

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Joseph B. Kalvelage House  
AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2432 W. Kilbourn Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Milwaukee

--- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Fifth

STATE

Wisconsin

--- VICINITY OF

CODE

055

COUNTY

Milwaukee

CODE

079

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Gregory K. Filardo

STREET & NUMBER

2432 W. Kilbourn Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Milwaukee

STATE

Wisconsin 53233

--- VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Milwaukee County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

901 N. Ninth Street

CITY, TOWN

Milwaukee

STATE

Wisconsin

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

designated Milwaukee City Landmark

DATE

May 16, 1975

--- FEDERAL --- STATE --- COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Milwaukee Landmarks Commission

CITY, TOWN

Milwaukee

STATE

Wisconsin

# DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Built in 1896-1898 the Kalvelage house is a two-and-one-half story German Baroque Revival house of tan pressed brick. The facade is formal and symmetrical. Brick laid in a striped pattern marks the first floor walls which are pierced by large elliptically-arched windows trimmed with terra cotta molding and foliated cartouches from which project women's heads. On the second floor level, more carved heads surmount the rectangular sash windows which also are trimmed by terra cotta moldings and rest on sills supported by foliated consoles. Above, a wide cornice with an interlaced scroll frieze forms the base for a curved mansard roof. The original slate shingles on the roof were covered over with asbestos shingles in the late 1960's. Pressed tin lions watch over the house from each corner of the cornice.

The major feature of the facade is a Flemish-gabled central pavilion and a monumental one-story entrance porch. The porch is decorated with eight half-figure atlantes of terra cotta. Other terra cotta trim on the porch includes carved consoles, garlands, cartouches and dentils decorating the elliptical arches and pilasters. A piazza extends from the porch across the front of the house with a flowing staircase on the southeast corner. A similar staircase once graced the southwest corner, too, but was removed, probably when the large apartment building to the west was built. Wrought iron railings in the form of entwined leaves and grotesque heads finish off the piazza and also trim the porch balcony, the smaller ballroom balcony, and one over the east bay.

The east and west ends of the house are crowned by Flemish gables similar to that of the central pavilion which is trimmed with terra cotta strapwork, garlanded pilasters and a bearded head forming the keystone to the round-arched ballroom window.

Equally elaborate decoration graces the interior of the house. Oak floors are bordered with cherry parquetry, several ceilings are of beamed and paneled oak, and the hardware is elaborately decorated brass. Most of the original combination gas and electric lighting fixtures remain in operable condition. The seven bathrooms retain their marble sinks and pull-chain toilets. Seven fireplaces warmed the house.

The first floor plan is conservatively formal. A large stained-glass window at the landing of the symmetrical divided staircase lights the dark central entrance hall. Carved lions guard the staircase. To the east of the hall are the library, featuring baroque carved oak woodwork and original stretched felt brocade wallpaper, and the music room which has plaster trim in the form of garlands of musical instruments, a scrolled frieze and decorative plaster moldings. To the west is the parlor, the woodwork of which was destroyed by fire in 1962 (the original fireplace was removed but remains in storage in the basement). Behind the parlor is the dining room decorated with elaborately carved breakfronts. On the north end of the dining room two columns frame a brightly-lit musicians gallery/breakfast nook with its own small fireplace. The service facilities remain in nearly-original condition, with walk-in coolers off the butler's pantry, large brown marble sinks and rust-colored tile wainscoting.

The second floor contains five bedrooms with a dayroom between the two front bedrooms, many built-in closets and large bathrooms. The fireplace in the master bedroom has a split flue to accommodate a round stained-glass window over the hearth. A large ballroom with vaulted ceiling and servants quarters comprise the third floor.

The house stands many feet above street level on a high terrace, enhancing its majesty.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER see PAGE

below

Item 6:

Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places  
1973  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
Madison

State

Wisconsin

Item 7:

appearance in a lower middle class downtown neighborhood of late nineteenth century two-flats and later apartment buildings.

Item 8:

"Sauerkraut Boulevard." Kalvelage hoped that Cedar would become another street of fine houses. "As fate would have it, however, the street's popularity never met his expectations, and the house stood then as it does today, a castle among cottages."<sup>8</sup> In 1924, the house was sold to the Milwaukee Ku Klux Klan. In 1926, it became a hospital and home for the aged. In 1947, it was converted into a rooming house. Recently it was bought by one of the roomers to save the interior trim from being stripped and sold to antique shops.

Despite its unusual history, the high cost of its maintenance, and its location in unprestigious neighborhood in a city not particularly attuned to preservation, the splendor of the Kalvelage house has almost miraculously been preserved.

<sup>1</sup>General Office, Building Inspection Department, City of Milwaukee.

<sup>2</sup>Andrew J. Aikens and Lewis A. Proctor, ed., Men of Progress, p. 532.

<sup>3</sup>Richard W. E. Perrin, Milwaukee Landmarks, p. 80.

<sup>4</sup>"Noted Builder, Strack, Dead," Milwaukee Journal, October 12, 1935.

<sup>5</sup>Cyril Colnik, quoted in John Gregory, History Of Milwaukee, p. 103.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>7</sup>Henry Russell Zimmermann, "Showpiece Mansion on Cedar Street Now Shaded by Patina of Time," Milwaukee Journal, May 28, 1967; and, Zimmermann, The Heritage Guidebook, p. 141.

<sup>8</sup>Zimmermann, "Showpiece."

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
—PREHISTORIC	—ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	—COMMUNITY PLANNING	—LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	—RELIGION
—1400-1499	—ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	—CONSERVATION	—LAW	—SCIENCE
—1500-1599	—AGRICULTURE	—ECONOMICS	—LITERATURE	—SCULPTURE
—1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	—EDUCATION	—MILITARY	—SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
—1700-1799	—ART	—ENGINEERING	—MUSIC	—THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	—COMMERCE	—EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	—PHILOSOPHY	—TRANSPORTATION
—1900-	—COMMUNICATIONS	—INDUSTRY	—POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	—OTHER (SPECIFY)
		—INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1896-1898<sup>1</sup>

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Otto Strack<sup>2</sup>

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Kalvelage house is an excellent example of a late Victorian version of the German Baroque style. The fine and artistic execution of every detail makes the Kalvelage house a showcase of late Victorian decorative arts. Its Germanic design influences are particularly significant in Milwaukee, a city proud of its German heritage and eager to display it in its fine arts.

The Kalvelage house was built by Joseph B. Kalvelage. The son of German immigrants, he married Miss Dorothea Hoffmann in 1878 and subsequently became the secretary-treasurer of the Hoffmann and Billings Manufacturing Company, which produced plumbing fixtures. It is no doubt because of this that the house has seven bathrooms.

Kalvelage selected Otto Strack to design his mansion. Strack came to Milwaukee in 1888 from Hamburg, Germany, where he had studied carpentry, masonry and blacksmithing before studying architecture at the Berlin and Vienna polytechnical schools. In Milwaukee Strack became the supervising architect for the Pabst Brewery, designing many of its towered and castellated brewery buildings and taverns, parts of the Pabst mansion and the Pabst Theater, in addition to private commissions for residences, commercial and industrial buildings. The Kalvelage house is the most striking of Strack's residential designs, according to Perrin, who states, "Otto Strack evidently loved baroque architecture, and in the Kalvelage House he indulged his flair for the ornamental in a baroque fantasy of carvings and figures."<sup>3</sup> Strack was an expert in the engineering facet of construction and moved to New York city shortly after he designed the Kalvelage house to pursue a career in civil engineering. However, his strongly Germanic designs made a dynamic impact on Milwaukee. According to his pupils, "much of the old world charm of many older Milwaukee buildings was due to Strack's influence."<sup>4</sup>

The finely executed wrought iron which decorates the exterior of the Kalvelage house was crafted by Cyril Colnik, a young master craftsman who moved to the United States in 1893 to display his work at the German exhibit of the World's Columbian Exposition. His grand awards led to many American commissions so he decided to move to Milwaukee to help "make it as beautiful as Europe made her cities."<sup>5</sup> Examples of his handiwork were soon found "in the palatial homes of most of the millionaires residing [in Milwaukee],"<sup>6</sup> and he gained a national reputation for his work. Zimmermann states that "nowhere in Milwaukee can such a generous display of his work be found" than at the Kalvelage house and that it is "among the finest remaining examples of this craft in the city."

Kalvelage built his house on what was then called "Cedar Street." Near-by, German residents had recently built a street of Victorian mansions, which earned the nickname,

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Aikens, Andrew J., and Proctor, Lewis A., eds., Men of Progress, Milwaukee: The Ever Wisconsin Co., 1897, pp. 532-533.
- Bruce, William G., History of Milwaukee City and County, Chicago: 1922, p. 340.
- Building permits and other records, General Office, Building Inspection Dept., City of Milwaukee.
- Crawford, Susan, "Home's His Castle: Amateur Craftsman Restoring Mansion," Milwaukee

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.72 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

City lot 27 and 24.34' of lot 26 in block 269, Hawley's Subdivision.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gregory K. Filardo, owner

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Nov. 15, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

2432 W. Kilbourn Avenue

TELEPHONE

414-931-0982

CITY OR TOWN

Milwaukee

STATE

Wisconsin 53233

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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PAGE 2

## Item 9:

Journal, July 26, 1977.  
Gregory, John G., History of Milwaukee, Milwaukee: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co.,  
1931, v. 4, pp. 102-104.  
Milwaukee City Directories.  
"Noted Builder, Strack, Dead," Milwaukee Journal, October 12, 1935.  
Perrin, Richard W. E., Milwaukee Landmarks, Milwaukee: Milwaukee Public  
Museum, 1968, pp. 80-81.  
Records of Ownership, Records and Research, Milwaukee.  
Zimmermann, Henry Russell, The Heritage Guidebook: Landmarks and Historical Sites  
in Southeastern Wisconsin, Milwaukee: Heritage Banks, 1976.  
                    , "Showpiece Mansion on Cedar St. Now Shaded by Patina of Time," Milwaukee  
Journal, May 28, 1967.

## Item 11:

Katherine E. Hundt, Architectural Historian  
State Historical Society of Wisconsin  
816 State Street  
Madison

January 6, 1977  
608-262-2970  
Wisconsin 53706

# Field Survey Form II [8/75]

State Historical Society of Wisconsin

MAP USED

NEGATIVE NUMBER

SURVEYOR

MAP NUMBER

Young (Latus)

- USGS Quad.
- DOT Com'ty.
- Hand-drawn

**Historic Name**

Kalvelage, Joseph B., House

**Common Name**

**Location**

2432 West Kilbourn Avenue

**Community or Town**

Milwaukee

**County**

Milwaukee

**Section**

**Town**

**Range**

**East  
West**

**Classification**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

**Today's Date**

5-26-76

**Facade Orientation**

South

**Owner of Property**

Greg Filardo

**Street and Number**

2432 West Kilbourn Avenue

**City or Town**

Milwaukee

**State**

Wisconsin

**ZIP**

53233

**Registry of Deeds or Courthouse**

Milwaukee County Courthouse

**Street and Number**

901 North 9th Street

**City or Town**

Milwaukee

**State**

Wisconsin

**ZIP**

532

**Date of Construction and Specific Source of Data**

1896-98: General Office, Building Inspection, 1010 Municipal Bldg., Milwaukee

**Architect or Designer and Source of Information**

Otto Straack - Inventory form

**Bibliographical References**

- Bruce, William G., History of Milwaukee City and County, (Chicago, 1922), 2:340  
 Building Permits & other records, Gen'l Office, Building Inspection, Milwaukee  
Milwaukee City Directory  
 Perrin, Richard W. B., Milwaukee Landmarks, (Milwaukee, 1968), 80-81  
 Records of Ownership, Records and Research, 509 City Hall, Milwaukee  
 Zimmerman, H. Russell, "The Past In Our Present," Milwaukee Journal, May 28, 1967

Condition				Check:	
<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved: 19__	

**Describe Present and Original (if known) Physical Appearance**

A brick, 2½ story German Baroque Revival house with decorated parapet gables and eight terms (atlantes) supporting the projecting porch roof. An impressive and fortress-like building constructed in 1896-98, the Kalvelage house can be noted for an abundance of lavish terra cotta ornament on the exterior, including window keystones resembling heads, lions at the roof corners, and other opulent scroll-work and detail.

In later years the house became the headquarters for the Milwaukee Ku Klux Klan and subsequently served as a hospital and rooming house.

While a rooming house, the mansion was damaged inside by fire, and portions of the interior which were destroyed had to be replaced. At an undetermined date the dormer (third floor) window of the main facade was replaced with glass blocks. Otherwise the exterior retains its original appearance.

The current owner is in process of restoring the house.

**Statement of Significance**

The significance of the house is principally architectural. According to Perrin, Otto Straack, whose name occurs with some regularity in the annals of Milwaukee's Victorian architecture, was born in Germany, coming from Hamburg to Milwaukee in 1888. "Aside from his work on commercial and industrial buildings including the Pabst Brewery, he produced a number of elaborate houses with reflect his German taste and training. The most striking of these houses is the old Kalvelage House at 2432 W. Kilbourn Avenue which was completed in 1895 for Joseph B. Kalvelage, Secretary and Treasurer of Hoffmann and Billings Company, a Milwaukee plumbing supply manufacturer. Otto Strack evidently loved baroque architecture, and in the Kalvelage House he indulged his flair for the ornamental in a baroque fantasy of carvings and figures."<sup>1</sup> The house was designated a Milwaukee Landmark in 1975.

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Perrin, Richard W. H., Milwaukee Landmarks, (Milwaukee, 1968), 30-31.

Nomination is requested by the Milwaukee Landmarks Commission, and the house's new owner eagerly concurs.