

LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT



PERKINS-NORDINE HOUSE

6106 NORTH KENMORE AVENUE

Final Landmark Recommendation adopted by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks, October 1, 2020



CITY OF CHICAGO
Lori E. Lightfoot, Mayor

Department of Planning and Development
Maurice D. Cox, Commissioner

The Commission on Chicago Landmarks, whose nine members are appointed by the Mayor and City Council, was established in 1968 by city ordinance. The Commission is responsible for recommending to the City Council which individual buildings, sites, objects, or districts should be designated as Chicago Landmarks which protects them by law.

The landmark designation process begins with a staff study and a preliminary summary of information related to the potential designation criteria. The next step is a preliminary vote by the landmarks commission as to whether the proposed landmark is worthy of consideration. This vote not only initiates the formal designation process, but it places the review of city permits for the property under the jurisdiction of the Commission until a final landmark recommendation is acted on by the City Council.

This Landmark Designation Report is subject to possible revision and amendment during the designation process. Only language contained within a designation ordinance adopted by the City Council should be regarded as final.

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PERKINS-NORDINE HOUSE

6106 NORTH KENMORE AVENUE

BUILT: 1902-1903

ARCHITECTS: POND AND POND

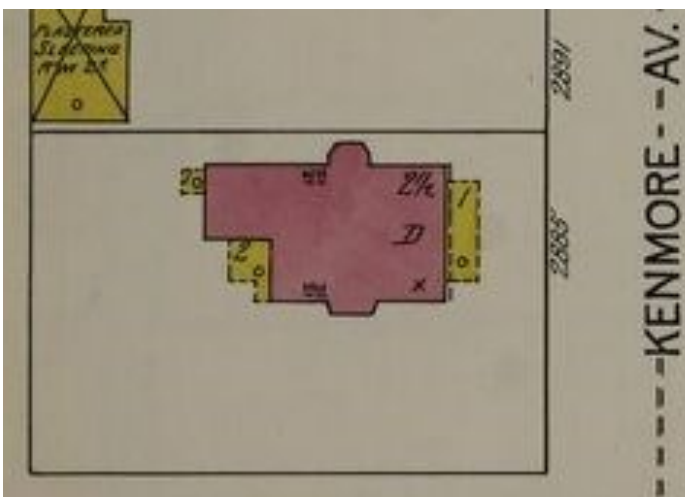
The Perkins-Nordine House is a handsome and subtly detailed residence. Designed in the Arts and Crafts tradition, the home is straightforward in design with slight variations in the tone and texture of its rich red brick and the interplay of shapes, volumes, and planes providing visual interest. When viewed from the south, the dominant two-story rectangular mass with a steep gable roof bookended by chimneys references colonial American architecture. When viewed from the north and east, the steep gables, intermittent medieval-inspired half-timbering, classically-inspired corner quoins of brick and pediment-shaped hood over the front door, and the incredible variety of window shapes, sizes, and decorative motifs are features associated with the eclectic Queen Anne style.

The building was designed by the distinguished architectural firm of Pond and Pond. This firm endeavored to develop an American architecture inspired but not constrained by historic tradition. Irving and Allen Pond were known for their interest and work in social reform which led them to design settlement homes where social, academic, and recreational activities could be provided to a neighborhood. These included the Chicago Commons Building, the Northwestern University Settlement House (designated a Chicago landmark in 1993), and a dozen purpose-built buildings for the Jane Addams' Hull-House settlement including the Dining Hall (designated a Chicago landmark in 1974).

The Perkins-Nordine home is one of the last remaining large-scale, single-family residences in the Edgewater Community. This neighborhood began in 1886 as a then-suburban real estate development created by John Lewis Cochran. He sought to create a railroad suburb accessible from the city by train. By 1889 it had been annexed by the City but still retained a suburban feeling. The home was built for Herbert Farrington Perkins, a manager who held positions of authority within banks, steel, lumber, and mining companies over the course of his career. However, the home is more closely associated with Ken Nordine, the spoken word artist who lived and worked out of the home from 1951 to 2019.



The Perkins-Nordine House is located at 6106 North Kenmore Avenue in the Edgewater Community Area on Chicago's North Side.



The basic form of the home has remained the same since it was seen in this 1905 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. (Image courtesy Sanborn Fire Insurance Co.)

BUILDING CONSTRUCTION AND DESCRIPTION

Construction

The Perkins-Nordine House was built in 1902-1903 for Herbert Farrington Perkins and his wife, Margaret Head Perkins. A construction permit for the house was issued by the City of Chicago on October 3, 1902. The permit did not list an architect per common practice at that time, but noted that the house was intended to be a two-and-one-half-story brick residence, 38 feet x 72 feet x 74 feet in size and to cost \$20,000, a substantial sum for 1902. The October 11, 1902, issue of *The American Contractor* did list Pond and Pond as the house's architects and John Peterson and Co. as the contractor.

The house's original owner, Herbert Perkins, was born in 1864 in Constantinople (now Istanbul), Turkey, to natural sciences professor George Augustus Perkins and wife Sarah Elizabeth Farrington Perkins. The elder Perkins taught at Robert College in Constantinople, an American-founded school created the year before in 1863 and still in existence today. Educated at Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts, and Yale University (graduating in 1887), the younger Perkins came to Chicago to work for the National Malleable Castings Co. In 1898, he became an employee of the McCormick Harvesting Machinery Co., rising to division manager in charge of purchasing for several departments for the successor firm, International Harvester Co. He also was president of the Wisconsin Steel Co. and the Wisconsin Lumber Co., and a director of the Continental and Commercial National Bank, Chicago Savings Bank & Trust Co., and the United Coal Mining Co.

His wife, Margaret Head Perkins, was the daughter of Chicago manufacturer and banker Franklin Harvey Head. Head had previously commissioned a house from Pond and Pond that was located at 3 Banks Street in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood. Long since demolished, the Head House was a large, free-standing, brick house with rounded bays, sober in appearance and reminiscent of nineteenth-century Boston houses.

Description

The Perkins-Nordine House is located on the northwest corner of North Kenmore and West Glenlake Avenues in the Edgewater Community Area on the North Side of Chicago. The two-and-one-half-story house is built of deep red brick trimmed with limestone and painted or stained wood trim. It sits in the northern half of a double lot with the front entrance facing Kenmore. The south half of the lot is open space and serves as a large side yard.

The home's footprint is more or less rectangular, but the northern half extends to create a small rear wing. In the right angle created by this wing there is a small two-story, frame enclosure. The roof consists of a central mansard hidden almost entirely by large, flanking, gable roof forms. The southern gable is bookended with tall, brick, engaged exterior chimneys. At the front façade, the northern gable sits a few feet forward of and slightly overlaps the southern gable and there is a partial-width front porch. A simple, non-original, wood-frame garage faces the rear alley, and the lot is surrounded by a non-historic, painted, wood fence.

The home maintains a high degree of integrity. Original railings and newel posts frame the stairs to the front entry at the northern end of the façade. The original, bracketed, triangular "portico" projects above the arched front door. The doorway is recessed into the masonry and the original door and wide, profiled molding remain. To the left, the open, masonry porch maintains its original wrought-iron railings. Wood beams with decorative molded brackets extend between masonry piers. Three of the original exposed rafter ends remain where they support the gabled portico, but the remainder, which extended from every side of the roof structure, have been removed and replaced by a plain fascia.



Three extant exposed rafter ends support the portico over the front door. (Photo by Patrick L. Pyszka)



The recessed plane of the arched entry contrasts with angular, projecting, bracketed portico on the east elevation. (Photo by Patrick L. Pyszka)

Masonry used for the home is a rich red brick with a slightly purple tone and simple limestone sills. The home is clad with smooth brick with rougher-textured ends used to provide subtle patterning at corners and edges, throughout the larger fields of masonry, and around select windows and doors. Along larger stretches of wall, rougher-textured, paired headers are placed approximately every third brick at every seventh course. Subtle but powerful, this brick-laying pattern allows the natural characteristics of the bricks to be put to best advantage by providing a variety of textures and tones.

Throughout the structure, windows and doors are a mix of shapes, sizes, and styles. At the front façade, the two southern first-floor windows are paired, six-lite casement sash with an arched transom featuring stained glass with a central, stylized flower and leaves. The same window appears around the corner, visually connecting the east and south elevations. Further north on the front façade, paired, four-over-one, double-hung windows are inserted before the arched shape appears again in the door. It can be seen again toward the rear of the north elevation in an arched window where, as with almost all arched openings on the home, the arch is emphasized with slightly projecting, rough-faced headers. The same treatment is given to the masonry above the adjacent rectilinear door, creating the impression of a recessed arched panel which then morphs to become an actual recessed masonry panel atop the rectilinear second-floor window where flush, rough-faced headers form an arch. This playful, intermittent repetition of shapes with slight variations provides visual variety while at the same time weaving cohesion as elements appear, disappear, and resurface further along a plane or around a corner. This may be most obvious with the half-timbering featured on the front façade's north gable end which is absent everywhere else except the full two stories of the bay at the north elevation.

Variation in window size and configuration is most dramatic at the front façade where every window at the second- and third-floor levels is different. All are rectangular but none the same size or configuration. Rather, they are a mix of fixed, casement, and double-hung; single, paired, and grouped in three; single-lite, two-lite, four-lite, and six-lite sash with muntins either in a grid or diamond pattern. The diamond pattern is another motif repeated at different windows throughout the elevations, each time varying in orientation, number, and location within a particular window configuration.

The use of slight variations in distinctly-shaped elements is not limited to windows and doors. The tapered chimneys centered on the ends of the southern gables are mimicked at a smaller scale with tapered corner buttresses at the structure's visible corners. At the south elevation the three-sided, two-story bay is paired with what can be seen as a miniature version in the form of a three-sided oriel window at the first floor supported by brackets and contrasted by the five-sided bay at the north elevation.

At the roof level, the south elevation features four evenly-spaced, gable-roofed dormers framed by broken-based pediment moldings. Graduated brick corbelling is inserted under the cornice and wraps around the broken-based pediment of the southern gable ends at front and rear elevations. The basement level is punctuated with single-sash windows set behind original cast iron grates which continue around the entire building.

Turning the corner at the west end of the south elevation, the wooden, two-story, flat-roofed structure with masonry base built in the interior corner appears to occupy the same footprint as the frame structure shown in the 1905 Sanborn map but the modern windows and wide, wood cladding are non-historic. A shed roof covers a projecting, one-story vestibule at the frame structure's south elevation with a door that opens to the west. This vestibule and a shed roof dormer located in the gable roof above also have non-historic cladding and windows.

Face brick wraps the entire home including the rear elevation. At this elevation, profiled bargeboard frames both gable ends. The northern gable end is clad in vertical board which appears to have been applied on top of the masonry with a central, barn-type door. Directly above this a metal beam protrudes from the structure, suggesting some type of pulley system was used at this location to lift heavy objects to the third floor. At the first



Above: The medieval-inspired half-timbering on the end of the north gable and the varied sizes, types and configurations of the windows are inspired by the Queen Anne style.

Right: The bay window at the north elevation also has vertical half-timbering while windows riff on variations of diamond-shaped muntins.



Above: Window types include this oriel window supported by brackets at the south elevation. The diamond motif is picked up again here.

Right: The Perkins-Nordine home is situated on a generous corner lot.

(Photos by Patrick L. Pyszka and Kandalyn Hahn)



floor is a standard, double-width door opening. Differences in the size and placement of bricks below suggest steps were previously located there though none exist now.

The north facade is not seen as easily today as it was when the home was constructed due to the adjacent multi-unit building and vegetation. At the roof level, dormers both large and small project from the sloping roof. Although currently clad in asphalt shingles, historic photos indicate that the large dormer above the projecting bay originally had the vertical half-timbering seen on all elevations of the bay. The large dormer toward the west end is clad in masonry and set low enough to interrupt the cornice line. Currently, cheek walls on the stairs at this elevation are constructed from brick like no other on the home and therefore are likely not original.

Location in the Edgewater Subdivisions of J. L. Cochran

The Perkins-Nordine House is located in the North Side neighborhood of Edgewater, which began in 1886 as a then-suburban real estate development created by John Lewis Cochran (1857-1923). Subdivided in stages, Edgewater was conceived by Cochran as a fashionable railroad suburb, reachable from Chicago by the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, which ran at grade just east of Broadway (known as Evanston Avenue at the time) on what is now the right-of-way for the Chicago Transit Authority Red-Purple Line viaduct. Cochran's first Edgewater subdivision was located south of Bryn Mawr Avenue, extending from Lake Michigan west to Broadway and south to Foster Avenue. A later subdivision in 1888 extended Edgewater up the lakefront to today's Devon Avenue; this subdivision contains the lot occupied by the Perkins-Nordine House. In 1889 Edgewater became a Chicago neighborhood as part of the larger annexation of Lake View Township.

Despite becoming part of the sprawling city early on, Cochran's subdivisions were intended to be suburban in character, with large, single-family houses. Cochran differed from many Chicago developers in the quality of infrastructure provided to new homeowners as they moved into houses in his developments, including sidewalks, sewers, and streetlights. The developer wanted Edgewater to rival North Shore suburbs. The Perkins-Nordine House exemplifies the scale of property and quality of design that Cochran sought for Edgewater and is similar to the houses that make up the nearby Sheridan Road Mansions (designated Chicago landmarks in 2013).

Over time, starting around World War I and quickening during the real estate boom of the 1920s, the portion of Edgewater within which the Perkins-Nordine House is located (the Kenmore-Winthrop "corridor" as many think of it), saw first-generation houses such as the Perkins-Nordine House demolished for multi-family housing, including six-flats, courtyard apartment buildings, and residential hotels. A hiatus of building during the Great Depression, World War II, and the immediate years after the war gave way starting in the 1950s. Construction accelerated in the 1960s leading to the demolition of more homes to make way for multi-family housing, especially "four-plus-ones," apartment buildings with lobbies and open-air parking at ground level and four stories of typically modest apartments above. As time passed, fewer and fewer of the Cochran Subdivision-era houses survived, and some of those remaining are relatively modest houses or have suffered loss of historic integrity. The Perkins-Nordine House remains as one of the most, if not the most, significant of the remaining houses on Kenmore and Winthrop Avenues due to its architectural quality as a finely made, Arts and Crafts house, its design by the noted architectural firm of Pond and Pond, and its later, almost 70-year association with long-time owner and spoken word artist Ken Nordine.



Above: This circa 1910 picture postcard shows the large, single-family homes typical of the railroad suburb of Edgewater. Looking south along Kenmore Avenue from Granville Avenue, the Perkins-Nordine home (not visible here) was at the end of this block. (Image courtesy Edgewater Historical Society)



Above: Photo soon after construction completed in 1903. (Photo courtesy Art Institute of Chicago)

Below: Part of the north elevation of 6106 North Kenmore Avenue is visible in this circa 1910 picture postcard. (See page 28 for enlarged detail. Image courtesy Edgewater Historical Society)



ARCHITECTS POND AND POND

The Perkins-Nordine House was designed by the distinguished Chicago architectural firm of Pond and Pond. Partners and brothers **Irving Kane Pond (1857-1939)** and **Allen Bartlit Pond (1858-1929)** were significant architects in the effort during the late 1800s and early 1900s to develop an indigenous modern American architecture, while also being deeply involved in progressive Chicago social and political reform efforts. The Perkins-Nordine House displays, through its design, elements of their characteristic architectural manner, including the use of "honest" design and handcrafted building materials, important components of the Arts and Crafts movement for which the Ponds were strong advocates.

Irving and Allen Pond were born and raised in Ann Arbor, Michigan, the sons of a politically progressive father who was a one-time warden of the Michigan State Prison in Jackson, Michigan, and later a newspaper publisher in Ann Arbor. Both attended the University of Michigan, where Irving was a student in a pioneering but short-lived program of architecture headed by Chicago architect William Le Baron Jenney before finishing his degree in the university's civil engineering program.

Upon graduation, Irving Pond moved to Chicago and sought out William LeBaron Jenney, who provided the young man with temporary work while helping him to find a more permanent job. This came in 1880, when architect Solon S. Beman hired Pond to be his assistant in the construction of the factory town of Pullman. Located in what was then a suburban area far south of Chicago, Pullman was the brainchild of manufacturer George Pullman who planned to build his namesake railway cars in a factory built along with, and supported by, the town. Irving Pond was Beman's man on-site, supervising workers in translating drawings and Beman's design intentions into brick and stone buildings to house both factory processes and workers and their families. Pullman was a complete town that included a variety of housing along with shopping facilities, a school and church, and a grand, Queen Anne-style hotel, along with vast factory buildings. Irving long afterwards noted that he learned much about architecture and building construction from this early job, especially how to achieve maximum visual effect at a modest cost through variations in brickwork and coursing, plus changes in surface planes and rooflines. His own signature beliefs in the primacy of well-made buildings constructed with fine materials emerged from the years he worked for Beman.

In 1885, Irving Pond and his brother Allen entered into an architectural partnership, Pond and Pond. Irving focused on the firm's design work while Allen supervised staff and handled the business end of the practice. Over time, the Pond brothers became deeply involved with various strands of progressive Chicago society. Some of their clients were wealthy Gold Coast inhabitants such as Lydia Coonley-Ward and Franklin Head (the father of Margaret Head Perkins, the wife of Herbert Perkins who commissioned the Perkins-Nordine House). Others were professors at the newly established University of Chicago as well as professionals who found the intellectual milieu of the university's Hyde Park neighborhood congenial.

Most famously, the Ponds became deeply involved with social reformers Jane Addams, Graham Taylor, and others in the establishment and construction of important settlement houses in Chicago. Addams' Hull-House settlement is today the best known, and the Ponds designed, over time, an entire block full of settlement buildings surrounding the original Italianate-style Charles Hull House. They also designed Graham Taylor's Chicago Commons (now a school) as well as the Northwestern University Settlement House (designated as a Chicago landmark in 1993), both on the Near Northwest Side. Additional settlement houses designed by Pond and Pond include the Gads Hill settlement house building (extant) in the Pilsen neighborhood and the Chicago Ethical Society settlement house building (demolished) in the Maxwell Street area.

Later in their practice, Irving and Allen Pond were noteworthy outside of Chicago for designing a series of significant university student union buildings, most notably the Michigan Union and Michigan League buildings at their alma mater, the University of Michigan. Other universities that commissioned union buildings from the Ponds include Michigan State University, Purdue University, and the University of Kansas.

Both Irving and Allen Pond were very involved with professional and progressive social endeavors. Irving served a term as president of the national American Institute of Architects from 1910 to 1911, while Allen was honored by the AIA for his pioneering work in standardizing the creation and content of architectural specifications. Both were members of the Cliff Dwellers, a private Chicago club heavily populated by architects and artists, as well as the Chicago Literary Club. Both were politically active, belonging to a variety of progressive organizations, including the City Club of Chicago for which they built a clubhouse on Plymouth Court (extant, now owned by John Marshall Law School). Allen was the long-time treasurer of Hull-House and chairman of the Chicago Board of Education for a time in the mid-1920s.

Throughout their more than forty-year architectural practice, Pond and Pond developed a manner of architectural design that was recognizably theirs while transcending surface style. While innovative, influences of colonial American architecture and historic English country houses are visible in their work. In the words of City of Chicago cultural historian Tim Samuelson, writing about the firm's American School of Correspondence (designated as a Chicago landmark in 1995):

Pond & Pond actively sought to develop an indigenous approach to American architecture. The Ponds' interpretation of this challenge was characterized by an emphasis on human values, an honest expression of structure and function, and an intimate understanding of the architectural past and present.

Pond and Pond-designed buildings typically were built of red brick accented by gray limestone and sometimes purple-red brick. Modernized and simplified classical-style details such as pediments over doors and windows and corner quoins of brick, typical of Queen Anne buildings, often provide ornament in early Pond and Pond buildings. By 1910, Irving Pond had developed a personal architectural ornament that combined limestone cubes with enfolding acanthus leaves. In this, Irving was part of a larger movement among Chicago architects, most famously Louis Sullivan, Frank Lloyd Wright, and George Maher, to develop modern architectural decoration that was personal to each.

Although respectful of the innovative nature of the work of Chicago School architects such as Louis Sullivan and Prairie School architects such as Wright, the Ponds, in the words of Tim Samuelson:

...often observed that the abstracted surface planes of buildings designed by Sullivan, Wright, and other practitioners of the Chicago and Prairie schools often negated the realities of their structural and functional identities. Despite their conflicting views, the Ponds were respected by their contemporaries, who viewed them as presenting a different, yet valid, interpretation of a common objective.

The buildings and design tenets of Pond and Pond had fallen somewhat into obscurity during the mid-twentieth century, overtaken in the public imagination by the metal-and-glass International Style of architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. But the Ponds began to be appreciated anew by architectural historians Mark L. Peisch and Carl Condit, writing in the 1960s about Chicago architecture of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Since then, historians have acknowledged that the history of Chicago architecture encompasses a greater scope of innovation and design quality than just the buildings of the Chicago and Prairie schools. Pond and Pond have been recognized for their innovative buildings that take the best of the past as inspiration, seen through the prism of Arts and Crafts ideals.



Irving Pond (right) and Allen B. Pond (left) in their office in an undated photo. (Photo courtesy Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan)



Part of the Jane Addams' Hull-House complex designed by Pond & Pond. (Photo courtesy Art Institute of Chicago)



University of Michigan Student Union, 1919, Pond & Pond. (Photo courtesy Art Institute of Chicago)

THE ARTS AND CRAFTS MOVEMENT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON POND AND POND AND THE DESIGN OF THE PERKINS-NORDINE HOUSE

The manner of architectural design embraced by Pond and Pond—building construction that was "honest" and "authentic" and clearly understood by the viewer, built using materials made beautiful through the intrinsic colors and textures of materials—is based on the tenets of the Arts and Crafts movement, which heavily influenced the practice of progressive American architects in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Perkins-Nordine House exemplifies the Ponds' embrace of aspects of the Arts and Crafts, especially beautiful brick construction, in a building that in aspects of its overall form were influenced by the Ponds' appreciation of American architecture from its colonial beginnings, architecture from the English Queen Anne period of the late 1600s and early 1700s, and the more recent English Queen Anne revival of the 1870s and 1880s.

Arts and Crafts, although often thought of as a style, was really more of an approach as to how an architect should design buildings. It developed in nineteenth-century Great Britain as a reaction against the Industrial Revolution with its machine-made objects considered by many to be inferior in design and quality. Influenced by architect and writer A.W.N. Pugin, who advocated handcraftsmanship in both buildings and objects, the Arts and Crafts movement emerged from the writings and work of art critic John Ruskin and designer and writer William Morris. Both of these English design progressives, working in the mid- to late nineteenth century, disparaged contemporary industrial design and machine-made objects. Instead, they advocated for a return to personal craftsmanship as it had been practiced in medieval times.

Ruskin was a prolific and influential writer and critic rather than a designer. But his Arts and Crafts ideas about proper and thoughtful design were embraced by Morris who is best known today for his decorative designs including wallpapers and fabrics, but who also designed influential buildings such as the Red House and Kelmscott Manor in Britain. Their design ideas in turn influenced several generations of architects, and collectively these designers have become known as the Arts and Crafts movement. They include British architects such as C.F.A. Voysey, C.R. Ashbee, and W.R. Lethaby. Their work and writings in turn influenced progressive American architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright, the California firm of Greene and Greene, Pond and Pond, and others.

The principles of the Arts and Crafts movement emphasize design clarity, physical beauty, and an embrace of past architecture for design inspiration, but not slavish copying. Structure should be visually clear and evident to the observer. In this, Arts and Crafts proponents took cues from medieval buildings and "vernacular" architecture, or the architecture historically common to a community or region. Materials should be "honest" in their appearance, depending upon inherent values such as color and texture rather than false or "faux" surfacing and elaborate applied decoration. Brick should not be painted. The use of locally sourced stone was encouraged. Materials, combined with visible structure, provided much of the visual appeal of typical Arts and Crafts-influenced buildings. The Arts and Crafts approach allowed architects great leeway and individuality in the appearance of buildings while adhering to these key concepts.

Pond and Pond are significant Chicago Arts and Crafts-influenced architects. They acknowledged the importance of the movement's tenets of structural honesty and the inherent visual qualities of materials while adding personal elements. They were influenced in part by colonial American buildings and British country architecture of the Queen Anne era in overall forms and types of materials (brick and stone) that they used. They also were interested in the revival of Queen Anne architecture that emerged in Great Britain in the 1870s. The Ponds believed that using such buildings as starting points for their designs acknowledged their honesty of construction and use of locally sourced materials while also providing a tangible connection between past and present. Unlike Frank Lloyd Wright and the architects of the Prairie School, Irving and Allen Pond wanted a modernism that acknowledged past architecture and embraced a continuum of society and culture, linking past and present.

The Ponds' Arts and Crafts roots can especially be seen in their use of building materials. They were much taken with the inherent beauty of brick, and they often used contrasting yet compatible shades of red and purple-red brick in their buildings. They layered and coursed brick work to create visual interest through light and shadow effects. Contrasting stone trim was typically gray Indiana limestone, easily available in Chicago and throughout the Midwest. Windows often had wood, geometric-muntined sash that harkened to English Queen Anne buildings and the later Queen Anne revival in Great Britain of the 1870s and 1880s. Aspects of classicism, found in both iterations of the Queen Anne, might appear as subtle detailing, including corner quoins made of brick, triangular or round-arched hoods over doors, and pediments over windows. Touches of medievalism such as half-timbering also appear often in their work.

Irving Pond wrote a great deal about modern architecture and the art of building. In the June 1909 *Western Architect*, he stated, "Architecture is a builded beauty—not sculpted beauty, not painted beauty, not vocalized beauty, but builded beauty." The Perkins-Nordine House exemplifies much of the Arts and Crafts ethic that Pond and Pond embraced in their work. It is solidly built of beautiful red brick. Its overall form and gables harken back to seventeenth-century Queen Anne-era houses built by English gentry in the countryside. The pediment-shaped hood over the front door is a simplified classical form. End chimneys at either end of the gable-roofed southern portion of the home and half-timbering at the north and west facades are a nod to medieval English building methods. Taken together, the Perkins-Nordine House is a finely crafted, beautifully "builded" house that expresses the Ponds' appreciation and love for a modern architecture based in tradition and craft.



American School of Correspondence, 1907, Pond & Pond. (Photo courtesy Art Institute of Chicago)

LATER HISTORY AND SPOKEN WORD ARTIST KEN NORDINE

In addition to its architecture, the house is also significant for its association with Ken Nordine, a noteworthy spoken word artist who resided and worked in the home from 1951 until his death in 2019. In 1957, Ken Nordine's *Word Jazz* album was released. It featured the established radio and TV spokesperson riffing lines of surreal poetry over hip jazz, a new fusion (or "somewhat new medium" as the album cover jokingly noted) of spoken word and sounds which created novel imagery from the inner thought processes and voice of the 37-year-old creative visionary. *Word Jazz* became Nordine's signature artistic realm, spawning over a dozen albums, a nationally syndicated, long-running radio series, and collaborative pieces with musicians and artists including Fred Astaire, Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, Tom Waits, Laurie Anderson, and David Bowie. Music journalist Bill Demain noted in a 2001 article "There aren't many artists who can lay claim to inventing their own genre. For this alone, Nordine deserves a place in the history books."

Nordine had begun to improvise poems in an exchange with musicians at cafes such as the Offbeat Room on the North Side of Chicago in the early 1950s: "The same crowd came every Monday, so I couldn't do the same poems over and over, so I started to ad lib," Nordine recalled in an interview with WBEZ in 2000. On the origins of this work, Nordine noted in 2001: "I always liked music, particularly jazz, and it became more interesting to me when they forgot the theme and they would go flying off in their imaginary and wonderful choruses, making variations on that theme, and within the structure of its harmony and the changes. So I tried to do the same thing with words."

Ken Nordine was born in Cherokee, Iowa, on April 13, 1920, to Swedish immigrant parents. When he was just a few years old, they moved to Chicago where his father found work as an architect. Nordine grew up on Chicago's North Side and attended Lane Technical High School and the University of Chicago. In 1938 the Chicago Radio Council (CRC) began to record broadcasts for the Chicago Board of Education initially broadcast over WBBM radio. They enlisted students at Lane Tech to help design and build studio equipment for their new endeavor. Nordine's interest in radio led him to an assignment at the fledgling operation where he worked primarily as an actor and writer. Later he would recall that "as a learning experience, working at the CRC was second to none." He left Chicago to get his on-air start in commercial radio in Michigan and Florida but returned to Chicago for voice-over work. In 1945 he married Beryl Vaughan, an actress who had done her share of radio work including voices for the "Lone Ranger" and "Sky King" series.

Nordine was in demand as a commercial spokesman and this allowed him to purchase a large home in 1951 on a corner lot in the Edgewater neighborhood at 6106 North Kenmore. The home not only accommodated his growing family, eventually to include three sons, but also allowed him to set up studios for his work. His ability to tape record professional quality sound which he could ship to sponsors allowed him to remain in Chicago instead of having to live near big-money production studios on the East and West coasts.

Time magazine did a brief write-up of the man behind the authoritative voice in 1954, noting his considerable annual earnings of around \$80,000 from recording radio and TV commercials, acting on soap operas, announcing local shows, and narrating for Chicago's growing TV industry. The article zeroed in on the contrast between this middle-of-the-road cultural presence and his decidedly un-mainstream artistic outlets. His "experimental television" show *Now for Nordine* was being broadcast late nights on Chicago's WNBQ Channel 5 during which he recited poetry but also took live requests from a flashing telephone, making small talk with the callers. Chicago audiences had become familiar with his TV presence the previous year when he read classic horror tales while incorporating simple lighting effects, strange music, and unexpected camera movement for eerie touches in *Faces in the Window* on WNBQ. In 1959, Nordine's TV audience became national when Fred Astaire, recording a special for TV, tapped him for use of his tongue-in-cheek hipster poem "My Baby" over jazz while Astaire danced on a nightclub set. He introduced Nordine as the inventor of a "new kind of contemporary beat."

Nordine continued experimenting with radio show formats. He briefly had a show on WBBM radio in Chicago in the 1960s, both performing and interviewing guests such as Ella Fitzgerald and Duke Ellington. This was followed by a show on National Public Radio and eventually a syndicated show in the 1970s given the “Word Jazz” moniker which he would host for decades. In a 1990 interview, Nordine explained the dream logic nature of the shows: “The mind will justify the strangest leaps from one subject to another. You can say ‘Where were we?’ and then you can get on a whole different topic, like the nature of time. How long is a second? How many billion nanoseconds are there in a nanosecond? Then, you can talk about what time is. I hope the audience will say, ‘That’s how my mind works.’ I think the way I think is the way everybody thinks. We all move from idea to idea and there isn’t necessarily a logical link that you can see.”

Meanwhile, Nordine’s advertising work ran the gamut, from Chevrolet to Sears, from Taster’s Choice to Gallo wines. Perhaps his best-known television voice-over commercials were for Levi’s Jeans, first in 1971 with Peter Max-influenced animation and again in 1983 with primitive computer animation. All the while, Nordine kept recording spoken-word albums, the first five for Dot Records and then sporadically for other companies including his own Snail Records Company in the 1970s. The company was based out of his home, more specifically, the larger of his two studios on the third floor. In a 1970s article in the *Chicago Tribune*, columnist Jeff Lyons described it as “a splendidly equipped sound studio, with a control panel of knobs, dials, and oscillating needles worthy of the Starship Enterprise” and listed its more exotic contents: a Moog synthesizer, an ARP synthesizer, an acoustic response analyzer, a sound projector, a battery of tape machines, and a Peterson audio-visual tuner. In January 1980 Nordine’s *Stare with Your Ears* album recorded there was nominated for a Grammy in the category of Best Spoken Word Recording. According to a *Chicago Tribune* interview in 2012, Tom Waits, Laurie Anderson, and countless musicians recorded there.

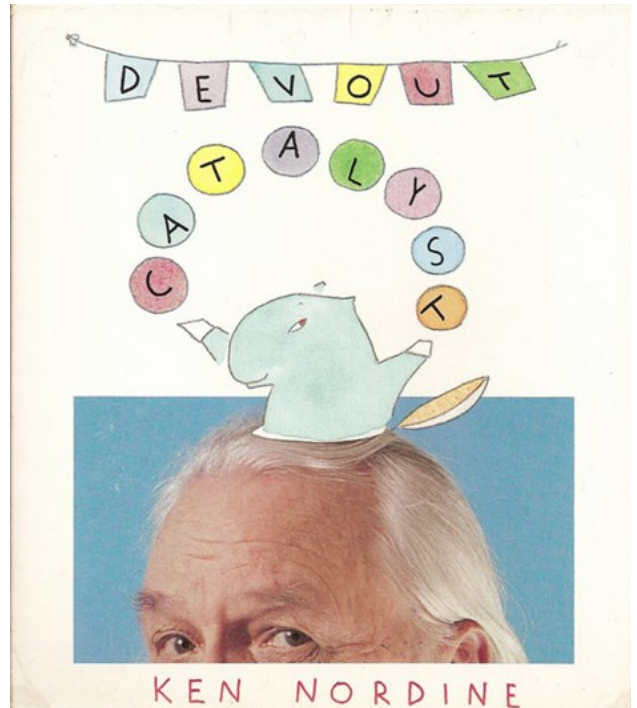
On occasion, and much to his preference, his work life would blend into his artistic life and vice versa. Perhaps the most notable example was his series of radio ads in 1964 for the Fuller Paint Company where he penned and recorded ten poems, each of which explored a color in his offbeat approach: “The Fuller Paint Company invites you to stare with your ears at yellow.” They were so beloved by listeners, radio stations received calls to replay them. This response led Nordine to record an album *Colors* in 1966 which included the original poems but expanded to riffs on several dozen other colors, all written and recorded in the same day. He followed up with a book of the same name which he paired with sculpture by his mother to create the 2007 “Mother and Son” exhibition at Chicago’s Swedish American Museum. Another local effort spanning some fifty years was recording shorts for the Chicago International Film Festival almost every year, occasionally supplemented with a short film by Nordine.

Collaborations and guest appearances also continued throughout his career. In 1992, Jerry Garcia invited him to collaborate for the Grammy-nominated *Devout Catalyst* album on which he spoke over a free-form jazz combo including the guitarist and also did two tracks with Tom Waits. He appeared on stage with the Grateful Dead at their New Year’s Eve show later that year and again in Chicago in 1993. Laurie Anderson, a fan of Ken Nordine from her teen years in Chicago which doubtless inspired her word-centric version of music performance art, invited him to play God opposite her Mrs. God at London’s Meltdown Festival in 1997 and again via Skype from Chicago in 2015 at the San Francisco Jazz Center. In 2007, David Bowie hand-picked Ken Nordine to perform at the New York High Line Festival, noting he chose only those performers he himself would like to see.

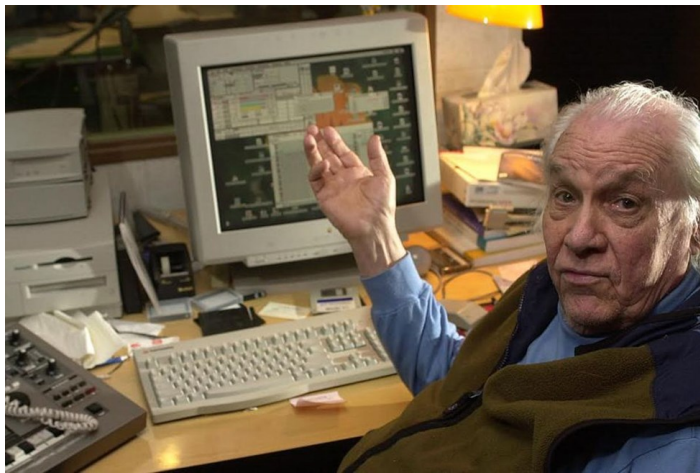
In the latest decades of his career and artistic life, Nordine’s interests focused on incorporating visual components into his creations. Utilizing the video capabilities of his second-floor home studio, and subsequently establishing a computer station for his work on the first floor, he set about to create first video and then abstract, computer-generated, visual trips to flow with his words. Nordine continued his creative pursuits into his 90s until his death at the age of 98 on February 16, 2019.



Jerry Garcia, left; Ken Nordine, center; Tom Waits, right. (Photo by Susana Millman courtesy of mamarazi.com)



CD insert of *Devout Catalyst* recorded with Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia, drummer Mickey Hart, and Egyptian musician Hamza El Din, featuring a collaboration with Tom Waits on two tracks. (Image courtesy discogs.com)



Ken Nordine in his home studio at 6106 North Kenmore. (Photo courtesy *suntimes.com*)



Ken Nordine in the living room of 6106 North Kenmore being interviewed for the *Video for the Ear* PBS documentary. (Photo courtesy Carl Palmer)

Criteria for Designation

According to the Municipal Code of Chicago (Section 2-120-690), the Commission on Chicago Landmarks has the authority to make a recommendation of landmark designation for an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object within the City of Chicago if the Commission determines it meets two or more of the stated “criteria for designation” and that it possesses a significant degree of historic integrity to convey its significance.

The following should be considered by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks in determining whether to recommend that the Perkins-Nordine House be designated as a Chicago Landmark.

Criterion 1: Value as an Example of City, State, or National Heritage

Its value as an example of the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the heritage of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Perkins-Nordine House, built 1902-1903, exemplifies the early residential history and development of the Edgewater neighborhood as an area of high-quality, single-family houses and mansions built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.
- The Perkins-Nordine house remains among the best surviving of these first-generation mansions that drew Chicagoans of wealth to the Edgewater neighborhood in the years just before and after its annexation to Chicago in 1889.

Criterion 3: Important Person

Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the architectural, cultural, economic, historic, social, or other aspect of the development of the City of Chicago, State of Illinois, or the United States.

- The Perkins-Nordine house is significant for its association with Ken Nordine, an influential spoken word artist who resided and worked out of the home from 1951 until 2019. The large home not only accommodated his growing family but also allowed him to set up recording studios for his work and artistic pursuits. In these studios he did the bulk of work that brought him acclaim including the long-running, syndicated, *Word Jazz* radio show and the Grammy-nominated *Stare with Your Ears* album. As a Chicagoan, he contributed to the artistic legacy of the city through decades of radio, television, film, fine art, and voice-over work for events such as the Chicago International Film Festival.
- In 1957, Ken Nordine’s *Word Jazz* album featured the established radio and TV spokesperson riffing lines of surreal poetry over hip jazz, a new fusion of spoken word and sounds which created novel imagery from the inner thought processes and voice of the 37-year-old creative visionary. This new synthesis was created on Nordine’s ventures from his home at 6106 North Kenmore to nearby clubs where he had to come up with new material every week for returning clientele. *Word Jazz* became Nordine’s signature artistic realm, spawning over a dozen albums, a nationally syndicated, long-running radio series, and collaborative pieces with musicians and artists including Fred Astaire, Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead, Tom Waits, Laurie Anderson, and David Bowie.

Criterion 4: Exemplary Architecture

Its exemplification of an architectural type or style distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship.

- The Perkins-Nordine House is a large-scale house designed in the Arts and Crafts manner, a significant approach to design in the history of Chicago architecture.
- The Perkins-Nordine House has excellent craftsmanship in traditional building materials including deep red brick artfully placed with variations in texture and plane to accent building elements and enliven surfaces; and wood details including the bracketed portico over the front door, vertical half-timbering in the gable, dormer, and bay, and varied geometric muntin patterns in the windows.
- The Perkins-Nordine House, through its overall architectural design and detailing, exemplifies the Arts and Crafts ideals embraced by Pond and Pond: building construction that was “honest” and understood by the viewer, the use of materials’ intrinsic colors and textures for aesthetic interest rather than applied ornament, and inspiration by architecture of the past.

Criterion 5: Important Architect

Its identification as the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose individual work is significant in the history or development of the City of Chicago, the State of Illinois, or the United States.

- Pond and Pond, the firm which designed the Perkins-Nordine House, was a significant architectural partnership in Chicago from the 1880s to roughly 1930. Partners and brothers Irving Kane Pond and Allen Bartlit Pond were highly involved in the Arts and Crafts movement and strongly associated with progressive social and political reform in Chicago.
- Pond and Pond designed many architecturally significant buildings in Chicago including the Northwestern University Settlement House (designated a Chicago landmark in 1993), a dozen purpose-built buildings for the Jane Addams’ Hull-House settlement including the Dining Hall (designated a Chicago Landmark in 1974), the Chicago Commons Building, the former City Club of Chicago (now the John Marshall Law School), and the American School of Correspondence (designated a Chicago Landmark in 1995). Elsewhere in the Midwest, they are best known for student union buildings such as those at the University of Michigan, the University of Kansas, Purdue University, and Michigan State University.

Integrity Criteria

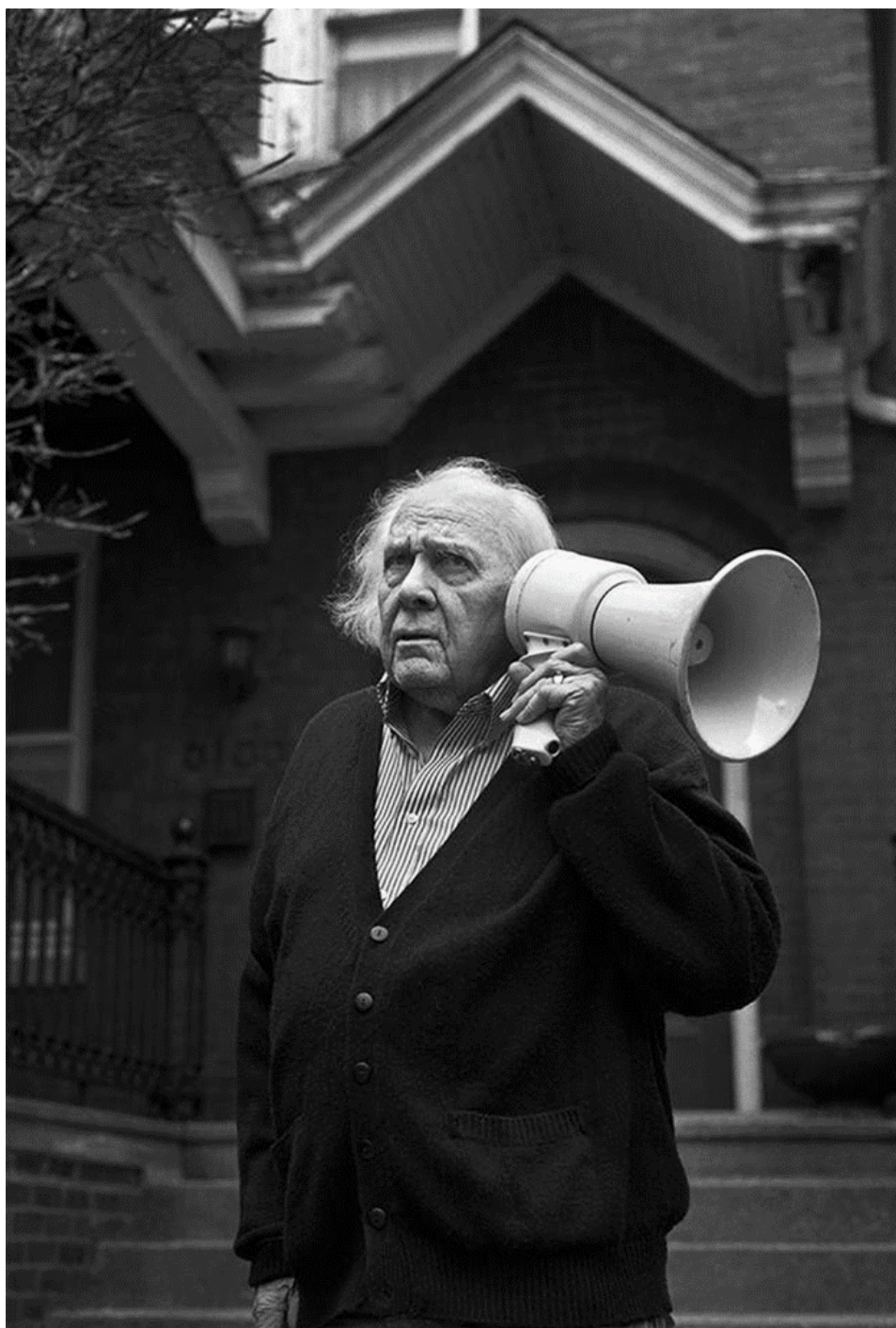
The integrity of the proposed landmark must be preserved in light of its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic community, architecture or aesthetic interest or value.

The Perkins-Nordine House has excellent historic integrity. It retains its original site, overall building form, and character-defining, exterior details. Original railings and newel posts frame the stairs to the front entry. The original, bracketed, triangular “portico” projects above the original arched front door. The open, masonry porch maintains its original wrought-iron railings. Wood beams with decorative molded brackets extend between masonry piers. The overwhelming majority of original windows remain throughout the home as does the masonry and wood trim.

Changes to the building are relatively minor and include non-historic cladding at a rear, frame structure, dormer, and gable end. A handful of windows have been replaced with non-matching substitutes and others are currently blocked off. The porch and steps at the rear elevation have been removed. Exposed rafter ends originally extended out from under each side of the porch roof and all but three of them have been removed and re-

placed with a plain fascia. Asphalt siding now covers dormers on the north elevation but this can be removed and on the large dormer over the bay, the vertical half-timbering is likely in place underneath.

Despite these changes, the Perkins-Nordine House retains more than sufficient historic integrity for Chicago landmark designation. The building was designed by the significant Chicago architectural firm of Pond and Pond. It is a finely made, Arts and Crafts house with beautiful brickwork. Spoken word artist Ken Nordine lived and worked out of the house for 68 years, creating his long-running, syndicated *Word Jazz* radio show and other notable commercial and artistic work out of the studios he built there. The home's historic and architectural significance has been preserved in light of its location, overall design, setting, materials, workmanship and ability to express its historic and architectural value to the City of Chicago.



Above: Nordine in front of 6106 North Kenmore Avenue. (Photo courtesy *suntimes.com*)

SIGNIFICANT HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Whenever an area, district, place, building, structure, work of art, or other object is under consideration for landmark designation, the Commission on Chicago Landmarks is required to identify the “significant historical and architectural features” of the property. This is done to enable the owners and the public to understand which elements are considered most important to preserve the historical and architectural character of the proposed landmark.

Based upon its evaluation of the Perkins-Nordine House, the Commission recommends that the significant features be identified as:

- All exterior elevations, including rooflines, of the building.



The home was included in Marian A. White’s 1910 *Book of the North Shore; Homes, Gardens, Landscapes, Highways and Byways Past and Present*. (Photo courtesy of the Hathi Trust Digital Library, original source University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana)

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Brick headers forming the arch over the window opening and in alternating courses along the sides project slightly from the façade to provide slight changes in plane and variations in texture. Original windows and porch railings are among the details that provide a high degree of integrity to this home. (Photo by Patrick L. Pyszka)

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**Detail of north elevation from circa 1910 picture postcard.
(See page 12 for entire postcard image. Image courtesy
Edgewater Historical Society)**

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