

# Women's Club House

## From the Deed Record Book, p. 543

Deed to the Women's Club filed on Dec. 12, 1930 by "Maren D. Morrison, as Trustee under and by virtue of the terms and conditions of the last will and testament of Wallace A Downing" conveyed the house for \$1.00.

"At any time the use of said property be discontinued as a women's club and memorial to my parents, it shall revert to me or my daughter, Georgianna Morrison Ely and Maren Downing Morrison or their children."

House located in the Ashland Addition of Kearney Junction at 723 W 22<sup>nd</sup> St.

## Federal Census

1880 – Kearney, Buffalo County Nebraska, June 7 & 8, 1880

Downing, Wallace A – 39, married, harness maker, born in Vermont, parents born in Vermont

Susannah – 28, married, keeping house, born in Wisconsin, parents born in Scotland

Maron D. – 10, daughter, born in Wisconsin

Georgia M. – 3, daughter, born in Nebraska

Richardson, Wm H. N. – 16, nephew, harness maker, born in Wisconsin, father born in

Wisconsin, mother born in Scotland [Susannah's nephew]

Bent, Judie – 18, servant, born in Ohio, both parents born in Ohio

1900 – 723 W 22<sup>nd</sup> St., Third Ward, Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska, 12, June, 1900

Downing, W A – 59, born Apr 1841, married 30 yrs, merch. harness, born in Vermont

Susonah – 48, born Dec 1851, married 30 yrs, 2 children 1 living, born in Wisconsin,

father born in Illinois, mother born in New York

1910 – 723 W 22<sup>nd</sup> St., Third Ward, Kearney, Buffalo County, Nebraska, April 23, 1910

Downing, Wallace A – 68, 1<sup>st</sup> marriage, married 43 years, own income, born in Vermont

Susana – 61, 1<sup>st</sup> marriage, married 43 years, 2 children, 1 living, born in Wisconsin,

father born in Ireland, mother born in Scotland

## Kearney Cemetery

Downing, Wallace – 1530, 4 East, 70, died 1/1/1912, arterio-sclerosis

Downing, Susanna – 1530, 5 East, 78 yr, 9 mo, 2 da, died 9/10/1927, bronchitis

Downing, Jane M. – 1530, 8 East, 72, died 12/21/1894, paralysis

Downing, Georgia – 1530, 1 East, 6, buried 1/28/1885 [no cause of death]

## **Kearney Hub – Jane Downing**

Apr. 28, 1890 – “Mrs. Jane Downing will soon have a new and beautiful residence at seventy avenue between Twenty-first and Twenty-second streets. It will cost nearly \$2,000.”

Dec. 9, 1891 – Eyesight May Be Impaired

Mrs. Downing, of 5<sup>th</sup> ave between 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup> was injured when a piece of wood flew up and hit her in the eye when she was cutting kindling wood. She is mother of W A & R L Downing.

Jan. 5, 1895 – W A Downing petitioned to be administrator of his recently deceased mother’s estate.

Mar. 13, 1895 – Rev. Hayden rented the former home of Mrs. Downing on Seventh Ave between 21<sup>st</sup> & 22<sup>nd</sup>.

## **Kearney Women’s Club notebook of clippings and history**

### Women’s Club Timeline

1887 – Clio Club organized

– One project was to study the equal rights of women in public affairs.

Name 19<sup>th</sup> Century Club – not because it was started in the 9<sup>th</sup> century

Because Victor Hugo said “The Nineteenth century is pre-eminently the age of women.”

1888 – Mrs. Elizabeth Saxon, VP of Nat. Women’s Suffrage Assoc. spoke to Clio Club

Some members formed a new group – the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Club

Study women’s work with municipal suffrage, and culture and education

Rebecca Hamer first president, wife of first lawyer, Dist. Judge by this time

Limited membership to 50

1898-99 yearbook – 15 minutes of each meeting to be devoted to current events;  
general conversation will close each meeting

1899 – Joined the Nebraska State Federation of Women’s Clubs

(had been formed at state level in Dec. 1894)

1901 – Lifted membership restriction

Formed 3 departments – Am. Lit., household economics, Music

Met once a week, 4<sup>th</sup> week general meeting

1903 – added History

Others added since then, esp. Civics & Child Welfare

1911 – Joined the General Federation of Women’s Clubs (national level)

1921 – Changed name from 19<sup>th</sup> Century Club to Kearney Women’s Club

Met in homes, Midway Hotel, Kearney Opera House top floor, Ft. Kearney Hotel

1931 – the Downing House given by Maren Downing Morrison as per her father's will

1980 – House placed on National Register

2004 – Quit Claim deed removed former restrictions

#### Community Projects (not a complete list)

Donated to Chautauqua fund 1906 and later

Planted trees in 3<sup>rd</sup> Ward park; carried water to them

Held first baby clinic, in 1915

Planted a tree on Longfellow school grounds for each Kearney soldier killed in WWI

Maintained a rose garden at the cemetery for many years

transferred to Downing House yard when cemetery needed the space.

Planted trees in Centennial Park

Planted trees and roses in Harvey Park

Conducted Tuberculosis Christmas Seal campaign for many years

During depression bought shoes and clothing for needy children

Installed drinking fountains downtown

Led move to get school nurse in public schools

Sponsor Practical Nursing School and have receptions do capping and graduation

Give music scholarships to high school students

Conduct sewing contest & craft fairs

Poor Farm – “At a meeting in 1921 a report was made on the county poor farm where pasture land was rented at \$5.00 an acre, and cultivated land for one-third of the crop. The county poor were cared for at the WCTU Hospital at \$6.00 per week for nursing care. The Women's Club made donations of bedding and food.”

#### Downing House

1870” – Downing family came to Kearney

1882 – Built brick 2-story building at 212-6-08 Central for his harness making business

1885(6) – House built by Charles Hanson, [started in 1885] about year later had financial problems

1887 – Wallace Downing purchased it for \$10,000

1920's – House was Downing home [W A died in 1912 & wife in 1927]

1930, Nov. 5 – Pres. Beulah Wirsig announced gift of the house

Named Downing Memorial Club Home

#### General Federation of Women's Clubs

(also from Wikipedia on line)

Organized in 1890 by Jane Cunningham Croly

Author & journalist

Used pen name Jennie June

Wrote for newspapers and magazines

1868 – Organized “Sorosis”, later called Gen Fed. Of Women’s Clubs

Because women were not allowed in to a NY Press Club (all-male) banquet  
honoring Charles Dickens

1889 – Organized NY Women’s Press Club

Chartered by Congress in 1901

Made headquarters in Washington DC in 1922