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AH449: The James Kinney House Report
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James Kinney House

The James Kinney House, named after the earliest known owner of the property from the 1840s, stands at 117 Jail Alley, Mineral Point, Wisconsin. This residential structure faces slightly southwest and is oriented parallel to Jail Alley (see figure 4.1). Clad in limestone, the house is neighbored on the north side of the street by other single-family residences. It is offset from Jail Alley by a sidewalk and no front yard. A narrow side yard to the east separates the house from the nearest structure on that side; the southwestern side elevation abuts directly against the neighboring timber-framed house. A long fenced backyard leads towards Doty Street to the north (see figure 4.2). The Kinney House is located one block north of High Street, Mineral Point's central commercial corridor.

The house is rectilinear in plan and is crowned with a shingled, side-gabled roof. On the front (southwest) elevation, two floors (ground and upper) are visible; the dramatic downward slope of the lot reveals a basement walkout on the rear elevation. The entire house was constructed with stone masonry walls and foundation. The house interior is arranged similarly on each of the three stories: the central staircase, climbing from front to back, divides each floor into two rooms of approximately equal size. After construction, one of the rooms on the ground floor was further divided into two, which currently house the bathroom and modern kitchen.

On the house's front elevation, a string of three windows runs across the upper floor; the central wooden panel door on the ground floor is flanked by one window on either side. Each window is six-over-six and double-hung. (These are replacements. An undated photograph from the 1960s or 1970s shows the house with one-over-one windows (see figure 4.3).) Below

each window, a stone sill emerges approximately one inch from the surrounding wall. Stone lintels cap the windows and door, and stone quoins are found on both sides of the front door as well as on all four corners of the house. The stone used for the quoins, lintels, and sills is the best-dressed on the entire exterior; other dressed stone is found on the majority of the front, back, and side elevations, with rubble stone comprising the front elevation below the level of the bottom window sills. On the rear elevation, the basement door is slightly offset from center; each of the three stories includes two side windows, one right and one left of the central vertical axis. Similar to the front, this elevation features quoins surrounding the door, sills underneath the windows, and lintels above the door and windows. The side elevations feature no fenestration. However, the undated photograph shows a door-sized void on the upper story of the southeastern elevation that had, at one point, been bricked in. Chimneys are situated at both ends of the roof ridge at the peak of each side gable. There are neither soffits nor roof overhang; fascia boards run the perimeter of the roofline.

A hearth and brick fireplace are located in the basement's western room (see figure 4.4); a functioning stove is located in the ground-floor room directly above. Covered stove holes that led to the opposite chimney are also found in the eastern rooms on the ground floor and upper floor. All windows have splayed interior wooden casings. A partition wall may previously have been present dividing an upper story room.

The house was most likely constructed between 1845 and 1850. According to census records from 1850, James Kinney – who was Irish – lived together with his wife, two children, and three boarders. (This may explain the upper-story door void, which likely led to an external staircase descending to the front sidewalk.) Over the course of the following fifty years, the property changed hands several times among recent immigrants and their families working in

retail and trade professions (Deeds 1866, 1873, 1880). The current owner has, over the course of forty years in the property, removed the one-over-one windows and covered the bricked upper-floor door void with limestone facing (see figure 4.5). Nineteenth-century Sanborn maps, archival photographs, and direct observation in the field reveal no evidence of additions or significant alterations to the house plan during this time.