#) (about 300 feet away); [Period Garden Park](#) (about 400 feet away); [Mansion Hill Historic District](#) (about 400 feet away); [Keyes House](#) (about 400 feet away); [Pierce House](#) (about 400 feet away); [Keenan House](#) (about 400 feet away). [Click for a list](#) of all markers in Madison.



By William J. Toman, June 29, 2010

**2. Old Governor's Mansion**

The marker is on the ground by the sidewalk in front of the house.

**Regarding Old Governor's Mansion.** According to the Madison Landmarks Commission, "this house was originally built for Catherine and Julius T. White, Secretary of the Wisconsin Insurance Company. The Whites sold the house in 1857 to one of Madison's first settlers, George P. Delaplaine and his wife, Emily. Delaplaine was secretary to Governors Farwell and Dewey and co-owner of one of the largest real estate development firms in the city. In 1867 the house rose to greater social prominence when it was purchased by State Senator J. G. Thorp, a millionaire lumber baron, and his wife, Amelia. In 1870, the Thorp's young daughter, Sarah, married Ole Bull, the world-famous 60-year-old Norwegian violinist in one of the most lavish weddings the town had ever seen. ... Conover and Porter designed renovations in 1897 which including a sweeping wrap-around veranda with Ionic columns, which was drastically reduced in size in the 1960s."

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Also see . . .

1. [Knapp House](#). The current occupant of the house. (Submitted on June 30, 2010, by William J. Toman of Madison, Wisconsin.)

2. [Madison Landmarks Commission](#). The landmark nomination form for the house (pdf). (Submitted on March 19, 2011, by William J. Toman of Madison, Wisconsin.)



By William J. Toman, June 29, 2010  
3. Old Governor's Mansion

**Credits.** This page originally submitted on June 30, 2010, by William J. Toman of Madison, Wisconsin. This page has been viewed 825 times since then. **Photos:** 1, 2, 3. submitted on June 30, 2010, by William J. Toman of Madison, Wisconsin. • Bill Pfingsten was the editor who published this page.

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Fax: 608/265-3135

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*Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand.* —Chinese Proverb

### Knapp House Graduate Program

The Knapp House is a unique community of scholars founded on the principles of scholarship, leadership, and a breadth of ideas.

The University of Wisconsin purchased the former Governor's Mansion in 1951 with funds from the Knapp Memorial Graduate Program. Since 1954, the Kohler Foundation has generously assured continuation of the program by funding twelve fellowships. These fellowships provide free housing and offer an exceptional opportunity for graduate students from diverse disciplines to live together at the Knapp House, sharing research, culture and interests. Fellows host monthly seminar dinners that serve as a formal setting for the exchange of ideas. For these events, fellows recruit speakers, invite guests from across campus and the community, and prepare and serve an elegant dinner.

#### Eligibility

Students making satisfactory progress towards a degree and meeting one of the following criteria:

- Ph.D. and SJD candidates with dissertator status
- Third year MFA candidates
- Third year professional school candidate (Law, Medicine & Veterinary Medicine)

#### Application Procedure

The department must submit:

1. A letter of support/recommendation from the student's advisor; and
  2. A statement of nomination/endorsement from the Department Chair.
- Note: Each department may only nominate two candidates.

The student must submit:

1. A Curriculum Vitae;
2. A letter of interest. The letter of interest must include information about academic and professional leadership, cultural, social & community activities, team building experiences and extracurricular interests and activities; and
3. A one-page summary of the student's dissertation topic (for public audiences).

#### Contact & Submission

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Executive mansion once "White House" dates from state's earliest history

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 Newspaper: [Capital Times](#)  
 City: [Madison](#)  
 County: [Dane](#)  
 State: WI  
 Subject: [Architecture/Buildings](#)

#### Names associated with this article

[La Follette, Gov. Philip Fox 1897 - 1965](#)  
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Capital Times  
April 10, 1932

## Executive Mansion Once 'White House' Dates From State's Earliest History



**PERSONAL** collection of autographed pictures of distinguished men in the fields of diplomatic relations, politics, writing, and theatre, made by Gov. Philip F. La Follette when he was in high school, adds a distinctive air to the library of the executive residence, 130 E. Gilman st., on the shore of Lake Mendota. Among the pictures arranged in rows on the walls are photos of Winston Churchill, Lloyd George, Thomas A. Edison, Woodrow Wilson, Justice Louis Brandeis, ex-Pres. Theodore Roosevelt, the Mayo brothers, George Arliss, John Galesworthy, Alexander Graham Bell, and Robert E. Peary.

The executive residence, known in the past as "the White House," is a stone mansion two stories in height, built of native sandstone, presenting the appearance of an old time gentleman's home. Tall double windows 10 feet in height lend stately appearance to the gray and white living room, furnished in rose wood and blue green. Several pieces of furniture of historic interest, including a cherry wood sewing table that belonged to Mrs. La Follette's great-great-great grandfather, Josiah Burleigh, who came from Massachusetts; a standard rocker presented to ex-Sen. La Follette Sr.'s mother by his brother-in-law, Justice Slesbecker, and a small mahogany table that has been a La Follette heirloom for many years, complete the picture.

### Opens Fireplaces

Two fireplaces on either side of the arched doorway that were closed for 25 years have been opened by Mrs. La Follette. Over one fireplace hangs a large gilt framed mirror, also an original piece of furniture. On one wall hangs a paisley shawl lent by Miss Marguerite Johnson, and on another a Japanese obe lent by Mrs. E. R. Edmondson.

In the large Chinese blue and gold dining room, carpeted with a Chinese rug, hangs a flowered wall spread made by Gov. La Follette's grandmother. The large walnut buffet was at the residence when Mr. La Follette lived there as a child.

The basement room, originally a billiard room, has been made into a play room for the children.

The walls of the ivory and gold library are lined with book shelves put in by Gov. and Mrs. La Follette.

On one side of the entrance hall stands the American flag, and on the

The bedroom used by Ole Bull, famed violinist, who married the daughter of J. G. Thorp, early owner of the house, has been reincarnated. Each bedroom, as well as library and living room, contains a fireplace.

The residence, which was built in 1854, was purchased by the state in 1885 from ex-Gov. Rusk who had bought it from J. G. Thorp.

A spacious lawn slopes to the shore of Lake Mendota. Oak, elm, and maple trees, shrubbery, and bird houses surround the home. A large green fountain which once stood in the capitol square was moved to the executive residence when the old capitol burned.

### Its History

The original owner was Gen. Julius White, secretary of the Wisconsin Insurance Co. With few large edifices, the dignified appearance of Gen. White's home emphasized the name of its occupant, a man of artistic taste and cultivation as was his successor, George P. Delaplaine, who purchased

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2.

Delaplaine gathered together a delightful society of musicians, painters, and authors in his drawing room and library and did his best to assist promising youth of Madison, Milwaukee, and surrounding towns in development of their talents.

The musicales given by the Delaplaines were notable. A feature of one was Helena Hastreiter, later the opera star of international reputation, who sang without accompaniment from a boat in Lake Mendota in the moonlight to guests assembled on the lawn. It was her last appearance before a large audience in the capital city. Going to Europe shortly afterward she advanced steadily to fame.

Within the decade the Delaplaines' eldest daughter, Ann Jay, was married to Francis Woodward, an eastern architect and banker who subsequently removed to Eau Claire where his orchid conservatories became the wonder of flower lovers and surpassed those of England.

Temporary illness of Mrs. Delaplaine and departure of a daughter to Germany caused the sale of the home to J. G. Thorp, retired lumberman. Here his youngest daughter, Sara, met Ole Bull, maestro of the violin, who became

her husband.

After appearing in America on a number of occasions after 1843, appearing in Madison in 1856, he came to Madison in 1868. After the concert he attended a reception at the home of R. B. Anderson and was introduced to the Thorps. They became friends and when he returned to Norway the next year, he was accompanied by Mrs. Thorp and Sara, who had accepted his invitation to visit him.

Some months later, June 1, 1870, the marriage of Ole Bull to Sara Thorp was solemnized at the American consulate at Christiania. On Sept. 6, the religious service was read here in Madison by Dr. Charles H. Richards, the couple having returned to Madison and the Thorp home. Titled foreigners were present at the magnificent reception that followed. Ole Bull had been twice crowned, once in California with a laurel wreath of gold and once in Florence, Italy.

Jeremiah Rusk became the owner of what had come to be known as the Ole Bull home when he was elected governor of the state. After his tenure, the state acquired it and has retained possession.



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Sketch of  
Gov. J. M. Rusk.



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Chicago Times

## A GRANGER GOVERNOR.

May 1 ————— 1886.

Farmer, Stage - Driver, Sheriff,  
Comptroller, Soldier, Congress-  
man, and Governor.

A Plant from Ohio Soil Which Has At-  
tained Grand Dimensions in the  
Badger State.

The Stage-Driver and the Mule-Driver  
Part on the Tow-Path and Meet  
in the Capitol.

Military and Civil Career of Jere-  
miah M. Rusk, of Wis-  
consin.

A Notable Figure in History.

### THE DAY AND THE CITY.

I.

If a person gifted with a small quantity of common sense wishes to visit the capital of Wisconsin, he will embark at Chicago some time during the hours of daylight, and five hours thereafter will find himself in one of the most charming towns in the northwest. If a person is afflicted with a tendency to idiocy, he will make the same journey in another way. He will take the sleeper at 10:35 at night. At 3:30 A. M. he will find himself in Madison; at 4 A. M. he will go to bed at the hotel; at 7 A. M. he will be seated at the breakfast table. Such was the course taken by the writer. Other imbecilities will probably repeat the blunder.

Exquisite weather prevailed over the domes and spires, the heights and lakes of Madison. A fleck of white here and there lay on the field of sky; the trees had put on delicate robes of russet hue—a wrap preparatory for the full-dress of green and blossoms, *de rigueur* in summer costumes. Very charming was the view to the pilgrim as he sat on the broad balcony of the hotel and saw before him the state-house pile with its white walls rising above the

in sward; here and there through vistas in trees of the park catching glimpses of the blue waters of the lakes far below, and beyond these the low, undulating line of the distant, wood-crowned horizon. It was an hour of supreme repose, of rest, and perfect tranquillity of earth and sky, grateful beyond expression to one lately enveloped in the damp east wind, the roar of the streets, and the confusing throngs of Chicago.

Three years ago, seated in the same place, the writer saw the ruins of the fallen wing of the capitol from which had then just been rescued the wounded and the dead. Now the wing had been restored, the ruins had been effaced, and the walls of the new structure were white, pure, and seemingly unconscious of the ghastly tragedy which had occurred in their midst. Not a scar remains. The restored portion is as impassive and pacific as if no blood stained its memory.

II.

Gazing over the streets and park, it seemed as if the river Lethe flowed through the region and pervaded the air with its tranquil influences. Diminutive street-cars crept along drawn by a single mule whose fallen ears and drooping head indicated the lethargy of slumber, and whose bell drowsily tinkled in somnolent harmony. An old man with crutches limped through the park, and halted in the sunny spaces for warmth, and stood with bowed head, and was happy like an old dog in front of a warm grate in winter. Pedestrians sauntered along dreamily as if permeated by the enervating but delicious languors of the budding life of spring. Fat, lazy gray squirrels scampered slowly over the green of the park or among the branches with an agile, sinuous grace.

It was a Monday, and the farmers, anxious, as it were, to extend the holiday, and the rest of the Sabbath, appeared in considerable numbers on the streets. Seen before they reached the limits of the city, they came at a crawling pace; as they neared the central square, the drooping heads of the steeds were pulled briskly up, and animated by the snapping lines, the active whip, and the menacing voices of the drivers, the animals changed into a brisk trot, and traversed the streets like small hurricanes, shattering the quiet air with the creaking and rattling of the springless wagons and rousing the sleeping dust into miniature tempests of wrath.

Very restful is this charming city, with its splendid residences on the slightly heights, its rolling site, its environment of lakes and subdued distances, and its freedom from excitements. The days are uneventful, the *agreements*

of social intercourse simple, without strain, or hurtful reaction. The wearying dissipations of large cities find no imitators; frivolous lives are not encouraged, and a healthful, moral, and intellectual growth takes the place of the forced, mushroom development of cosmopolitan centers. Such a place permits the rearing of healthy children and the cultivation of a rare order of family relations not to be found in urban hotbeds of domestic life.

In this place there may be drunkenness, but it is never seen in public; there may be rowdiness, but, if so, it is invisible to the public; there may be certain forms of social depravity, but their scarlet shame is never flaunted in the faces of the people. Everything is decorous in the domain of the external; in the families there prevails a quiet dignity, and in many an elevated cultivation and an exquisite refinement.

### III.

It is at once a university town and a court city. It is the seat of the state government, and about such an institution there is necessarily an accretion of certain courtly habits and a growth in the knowledge and practice of social amenities. The homes of some of the attaches of the national government are located here, and reflect much of the breadth and cosmopolitanism of the country's capital. The scholastic institutions, while they may somewhat stiffen and embarrass the freedom of social intercourse, have the effect to add a perceptible tone of dignity to the character of the people.

Nor is the capital without its potent political influences. Within it has been hatched a progeny which has developed into stalwart dimensions, and whose acts have been wide-reaching and powerful. Regents, "bosses," and others of the factors of agencies designed to control political results have existed here in profusion, and have made themselves felt from Madison to Washington. Noted statesmen, acute and scheming politicians, great war leaders, eminent local officials, and teachers and scholars without limit have been reared in this atmosphere, and have made the world aware of their existence.

## PORTRAIT OF A GOVERNOR.

### I.

The visitor strolled through the sunshine and beneath the budding elms and maples to the stately structure whose symmetrical dome shone with a dazzling white in the fierce sunlight, and entered the building at the hospitable entrance. The first door on the left of the hall

bore the inscription "Executive Department," and which leads into a lofty, imposing, sunny room. A gentleman sat at a small table, and in response to the inquiry, "Gov. Rusk?" with a polite bow waved his hand toward a door leading into a room beyond. The visitor passed through the door thus indicated, and found himself in another lofty, capacious apartment, near the center of which, at a table, was seated a portly gentleman with an abundance of gray hair and a kindly countenance.

"Gov. Rusk?" asked the caller.

"Yes, sir," was cordially responded. The visitor introduced himself, and a moment thereafter was as much at home as though he had been an honored and habitual visitor for a dozen years.

Once the same pilgrim was sojourning in a foreign land and desired to see a certain British official whose rank would about equal that of the chief of police in an American city. He was met at the entrance of the official residence by a lackey, who inquired his business. It was given, and then the lackey went away, and some time after returned with the information that the caller must first see another man in another part of the city. He called at the other place, and after much lackey at the entrance he was finally told that he must address in writing the official and state his business. He wrote, and there came back an answer that he must give references as to his position and character, including the indorsement of the American minister. At least a week was spent in reaching Mr. Pierrepoint, the American representative, and then he was seen only through his subordinate, who lived in another portion of the town. Finally, after the giving of many credentials, the writer obtained the vicarious

indorsement of the American minister, which, with his home credentials, a letter from his broker, and another from a member of parliament, he sent to the office of the official to whom he had originally applied. Two weeks later, from another source entirely, there came a written reply granting permission for the petitioner to visit a well known public institution. In all not less than three months were expended in securing what might have been obtained as well in twenty minutes.

### II.

The courteous wave of the hand of the private secretary of the governor took the place of the insolence of the English lackeys, and the ten seconds which were required to pass into the room of the chief executive and be welcomed were the differences which encountered the visitor in his attempts to penetrate the interior of English and American officialism. What is true in the administration of affairs in this

instance is true in many others in business, both of a political and commercial nature. In this country it is possible to transact an operation of the kind attempted in London and forget all about it long before the effort to penetrate the sanctuary of the English official can be made successful.

The portly gentleman who well filled the roomy chair in which he was seated was exactly unlike the ideal which the visitor had formed of him. He had supposed the governor to be a coarse, homespun character, slouchy as to shoulders, and rugged in feature and speech. Instead of this he saw a man of commanding size, with a massive head whose effect was increased by an abundant crown of gray hair, pushed back from a wide and high forehead, and by a heavy mustache and chin whiskers—the ensemble being that of an ideal patriarch, at once venerable and imposing. Although gray as to hair and white as to beard, the governor is venerable only in appearance and not in years, as he is yet a long way from the three score and ten which are assigned as the period of life's further limit.

He has deep-blue eyes that are always warm and kindly, and which vary constantly in expression, and yet which withal have a dominant expression of sadness. In conversation, while not always fluent in the utterance of words, he is ever interesting and interested, and pervaded with an expression of consideration for the one to whom he is speaking. His countenance has none of that gloss which is seen on the faces of men who have worn off the down of inexperience by much contact with the world; he is yet fresh, and without a suggestion of a *blase* life in his tone or countenance.

Looking at him from a purely physical point of view, he is, with his shaggy mane, his deep chest, his broad shoulders, his colossal neck and thighs, a magnificent animal, and yet without a hint of anything gross or sensual. In fact, his voice, the expression of his eyes, and his sentiments negative any suggestion of a predominance of the animal in his nature, for his expression is one of gentleness and kindness, and his sentiments refined and genial. Not a single unkind sentiment did he utter in the frequent conversations with his visitor; he spoke always well of his political opponents, and in his view of affairs and men in general he was always courteous in tone and charitable in his estimates.

By contact with him one learns, in time, that he is characterized by a grand simplicity; that he is without affectation, and generous and tolerant in his views, and still possessed of much of the naturalness which has come up with him from his childhood. That he has abundance of other desirable qualities will become evident as the details of his life and the particulars of his military and official career shall be presented. In the direction of his growth, and with respect to the results he has attained, he has achieved a most remarkable career, and one which has few rivals.

## THE OUTLINES OF A LIFE.

### I.

Like so many of the distinguished men whose names have been presented in these sketches, Gov. Jeremiah McLane Rusk was born of the glebe. The nutrition of his early youth was drawn direct from nature's sources of supply—from the earth, the air, and the sunshine. He obtained his sturdy strength from contact with the soil; he was hardened by the storm, the summer's heat, and the cold of winter. Plain food, active outdoor exercise, the absence of care, constant association with the free and benignant influences of nature, all united to construct for him a sound body—the foundation of cheerfulness, patient endurance, hopefulness, the ability to labor untrudgingly, perseverance, and, in fine, all the essential qualities of success in life.

Ohio, region fruitful as the nursery of eminent men, was the place of his birth. He was born in Morgan county, Ohio, in 1830, where he remained until he was 23 years of age, when he moved to Vernon county, Wisconsin, where he still resides. No account is within reach as to the origin of his parents or his remoter ancestry; but it is a fair presumption, in view of his stalwart build, his perfect health, and his equable disposition that he comes of an excellent stock. One does not gather grapes from thorns, nor figs from thistles; a puny parentage can not produce robust, permanent results. That he came of a virile ancestry can not be doubted by one who looks over his physical developments or who examines the achievements of his busy life.

### II.

It is recorded of him that he spent the earlier years of his youth on a farm; that he had but little opportunity for schooling; that he was widely-known when a lad for the possession of extraordinary strength and agility; that, for a period, when about 15 years of age, he was the driver of the stage which ran between Zanesville and Newark, in Ohio; and that during this time he met and formed the acquaintance of Garfield, then a ragged boy engaged in driving mules on the tow-path of a canal.

In 1849 he married Mary Martin, who lived only three years after he moved to Wisconsin. When he settled in the west he engaged in farming, and this has been his occupation without cessation from that date to the present time. He intermitted his farming duties by a resort to other occupations in which money was to be gained, or the wishes served of the people among whom he resided. He opened a hotel, and also operated a stage line between Sparta

and Prairie du Chien, often himself mounting the box and manipulating the reins. His first official position was that of sheriff, which he held for some years, and he was elected to the state legislature in 1861.

In 1862 he entered the army. He had been very efficient in securing the enlistment of troops, and as a consequence he was elected major of the 25th Wisconsin regiment in July of that year. He saw considerable service during the Indian outbreak in Minnesota, and when the rebellion of the savages was subdued he was sent to aid in the suppression of the more formidable outbreak then raging in the south. He served during the siege and the capture of Vicksburg, and then went to Helena, where he was promoted to a lieutenant colonelcy, and acted as president of a court-martial.

In February of the next year he returned to his regiment, of which he assumed command, and joined Sherman in time to participate in the Meridian campaign, and at its close he was complimented in general orders "for the discipline he had maintained on the march, and for not losing a man from straggling or inattention." He was with Sherman, and was a part of all the fights in the movements which preceded and ended in the capture of Atlanta. After the surrender of this stronghold he followed Hood in his raid into Alabama, and then accompanied Gen. Sherman in his famous march to the sea. During this movement he had charge of the advance of the Seventeenth corps, including the skirmishers, pioneers, engineers, and the pontoon train. In the campaign from Beaufort island north he was brevetted brigadier general for his gallantry at the battle of Saukahatchie, where he led the advance against the strongly-protected position of the enemy, at the crossing of the river, and carried it against terrible odds. He was mustered out of the service in June, 1865, having been uninterruptedly in the field with Sherman from May of the preceding year.

### III.

In the autumn of 1865 Gen. Rusk was nominated in the republican convention by acclamation for the office of bank comptroller, and elected. In 1867 he was again elected to the same position, and held it until, owing to the decline in state banking institutions, the office was abolished by an amendment to the constitution.

In August, 1870, he was nominated by the republicans of the Sixth district as a candidate for congress, and was elected by a very large majority—"the largest," said a local journal, "ever given by any district of the state to its representative." He took his seat in congress in March, 1871.

At the close of his term he was again elected, and this time, so great was his popularity and so overwhelmingly republican the district, no one cared to contest the election, and he was returned without any opposition in his own party. During this period of his service in congress he acted as chairman of the committee

on pensions, and to his assiduity and painstaking while in this place is due the great popularity which he enjoys among the old soldiers of his state. He was elected a third time in 1874, and this time refilled his old position of chairman of the pensions committee, and also that of agriculture. At the close of this congressional term he retired to his farm, and remained there till, in the fall of 1881, he was placed in nomination for the governorship by the republicans, and, although the chances opposed his success, he won by a very respectable plurality over three competitors, composed of a democrat, a greenbacker, and a republican. He was again elected governor at the close of his first term.

### IV.

As a governor, he has been attentive to his duties, and has made a most excellent record for vigilance and the exercise of valuable practical sense. Among the acts of his gubernatorial career which have attracted the most attention, and concerning which he is doubtless most pleased, was his disposition of a very complex and aggravating condition which was developed in connection with the building of a railway. It will only be said at this point that he dealt with the difficulty in a manner which was at once novel, humane, and effective, and which gained for him the unbounded respect of the laboring classes.

He has been unsparing in the use of the veto power whenever in his judgment the interests of the people demanded it. In several instances he has corrected long-existing abuses, economized in important expenditures, and broken up several monopolies which had become fastened on the state.

During the administration of Garfield he was especially favored by his old associate. He was nominated by the president as minister to Paraguay, and the nomination was confirmed by the senate, but was refused by the nominee. He was also tendered other places of trust by his friend, among which was that of minister to Denmark and chief of the bureau of printing and engraving, but in each instance he declined the proffered honor. He was also mentioned favorably as the successor of Postmaster General Howe on the occasion of the death of the latter. As the nomination was not tendered him, it is not known whether or not he would have been induced to have changed his mind as to the desirability of filling an appointive federal office.

In fine, it is but just to say of Gov. Rusk that in all the responsible places with which he has been intrusted, from sheriff and bank comptroller to congressman and governor, and including his services during the war, he has creditably performed his duty. He may have had here and there good advisers, but as a rule, lacking training, he has relied upon a practical common sense, which has invariably proved as advantageous as would have a technical training of the best quality. He



has thus been little hampered by precedents, and has been able in some notable instances to reach just results when, had the attempt been made by one who relied on the decisions of the past, the end attained would have been long in coming, and possibly less desirable in its nature. Prompt in deciding, quick in execution, and resolute and self-reliant in the carrying out of a purpose, he has often reached conclusions in a time when others, acting in the usual way and hampered by rules, would not have passed the initial stages of the labor to be accomplished.

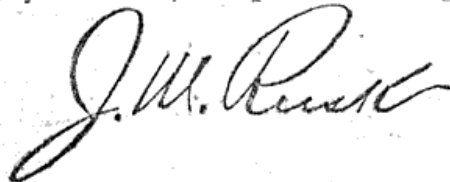
He stands well with the people of the state, irrespective of parties, and has made himself a special favorite with the soldiers and the labor and agricultural elements.

#### DETAILS AND INCIDENTS.

##### I.

When the governor was a lad of 14, his father died and left dependent on the son the widowed mother and two sisters. He supported them for two years by working the farm left by his father, and then commenced his career as a stage-driver in the employ of Neill, Moore & Co. The coach was of the old Concord pattern, and was drawn by four horses, which were driven in army style by a single rein, and with the driver riding the "near" wheel-horse. The governor is not a little proud of his ability as a horseman, as developed at this early period, and with reason. There are few youths of the present day that at the same age could reach the dignity of handling a four-in-hand and be intrusted with the responsibility connected with the management of a business such as that which fell under the care of young Rusk.

It is possible that this period of his life furnished him a training and an experience which became of value in later years. There was a simplicity in his manner of managing his team that he has imitated in his driving as an official and a politician. There was no style about his early operations; there was no flaunting display, no gathering of a handful of reins in his hand, as is the case in the modern manipulation of a four-in-hand. He used but a single rein; instead of being seated high up on a box remote from his team, he sat down among them, within easy reach of all, where he could encourage



them with touch and voice. The single rein was ample for all guiding purposes, and at the same time scarcely afforded a suggestion of restriction or compulsion. In something of the

same nature has he reined men in his political life. They felt no multiplicity of reins flapping across their backs; there was nothing to suggest that they were being driven; he was down with and apparently one of them; the single line was unnoticed, and they have cantered on, believing they were enjoying a total freedom, and all the time were being guided hither and thither at the will of the man mounted on the wheel-horse of the political coach. There is no display in this method, but it is very effective when practiced by one who, as Gov. Rusk said of himself, is "fond of horses and very familiar with them."

##### II.

It was while he was manipulating the single rein of his four-horse team that he encountered a young man of about his own age, and who was unconsciously engaged in acquiring experience for the future driving of masses by superintending and governing the movements of a solitary mule. The young student in the art of direction, of guidance, was Garfield. The result of the careers of the two proves that early advantages do not necessarily determine the outcome of their efforts. Garfield, experimenting in government with a single, diminutive mule, and crawling along a towpath with a gait like that of a snail, acquired in time a speed which carried him to the very head of the nation, while Rusk, practicing with four horses, and bowling along the highways at a canter, never managed to get higher than the chief place in the state. It is possible that training with a mule—that is, in a school in which slow and sure is the rule—may produce much higher results than with a four-in-hand, or a system in which speed is a dominant factor.

"It was at this time" (in about 1846-7), said the governor, in speaking of his early stage-driving days, "that I first became acquainted with Garfield. He was a canal-boy, driving a single mule on a towpath, and as Newark, O., was the point where both our routes terminated we met at short intervals. I think our first meeting was at a wrestling-match, when it was announced that a canal-boy would throw a stage-driver. Garfield was a very hearty, rugged youngster, and was a true friend to his comrades, and always ready to stand by them in any kind of trouble or contest.

"In those days he used to frequently speak of his future, and always asserted that he intended to become either a lake captain or a lawyer. He left the canal after a time and commenced going to school. We were always close friends from our boyhood up to the time of his death; but, of course, we knew little or nothing of each other for many years, and never met after he left the canal until the opening of the war. He was on Rosecrans' staff when we next saw each other.

"In later years, when we were in congress together, we had many a laugh over the reminiscences of our boyhood. He would often assure me that I was of no account, being only a stage-driver; to which I generally responded: 'Well, what were you? What did you drive? I handled four horses on a stage, and you, you steered one little, insignificant mule!'"

Gov. Rusk omitted to mention the result of the wrestling-match between the stage-driver and the canal-boy. In a newspaper sketch of the governor there appears a statement which may throw some light on this point. "The greater portion of Rusk's boyhood," says the article, "was spent on a farm, and he was one of the strongest young men in the neighborhood. During a county fair he entered a wrestling-match with two other competitors. The first was easily thrown, but in the struggle with the second, Rusk had his hands full. Finally, by a tremendous effort the future governor threw his opponent completely over his head, stunning him and breaking his shoulder. Rusk was greatly frightened at the moment, thinking that he might have killed his opponent, and from that time never again engaged in a wrestling-match."

If it were the canal-boy who was thus thrown, the governor is reticent about stating the fact.

### III.

The governor's war record is full of exciting incidents. He was offered the colonelcy of the regiment which he raised, but refused, asking to be made major, for the reason that he had no military experience, and for the further reason that, as he supposed, a major had little to do with the management of the regiment. "I did not think," he said, "that I was competent to take command of a regiment, or that I had the experience necessary in military matters to fit me for any rank higher than that of major, which, at that time, I regarded more ornamental than otherwise. I soon found, however, after I was in active service, that I was seriously mistaken in my estimate, and that the major had more to do than any other officer. As a matter of fact, I was practically in command of the regiment from the time I went into the field until the close of the war."

A very exciting occurrence attended the crossing of the Sankahatchie river in February, 1865. Gen. Mower was in command of the division in which was the regiment commanded by Rusk. The division was moving north from Beaufort directly toward the river, while the remainder of the army of Sherman was converging toward the same point. Where the crossing had to be made the enemy was in strong force on the other side, and defending the crossing with a heavy infantry column and batteries of artillery. The only approach to the ford was along a narrow road through a swamp, which was then covered with water too deep to permit the movement of cavalry or heavy guns. It was a position almost as strongly protected and as difficult of capture as the celebrated bridge of Lodi.

There was a race among all the divisions to first reach the crossing, and on the morning just before the point was within attacking distance Mower's division was in the lead, and the brigade in advance of the division was that to which Rusk's command was attached. Mower rode up with his staff and could not find the commander of the brigade. He inquired of Col. Rusk where the officer was, to which the latter replied that he

did not know, but that he was ready to move at once. Mower replied that he could not wait for the return of the officer, but would move another brigade. Rusk was indignant that he should be ignored. "He did not wish," as he said, "to be cheated out of the lead." Going up to Mower, he said: "Gen. Mower, I protest against being left behind, because it is not my fault that the officer is absent. I want the advance." Mower, however, would not listen; he went away, ordered the division forward, and put the other brigade in the advance.

Later Mower seems to have recalled the protest. He found the route to the crossing an embarrassing one, whereupon he said to one of his staff officers, Capt. de Brasse: "Bring up that colonel who objected to remaining behind and we'll give him a taste of what he's yearning for." Rusk received the order from the aid, and rode up to Mower, and asked him if he had any orders.

"None," he said. "Drop right down there," pointing to the crossing, "throw your men in, and clear that road. I wish to get to the river. If you don't do it right I'll know it. That's all, now go!"

Rusk got his command in position, and charged down the narrow causeway that led to the ford, and which was swept by the shell and musketry of the enemy. His men were cut down in dozens, but they persevered and gained the position after a desperate contest. In the charge a shell cut the brow-band of the bridle of the colonel's horse, which fell to the ground and threw the rider over his head. The latter scrambled to his feet, and, although considerably bruised, headed the column on foot. The same shell took off the head of his bugler and killed two other men who were immediately behind him. The tremendous cannonade demoralized the staff of Mower, who were following in the rear of Rusk's column, and they took cover by leaving the causeway and taking refuge in the swamp, but found that route impassable, and were obliged to dismount and make their way on foot.

Col. Rusk carried the crossing. "I made a crossing," he says, "and was successful—as I thought, very successful. I reported back to Mower, who ordered another brigade in to relieve us, and then we went back into camp." He had scarcely reached camp when a messenger from Mower ordered him to report to headquarters. Rusk was non-plussed at the reception of this order, as he was not certain as to whether he was to be commended or condemned for what he has done. "I was in doubt," said the governor; "Mower used to get a little full at times, and I did not know what to expect." He "fixed up" and rode over to Mower's quarters. Col. Christianson was standing in front of Mower's tent as Rusk rode up, and offered to carry in any message which he wished to send. Rusk replied that he had been ordered to report to Mower, and must see him in person. Just then Mower from within the tent called: "Come in! Come in!"

Col. Rusk pulled aside the flap of the tent, entered, and saluted the general. The latter glared at him for an instant, and then said:

"Yes, sir; I sent for you. You are the only man in this army, or any other army that I ever saw, who could ride further into hell than

Mower, and I want you to take a drink with me."

"I thank you, but I can't do that, as I never drink."

"You don't? Well, I should like to know how a man can ride so far into hell without taking a drink. Do you eat?"

"Certainly I do, and would be glad to do so now, as I have not had a bite since morning."

Mower ordered supper, and "always from that time on," says the governor, "he treated me with the greatest kindness and consideration up to the day of his death. I never asked anything from him during the remainder of the service that I failed to get. The last time I met him was at the reunion in Louisville, shortly before his death."

#### IV.

In conversation with an officer who had been with Gov. Rusk during his military career the writer was informed that he was a model soldier. He never drank a glass of liquor of any kind, and devoted his entire attention to the duties of his position. He was exceedingly popular with his command, looked after its interests and comfort, and "stood by them" on all occasions. He was always very fearless and cool, never hesitated to expose himself, and had three horses killed under him during his service.

The same informant gave the details of an engagement near Atlanta on the day on which McPherson was killed, and in which the governor in his eagerness had passed beyond the skirmish line and was surrounded and ordered to surrender by a squad of the enemy. He refused, and, drawing his revolver, turned his horse's head and spurred toward the federal lines under a shower of rifle bullets. A confederate soldier barred his progress with a lowered bayonet, but was killed by a shot from the federal officer's pistol. He regained his lines, being but slightly wounded, but lost his sword and had his horse killed in his flight.

"He was perfectly fearless," said the old soldier, "whether in line of battle or on the skirmish line or in action, and, above all, was hopeful under all circumstances. He never wavered in his belief that the confederates would be defeated, and a hundred times asserted he would never leave the service till the last armed rebel had laid down his arms."

When his regiment was mustered out at Madison at the close of the war his officers and men united in the preparation of a letter in which their commander was spoken of in the highest possible terms as one "than whom there is none more gallant and daring," who "asked nothing and received little," and who was at once a "gentleman, a soldier, and a hero." He was also highly commended in a letter sent him by Gen. Sprague, under whom he served during the greater portion of his military career.

#### V.

One of the most marked events of his gubernatorial life was developed in the case of a rail-

way which had been granted lands by the state. It commenced operations, and the contractors failed, with nearly a thousand laborers on their hands, without any money or food, and remote from any point which could be reached by a railway. The residents of the vicinity sent a telegram to the governor, in which it was stated that they were powerless to protect themselves against the laborers, who were threatening violence, and who were without money and means of subsistence, and asked that he send them assistance. It was in January, the weather savagely cold, and the condition a serious one. The governor at once telegraphed in reply that the men must be notified to do no damage, and that supplies would be sent them at once. The reply came that the men were turbulent, and asking for a military force to keep order. In his answer he refused to send troops, making the memorable assertion that the "men needed bread, and not bayonets!"

Soon after the legislature was in session, and at the suggestion of the governor a clause was introduced into a bill providing for the transfer of the land to another company to the effect that the new company must agree to liquidate the indebtedness of the original one. The bill was carried, and the laborers were all paid to the last penny of their claims. About \$78,000 was in this way paid to the men, with the result that Gov. Rusk acquired a popularity among the laboring classes which no other public man in the state has ever possessed. The clamor for militia and rifles, had it been favorably responded to, would have resulted in murder; as the difficulty eventuated under his humane management, not a dollar of property was destroyed, not a life was lost, all the claims were paid, and the governor justly secured an enviable reputation for a humane and sagacious foresight.

### MISCELLANEOUS SUMMARY.

#### I.

"Accident has occasionally been of essential benefit to the governor," said a gentleman who has known him for many years. "As, for instance, it was one of these lucky accidents which first made him sheriff. One morning there came to his farm, and asked for some refreshment, a man driving a single horse in a buggy. He was given what he asked for, and soon after drove away. Within a short time some officers came along in pursuit of a horsethief, and learned that the man who had stopped for something to eat was the person for whom they were in search. A query at once was started as to the course which the fleeing thief had taken, and the sheriff's officers decided to follow one trail; when they had left the governor concluded to follow the only other course which the fugitive could take. He mounted a swift horse and pursued the road leading to Kickapoo.

"After many miles of hot riding, he overtook the buggy in which was the offender, fast asleep, having been worn out with fatigue. Without a moment's hesitation, the pursuer sprang from his horse into the vehicle, and single handed, after a severe struggle, secured the criminal. The sagacity displayed in picking out the route chosen by the horse-thief, the courage in attacking him without any arms, and the strength shown in mastering the man, suggested him as a suitable candidate for sheriff."

#### II.

Something of the same kind occurred when he was nominated for governor, the first time, in 1881. The democrats had strong hopes of electing their man, for the reason that there were two other tickets in the field—the regular republican and a prohibition ticket. The convention which had nominated Rusk had dealt gingerly with the prohibition question with the view of making as few enemies as possible among the prohibition and anti-prohibition elements.

After he was placed in nomination the unheard-of thing occurred to the governor that he might, with advantage to himself, "do something more than the convention had done," as he expresses it. Thereupon he wrote a letter to the chairman of the state central republican committee, in which he came out squarely on the prohibition issue, and announced that he disagreed with the prohibitionists in their claim that prohibitory laws had proved successful; and added that these laws were far from doing the work demanded of them. He also said that the question of prohibition was purely a moral one, and should under no circumstances be permitted to enter into politics.

This is probably the first case on record in which a candidate for a high office has taken a nomination on a platform enunciated by the body which has named him and then proceeded to change materially the issue presented by his party. There is an audacity, a novelty in this proceeding which is without a parallel. Were it the custom of candidates to take nominations on certain platforms, and when in the field to modify them according to their fancy, the entire party situation would be revolutionized.

This audacious innovation had a very happy result. It strengthened him very materially with the German element, which is very powerful in Wisconsin, and undoubtedly contributed largely to his success. His influence with the Germans is very potent; and the same may be said of the laboring and farming classes. At the last election he ran several thousand ahead of the national ticket, which compliment he attributes to the hold he has on the above element and the old soldiers.

Speaking of the old soldiers recalls an anecdote concerning the style in which he attended a soldiers' reunion at Minneapolis. "He was

invited to be present with his staff," says the account, "but instead of appearing with a gorgeous military escort he took with him a squad of crippled veterans, paying all their expenses at a first-class hotel. There was not a man in the party that had not lost an arm or a leg, or was not desperately wounded in some part of his body. Their appearance was the feature of the reunion, and the old fellows still talk of their trip with the governor."

#### III.

The governor relates with considerable enjoyment an incident which occurred in 1881, when he was the candidate on the republican ticket for governor, and Kanouse was candidate for the same position, and was supported by the prohibition element. The two candidates happened to meet at Sparta, in the hotel where there was a gathering of Methodist preachers. A good deal of badinage and joking took place between the two aspirants and the clerical gentleman in regard to the coming election and the prospects of the candidates. Finally Kanouse purchased a couple of cigars.

"Take one, governor," he said, as he proffered one of the weeds to his rival.

"Thank you!" was the reply. "I never have smoked in all my life."

At once the preachers gave a rattling cheer for the man who had never smoked. One of them, a venerable old figure, some three-score and ten in his years, broke out:

"You never smoked! I will vote for you. I have fought that filthy weed, tobacco, for more than fifty years. Mr. Kanouse, I will never support you!"

Here was another instance in which accident conferred a great benefit on the governor. The preachers who had heard the conversation became severally missionaries for his election.

#### IV.

The residence of Gov. Rusk is situated on the bluff of one of the lakes. The front is on the most wealthy, pretentious, and aristocratic street of the town. The residences of the vicinity are all detached, and have the appearance of villas with their spacious grounds, beautifully-kept lawns, and shade trees. All of them lie high above the lake, down to which the surface is sometimes smoothly sodded, and others finished in terraces.

The splendid residence occupied by the governor has connected with it something of a romance. It was built by a very wealthy manufacturer named Thorpe, who lived at Eau Claire, but who constructed the Madison house for a summer, or "occasional," residence. It was his daughter who married Ole Bull, the famous violinist, and who made his acquaintance while the artist, on a professional visit to the capital, was the guest of the father.

In the rear of the mansion is a small summer-house of a bright and rather fantastic style of architecture and decorated with high colors, which is somewhat famous as being the place in which Longfellow wrote his poem entitled "The Four Lakes." The view from the rear balcony is a most charming one, so much so that an appreciative observer who sees it at its best, and who then reads the description of the poet, will be forced to conclude that he failed to do it justice. A daughter of the poet was married to a son of the original owner of the place, so that the associations of the house are doubly interwoven in an art woof representing the genius of two continents.

The governor has an album in which is the original text of the Longfellow manuscript, and which, as a matter of course, is of a priceless value.

The home of the governor is not only rich and palatial in its construction, but in its decorations, and is in every respect a fit representative of a powerful and wealthy state. The mistress of the mansion and a daughter received the visitor. Mrs. Rusk is a lady with a warm face and sympathetic eyes, who, like the daughter, was dressed in deep mourning, whose hue was reflected in the sadness of their countenances. Not long since a sister of the one and daughter of the other suddenly, and with but little anticipation of such a result, was called to another life.

The blow was as terrible as it was unexpected. The young lady was one of culture, of exquisite refinement, unusual intelligence, and the possessor of superior social qualities. She was the organizer, the hostess, the life of the receptions which were given at the executive mansion during the winter sessions of the legislature. She was universally admired by those who were her acquaintances, and loved by those who knew her. She was the favorite child of her father, and her loss seems to him irreparable; even a slight allusion to her sends a quiver of anguish through his stalwart frame. A perceptible gloom pervades the house which she once brightened, and is reflected in the mourning vestments and sad faces of the inmates.

Gov. Rusk is a domestic man in all the better senses of the term. A bereavement such as that which has just befallen him in the loss of his accomplished and affectionate daughter is one that reaches the very marrow of his soul.

The character of the furnishing of the executive mansion is rich and artistic in its most salient features. It has in the presence of the governor and his family an air of refinement that is very perceptible, and suggestions in abundance of a domestic life which, within itself, and undisturbed by such an intrusion as it has of late suffered in the loss of one of its members, must be felicitous to an unusual degree.

#### CONCLUSION.

Gov. Rusk comes of a prolific parentage, there having been ten children born to his father and mother, of whom he is the youngest, and of whom seven were boys. By his first marriage with Mary Martin, the governor had three chil-

dren, and by his second marriage to Elizabeth Johnson, in 1856, he had four, two of whom are living. His mother reached the age of 87, and from the magnificent appearance of her youngest son, he is destined to enjoy an equally long lease of life. He has never impaired his vitality by any of the excesses not uncommon among men in public life, and he possesses an equable disposition which prevents his being harassed by excitements or worn by irritation. He is one of the "good old stock" so often heard of, but so rarely seen; one whose nervous system has suffered no demoralization, and whose functions have undergone no depreciation.

In a sketch of him written three years ago it is said: "The present occupant of the executive chair of Wisconsin is a man who tips the beam at 250 pounds, and has in him a heart proportionate to the size of his body. . . . In the expression of opinions as well as in movements, he is cool and deliberate, and evidently does not believe in rushing things, but does not hesitate to shoulder the responsibility when the time to act has come. No one will ever find Gov. Rusk a coward physically, morally, or politically. He does not jump to conclusions quickly, but, when he decides what to do, is able to give substantial reasons therefor. He is a large man, with a kindly face, an abundance of hair, a full beard pretty well silvered, and lacks in his demeanor that self-satisfied, peculiarly offensive dignity so often seen among official luminaries."

#### II.

He is held in great respect by the people. A citizen said of him: "He pays the greatest attention to details, and is thoroughly informed as to everything that is going on. There is no possibility of any 'monkey-work' taking place without his knowledge. He is intensely practical, very observing, and faultless in his habits, as he never drinks anything in the shape of liquor, and uses tobacco in no form. He has a most estimable family, and is himself very domestic in his tastes, and very warm-hearted. He is an intuitive reader of human nature, and his first impressions always dominate and give shape to his conclusions. He decides promptly in emergencies, and clings to a conclusion with pertinacity. People do not at first always understand him, but they invariably like and respect him when they come to know him. He makes long and lasting friends, and is especially a favorite among the farmers, who always come to visit him."

Gov. Rusk is not an orator, but he is an impressive talker. He converses with his audiences very much as he does with a single listener; he is plain, without affectation, logical, and possessed of a winning manner.



III.

A childhood spent on a farm affords opportunity for the development of a character of a high average of excellence. Industry is one of the necessities of this phase of occupation, for it is only by persistent toil that satisfactory results are obtained. One thus educated learns the necessity of economy. There is no opportunity for extravagance; rivalry in display and expenditure finds no opportunity for existence. Personal integrity and cleanliness in life are obligatory in the farming communities, where the sparseness of population subjects each member to the supervision of the others. The opportunities for dissipation are not presented, as in crowded communities, and hence there is no blunting nor impairment of the vital forces in fierce excitements. The freshness of youth is not withered by social excesses; the boy becomes a man and retains the simplicity, the purity of his boyhood. Much of the time, limited to himself in his labor, he becomes reflective, forms his conclusions through his own unaided processes, and thus acquires a mental independence. Apart from the corruptions of the great cities, he imbibes no remissness of opinion in regard to moral or political laxity; what others often regard with toleration he views as a crime.

Thus industrious from necessity, drilled in habits of economy, free from the bane of extravagant display, obliged from his comparative isolation and the inspection to which he is subject to lead a correct life, with nerves unshaken by social dissipation or the excesses of intemperance, conscious of rectitude in his own life and generously trustful of others, the man born and reared on the farm secures qualities which make him the possessor of an unassailable manhood. He may not be brilliant as an orator, nor successful as a political intrigant, but he is, of all men, the character to which it is safe to intrust the management of public affairs in which the qualities demanded are unswerving honesty, excellent judgment, personal self-respect, and an accurate perception of the rights involved in issues which come before him for settlement.

Of such birth and rearing, and such a result, is Gov. Rusk. POLITO.

*Country of the North, Wisconsin*  
*Jan. 13, 1878.*

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## A WISCONSIN MAN

**UGHT TO BE AND MAY BE  
GROVER CLEVELAND'S  
SUCCESSOR.**

The Rusk Boom Has Been Steadily Growing for More Than a Year--Opinions of Congressmen--Press Opinions--What a Prominent Wisconsin Man Says About the Governor--He Is Sure of an Enthusiastic Wisconsin Delegation.



A large proportion of the republican press of Wisconsin has expressed itself in favor of the nomination of Governor Rusk for the presidency. It has been known for some months that the delegation from Wisconsin will give him its cordial support. Indeed, there are very few republicans in the state who are not hoping for his nomination.

Leading papers of the Eastern and New England states have repeatedly referred to Governor Rusk as an available candidate.

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A distinguished Wisconsin man, who is respected by men of both parties, in a recent letter to a friend in this city, spoke thus truthfully and enthusiastically of the popular Wisconsin governor:

I like what you say about Gov. Rusk. You do not overrate him in the least. I have studied him carefully and I think him a very able man, and a very good man. He would not only make a very excellent and available candidate, but if elected, an able President.

1. He is a thoughtful, cool and dispassionate man of sound judgment.

2. He is highly educated in the college of observation and experience, and he is well posted on all matters of state.

3. He made a first-class congressman for several terms, and no one had more personal and political influence in that body.

4. Wisconsin never had as able and excellent a governor as he has been for several terms. How carefully he looks over and studies the bills before he signs them and how judiciously, yes, and judicially, he examines the evidence and the laws in pardon cases.

5. He was a good soldier and able commander, and the old soldiers love him.

6. He is a man of great firmness and decision and is fearless in protecting the public peace.

7. He is kind, tender hearted and benevolent.

8. He is to-day the most popular man in America, and entirely unobjectionable. They may talk about his capability. I know that he is capable and would make a first-class President.

But again: He came up from the ranks of labor and he sympathizes with labor. He is a noble looking man and splendid specimen of manhood. I don't speak politically, but personally, when I say that I think his candidacy would excite more enthusiasm among the people than that of any other man spoken of.

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A Washington correspondent writing to a Wisconsin paper concerning the republican candidate for 1888, said: Your correspondent has heard a good many men discussing the presidential question during the past few days, and it will be of in-

terest to Wisconsin people to know that the name of their honored governor was frequently mentioned in a most kindly way. One gentleman, a congressman from a western state, said: "I know Jerry Rusk, personally; have known him many years; was in congress with him and I know him to be as straight haired a man as ever lived. It is true that he has not a college education, but he has as much solid common sense as any man I ever became acquainted with. I would like to see him nominated by the republican party. While I am among the millions who believe that he did just what was his plain duty in subduing the Milwaukee riots, I can see that it would be used against him in the most vigorous manner as a presidential candidate. Why, it would not be ten days after his nomination before we would see big two-page cuts of a company of state militia with Jerry Rusk looming up in command of them, firing into a company of laboring men."

A gentleman of the company, a senator, who had said but little up to this time, began to walk the floor, and said: "That will not amount to a continental so far as injuring the candidate. I really believe it would do him good. You ask why? Such a picture as that would be incorrect to begin with. It would be a lie on the face of it, for it was a vicious mob of rioters, and you may be sure that the friends of the republican candidate would lose no time in getting a companion piece that would show the true state of affairs. That companion piece would show hundreds of fierce men, some of them under the influence of strong drink, marching through a great city driving thousands of workmen from their places, threatening to destroy property, showing a disposition to override law, and, if necessary, destroy life, and then in another portion of the picture there would be displayed a lightning

train running from Madison to Milwaukee, bearing the governor, who, when he reached the city, after having made a personal examination, decided that the safety of property and life demanded that he, as the governor of the state, in response to a call from the sheriff and mayor, say the word that would put a stop to lawlessness and render secure property and life. Such a picture as that would offset the other one. I tell you that such a picture as you have mentioned would prove a boomerang."

Another gentleman said, "and you must take into account that the turbulent, riotous, lawless element among the labor class is only a small element compared with the whole army of laborers. The great mass of the honest laborers of

the country are law-abiding, good citizens, and love their country as well as any one loves it, and would be as quick to resent any attack upon it or its institutions, as any body. Jerry Rusk has been a laboring man nearly all his life; he was a farmer, a stage-driver, can run a threshing machine as well as any man in Wisconsin, was a poor boy and is not a rich man now by any means, though he has had plenty of opportunities to become rich. How would a picture of Jerry Rusk running a threshing machine, take with the public? So, when the turbulent, lawless, un-American gangs make war upon him for having done simply his duty and prevented the destruction of property and the loss of life, you would see the honest laboring element of the country defending him for that which you said might work to his injury."

"Then there is another thing to take into account. Were that kind of a fight made upon the republican candidate for President, every man of wealth, every one who has property to defend, and who has more than a personal interest in seeing the laws of the land obeyed, no matter whether he be democrat or republican, would be on the side of the man who fearlessly did his duty and checked lawlessness and punished the lawless. All of this talk about the Milwaukee riots endangering the prospects of the republican party in case it nominates such a man as Jerry Rusk, is moonshine. Why, you remember in 1868 and again in 1872, the democrats paraded General Grant as a wholesale butcher in thousands of articles, written both for circulars and the press, and every true American—everybody who loves justice and hates injustice, was Grant's friend instead of being made his enemy by such demagogical conduct." That little party broke up regarding Governor Rusk as an available man for the republican nomination in 1888.

It is reported from New York that Mr. Conkling has declared that Gov. Rusk, of Wisconsin, could carry New York for the republican party, and in his judgment is perhaps the strongest nomination that could be made. Thereupon the friends of the bluff old governor have started a boom for him, and are pushing him to the front as a good candidate to consider. It will do no harm to consider Uncle Jerry, as he is one of the strongest men in the Northwest.—*Des Moines (Iowa) Register*.

If the republicans expect to elect the next President they must carry New York, and if they expect to carry New York they must nominate some candidate who will receive the active support of

Roscoe Conkling, and where is the candidate who will so effectually consolidate all the factions in the republican party as Gov. Rusk. He is strong in every section.—*Lake Mills Leader*.

Roscoe Conkling has as much admiration for Governor Rusk as Senator Sawyer has love for Blaine, and the former has expressed the conviction that Governor Rusk, if given the Presidential nomination, could carry the state of New York. Roscoe Conkling is not the only prominent man in the East who has expressed that opinion.—*La Crosse Republican-Leader*.

Rusk's name is steadily advancing towards the front. The personality of the man, with his simplicity, solidity, and straight-forwardness, shines among double-dealing, trebly-opinionated politicians like the full moon among lightning bugs. Oh, Rusk would do, and would do righteously.—*Whitewater Register*.

Having built a broad and consistent platform, let us nominate a man who, though he may not be as brilliant as Mr. Blaine, is just as brave; though he may not be so learned, is just as loyal; though he may not be as showy, is quite as safe. A man who will seek confidence rather than applause, and who will rest his claim to fame upon acts rather than speeches. Some man who will not bring personal issues into the campaign. We have just such a man in Wisconsin. Not "honest old Abe," but "brave old Jerry." Not "the black eagle of Illinois," but "the gray eagle of Wisconsin." A man whose common sense, unflinching nerve and sterling integrity have elevated him from the box of a stage coach to the gubernatorial chair; whose metal stood the test of the battlefield, in the halls of congress, and in the face of the mob. He is emphatically a man of the people, commissioned by nature as a leader who is inspired by the genius of common sense. It will be objected that a western man cannot carry New York. We assert that Jerry Rusk will have more strength in New York than any candidate yet mentioned. His candidacy will draw Mr. Conkling from his long retirement, and we shall see the great Achilles buckle on the armor again and smite the Trojans.—*Racine Journal*.

Governor Rusk gave in his message a text which workingmen everywhere, both rich and poor, would do well to make the subject of careful consideration. "Every one's right," it runs, "to work for

himself, or for any one else, on such terms as he may choose to make, must be maintained at all hazards." That savors much of the fundamental principles of American freedom. Think it over and see if it does not.—*New York Tribune*.

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Among the possible dark horses of 1888 Governor Rusk has a stall very near the parade ground. He is one of the biggest, truest, bravest and most level-headed men in the west.—*Salt Lake (Utah) Tribune*.

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Score a point for Jeremiah Rusk—"Uncle Jerry," as the Wisconsin people call him. In his recent message to the legislature of his state, Governor Rusk, referring to anarchists and socialists, said: "They are as un-American as monarchy, and as treasonable as secession."

A ringing good sentence that; and it is the utterance of as true an American spirit as lives. The country is not over-

burdened with honest, clear-headed men in public life like "Uncle Jerry" Rusk. Eighteen months from present writing the republican party, in convention assembled, will be "taking account of stock," with a view of selecting sound presidential timber. The orator who may be called upon to address that convention in behalf of Jeremiah Rusk will find in the life, labors and state papers of Wisconsin's governor abundant material for a magnificent address. "Uncle Jerry" has a record on which the republican party may safely and successfully appeal to the honest voters of this country.—*Chicago Mail*.

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The Manitowoc *Tribune* gave a spicy column reply to the *Evening Wisconsin's* recent ill-advised article in which it tabooed the idea of Governor Rusk for the presidency. So much is quoted from the *Tribune's* article: The writer was one of the commissioners to Gettysburg last summer, the governor being one of the party. There were other delegations there, one from Maine headed by the late Governor Bodwell, and from New Hampshire and Rhode Island. They were representative men from those states; they were the men who had hurled back from Cemetery Ridge and Round Top the rebel legions, and resisted the incomparable charge of Picket's splendid division; those men spoke enthusiastically of the governor as a presidential candidate, first because of his splendid record as a soldier and secondly because of his record as an executive who dare do his duty in the face of threatening danger. On the homeward trip the party arrived in Harrisburg late in the afternoon, and, having several hours to wait for the through train to

Chicago, the party, after supper, went to the state house, the assembly holding an evening session. The governor met many of the leading men, whose acquaintance he had formed in congress or in national conventions and he was most cordially received, and we heard many of the gentlemen express the opinion that they would be glad to see him nominated for the presidency by the republican convention.

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With the exception of the *Evening Wisconsin* the republican papers of the state are unanimously in favor of the Wisconsin delegation going into the Chicago convention solid for Rusk. The *Evening Wisconsin* is the most enthusiastic Blaine paper in the state, and will not hear patiently of any other name than Blaine's as a standard bearer.—*Milwaukee Correspondence of Chicago Inter-Ocean*.

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It is reported that Mr. Conkling has declared that Governor Rusk, of Wisconsin, could carry New York for the republican party, and Mr. Conkling's judgment upon a question of that kind is entitled to profound respect.—*St. Louis Globe Democrat*.

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A gentleman in California writing to the *Weyauwega Chronicle* says: "This is a great Blaine state, but I often hear it 'guessed' that the 'dark horse' is in Wisconsin's stables, and that his front name is Jerry Rusk. Groom him well. Grover's free trade theories won't work out here, where their crying need is manufactures."

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Governor Rusk has had long experience in public life, both in congress and as governor of the state, has won the respect and confidence of the public. He has shown distinguished ability as an executive officer; he has sound judgment, courage, and independence of character. As a candidate, he would receive the cordial support of all republicans as an honest, capable and patriotic man. Hence, we do not think there is any impropriety in the talk about him as a candidate for the presidency.—*State Journal*.



## Knapp House Architectural History

By Jeffrey Dean, State Preservation Planner. State Historical Society of Wisconsin. 1972.





The appearance of this house today is most likely very similar to its original appearance. During the years three porches have adorned the house, starting in the 1850's with a small front porch flanked by a bay window to the left, which no longer exists. Around 1898 a rambling porch was added which swept across the front of the building and down its southwest façade. In turn, this porch was removed more recently and replaced with the present small porch supported by two Ionic columns in front of two Ionic pilasters.

The house is built of indigenous sandstone from the Westport quarry, as are many of Madison's other aristocratic mid-19th century houses. Unlike the others, however, this house has an asymmetric façade composed of three blocky masses. To the right of the entrance is one-story, flat roofed stone projection with a pair of deeply-recessed windows which are unadorned by hooded moldings. Other windows in the façade are also deeply recessed, but have generous hood moldings with keystone motifs. These richly-formed windows, casting marked shadows, are the most striking feature of the main elevation, closely followed by the generous eaves of the roof which are supported on large brackets. These brackets are paired at corners, which are further embellished by recessed panels under the eaves. On the northeast elevation is a white, one-story bay window.

Attached to the rear of the main body of the house is a subordinate stone wing, which is less elaborately executed. The roof is lowered and the walls planes recessed, and the windows are smaller with only plain lintels and sills. Roof brackets are also smaller, and are paired.

The house has a very gently sloped-hipped roof topped by a widow's walk. Four centrally-located chimneys penetrate the roof.

The design of the house is unusually restrained for the mid-19th century, making it appealing to one with contemporary taste. Assigning the proper "style" to a Midwestern building of this period is often hazardous because of the way styles quickly came and went, and because designers had no qualms about combining styles which had been regarded as incompatible previously. This house is a Victorian design with Italianate influences, a "style" shared with many other Madison residences of the period.

Toward the end of the last century, a Norwegian formal terraced garden was built on the northwestern lawn of this house. Though this garden is no longer preserved, traces of it can be found today. The spacious lawns on this side of the house run down to the shore of Lake Mendota, where a University of Wisconsin boathouse has been built only recently.

### **Historical articles about the Mansion**

#### **"Tax-Payer's Mansion"**

In which Governors Will Reside. Romantic History of the New State Executive Mansion—Where Ole Bull Took His Child-Wife—A Magnificent View. [more...](#)  
[The (Milwaukee) Journal, April 13, 1885. 4 pages]

#### **"A Granger Governorr"**

Great story about Governor Rusk and descriptions of the city in these early times. [more...](#)

#### **"An Historic House"**

Story of the Executive Residence at Madison, Wis. Ole Bull Lived There Once [more...](#)  
[The Minneapolis Journal, May 31, 1893; 2 pages. Nice Image]

#### **"Madison's Historic Old Homes Are Picturesque—Also Drafty"**

Executive Mansion, One of the Oldest In City: Was Built In 1857 [more...](#)  
[The Wisconsin State Journal, February 5, 1917]

#### **"Executive Home in Madison to be Open Again"**

Official Residence of Wisconsin Governors to be More Lively. [more...](#)  
[Milwaukee Sentinel. December 26, 1920. 3pages]

**"Wisconsin 'White House' Born Same Year As Republican Party"**

"The White House" of Wisconsin is one of the most historic residences in Madison. [more...](#)  
[The Wisconsin State Journal, June 4, 1922; 2 pages]

**"Governor's Home Scene of Early Social Life"**

Society and Political History of State Made in Present Executive Mansion. [more...](#)  
[Wisconsin State Journal, December 2, 1928]

**"Making of a Home of the Governor's Mansion"**

Coming into own. [more...](#)  
[The Milwaukee Journal, February 10, 1929; 6 pages; Photos]

**"Executive Mansion Has Historical Background"**

Executive Home Once Called 'White House'. Governor's Residence Owned by General White:  
Bull Lived in it, too. [more...](#)  
[The Wisconsin State Journal, March 2, 1930; 4 pages]

**"Mansion Comes Into It's Own"**

Within the large wide verandah-ed... [more...](#)  
[The Wisconsin State Journal, June 22, 1930; 6 pages; blurry photographs]

**"Knapp House is an intellectual and social heaven" [more...](#)**

[University Communications; News@UW-Madison and Wisconsin News weekly newspaper on  
02/13/01]

**Knapp House Graduate Center – Old Executive Residence  
130 East Gilman Street  
Madison, Wisconsin**



**Front (southeast) elevation**

**Brief History**

The existing Knapp House Graduate Center (aka Old Executive Residence) was originally built in 1855 by Julius T. White, and his wife Catherine, and was first known as the “White House” to local residents in Madison. Mr. White was a prominent local businessman and legislator. It was one of the first sandstone mansions in what would become known as Mansion Hill. White was a local art collector and had a leading role in the artistic and social life of Madison until his departure in 1857. White sold the house to George and Emeline Delaphine from whom he originally purchased the land. In 1868, they sold the house to J.G. Thorp and his wife Amelia Chapman Thorp from Eau Claire, Wisconsin where they had compiled a fortune in the lumber industry. In 1883, the Thorps sold the mansion to Governor Jeremiah Rusk who lived there for two years. He then sold it to the State of Wisconsin for use as a permanent executive residence. All seventeen governors from 1885 to 1949 lived in the house and maintained its social standing and festive reputation in the community. In 1950, a new governor’s mansion was purchased in Maple Bluff and the State sold the house to the University for \$60,000 using earnings from the Kemper K. Knapp endowment fund. Since that time the university has used the facility for graduate student housing as the Knapp Graduate Center. That program has recently been reorganized and move onto campus. The university is working with UW System, the State of Wisconsin’s Department of Administration, and the Wisconsin Historical Society to transfer the property.

**#7: Old Governors' Mansion****130 E. Gilman Street****1856**

Constructed of locally quarried sandstone and designed in the Italianate style, this house was originally built for Catherine and Julius T. White, Secretary of the Wisconsin Insurance Company. The Whites sold the house in 1857 to one of Madison's first settlers, George P. Delaplaine and his wife, Emily. Delaplaine was secretary to Governors Farwell and Dewey and co-owner of one of the largest real estate development firms in the city. In 1867 the house rose to greater social prominence when it was purchased by State Senator J. G. Thorp, a millionaire lumber baron, and his wife, Amelia. In 1870, the Thorp's young daughter, Sarah, married Ole Bull, the world-famous 60-year-old Norwegian violinist in one of the most lavish weddings the town had ever seen. Governor Jeremiah Rusk acquired the house in 1883 and sold it to the State of

Wisconsin two years later. Conover and Porter designed renovations in 1897 which including a sweeping wrap-around veranda with Ionic columns, which was drastically reduced in size in the 1960s. The house served as the executive mansion for seventeen governors from 1885 to 1950.



Designated January 17, 1972  
National Register of Historic Places  
[Landmark Nomination Form](#)



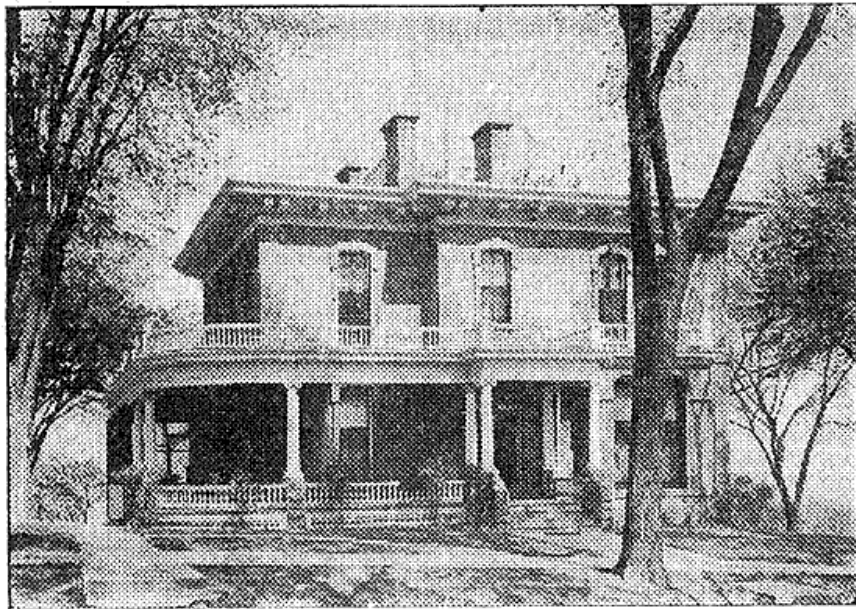


Zimmerman has been more of a home woman, her chief interest being the well being of her husband and her two boys.

For 47 years this fine old structure has housed 11 Badger governors.

Four of its occupants have thrice been elected, Rusk, La Follette, Philipp and Blaine. Three have had but one term, Hoard, Upham and Zimmerman, while the others have had two.

## Coming Into Own



*The Milwaukee Journal*

*February 10, 1929*

# Making a Home of the Governor's Mansion



HE executive mansion in Madison at 130 East Gilman st., is not all that could be desired in the way of a home. It turns an aged, indifferent sandstone back to the icy gales from Lake Mendota. Inside its high ceilinged, cluttered roobos hardly two pieces of furniture could call each other brother. The drawing room shrieks with discordances of overstuffed, mottled arm chairs, of heavy, gilt framed mirrors, knick knacks of sorts, ornate fringe dripping lamp shades.

Mrs. Walter Kohler, its new mistress and the first lady of the state, loves beautiful things. But she does not sit down in the midst of that room and bewail its lack of harmony. She hangs one of her own pictures—a Jonas Lie landscape, "Northern Hills," lovely in green and blues—above a mantel from which she first removes dangling glass prism candlesticks and a vase patterned like ameaba.

WHAT she would like to do is to re-furnish the house in the manner in which it was furnished when the state took it over from Gov. Jeremiah Rusk. She would like to restore to it original pieces of furniture which are scattered all over Wisconsin and Illinois.

Consulting the Wisconsin State Historical library, she has found that the upstairs rooms were furnished with heavy carved black walnut. In the guest room still stands the massive bed in which Ole Bull, famous Norwegian violinist, slept, when as the son-in-law of the Thorpes he visited the home. Mrs. Kohler laughs as she tells the old story of how it had to be taken apart and hoisted over the veranda because it was too big to get in the house any other way.

Joseph Thorpe, from whose family the house was bought by Gov. Rusk in 1882, has written her from Cambridge, Mass., that the downstairs rooms boasted blue and white velvet furniture, with metal lions' heads on the arms and backs of the chairs.

That, Mrs. Kohler thinks, does not sound so very attractive, and after all, the main thing is to see the home furnished in keeping with the stately beauty and dignity of its architecture.

ALL that, however, depends on the state legislature, which must decide whether Wisconsin shall retain the mansion as it is, refurnish it, or build a new one. It doesn't matter too much to her what the decision is, Mrs. Kohler says. She's a "cheerful soul," and can be happy, even though she can make no definite plans until a decision is reached. In the meantime, she makes the best of things as they are; consults with the state architect; hangs pictures; sends for her books.

Her choice in reading, by the way, runs mostly to historical novels, biography and philosophy. She is, she says, deeply interested in religions and philosophy.

This getting settled in one house, keeping up another in Kohler, fulfilling her responsibilities as chairman of the art department of the Federated Women's Clubs, entertaining, answering the thousand and one calls that are made on her doesn't leave much time.

A MAN who has been unpacking pictures in the basement comes into the room with one of Mrs. Kohler's most treasured possessions. It is a portrait of Isaac Barre, by Benjamin West.

"I picked it up in London," she explains, as she tries it, now in this place, now in that, for the best light. "He was the man, you know, who upheld our cause in parliament against taxation. I saw the portrait in a shop. I went home and told Mr. Kohler, 'I've found something lovely—something we can live and be happy with,' so he went to see it and he let me have it.

"And now"—she is satisfied with its position, "Look, doesn't it resemble Mr. Kohler? The forehead and the nose—they look like his family. And the chin, don't you see the resemblance there?"

BEFORE she went to Madison, Mrs. Kohler planned some of the things she was going to do. She would take a course in art at the state university. She would spend many quiet, happy afternoons at the library. She would skate across Mendota, all the way across, with the wind blowing in her face.

Those things still remain to be done. The little orange and blue skating out-



fit which she purchased—"with a skirt, because I think I ought to wear one, rather than breeches,"—hangs forlornly in the closet. It has seen no service.

The governor's wife looks very much like a wistful little girl as she sits up very straight on the footstool she has chosen and gazes out the window at the snow swirling in from the lake.

"I must—I simply must, get out my high shoes, and at least tramp around a little," she says, almost rebelliously. "I love the outdoors. When I was a little girl down in Kenosha, I was

often called on by my brothers to fill in for a baseball nine. And we used to row—out on Lake Michigan—with those nice spoon oars. But there's so much to do—and I'm so tired. I make out little lists, so I'll be sure not to forget anything."

ONE of the things the governor's wife will not forget to do, is to visit little Willie Walker, a crippled Indian boy at a Madison hospital, who shows talent modeling in soap. Mrs. Kohler thinks it will be possible to show him how to turn his talent to account in making things which could be sold to tourists.

To uncover talent anywhere is not only part of her work as chairman of the art department of the Federated Women's Clubs; it is also her pleasure. She is enthusiastic over plans for the Sheboygan county art exhibit Feb. 19, to which everyone in the county, who paints or sketches or models in clay is asked to contribute. She goes about the state speaking on art before women's clubs.

The Helen Mears Memorial School Contest fund, which was founded in 1927 by Mrs. John F. Conaut, and which the club hopes to extend until it is possible to have "The Fountain" of Helen Mears cast in bronze and presented to the state capitol, has her heartiest interest.

WHATEVER is done about the executive mansion, there will always be people where Mrs. Kohler is. She draws them to her. She likes to meet

them—she goes more than half way to make friends with them, and she has hosts of friends. But she has reserves, and dignity, this diminutive gray haired woman.

Her most informal entertainments, you feel, will be pleasant, happy, delightful occasions, but they will never be ones of boisterous jollity. Mrs. Kohler sets the tone of any gathering by her presence. She creates an atmosphere that is peculiarly her own.

She never slouches—she selects always a backless or a straight backed chair—and you feel that she would have small use for mental slouchiness or for conversational carelessness.

Hers is a marvelous vitality, a zest for living, but she surrounds herself instinctively with the good, the fine things of life, discarding the shoddy, the flashy, the cheap. Hers, too, is a broad sympathy with, and consideration for, people. It is easy to understand both the easy comradeship and the deep respect with which her four boys always treat her; easy to understand the enthusiastic comments of those who meet her even casually.

The first function in the executive mansion was a dinner for members of the state legislature Wednesday, Jan. 23. There will be other Wednesday night dinners. Mrs. Kohler says, until she and the governor have met personally every member of the senate and of the assembly.

About the possible political activities in which her position as governor's wife may engage her, Mrs. Kohler hasn't had time to think. She is not bewildered, so much as overwhelmed, by the number of things into which the inauguration plunged her. She will have to make an adjustment somehow, she says.

HER plan to spend a part of every week in Kohler still holds good. She worries a little that Walter, jr., may be lonely while she and the governor are away.

"The youngest boy, Robert," she says, "is at school in the east. Another boy is married and living in Chicago, and another is married and living in Kohler. That leaves Walter all alone. He likes to read, though; he can absorb himself in books in the evenings, and of course he can have his friends in."

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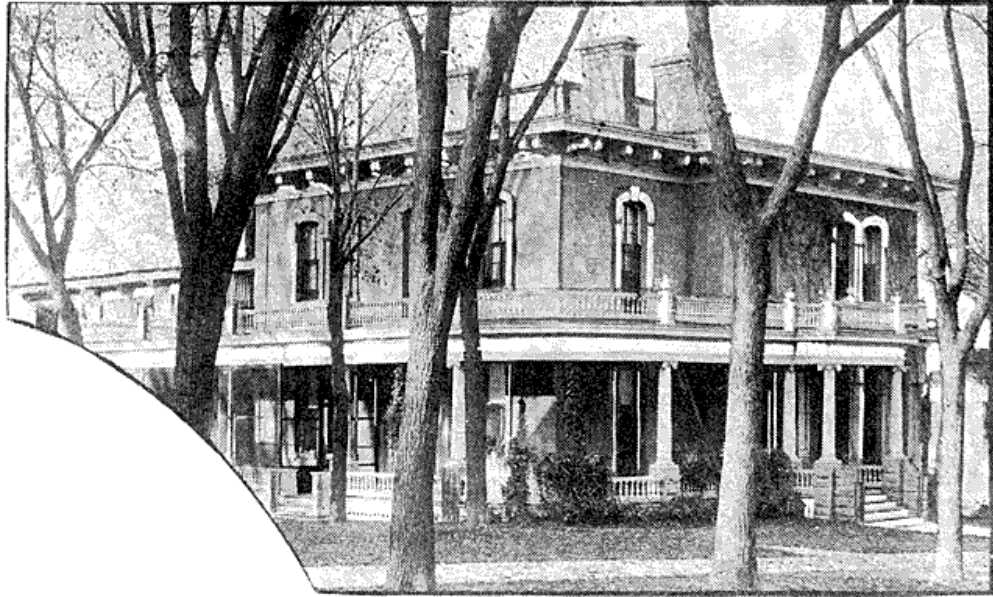
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*Mrs. Walter B. Kohler, first lady of Wisconsin*



*The Kohler home  
at Kohler, Wis.*



*The executive mansion at Madison*

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# THE JOURNAL.

*—Milwaukee—*

MONDAY, APRIL 13, 1886.

## THE TAX-PAYERS' MANSION.

IN WHICH GOVERNORS WILL RESIDE.

Romantic History of the New State Executive Mansion—Where Ole Bull Took His Child-Wife—A Magnificent View.

MADISON, April 13. — [Special] — The property purchased by the commissioner under an act of the legislature, for an executive residence, is well adapted to the purpose to which it will be put. It is located on East Gilman street, and the waters of Lake Mendota beat upon its lower margin. The grounds are ten rods broad and extend back in a gentle slope to the lake shore, a distance of more than 300 feet. They are beautifully located, and command an extensive view of nearly the whole of Lake Mendota, including the state insane hospital upon the northern shore—four miles distant. That favorite elevation known as Maple Bluff, on McBride's Point, forming a portion of the northeast shore of the lake, is a conspicuous object which meets the gaze of the admiring sightseer as he stands upon the lawn in the rear of the executive mansion. Away off to the northwest, low-lying on the bosom of the water, is Picnic point, beyond which the summer sun sinks in all his effulgent beauty; and these same sunsets, which, it is safe to say, cannot be rivalled anywhere in the world, and which have become famous in connection with Mendota, can nowhere be seen to better advantage than from the ground so recently acquired by the state. The lake shore of the grounds is a delightful spot in summer, and few indeed have been the evenings since Gov. Rusk has occupied the place, when young people have not been there to enjoy it.

Upon the 6th of April, 1836, nearly fifty years ago, the whole of the present site of

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State Historical Society  
OF WISCONSIN

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Madison was entered by James Doty, after governor, and S. T. Mason, who received a patent upon it from the federal government. This acquisition of course included the land upon which now stands the executive residence of the commonwealth. Within twelve months after the admission of Wisconsin as a state, this particular piece of ground, a veritable jungle at the time, came into the possession of Delaplaine and Burdick, real estate dealers here at that time, and who continue in the same business to this day. The two members transferred the property back and forth between themselves several times, and finally, in 1854, sold it to Gen. Julius T. White and A. L. Collins, the consideration being \$1,800. In 1855, White sold out to Collins, and the next record shows that Mrs. White had gained possession of the property. Mrs. Emily T. Delaplaine owned it in 1857, several transfers having occurred in the interim.

While the land was in the possession of Mrs. White in 1855, the beginning of the present executive mansion was made. It consisted of what is now the front part of the structure, and instead of a broad hallway and two large rooms only on the first floor, as now, there was the hallway and four rooms. The building was constructed of Madison sandstone, and at the time of its erection, even in its somewhat limited form, was regarded as quite palatial. It was occupied by the Delaplaine family till 1866, when J. G. Thorpe, a wealthy Eau Claire lumberman, purchased it, paying therefor \$15,000. This gentleman made very extensive, as well as expensive, improvements in his newly acquired property. In fact, he hesitated at no expenditure which would tend to render it a most delightful home for himself and family—a wife and son and daughter. First he purchased, for \$2,000, a strip of land two rods in width, extending from the street to the lake, along the west boundary of the premises. Then he lavished \$12,000 in the erection of a stone addition to the rear of the house, for dining-room, kitchen, etc., and in removing several partitions from the interior of the front part, placing it in substantially the condition it is to-day. The grounds were graded and terraced at an expense of \$1,000, and a barn and billiard room, separate buildings, were erected at a cost of \$2,000. The last money which Mr. Thorpe expended upon the property was in 1880, when the introduction of a hard-wood finish to the residence absorbed something over \$2,500, thus making the entire outlay on the property \$34,000, which

includes the \$15,000 originally paid for it. Mrs. Thorpe and her daughter were great roamers and even the beauty and elegance of their Madison home could not lure them from the fascination of travel. In their tour of the old world they became infatuated with Bergen, Norway, and there, too, a handsome home was purchased for them. Either there, or while residing in America, they met Ole Bull, the celebrated Norwegian violinist, and on a beautiful September day—the 6th—in 1870, a brilliant wedding occurred in the parlor of Wisconsin's new executive residence, the groom being beaming-faced, white-haired Ole Bull and the bride, Miss Sara C. Thorpe, the only daughter of the wealthy Eau Claire lumberman. At that time the groom was 60 years of age and the bride but 20—surely a striking combination of December and May. This event, which was doubtless the culmination of a series of happy little romances, invested the place with an interest which has ever clung to it. The Thorpes resided here for several years after the marriage of the daughter, although they traveled much. Finally, Mr. Thorpe returned to Eau Claire and Mrs. Thorpe went to Boston, where, with her son Joseph, who is soon to wed a daughter of the lamented Longfellow, she at present resides in the house of James Russell Lowell. In 1880, Ole Bull stopped at the house in this city, where he was given a bride, for the last time. In 1882, Gov. Rusk purchased the property of Mr. Thorpe for the sum of \$15,000, and afterwards made many improvements in it, aggregating over \$8,000 in cost. In the same room in which Miss Sara Thorpe was joined in marriage to Ole Bull, the beloved daughter of the governor, recently lay in the cold arms of death.

The new executive mansion is a commodious stone structure of two stories, with attic and basement. Upon the first floor is a broad hallway, parlor, library, dining-room, kitchen and three pantries. On the second floor there are two front sleeping chambers, with dressing-rooms off, and five other chambers, all furnished with closets, besides bath-rooms, and a cedar-closet for the storage of such articles as are liable to injury from insects or damp atmosphere. The attic is large. The basement is also commodious, and has a high ceiling. It contains a coal cellar, heating apparatus, laundry, wine-room—which Ole Bull appreciated in the highest degree—wood-room, and at the rear pleasant servants' quarters. The building throughout is



heated by steam, and the coldest wind which blows cannot force itself within the massive walls. In purchasing the property, the state secured all the heavy furniture on the first floor, including carpets but not pianos, the common furniture in the second story and the paraphernalia of the laundry. The state drove an admirable bargain in securing the property for \$20,000, and Wisconsin's future governors are assured of a residence where they will be enabled to receive and entertain in a manner which will be in harmony with the dignity of the exalted office they occupy.



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# THE MINNEAPOLIS JOURNAL.

## May 31, 1893

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### AN HISTORIC HOUSE

Story of the Executive Residence at  
Madison, Wis.

OLE BULL LIVED THERE ONCE

Longfellow's Lines to the Lakes—The  
Tale of the  
Thorpes.

Special to The Journal.

MADISON, Wis., May 30.—Wisconsin provides its Governor with an executive residence, and that residence is a building possessing more than ordinary interest from a historical standpoint. It is located on the shore of Lake Monona, one of the beautiful sheets of water made famous by one of Longfellow's poems:

Four limpid lakes—four naiads  
Or sylvan deities are these,  
In flowing robes of azure dressed;  
Four lovely handmaids that uphold  
Their shining mirrors, rimmed with gold,  
To the fair city in the West.

One of the legends of the city is that the poet wrote the verses in a small summer house on the shore of Mendota in the rear of what is now the executive residence, although this is a fiction more agreeable to the people of Madison than well founded in fact. The truth is that Mrs. J. G. Thorpe, one of Wisconsin's board of lady managers

for the Centennial exposition in Philadelphia, was the mother of Longfellow's son-in-law, Joseph Thorpe, and by using her influence through her daughter-in-law, succeeded in obtaining for the ladies' memorial this original poem, which added not a little to the sale of the book. It was written at the poet's home and without his ever having seen the city of which he so prettily spoke. And so, while it may not be so pleasant to shatter the legend which brought Longfellow to Madison and placed him on the grounds of the present executive residence, nevertheless possibly as much historical remains value with the place as it is, because Ole Bull, the far-famed violinist, was once to be found there.

The executive residence is a stone mansion resting in the center of a handsome park 10 rods wide and running back 300 feet to the shore of the lake. The building is two stories in height, with mansard roof. It is constructed of native sandstone, and presents the solid appearance of an old-time gentleman's home. Surrounding it are oak, elm and maple trees. The rear of the lawn is washed by the waters of Mendota, and from the shore a most strikingly beautiful view may be obtained. Nearly the entire shore line of the lake may be seen, and it stretches away to the westward nine miles and to the northward three miles. At sunset no prettier scene could be imagined than that which is spread before the eye of him who steps down the sloping lawn. The state university buildings stand out in silhouette to the left, the domes and pinnacles gleaming in the sunlight. Reaching out almost to the center of the lake from the south shore is Picnic Point, while over its undulating crest the lake is again seen reflecting the many-tinted clouds, the path of the sun and the green banks. To the northeast, a bold prom-

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ontory stands out, known as Maple bluff. Westward from that is the state hospital for the insane and a succession of varied fields and wooded plats. From the lakes the grounds show to advantage, both the man-

sion and lawn having been arranged to appear at their best to those who might approach on the water.

The building contains on the first floor a spacious hall-way, parlors, library, dining room and pantries. The second floor is devoted to sleeping apartments and the basement to coal rooms, laundry, servants' quarters, heating apparatus and wine room.

Fifty-seven years ago last April the ground upon which the city of Madison rests was platted by James Duane Doty especially to be used as a state capitol. But it was not until the state was admitted that the ridge of land lying against Lake Mendota at the point where the executive residence is located was transferred from the platters, Doty and S. T. Madison, to Delaplaine & Burdick. It was covered with a tangled copse at that time, and no attempt was made to reduce the ground to a state of civilized subjection until 1854, when it was sold to Gen. Julius T. White and A. L. Collins. The next year Mrs. White, who had obtained title to the property, began the erection of the mansion. She built what is now the front or main building. The property was retransferred to the Delaplaines, and they occupied it until 1866, when J. G. Thorpe, a wealthy Eau Claire lumberman was charmed with the place and bought it at the suggestion of his wife and daughter, who had seen and admired it. He made extensive improvements which made the total cost of the property to him \$34,000. Included in his changes was the construction of an addition, from the center of the lake side of the old house toward the lake, and remodeling the entire interior as lavishly as money would permit. The grounds were terraced and a barn, billiard room and boathouse constructed.

The place was purchased to please Mrs. and Miss Thorpe and the husband and father spared no pains to make it as attractive as possible. But the mother and daughter were great travelers, numbering nearly all European countries among those which they had visited, besides American tours too numerous to mention. During one of their trips abroad they became infatuated with Bergen, Norway, and spent a great deal of time there. Among those with whom they came to be on intimate terms was Ole Bull, the violinist, who fell in love with the daughter, notwithstanding three score years had passed over his head, and but twenty summers had wrought their flowers to Miss Sarah. As a result the American lass was joined in wedlock to the great musician at Bull's country seat near Bergen, privately, June 1, 1870, and the wedding party sailed immediately for America. The marriage was confirmed according to the laws of this country at the Thorpe home, now the executive residence, Sept. 6, following, Rev. C. H. Richards officiating, the snowy haired groom and blooming bride seemed most happy. The Thorpes remained here several years after the marriage of the daughter, Ole and wife spending a part of their time here. Finally Mrs. Thorpe returned to Eau Claire, and Mrs. Thorpe went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and became an inmate of the home of her son, Joseph, who married a daughter of the lamented Longfellow. Ole Bull stopped in

the house for the last time in 1880 and in a short time the household was broken up. Gov. Rusk purchased the property and moved his family into it shortly after being installed in office, and in the parlor in which Ole Bull and the Thorpe daughter stood in taking their vows of fidelity, two years later laid the body of the Governor's oldest daughter previous to its being carried to its last resting place.

In 1885 the state purchased the property from Gov. Rusk for exactly the same amount which he gave for it and made the mansion the executive residence of the state. The only relic of Ole Bull which remained with the property was an imported glass gas chandelier which the poet purchased for \$1,000 and which is now in the art gallery of the state historical society. Mrs. Thorpe died recently in California, where she was visiting.

C. E. Nelson

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THE WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL.

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1917

Madison's Historic Old Homes  
Are Picturesque---Also Drafty

Executive Mansion, One of Oldest  
In City, Was Built  
In 1857

Madison has a number of historic old residences. Some of them are drafty and some are picturesque and some, the chronicler fears, are both, but we're glad to have them so that no one can cast any reflections on OUR dignity and tradition.

One of the oldest and draftiest is the executive residence, which was built about 1857. B. F. Hopkins, who at one time was representative in congress from this district, was one of the early occupants. He sold it to George P. Delaplaine, an early landowner of Madison, and Delaplaine passed along the picturesque old mansion and the drafts to J. G. Thorpe. Mr. Thorpe was the father-in-law of Ole Bull, and the famed violinist and his wife at one time resided in the gubernatorial halls.

Rusk First Governor-Occupant

Jeremiah Rusk, was the first governor to occupy the residence, tho it was not sold to the state until after his term of office. There was a good deal of entertaining in the old house those days. Older residents of Madison are still talking about a "crush" given as one of the official functions by Gov. Davidson. "Everybody" was there, and the crowd was so huge that those who had come in first couldn't wedge themselves back thru the crowd and had to make an informal exit down ladders from the second story windows. Gov. Washburn did the entertaining part of it up in the best style, according to those who frequented the official parties, and Gov. La Follette also entertained freely during his incumbency. It is only in the last two administrations that the executive halls have been dark and cold, and social Madison still longs for the old days of hospitality and punch.

Everyone who walks along Wilson street between Carroll and Monona avenue casts envious eyes over the low fence into the charming old ground of the Lucius Fairchild residence. As far as location and grounds go, this is one of the most ideal of Madison's older homes. It was built by J. C. Fairchild, who came to Madison from Ohio in 1852, and has been

in the family ever since. J. C. Fairchild died there in the early '70s and his widow lived on at the old place with Mrs. Dean. When General Lucius Fairchild returned from his ministry to Spain, he and his wife took up their residence in the family home, and Mrs. Fairchild is its present occupant.

La Follette Home Built in '60s

The La Follette residence on Maple Bluff was built during the '60s and was for a number of years the home of Hille Steensland, father of E. B. Steensland. He sold it to Senator La Follette 15 or 20 years ago.

An even earlier residence, built during the '50s, is the old Burdick home, 415 West Wilson street, at present occupied by Miss Mary Burdick and her brother, Robert. The home was built by Elisha Burdick.

The present Edgewood Villa is the old home of Gov. C. C. Washburn, who was a wealthy lumberman. The house was far out in the country at that time, and the Washburn coach with its sleek, well-fed horses was much in evidence at that time. With its wide lawns and the beautiful old evergreens, it was one of the show places of the vicinity. Later on Gov. Washburn tried to give it to the state for the use of the university and failing in this turned it over to the Catholic sisters.

There are two old Atwood homes in which David Atwood, one-time editor of the State Journal, lived successively. The earliest one was the residence was taken by O. C. Buck. The George Neckerman at 210 Monona avenue. Mr. and Mrs. Atwood lived there until they built their other home in 1874, after which the older residence was taken by C.O. Buck. The Atwoods' later home was the structure on Monona avenue across the street from the Elks' club.

The old home of Judge J. C. Hopkins, federal judge preceding Romanzo Bunn, was built about 1856. It formerly fronted on South Hamilton street but now faces on West Wilson street and is occupied by Dr. Frank T. McConnell. All of the Hopkins descendants are away except Charles Hopkins, a son.

Mills Home Stately

A stately old home surrounded by evergreens is that of the late Simeon Mills in Elmside, built in the latter '60s. A daughter-in-law of Simeon Mills, Mrs. Arthur Mills, lives on the corner of Monona avenue and West

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Wilson street.

The William Welch home in the east end was one of those which was the scene of much hospitality in its glorious days. William Welch, who was a lawyer and a writer, built the house about 1823 and lived there until 1870, when he went to St. Paul. This house, too, was out in the country, and its occupants maintained the non-speedy but effective horses and carriages. Leopold Sommers lives there now.

Phi Beta Phi sorority occupies the house which was the old Delaplaine residence after Mr. Delaplaine sold the executive mansion. He lived in this house until he died.

The Ramsay home in Greenbush was built by Seth Van Bergen and later occupied by Wayne Ramsay, cashier of the First National bank for 30 years. J. B. Ramsay, a son, lives there at the present time.

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From

Milwaukee Sentinel

December 26, 1920

## EXECUTIVE HOME AT MADISON TO BE OPEN AGAIN

### Official Residence of Wisconsin Governors to Be More Lively Place.

By a Special Correspondent.

MADISON, Wis.—On Monday, Jan. 3, the doors of the executive residence will open to receive Gov. and Mrs. John J. Blaine, and a new chapter in the history of this interesting official home will be begun.

The Badger "white house" will become a more animated and cheerful place than it has been for some years, whatever the degree social gayety may attain under its roof. The governor's house has been a comparatively lonesome place during the Philipp administrations, owing to the war and the desire of Mrs. Philipp to retain her charming home in Milwaukee. For some time the Philipp family occupied the place, but owing to the difficulty of heating it and its somewhat old fashioned and inconvenient appointments, it was largely deserted.

#### Home of Badger Governors.

Much brilliant social history clusters about the old house on East Gillman street, which has been the home of governors of Wisconsin for about forty years. Its history and glory long antedate its acquisition by the state. It is a substantial structure, not of a modern type, yet well planned with wire halls, great parlors, libraries and other rooms.

There is scarcely a more historic mansion in the state and perhaps none with more interesting associations. To the citizens of Madison of social bent it has in particular been a center of much attraction and interest.

The house may be said to have come into being with the republican party, for it was in about 1856 that it was built by Julius White, who became a general in the union army during the civil war. He was a prominent citizen of Madison in early days and a

brother-in-law of Circuit Judge Collins. One of his sons became a well known newspaperman in Chicago and was married to Fanny Driscoll, the poetess.

Gen. White sold the place to George P. Delaplaine, whose family was one of marked social prominence. Many festivities were held while they occupied it. Gen. Delaplaine had come to Madison as private secretary to Gov. Nelson Dewey, first governor of the state, and was a resident of the city until his death.

#### Bought by Senator Thorpe.

The house was sold by Gen. Delaplaine in the latter part of the '60s to Senator J. G. Thorpe, a millionaire lumberman of Eau Claire, and it was under the Thorpe regime that it attained its greatest glory as the center of Madison's social life. Mrs. Thorpe was a talented and ambitious woman and the family entertained on a scale never before approached in the capital. When the family came to take possession they brought with them the handsomest furniture ever seen in the city. The main parlor set was of Egyptian design, covered with purple satin, and decorated with gilded sphinx heads. The appointments of the other rooms were on an equal scale. Mrs. Thorpe had an extensive acquaintance with the literary and other notable persons in the country. These were often entertained at the Thorpe home and the society of the capital flocked there to brilliant receptions and parties.

#### Home of Famous Musician.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter in the history of the house was that having to do with Ole Bull, famous violinist, who married Miss Sarah Thorpe, and who made the place his home for some years.

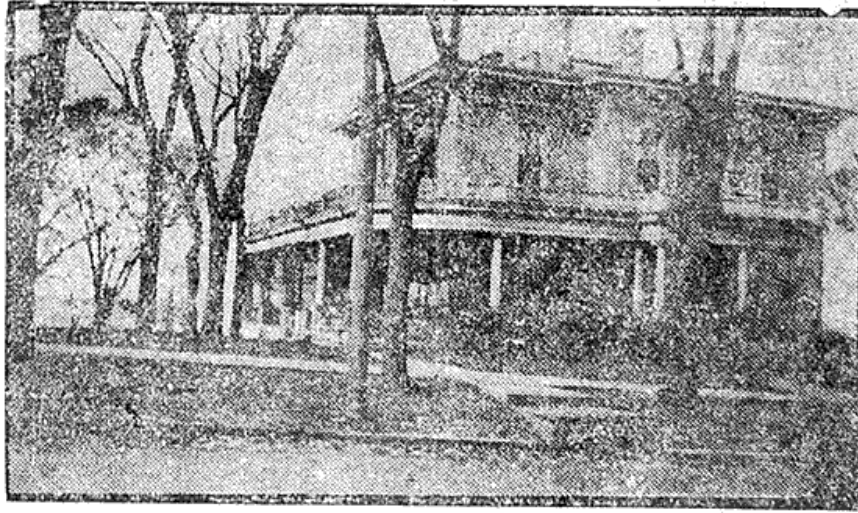
According to the story, Ole Bull had met Sarah when she was a small child, at one of his concerts in Washington, to which her mother had taken her. Prof. R. B. Anderson says in his autobiography that he introduced the Thorpes to Ole Bull at a reception given for the violinist when Ole Bull came here to give a concert in 1868. Mrs. Thorpe cultivated the acquaintance of the great artist and when he went to Norway the following year she and her daughter followed him and were entertained by him in his native home. Miss Thorpe was then scarcely more than 18 and was very bright and clever, a fine pianist, dancer and conversationalist; in short, thoroughly accomplished like her mother.

Ole Bull's marriage to the young Madison girl was privately solemnized at American consulate in Christiania on June 1, 1870. In the autumn the

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## WISCONSIN "WHITE HOUSE"

Governor's Residence at Madison Is State's Most Interesting Home.



Wisconsin's "Executive Mansion."

bridal pair returned to America and on the evening of Sept. 6 the marriage in Norway was sanctioned in accordance with American custom, at the Thorpe mansion, the Rev. C. H. Richards of the First Congregational church performing the ceremony.

### Historic Social Event.

To celebrate the union of their daughter with the great musician, the Thorpes gave a reception on Sept. 24 following, which still holds its place as the leading social event in the history of the mansion, if not of the capital. Over one thousand invitations were sent out to all parts of this country and abroad, and many people of prominence were present. The poet Longfellow sent regrets. The beautiful grounds were gaily illuminated and the palatial residence was turned into a bower of loveliness through the art of professional decorations. The gowns were more elegant than any that had ever before been seen in the city. Ole Bull himself received the guests with the beaming courtliness for which he was famous. A Chicago caterer with a corps of assistants came to serve the feast.

### Ate From Solid Silver.

He brought with him a famous dinner set worth \$30,000 and the guests that night ate from solid silver plates and drank from solid silver cups. An immense punch bowl, also of solid silver, was a conspicuous part of the set. At either end of the table was a large frosted cake, with the Norwegian and American coats of arms, respec-

tively. Ices of various forms were a feature, and a superb epergne with rare flowers ornamented the center of the table. A Chicago orchestra played. One of the interesting personages present was Joe Thorpe, brother of the bride. He was then a member of the famous Harvard baseball team and a great social lion. Later he married one of Longfellow's daughters.

For years Ole Bull made the Thorpe residence his home, when not absent on concert tours, and gave considerable attention to the beautification of the grounds. In the embankment leading to the lake he had built a series of terraces of Norwegian style, resembling a mountain road. Traces of this can still be seen. Croquet parties were a feature of outdoor life then, as were also aquatic contests on the lake nearby. Ole Bull was a genial host and entertained and delighted his many visitors with wonderful and amusing tales of travel, anecdotes of celebrities he had met, and when the spirit moved him, with selections upon his violin, naturally the greatest of treats. At heart Ole Bull was thoroughly democratic and was as ready to play at the wedding of a daughter of one of his poorer countrymen as before a crowned head.

### Purchased By The State.

Ole Bull and the Thorpes moved to Cambridge, Mass., to live, and during the first term Gov. Jeremiah Rusk bought the Madison residence from the Thorpes, paying \$15,000. In 1885 the legislature passed an act authorizing the purchase by the state of a dwelling for the governor, at a cost

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not to exceed \$20,000. Gov. Rusk had made many improvements and the commission purchased the property from him, paying \$20,000. From that time to the present it has been the official home of the executives of the state. As such it has been the scene of many receptions and social events of note, such as the wedding in 1895 of a daughter of Gov. and Mrs. Upham to Edgar P. Sawyer of Oshkosh. Many celebrities have been entertained here by governors. Gov. and Mrs. La Follette entertained for Carl Schurz and his daughter shortly before the death of the distinguished statesman and publicist.

#### Ole Bull's Bed Still There.

Many other historic homes surround the executive residence. Among them is that of the late Col. William F. Vilas, now occupied by Mrs. Vilas. The home of Wisconsin's governors is no longer one of the great houses of Madison, as many much more expensive and elegant have sprung up, but none has more interesting associations. A chamber set of mahogany, imported from Norway by Ole Bull, is still used in one of the guest chambers.

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THE WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL  
Sunday, March 7, 1930

# *Executive Mansion Has Historical Background*

## **Executive Home Once Called 'White House'**

**Governor's Residence Originally Owned by General White; Ole Bull Lived in It, Too**

By MARY LIVINGSTON BURDICK

In at least one respect Madison may be said to resemble Washington, for the present residence of our chief state executive was known in the past as "the White House." Its original owner was General Julius White, secretary of the Wisconsin Insurance company.

In the later 50s and for a considerable period afterward the little lake city seldom used numbers of streets in locating families or friends. General directions were given in other forms, as "the octagonal house on Lake Monona" or "the square brick building across from the church" or "a mile east of the hotel."

There were few large edifices, however, and the dignified appearance of General White's home with its fine trees and outlook over Mendota emphasized the name of its occupant who was a man of artistic taste and cultivation as was his successor, George P. Delaplaine, who purchased the property a few years later when circumstances brought about the removal of the White family.

### **Gathered Delightful Group**

Devoted to literature and the fine arts, and possessed of a considerable foreign and eastern acquaintance, Mr. Delaplaine gathered together a delightful society of musicians, painters, authors, and

people of advanced thought in his drawing room and library and did all in his power to assist the promising youth of Madison, Milwaukee, and the surrounding towns in development of their talents.

The musicales given by himself and Mrs. Delaplaine are still recalled by a number of our oldest citizens. A feature of one was the singing of Helena Hastreiter, later the opera star of international reputation. She sang without accompaniment from a boat in Lake Mendota in the moonlight to guests assembled on the lawn.

It was her last appearance before a large audience in the capital city. Going to Europe shortly afterward she advanced steadily to fame and fortune.

### **Lumberman Buys House**

Approximately a decade passed happily for the Delaplaines in which time their eldest daughter, Ann Jay, was married to Francis Woodward, an eastern architect and banker who subsequently removed to Eau Claire where his orchid conservatories became the wonder of flower lovers and surpassed those of England.

Temporary illness of Mrs. Delaplaine and departure of a daughter to Germany caused the sale of the home to J. G. Thorp, a retired lumberman. Here his youngest daughter, Sara, met Ole Bull, maestro of the violin, who became her husband.

After appearing in America on a number of occasions after 1843, appearing in Madison in 1856, he came to Madison in 1868. After the concert he attended a reception at the

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home of Dr. Anderson and was introduced to the Thorps. They became friends and when he returned to Norway the next year, he was accompanied by Mrs. Thorp and Sara, who had accepted his invitation to visit him.

**Victorist and Miss Thorp**

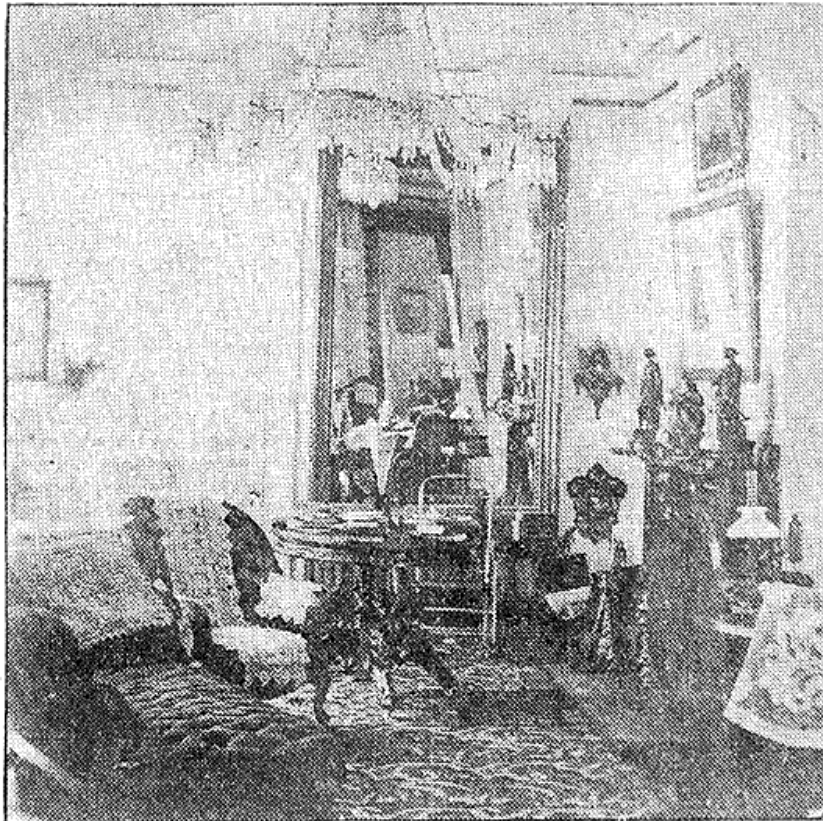
Some months later, June 1, 1870, the marriage of Ole Bull to Sara Thorp was solemnized at the American consulate at Christiania. In the autumn, the religious service was read here in Madison by Dr. Charles H. Richards, the couple having returned to Madison and the Thorp home. This was on Sept. 6.

Titled foreigners were present at the magnificent reception that followed. Ole Bull had been twice crowned, once in California with a laurel wreath of gold and once in

Florence, Italy, according to Dr. Anderson's translation of Janson's "The Spellbound Fiddler." His art, patriotism, and efforts for the welfare of the Norwegian people, even though not always of avail, won him respect and affection.

Ole Bull was nearly 50 when he married for the second time. The latter years of his life were divided between three homes, Madison, Cambridge, Mass., and Norway, when he was not on concert tours. Yet Lysoe (Island of Delight) was his favorite place, and he died there on August 18, 1880.

Jeremiah Rusk became the owner of what had come to be known as the Ole Bull home when he was elected governor of the state. After his tenancy, the state acquired it and has retained possession ever since.



—Photograph of the drawing room in the executive mansion at the time of Mr. and Mrs. Ole Bull's residence there.



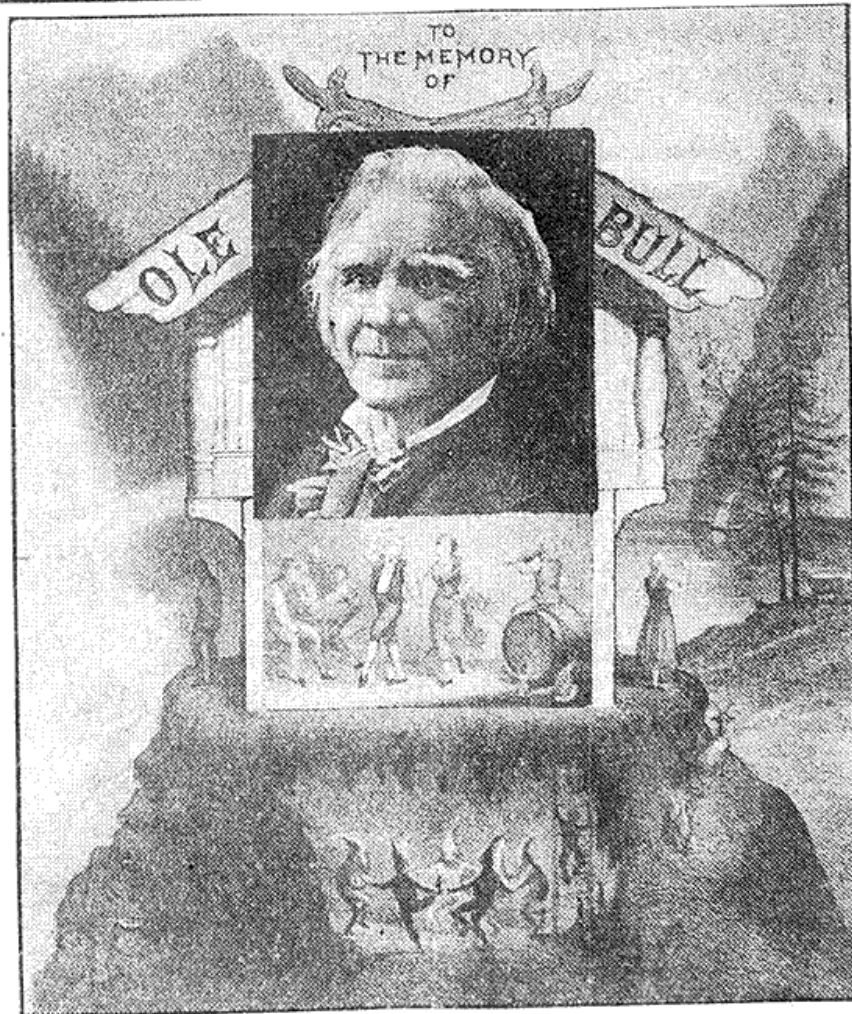
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—Mrs. Sarah Thorp Bull, wife of Ole Bull, not long after her marriage.

—Photograph of Dr. and Mrs. Rasmus B. Anderson with Mrs. Bull and the Anderson children and a friend of Dr. Anderson in the garden of the Anderson home.





Picture of Olé Bull at approximately 60 years of age while at the height of his musical career. The picture and figures were designed by James R. Stuart, artist, for the Norway Album of Songs, which was edited by Dr. Rasmus B. Anderson. Dr. Anderson was a contributor to the volume as was the late Mrs. Samuel Moore (Aubrey Forestier). The border of the picture shows the countenance of Dr. Anderson from various angles. Legends of Norway are represented by the elves and other figures.

## The Wisconsin State Journal

Sunday, June 4, 1922.

## WISCONSIN "WHITE HOUSE" BORN SAME YEAR AS REPUBLICAN PARTY

"The White House" of Wisconsin is one of the most historic residences in Madison. Located on East Gorham street, overlooking Lake Mendota, the old residence, which has been the home of Wisconsin governors since the days of Gov. "Jerry" Rusk, has just been repaired by order of the legislature and now takes on a truly modern appearance.

Its history long antedates its acquisition by the state. It was built practically at the time that the republican party was founded at Ripon, Wis.

A more historic mansion scarcely can be found in the state. To citizens of Madison of social bent it has been a center of much attraction and interest.

The house may be said to have come into being with the republican party, for it was built in 1855 by Julius White, who became a general in the union army during the Civil war. He was a prominent citizen of Madison in early days and a brother-in-law of Circuit Judge Collins.

### Purchased By Millionaire

Gen. White sold the place to George P. Delaplaine, whose family was of high social standing. Gen. Delaplaine had come to Madison as private secretary to Gov. Nelson Dewey, first governor of the state, and was a resident of the city until his death.

The house was sold by Gen. Delaplaine in the latter part of the '60s to Sen. J. G. Thorpe a millionaire lumberman of Eau Claire, and it was the center of Madison's social life under the Thorpe regime.

One of the most interesting chapters in the history of the house was that having to do with Ole Bull, famous violinist, who married Miss Sarah Thorpe, and made the place his home for some years.

According to the story, Ole Bull had met Miss Thorpe when she was a small child, at one of his concerts in Washington, to which her mother had taken her. Prof. R. B. Anderson says, in his autobiography, that he introduced the Thorpes to Mr. Bull at a re-

ception given for the violinist in 1868. Mrs. Thorpe cultivated the acquaintance of the great artist, and when he went to Norway she and her daughter followed him and were entertained at his native home. Miss Thorpe was then scarcely more than 18, but was a fine pianist and dancer.

### Married in Norway

Ole Bull's marriage to the young Madison girl was privately solemnized at American Consulate in Christiania June 1, 1870. In the autumn the bridal pair returned to America and the marriage in Norway was sanctioned in accordance with American custom at the Thorpe mansion. The Rev. C. H. Richards of the First Congregational church performed the ceremony.

For years Ole Bull made the Thorpe residence his home and gave considerable attention to the beautification of the grounds. On the embankment leading to the lake he had built a series of terraces of Norwegian style, resembling a mountain road, traces of which still can be seen. Croquet parties were a feature of outdoor life then, as were aquatic contests.

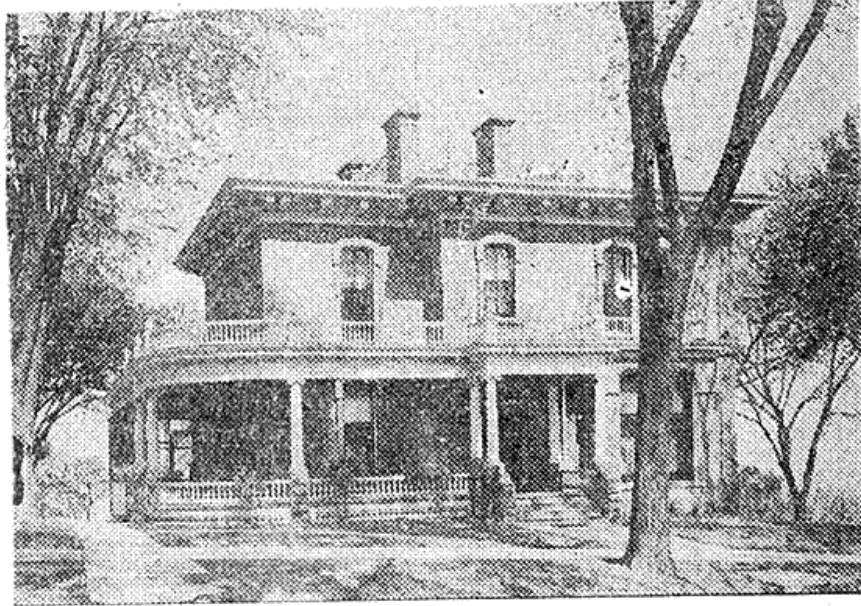
### Sold to Gov. Rusk

Ole Bull and the Thorpe family moved to Cambridge, Mass., and during his first term Gov. Jeremiah Rusk bought the Madison residence from the Thorpes, for \$15,000. In 1885 the legislature passed an act authorizing the purchase by the state of a dwelling for the governor, at a cost not to exceed \$20,000. Gov. Rusk had made many improvements and the commission purchased the property from him for \$20,000. From that time to the present it has been the official home of state executives.

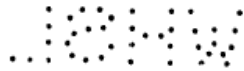
Many celebrities have been entertained here by governors. Gov. and Mrs. La Follette entertained for Carl Schurz and his daughter shortly before the death of the distinguished statesman and publicist.

Other historic homes surround the executive residence, among them the

late Col. Wm. F. Vilas estate. The home of Wisconsin's governors is no longer one of the great houses of Madison, but none has more interesting associations. A chamber set of mahogany, imported from Norway by Ole Bull, is still used in one of the guest chambers.



The White House of Wisconsin on East Gorham street, the home of Wisconsin governors since 1885. Gov. Rusk was the first executive occupant.



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THE WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

JUNE 22, 1930

Mansion Comes Into It's Own

WITHIN the large wide verandah-ed residence on the Mendota lake shore at 130 East Gilman street, which the citizenry of Madison and the state call and point to proudly as the "executive mansion," there have been delightful changes going on in the past year and a half, which those who take pleasure in "the fitness of things" will appreciate. Mrs. Walter J. Kohler, the wife of the governor, has shown artistic vision and a homemaking touch to a marked degree in the decorative changes which she has evolved in the high-ceilinged, stately rooms.

She appreciated the enchanting oldness, fast approaching one hundred years, of the mansion, and regretted the discordances of furnishing which are bound to result when mistresses, the busy wives of busy governors, follow each other with such rapid succession, each one making the best of the things which were left her.

"Bringing it all back to the old" was Mrs. Kohler's very wise solution of her new artistic problem, for she is a true artist by talent and interest, and after many hours of planning, direction of refinishing and rearranging, the executive mansion is ready to greet one as a lovely, unified home.

A pictorial journey through the mansion can show with greater faithfulness than can words, the effects that have been wrought.

A photograph of the dwelling and also of Mrs. Kohler (in the insert) are at the upper right of the pictures.

An interior vista whose loveliness takes one's breath is that which one views standing in the living room in the beautiful semi-circular windowed nook on the eastern side of the house and looking toward the fireplace and mirror which graces the space above, through the ivory arch into the hall, again through an identical arch into the library, where one's eye first rests upon a stately mahogany secretary. This secretary is one of the choice pieces which the mansion contained and was taken from a corner of the room, and almost hidden by the ef-

fect of a tall window, to the present wall space, because Mrs. Kohler's unfailing eye sensed that it "needed something high." This view is in the upper lefthand picture on the front page. It shows, too, the fairy-like effects created by the use of crystal lighting fixtures when in the correct, roomy setting, and it is this innovation of Mrs. Kohler which has given marked beauty to several of the rooms in the house.

Interesting Sources

The library which the secretary graces is shown more clearly in the left picture of the second row on the front page. The Governor's large personal desk is at the left and Mrs. Kohler's small secretary just across at the right of the room.

One of the most enchanting stories which can be told of any of the activities which center about bringing the old back into the mansion are the sources of many of the most fitting pieces. The state hospital at Mendota was found to possess three charming, walnut and rosewood sofas, two delicate chairs of hand-carved rosewood, and even the treasured corner what-nots, definitely harking to the early fifties when the mansion was built. The Kohlers were very much overjoyed for many of the heavy pieces of furniture,—divans and large chairs, and also durable bookcases, quite obviously out of place in the executive home, found a worthy use in the hospital and a happy exchange, with the permission of the state, was made. The photographs of the drawing room, at the lower right on the front page shows several of these old pieces in intimate, home-like groupings.

The pictures, some old prints and other more modern and very treasured paintings, which now grace the walls, give a note of perfect good taste. There is no question which is of the art works in the home is Mrs. Kohler's favorite, for she shares willingly with the visitor

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DEFECTIVE ORIGINAL



the appreciation of the great likeness which a certain portrait bears to her husband, the governor. This is seen at the right hand side of the farther wall in the picture of the drawing room; and a closer perception would show so plainly how closely the features, especially the forehead and the nose, of the gentleman in the picture resemble those of Mr. Kohler. The man of whom the likeness actually is Isaac Barre of England, and the painter, Benjamin West. Historically, Barre recalls the ardent support which he gave William Pitt in the English parliament against the taxation of the American colonies. London was the source of the painting, for upon seeing it in an art shop there, Mrs. Kohler was immediately impressed with the resemblance which it bore to her husband. They went together to view it the day after and now treasure as one of their most valued art possessions.

#### The Dining Room

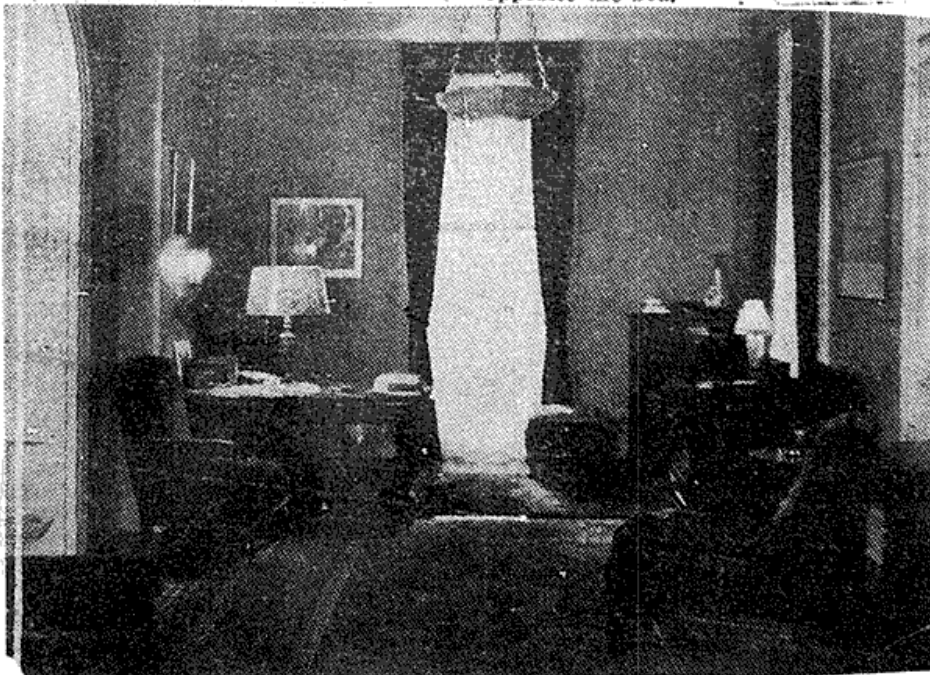
One seeing the dining room now, and then recalling it in the years before would note immediately the present lightened effect, because the heavy dining table supported only by massive legs and braces at the very center and in constant danger of upsetting state dinners has been replaced by the older type of table with slender, delicately turned legs. Its usefulness is enhanced by the fact that the drop leaf tables at either side of the room may be moved beside it, making a board of truly banquet size.

Also, in the dining room, one cannot help but see, towering to the ceiling, the massive many-mirrored

buffet. It is traceable to the early days of the mansion and in seen the position it has had for many years.

Among the several choice art pieces which belong to Mrs. Carl J. Kohler, daughter-in-law of the state's first family, and are now gracing the executive mansion is a gorgeous hand-wrought East Indian wall hanging, seen on the left wall of the dining room. It is extremely rare and an antecedent of the well-known paisley. Others of her many art possessions in this home are two petit point action pictures, on either side of the hanging.

"The Ole Bull bedroom" comes immediately to the fore when one thinks of historic associations of the house. One recalls through it one of the most famous personages who at one time made Madison his home, Ole Bull, Norwegian violinist, whose marriage to Sarah Thorpe, daughters of the Thorpes who for many years lived in the mansion, took place abroad and was celebrated at a large reception here. The fact that the violinist passed much time in that dwelling would give it a valued association, but to have the upper room which he occupied still contain the same suite of furniture is quite unspeakably fortunate. One can see for oneself in the right hand picture of the second row on the front page, the massive walnut bed and the great matching dresser at the side. Charming samplers of earliest American colonial origin from the family of Mrs. Carl Kohler ornament most appropriately the walls as well as does a charming nineteenth century lithographic print, "Her New Doll, which is above the fireplace, on the side of the room opposite the bed.



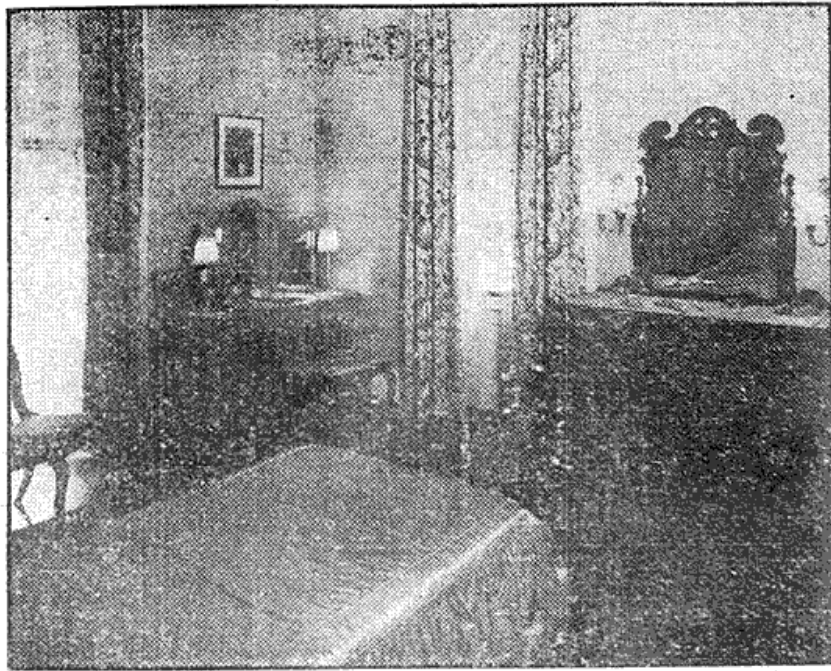
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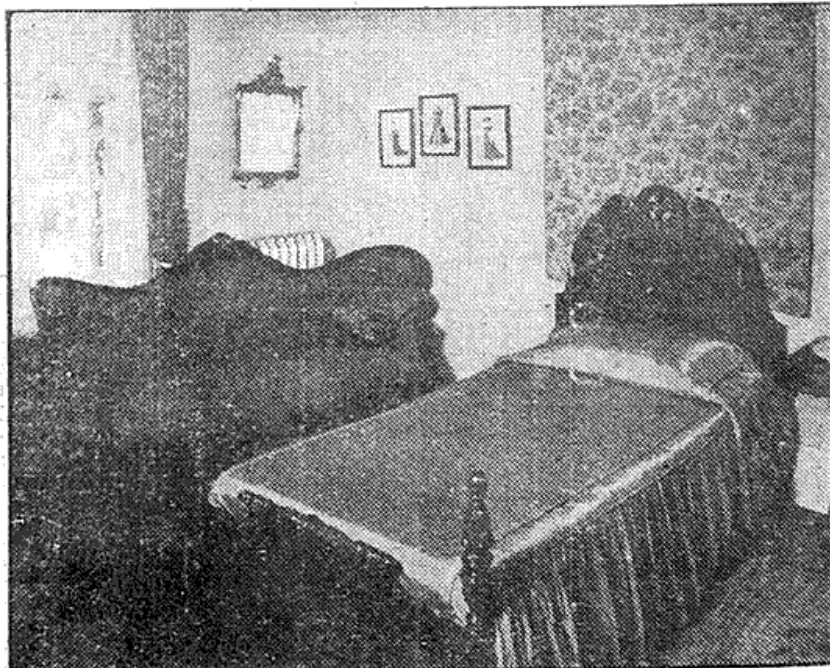
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## In Mansion



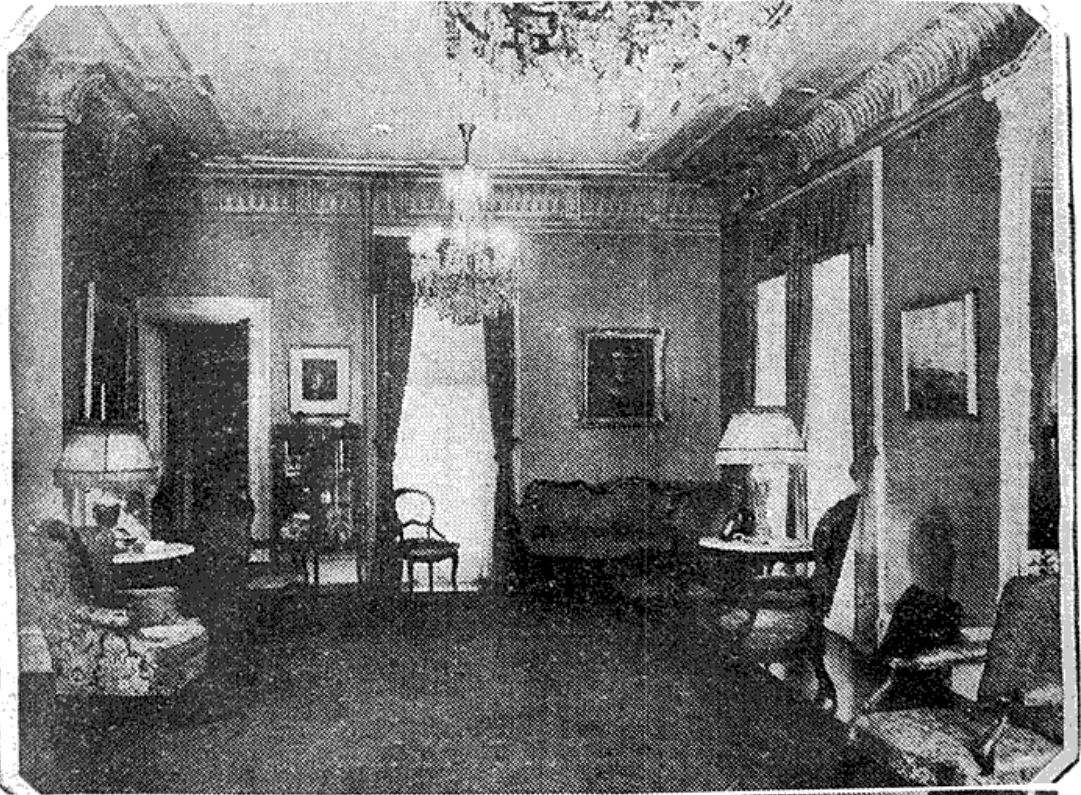
Mrs. Kohler's room (above) in the state executive mansion is a symphony in gold and turquoise, with the furniture of walnut. The dressing table is delicately charming and above it tastefully hung a flower study. The companion room is also furnished in walnut and is pictured below. A tapestry of old-time feeling is on the wall at the head of the bed, and a myriad of French prints in small frames are also arranged in artistic groups, for wall treatment. An old-time feeling is also given by the sofa and the candle table beside the bed.—Photos by Vinje and Russell.



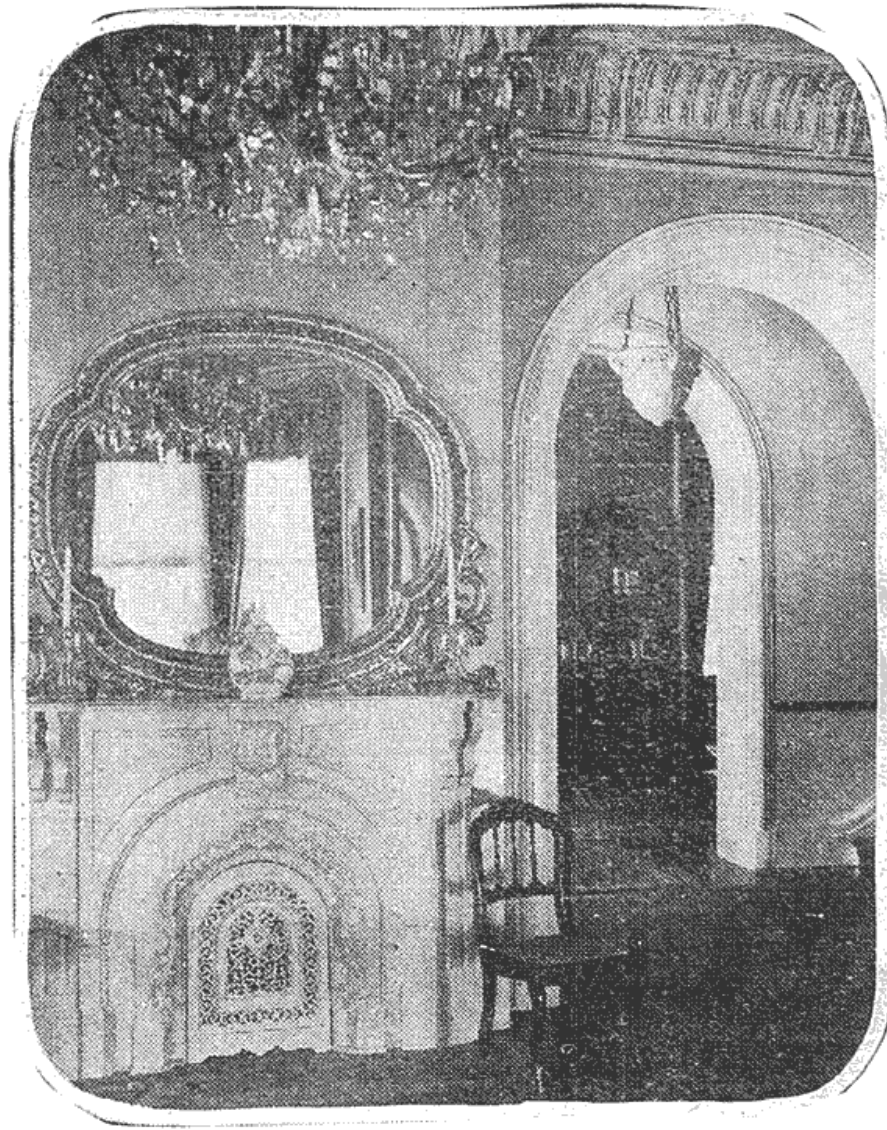


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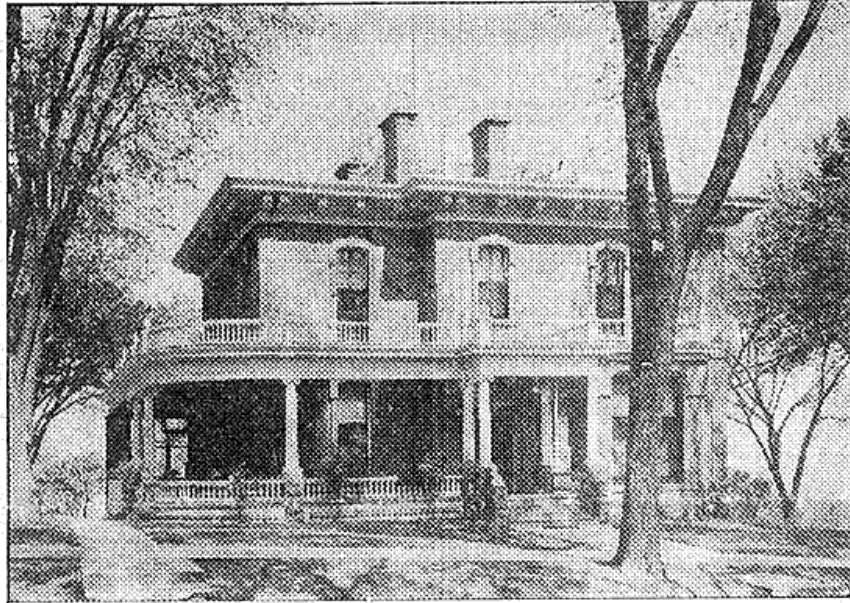
*State Executive Home  
Comes Into Its Own*





December 2, 1928

## Historic Residence



## Governor's Home Scene of Early Social Life

### Society and Political History of State Made in Present Executive Mansion

BY MARY LIVINGSTON BURDICK

From the log-houses and block fort rooms frequently occupied by Wisconsin's territorial governor, Henry Dodge, to the solid and dignified residence on Gilman street, by Lake Mendota, which is known as the executive mansion, is a journey whose mile stones mark in many ways the progress of the state.

It is true that there can be found a number of homes in Madison where distinguished guests have been entertained and where political history has been made, but none other has entered as markedly into the activities of the state, country, and city.

In the early fifties, General Julius White, a man of culture and varied interests, erected the structure which with minor additions and alterations has withstood the wear and tear of semi-public life for three-quarters of a century.

#### Beautifully Furnished

Possessing the quality of taste supplemented by wealth, General White furnished the rooms handsomely, and added to their attractiveness fine pictures, an extensive library, and bric-a-brac from many foreign countries. A generous and thoughtful host he attached his guests to self and home, and it was with genuine regret that Madisonians bade farewell to their friend a few years later, when circumstances demanded his removal to another region.

George P. Delaphaine was the purchaser of the fine property and admirably succeeded to the position

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which had been held by his old acquaintance.

During the ten years of his occupancy, the home served as a musical and social center and was the abiding place of men and women, of letters who foregathered there from old world and new. Among the brilliant festivities still recalled by our oldest citizens were the dinner parties for Lowell Bayard Taylor and Horace Greeley, and the assemblies for Carl Schurz and A. B. Alcott.

Youth danced often and gaily in the Delaphine halls, and the long list of musicales, formal and informal, was marked by noted talent. Among the soloists who became famous was our city's diva, Lena Hastreiter, whose final appearance before her foreign career, was made on a June night when she sang for the guests from a boat on the moonlit lake, choosing two opera selections, and waving adieu to her audience as the boat glided into the shadow of trees and was lost to view with the last notes.

Mr. and Mrs. Thorp of Eau Claire,

with a son and a daughter, were the next occupants of the dwelling, and during their tenancy was celebrated the marriage of Miss Sarah Thorp to Norway's violinist, Ole Bull.

Gifts to the bride came from kings and queens, and the gowns and jewels of the feminine part of the wedding party were in accord with the offerings.

Some time afterward Mr. Thorp presented the home to his daughter, and subsequently it was sold to Governor Jeremiah Rusk, who in turn disposed of it to the state for its present purpose.

As the residence of Wisconsin's executives it has been visited by thousands of people, and its existence of approximately 40 years as the governor's home has endeared it to multitudes.

It is probable that the governor-elect Walter J. Kohler and family will enter into their proffered residence in January, and Madison will unquestionably accord them a warm reception and good wishes for their happiness.

JANUARY 6, 1929

# State Mansion Due For Rehabilitation

## Mrs. Kohler Lays Plans to Restore Original Furnishings to Historic Home

BY HENRY CASSON

After years of criticism the Wisconsin executive mansion is coming back into its own. Mrs. Walter J. Kohler who will be the first lady of the state after Monday has expressed herself as charmed with the stately beauty of this fine old home and is about to formulate plans for the restoration of its furnishings symbolic of the period in which it was acquired by the state.

Jeremiah M. Rusk became governor Jan. 2, 1852. Subsequent to his election he visited Madison and purchased this property from the Thorpe family for \$15,000 and upon his inauguration as governor, with his immediate family consisting of his wife and two grown daughters, Misses Ida May Rusk and Mary Edith Rusk, and seven year old son,

Blaine Daniel Rusk, named after the plumed knight, with whom he served three terms in congress, moved into the same and occupied it during his seven years tenure of office.

### Romped with Grandchildren

With him also came his oldest son, Col. L. J. Rusk, wife and three small daughters. These were lively, beautiful children and as soon as their gigantic grandfather entered the house, would make for his arms and a romp would ensue.

Governor Rusk was elected for a second term in 1854 and as soon as the legislature met a bill was introduced and passed authorizing the purchase of this property as an executive mansion for the sum of \$20,000. The governor just broke even on the matter as he had invested \$5,000 in repairs and improvements since acquiring the property. During the late winter of 1855 Ida May Rusk was stricken with a mortal illness which she fought for weeks but as the month of March was ending death resulted.

### Lavish Entertaining

The Rusks entertained probably

the most lavishly of any occupants of the mansion. When the National Educational association held its convention in Madison in 1884 the governor and his wife gave the visitors a reception and the late A. F. Waltzinger, caterer, furnished 800 gallons of ice cream for the occasion. Rusk was fond of company.

He'd carve two big turkeys and keep plates heaping full.

Governor Rusk was succeeded by Governor Hoard upon Jan. 7, 1889, and with him and his good wife there came to dwell in the executive mansion their youngest son, Frank W. Hoard and his bride of a few weeks. Mrs. Hoard was not in robust health and much of the hospitality of the home fell upon her charming young daughter-in-law. Old residents of the East Gilman street neighborhood remember the kindness, the humanity and bubbling humor of Governor Hoard.

#### Peck Last Democrat

Wisconsin's last democratic administration began upon Jan. 5, 1891. At the time the genial George W. Peck who had overturned the politics of the state on the Bennett law issue became the occupant of this old home and with him came Mrs. Peck and their youngest son, Roy. The oldest son, George W. Peck, Jr., and his wife and son, Gerald, were also there a large part of the time. Mrs. Peck was fond of social affairs and during the time she presided over the mansion it was teeming with life and activity. The governor cared little for society. Hunting or fishing with his friend, George A. Lougee of the Park hotel, was more to his liking.

\* \* \*

Governor Peck served two terms in office and on Jan. 7, 1895, surrendered the governorship to Major William H. Upham of Marshfield. With the new governor and his wife there came to the executive mansion their youngest daughter, soon extremely popular with Madison's younger set. Mrs. Upham was socially inclined. Whenever the wives of her husband's predecessors came to the state capital she always did the handsome thing by way of social functions in their honor. In November, 1896, occurred the marriage of Miss Caroline Upham to Phil Sawyer of Oshkosh, a brilliant event.

#### Scotfield Next Governor

Governor and Mrs. Edward Scotfield and their son Paul succeeded the Upham family as tenants of the governor's mansion, Jan. 4, 1897. Mrs. Scotfield was a woman of unusually good sense, tact, and charm and during the first few months of the administration generously entertained and won strong friendship among Madison people. In the late summer of 1897 Paul D. Scotfield, their younger son, was stricken

with pulmonary trouble and for the remainder of the Scotfield tenure of office deep gloom was cast over the home. His death occurred in May, 1899, and from then on until the governor's term expired Mrs. Scotfield abstained from entertaining.

The LaFollette regime began Jan. 7, 1901, and with the new executive

and his wife there came to this historic old home their four children, Fola, a university freshman, Robert and Phil, alert and up and coming youngsters, and Mary, a babe in arms. Governor LaFollette was head of the state for five years and during this period his wife freely entertained and the walls of this stately old home rang with childish laughter.

#### Davidson Well Known

Governor La Follette assumed the senatorship in January, 1906, and was succeeded as chief executive by James O. Davidson, who was elected to succeed himself in 1906 and 1908. Mrs. Davidson was well known in Madison by reason of her husband having been state treasurer for four years and lieutenant governor for three years. They had two daughters, Mabel, now Mrs. Theodore G. Lewis, of Madison, a university senior and Grace, a high school student. Both the governor and his wife were fond of young people and during their residence social affairs reigned supreme. It was in April, 1907, that the second marriage of a governor's daughter occurred in this old home, that of Miss Mabel Davidson to Frederick W. Inbusch of Milwaukee, who died some two years thereafter.

Wisconsin's next chief magistrate, Francis E. McGovern, was a bachelor. Two nieces, who were university students, managed the household for him while he was in office.

#### Philipp Next Governor

Emanuel L. Philipp, the great Badger war governor, assumed the duties of his office on Jan. 4, 1915. Prior to his inaugural he made it known that he would not occupy the executive residence. He had been advised that it was a barnlike old structure. During the first few months of his gubernatorial incumbency he had quarters at a local hotel, but in the spring he moved to the residence and lived there whenever he was in Madison until his administration closed in 1921.

Gov. and Mrs. John J. Blaine became the occupants of the mansion in 1921 and were there for six years. Mrs. Blaine was popular, regularly entertained and when she surrendered the home to her husband's successor in 1927 left behind her a circle of warm friendships.

#### 11 Governors in House

Fred R. Zimmerman and his wife and their two sons moved into the old home in the winter of 1927. Mrs.

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