



# MCHS News

March 2014

Opening Doors to Madison County History

Vol. 2 No. 2

715 N Main Street  
Edwardsville, IL  
62025

**Hours:**

Wed-Fri 9 am - 4 pm  
Sunday 1 pm - 4 pm  
Group Tours Available

**Free Admission**

**Museum Phone:**

618-656-7562

**Library Phone:**

618-656-7569

**Web Address:**

madcohistory.org

**E-mail:**

info@madcohistory.org

**About Us:**

The MCHS museum complex consisting of a modern archival library, the 1836 Weir House Museum and the Helms Collection Center, is owned by the non-profit Madison County Historical Society and operated jointly with Madison County.

The Madison County Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.

## THE KANE LEGACY: THREE GENERATIONS OF DESIGN

### *Opening Reception*

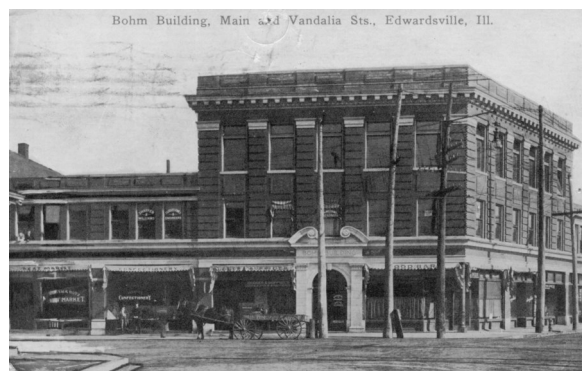
### **KANE FAMILY OF ARCHITECTS March 16, 2014**

The first MCHS exhibit featuring the Kane Collection will open with a reception on March 16 in both the MCHS Museum and the Archival Library. The exhibit will continue through August.

Edward Kane, Sr. was an early supporter of MCHS and a strong preservationist. In his will he expressed a desire to donate documents from the firm to MCHS after the Kane architectural offices closed. The Kane family honored that request and in 2011 allowed the Society to collect items of importance to Madison County history, which included plans for schools, churches, businesses and homes.

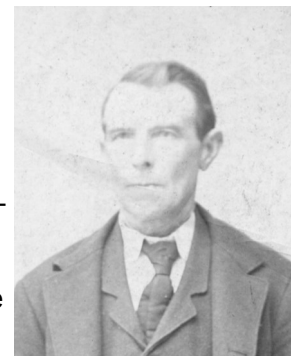
A portion of this important collection will be on display, highlighting the contribution of Kane architects to our communities, as well as demonstrating their artistry. The exhibit also includes beautiful interior photographs of the offices by photographer Scott Kane.

For nearly a century, three generations of the Kane family occupied a suite of rooms overlooking the intersection of Main and Vandalia Streets in Edwardsville, Illinois. They were architects, and their skill and artistic sensibility can be seen throughout Madison County and beyond, in the cornice of a school, the steeple of a church or the beauty of a mosaic design.



*Bohm Building at corner of Main and Vandalia in Edwardsville. Circa 1912 postcard.*

The company was founded by Michael Bernard Kane in 1912. Michael was born to Irish emigrant parents in 1874. His father, Thomas Kane, was a talented landscape architect. According to oral tradition, Thomas worked on some of the grand estates in England before coming to the United States where he settled on a farm near Liberty Prairie in Fort Russell Township. In the early 1890s, he moved to Edwardsville where he was awarded landscaping contracts for the new Madison County Courthouse (1912) and Federal Building (1915). He was often hired to design gardens and grounds for some of Edwardsville's wealthiest residents. One of note was the Griffin House on St. Louis Street where the landscaping was specifically designed to complement the Prairie-Style architecture of the 1909 house.



*Thomas Kane circa 1892.*

*Continued on page 4*

## **MARCH - APRIL CALENDAR**

### *New Exhibit*

**Creatures of Cahokia**  
MCHS Museum

### *Opening Reception*

*Sunday, March 16 1-4 pm*  
**Kane Family of Architects**  
MCHS Museum & Archival Library

*Continuing through February 28*

**"Tools of the Trade:  
Surveyors and Topographers"**  
MCHS Museum

Coming in June 2014  
Exhibit: Wedding Traditions  
Program: Route 66 in Illinois

## MCHS BOARD

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Archival Research Asst.  
Karen Stoeber  
Archival Research Asst.  
Jenn Walta  
Curator

## VOLUNTEERS

There are abundant and varied opportunities for volunteers at either the museum or the archival library. Please call if interested.

## MEMBERSHIPS

Several membership levels are available to those interested in supporting the work of preserving Madison County history through an MCHS membership. Memberships run on the calendar year, Jan 1-Dec 31. Applications are available on our website, at the MCHS Museum or at the Archival Library.

## PUBLICATIONS

### MCHS NEWS

6 issues annually  
Cindy Reinhardt, Editor

### WEB SITE

[madcohistory.org](http://madcohistory.org)

# ARCHIVAL LIBRARY SPOTLIGHT

By Mary Westerhold, Archival Research Manager

We receive several newsletters at the Archival Library from various organizations ranging from local county historical and genealogical societies to professional organizations. A front-page article from a recent issue of the Carondelet Historical Society Newsletter was about a rare book that had been donated to the library. The book *A Tour of St. Louis; or, The Inside Life of a Great City*, was a 564 page volume published in 1878. As soon as I read the title of the book, I had a feeling that the book was in our collection.

Our collection of over 3,000 books has been entered into our digital database,

*PastPerfect*. The books were the first items we decided to catalog in *PastPerfect*. I helped to enter and/or check the entry on most of the books and I knew we had an interesting collection of older volumes about St. Louis. A quick check of the *PastPerfect* database proved my suspicion was correct.

The book has over 140 sketches similar to the one shown here (St. Louis Courthouse), along with profiles

of businesses, residences, schools, and churches. While it may be skewed a tad to show only the positive aspects of the city, it is a rare snapshot of the city during a long-forgotten time period. A true hidden treasure!



# MUSEUM SPOTLIGHT

By Jenn Walta, Curator



*Madison County Centennial Arch with plaque visible inside the right leg.*

Two years ago, Madison County celebrated its 200th anniversary. In 1912, the county held a centennial celebration which included parades, historical displays, and numerous other events and activities. Two commemorative structures were created for the centennial, one permanent and one temporary. The recently restored Centennial Monument in Edwardsville's City Park is still enjoyed by residents today. The second sculpture was the Memorial Arch (above) designed by Michael B. Kane that greeted visitors in front of the 1857 courthouse.

According to a May 2006 article in the *Belleville News-Democrat*, Kane fashioned the 30-foot tall structure after the Arc de Triomphe located in Paris. The building materials,

specifically the plaster of Paris, were reminiscent of the semi-permanent buildings constructed for the World's Fair in St. Louis in 1904. Two plaques adorned the interior sides of the arch during its display. One side featured the Territorial Governor of Illinois, Ninian Edwards, while the other displayed a relief of Charles S. Deneen, Governor of Illinois in 1912 who was born in Edwardsville.



*Bronze silhouette depicting Ninian Edwards*

The arch was dismantled after the centennial celebration and the plaques given to Kane who stored them in his new office in the Bohm Building where they remained for 99 years. In 2011 they were donated to the Madison County Historical Society.

## RECENT MCHS NEWS

A new exhibit in the Artifact Room on the second floor of the Museum has just been completed by Ryan Anderson, an SIUE intern who worked with Curator Jenn Walta during fall semester.

The exhibit explores the importance of animals to Native Americans in the county during the Mississippian period. The local Native American population hunted some animals, like deer, using arrowheads carved from pieces of stone. While the Cahokians hunted most animals for commodities such as food, hide, or sinew, some animals served more spiritual purposes. *Creatures of Cahokia* explores the relationship between local animals and the Native Americans in Madison County using artifacts from the collection.



During fall and winter there have been many improvements to the MCHS complex, not all of them readily visible. The electrical service for all four buildings is now underground and has been upgraded. Landscaping around the library has been completed and Victorian-style light posts to match the city's new street lights have been installed. Additional work on the plaza

and parking lot will be completed as weather permits. Thanks to Board Member Russell Marti for coordinating this work and to Director Suzanne Dietrich for obtaining grants to make this work possible.



Reminder: If you have not renewed your MCHS membership for 2014, this will be your last newsletter. Please consider renewing as your membership dollars allow us to continue preservation, research and programming activities. MCHS members are eligible for a 10% discount at the MCHS gift shop which stocks a selection of area history books as well as other items.



Sneak Preview: In June (back by popular demand) a new exhibit will feature some of our wedding dress collection along with information on wedding traditions.

On Sunday, June 8, MCHS will host the inaugural book signing for "Route 66 in Illinois" with authors Cheryl Jett and Joe Sonderman, both recognized experts on America's Mother Road. Their program will feature rare Route 66 images not included in the book due to space restrictions and a wealth of 66 trivia!

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

### New and Renewing Memberships

**Mid-December 2013 through January 2014 ♦ Thank You for Your Support!**

#### **Alton, IL**

Beverly Stutz

#### **Aviston, IL**

Shirley Daiber

#### **Collinsville, IL**

Collinsville Historical  
Museum

#### **Edwardsville, IL**

Emogene Beck  
Betty Braundmeier  
Bill & Miriam Burns  
Joan Evers  
Genevieve Hill  
Bruce Hoffman  
Beverly Kane  
David Kriege

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Robert L. Malench

#### **Karen Mateyka**

Linda A. Mizell

#### **David Novak**

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#### **Northfield, IL**

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#### **Plano, TX**

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#### **Roxana, IL**

Gena Boger

#### **Savanna, IL**

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Rosalynn Kessler  
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#### **Warrenville, IL**

Joyce Giaquinta

#### **Wheaton, IL**

Judith Leo

#### **Wood River, IL**

Velma J. Schmidt

#### **Worden**

Arlene Eller



# THE KANE LEGACY

An artistic eye was also evident in Thomas' sons, Michael B. and Hugh F., who both established careers related to architecture. Hugh worked as a draftsman, but Michael chose to become a professional architect, a path that proved more difficult than he could have imagined

M. B. Kane, a fiery little Irishman, worked for several years as a carpenter, before becoming an architect in the late 1890s under noted Edwardsville architect Charles H. Spilman. He was working as a contractor and architect

in 1897 when the state first required an architectural license. Kane repeatedly applied for his license, but was not accepted. He worked with Spilman for a total of 12 years while studying engineering, then three years under architect F. Oswald and three years under John W. Kennedy who also had offices in Collinsville and East St. Louis.

It didn't take 18 years of study for Kane to become a proficient architect. Newspapers at the time reported that he was denied a license due to

Republican political ap-

pointments from 1897-1913. A Democrat, Kane was forced to work an extra 14 years as a draftsman before obtaining a license in 1912, and then only through the intervention of State Senator Edmund Beall, a Democrat from Alton. Although Governor Charles Deneen was a Republican, he was born in Edwardsville, which may have helped with Beall's appeal.

"M. B. Kane, Architect" was the first tenant in the Bohm Building when it opened in 1912. At the time, Kane could not have anticipated that his family would hold the lease on those offices for nearly one hundred years.

A year after finally obtaining his license, Governor Edward Dunne appointed him to the Illinois Board of Examining Architects. Since Kane had held an Illinois license for such a short time, this brought loud protests from other architects in the state. Newspapers reported that since 1897, Kane had been illegally "deprived of a license by unfair political intrigue." Kane's supporters also pointed out that his was the only downstate Illinois appointment. He served from 1913 to 1917.

Although Michael Kane worked as a licensed architect from 1912 until his death in 1951, the family never had money and was often in debt. He and his wife purchased a little four room house on Benton Street shortly after the turn of the century. When their ninth child was born in 1921, they raised the roof, creating a second story to make room for additional beds. They were a Catholic family, and for years many of their adult children would come to the house on Sunday mornings, walk a block to St. Mary's Catholic Church on Park Street for Mass, then return to the home place for a loud and boisterous family dinner.



Wedding portrait of Michael B. Kane and Catherine "Katie" Hark, 1897



Michael and Katie Kane with grandchildren in 1938: From left Virginia Mae Sadowski, Edward Kane, Jr. and Mary Ellen Kane.

Michael's home was just a block from Edwardsville's beautiful St. Louis Street, where he was the architect for many of the homes. His design work for residences included a wide variety of architectural styles, all with an elegance and grace that defines his work and his architectural era. Those characteristics are also what



St. Louis Street homes designed by M. B. Kane: From left, the Tudor Revival home built for Leonard Kesl at 743; the Georgian Revival home for Joseph Keshner at 814, the Italian Renaissance home of Albert Stolze House at 1029 and the Craftsman bungalow for the Estabrook family at 1303.

# THREE GENERATIONS OF ARCHITECTS

qualified St. Louis Street as a National Historic District in recognition of the varied and exquisite examples of American architecture. Some of these homes are pictured at the bottom of Page 4.

But his work was not limited only to Edwardsville. Early in his career he did a lot of work in Benld, Illinois. His Benld projects included St. Joseph's Catholic Church, a school, co-operative store and a theater that many remember as the Coliseum.

He drew plans for schools in Maryville, Madison, Livingston, Worden, Alhambra and Edwardsville, to name just a few. In Edwardsville he built the addition to Columbus School and designed a new high school on West Street that is Lincoln Middle School today. That building has had many additions over the years, most of them designed by either Michael Kane or his son Edward Kane, Sr. He also was the architect for many country schools, among them Quercus Grove, Pleasant Ridge and Bohm School.

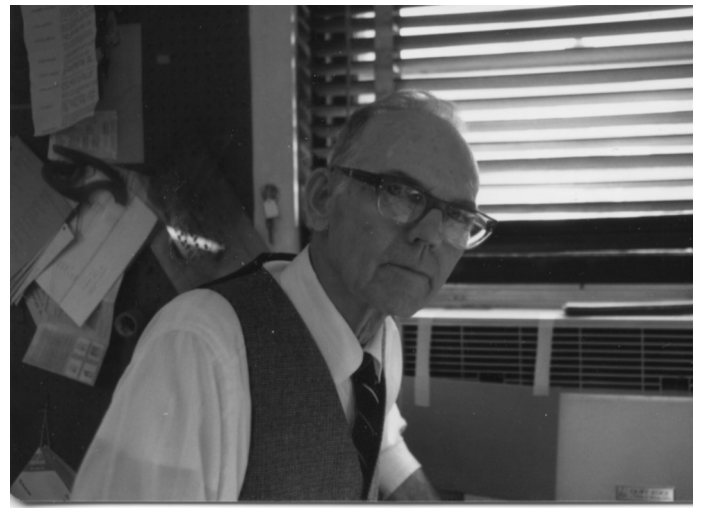
In Edwardsville, Kane Architecture was usually the firm selected for city, school district and county building projects, so the Kane Collection includes original building plans as well as many additions or modifications. New schools, due to budget constraints, often proved too small and then needed additions within a few years.

Other work included city halls, gymnasiums, barns, garages (later called service stations), parsonages, factories, storefronts, club houses and even Madison County's first radio tower. The 131-foot radio tower was built on the courthouse roof in 1938. Members of the Kane family remember hearing the story of how at its dedication someone questioned whether the tower was worth the price since it was only a matter of time before the wind tore it down. Michael Kane took this as a personal insult to his abilities, and to prove them wrong, climbed to the top of the steel tower and set it swaying to prove its strength and flexibility. He then climbed down and invited his critic to do the same.

In 1920, Michael Kane was one of the founders of the Southern Illinois Association of Architects that also included Alton's George Pfeifferberger and Edward Pauley of Granite City. Throughout his career he was active in professional organizations on the state and local level.

Kane Architecture was a family business from the beginning. Hugh Fabian Kane, Michael's brother, was a draftsman at the firm during the 1920s and early 1930s before moving to St. Louis. Most of Michael's sons showed artistic talent and three worked for the firm. Bernard "Bernie," Jr., Edward and Hugh Charles would all apprentice with their father. The oldest son, James, was an artist. Although he didn't follow the architectural trade, he did work briefly as a draftsman in the late 1930s before his brothers returned home. The youngest sons, Emmett and Charles, found careers in other fields and moved away from Edwardsville.

Hugh Charles Kane (1911-2005) apprenticed with his father and worked at the firm as a draftsman until he was drafted during World War II.



*Bernard Kane at his desk.*

Bernard (1903-1999) was the only family member to earn a college degree in architecture. He graduated from the University of Illinois with degrees in engineering and architecture, but didn't go to work for his father's firm until 1940. He never became a partner in the business, choosing instead to always work as an employee. Although he held the architectural degree, the design of buildings usually fell to the other men while Bernard established himself as the technical specialist. He calculated and drew all of the engineering specifications for each job to ensure they would be safe and functional.



*Public buildings designed by Kane architects. From left, Woodlawn Cemetery Chapel in Edwardsville. Maryville Village Hall and Fire Station, Venice Public Library, and the Troy Exchange Bank.*



# THE KANE LEGACY

Being close in age to Bernard, Edward (1905-1987) didn't attend college immediately after high school as the family couldn't afford to send two boys at the same time. He took a different route, apprenticing for his father and taking a year's worth of classes part-time at Washington University. He was then accepted in the Beaux Arts Institute, a method of study that allowed him to work under noted architects in St. Louis, San Francisco, Chicago, Denver and Washington, D.C.

Edward Kane married Edwardsville native Isabella Gilmore in 1929. She moved with him to the various locations, working to help support them when needed during his years of study. In 1936 he began working for the federal government and in 1938 obtained his architectural license in North Carolina, an examination recognized by all states.

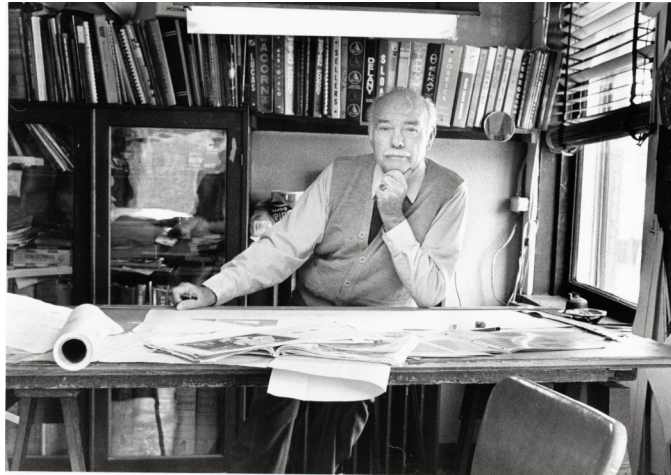
The following year he obtained certification in Illinois and in 1940 returned to Edwardsville where he joined his father and brothers at "Michael B. Kane and Sons." At the time Bernard was designing bridges for the State's architectural office in Springfield, and Hugh was working as a draftsman for the family firm.

Some in the family say Edward was pressured to return home to "save the firm." Whether true or not, it's fortunate that he did, as within a short time his brothers, Hugh and Bernard, both single men, were drafted into WW II, and by then Michael was 66 years old. Because Ed was still working on various government projects, he was not drafted; however, he served on rationing and draft boards.

Bernard served only 15 months in the military before being discharged along with fellow Edwardsville native Deliso Erspamer. Both men were with the 39th Combat Engineers that participated in operations in Sicily and Africa where they contracted malaria. They were discharged in late 1943, probably because of a combination of illness and age, since both men were over 40. Upon his return, Bernard returned to work in the Bohm Building. Hugh Charles did not return to the firm after WW II.

The construction industry slowed during the Depression, although Michael was able to find work, including contracts for some WPA projects. Business remained steady during and after WW II despite a scarcity of building materials, and the post-war housing shortage led to a construction boom.

Edward provided a needed boost to the firm. He was not only talented, but also outgoing and civic minded. He brought government connections in Washington and



*Edward A. Kane, Sr. in his office circa 1982. Photo by Edwardsville Intelligencer.*

Springfield that would contribute to the financial stability of the business. Michael Kane continued to work until his death in 1951, although he turned the reins over to Edward in the early 1940s. Also at the firm was Edward's wife, Isabelle, who was the secretary and bookkeeper as well as responsible for making endless pots of coffee. Coffee, cigarettes and cigars were staples of the office by all accounts, and there was a circle of friends, "good ole boys," who stopped by daily for coffee

and to catch up on local gossip with the Kane family. The cigarettes, non-filter, were Isabelle's, while the cigars were enjoyed by Michael and Edward who could usually be found at their drafting tables.

With so many hot-tempered Irishmen in close quarters things could get heated. Relatives report there would be very loud animated discussions, usually followed by laughter when an agreement was reached. Moving into the post-war years, many of the larger jobs were collaborations of Edward's design and Bernard's technical expertise, so the men had to get along. The office discussions never went home with them.

In addition to the above mentioned family members, others not related to the Kanes were hired as draftsmen over the years, including one woman. Dolores Rohrkaste, a University of Illinois art student, worked as a draftsman in the Kane offices from 1944 until the fall of 1946.



*Four Kane designed homes: From left, the R. Louise Travous house (1941), the Robert Bloecher house (1962), the Henry Trares House (1922) and the Nellie Yates house (1940). Both the Trares and Travous homes were considered very modern and progressive for the era when they were built.*

# THREE GENERATIONS OF ARCHITECTS

One of the active projects during Dolores's years at the firm was Our Lady Queen of Peace Church in Bethalto, designed by Edward and Michael. Edward was also hired to design a duck hunting lodge and car dealership in Stuttgart, Arkansas in the mid-1940s.

Dolores looks back on her years at the firm with fondness. "Old Mike" came in every day, but was working part time by then while Edward ran the business. Mike enjoyed reminiscing about "old Edwardsville." She has a great appreciation for Edward's talent as both an artist and architect and today lives in a house designed by him. Coincidentally, she previously lived in a St. Louis Street house designed by Michael Kane, but that was long after she left the firm.

In 1961 a third generation of the Kane family entered the firm, Edward A. Kane, Jr.. He was already as experienced draftsman and later obtained a degree in Art from SIUE and his architect license. For the first time since Michael's death in 1951, the business was back to three family architects in the office, Edward, Sr., Bernard and Ed, Jr., and so it would remain until Edward, Sr.'s death in 1987.

Edward Kane, Sr. was the spokesman for the firm as well as a community activist. He was a staunch advocate for the preservation and development of Edwardsville and often provided programs for regional organizations on the history of architecture. He conducted a building survey, still referenced today, identifying Edwardsville's most valuable historic properties. He was active with the Madison County Historical Society and specified in his will that documents and other materials at the firm should be donated to MCHS, which is the reason the Society was given the Kane Collection. He was one of the founders of Edwardsville's Historic Preservation Commission, served as director for Madison County's Sesquicentennial Celebration and became involved in the preservation of Lusk and Woodlawn Cemeteries. His chapel at Woodlawn Cemetery was designed to complement the pine trees in the beautiful 1871 cemetery. (See photograph on Page 5.)

While protecting the past, he also had an eye to the future and was hired in 1973 to develop a Comprehensive Plan for the City of Edwardsville. His contracts were varied, including a new municipal building for Edwardsville on Main Street, Edwardsville's first shopping center (Montclair) on Troy Road, plus many schools, business buildings and residences. The Edwardsville Public Library was expanded twice with additions designed by Edward A. Kane.

Edward, Sr. was a founding member of the Southern Illinois Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and was named an AIA Fellow in 1965, one of the highest national honors awarded by the organization. Like his father he also served on the Illinois State Board of Examiners as well as other state appointments. He continued to work for the federal government on select projects and in the early 1980s was approached by the government to remodel U. S. embassies, primarily in the Middle East, to increase security. He turned down the offer for two reasons, he had no interest in living in the Middle East, and he didn't want to disrupt his local



*Edward A. Kane, Jr. at his desk in the Bohm Building.*

practice for an entire year.

In 1987, Edward was recognized for his artistic abilities with an exhibit at SIUE that was loaned to other galleries. He also donated his drawings to non-profit organizations for local fundraisers in the form of engagement books or other merchandise that could be sold.

Although he officially retired when he was about 70 years old, it was a short-lived retirement. Within a month he was back at the office daily working a full schedule. Edward A. Kane, Sr. died September 4, 1987. He had been at the office the previous day, doing the work he loved. The last public project he worked on was the Madison County Transit Building located off I-270 near Mitchell.

After Ed Kane, Jr. joined the firm in 1961, collaboration on the larger, public projects continued, with father and son both designing residences. Bernard occasionally designed a house, but for the most part worked on technical specifications for all of the firm's plans. Isabelle still covered the secretary's desk until her death in 1984, after which others, non-family



*Kane designed schools. From left, Quercus Grove School, the former Edwardsville High School (now Lincoln Middle School), the former Edwardsville Junior High School (now Woodland Elementary) and Leclair School on Franklin Avenue in Edwardsville.*





## Madison County Historical Society

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Edwardsville, IL 62025

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## THE KANE LEGACY

### FAMILY PICTURES

As a boy, photographer Scott Kane visited his grandfather's office often. But after Edward Kane, Sr.'s death in 1987, he didn't go back until 2011, when his aunt told him the office was being dismantled. He arrived, camera in hand, for one last look, and was surprised to find it exactly as he remembered it: the rotary dial phone; the manual typewriter, the writing instruments on the window sill and thousands of architectural drawings stacked on shelves, rolled up in drawers, and filling every available space. The architects were voracious readers on their craft so there were also books dating back to the beginning of the firm. The smell of old books, dust and maybe a hint of cigars lingered in the space. Scott's beautiful photographs of his grandfather's office are included in the exhibit on the Kane family of architects.

*The picture (above right) is one of Scott Kane's photos from the Kane architectural offices.*

members, were hired to cover those duties at the front desk.

Ed, Jr. was also accredited by the AIA and like his father and others in the family had considerable artistic talent. His architectural drawings are recognizable for their attention to detail and precision.

He was the only architect at the firm after his father died, although his uncle, Bernard, would occasionally come out of retirement to work on some of the larger projects.

For the most part Ed, Jr.'s practice was focused on residential and business design,



including both new construction, additions and renovations, as well as some modifications to public buildings.

As modern architecture moved toward computer-aided drafting (CAD) programs, Ed resisted automation and continued to draw his plans by hand. A neighboring tenant said she always enjoyed the "clackety clack" of Ed's typewriter as it quietly echoed through the halls on the second floor of the Bohm Building. The office became a time capsule of memories from an earlier time, filled with exquisite drawings by a family of artists and architects.

In 2006 Ed was in a serious accident, and able to do only limited work after that time. In 2011 Ed and his family began the task of dismantling the office. It was the end of an era, marking a century of artistic and architectural design from the Kane family in Edwardsville.

*Family photographs and information on the business and family are courtesy of the Kane family, particularly Katherine Medder, Beverly Kane, Bradley Kane and Scott Kane. The Trares house photo is courtesy of the Edwardsville Intelligencer. The Yates house photo is courtesy of Dolores Rohrkaste.*

*Other photographs are from the MCHS collections.*

## MARY'S RESEARCH TIP

One of the most important things to do when researching is to document your sources. Sooner or later you will find conflicting "facts" that need verification and will need to go back to the sources. One easy trick we frequently use at the Archival

Library when copying a page from a book/magazine is to copy the title page of the source on the back. Also, be sure to add where you found the source - the name of the archive AND the location.

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