

## The Kingsley-Jenter House



### Description

The Kingsley-Jenter House at 302 E. Main Street is the headquarters, meeting place, archives and museum of the Manchester Area Historical Society. The Society purchased this property in December 2015, and has been improving and converting it into a central showplace of Manchester history.

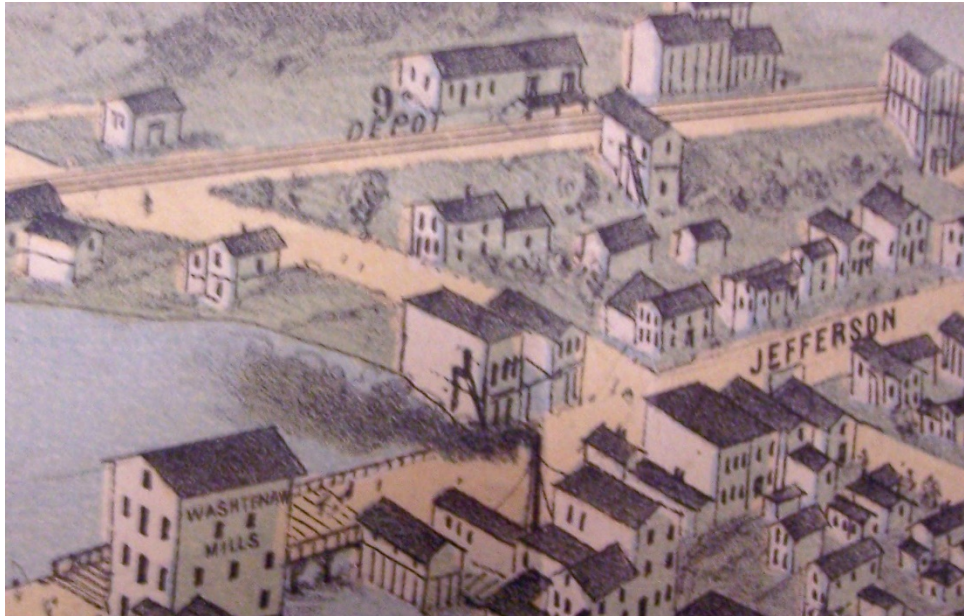
The MAHS facilities consist of a main hall/assembly room, large entrance foyer, a boardroom with archival materials, a galley area with restrooms, an upper level museum room with attached archival storage, and lower level storage.

The MAHS uses the Kingsley-Jenter House for periodic membership meetings, presentations, hosting of visiting researchers, and archives/artifacts preservation. The facility is also open to other community organizations, businesses and private parties for gatherings.

### History

The home sits on Lot 1 of Block 32, and the property transferred from **John Gilbert** in 1835 to the investment team of **Stephen Fargo, James H. and Elizabeth Fargo, and Shepherd Knapp**. **John D. Kief** and wife **Jane Kief** took over parts of this parcel between 1835 and 1841. In November 1841, the property was sold by the Fargos/Kiefs (3/4 of lot) to **Lorenzo Higgins** for \$75, and by Shepherd Knapp (south 1/4) to **Lorenzo Higgins** for \$75. Higgins was the Manchester Postmaster at the time. Lorenzo Higgins and his wife Catherine Higgins then sold the lot to **Prosper J. Wheeler** on February 4, 1842 for \$575.

**Prosper J. Wheeler** was a cooper (barrel maker). He came to Manchester in 1839, and built the first home on the property circa 1842, along with a cooper shop behind it. He worked in conjunction with **Philo Millen**, a blacksmith, who lived across from him on Ann Arbor St. **Prosper and wife Zadia Wheeler** lived there until 1864, raising a son **William Wheeler**, who obtained some national fame as a portrait painter.



*Excerpt from 1872 Manchester Birds-Eye View Showing Original House and Workshop*

Prosper and Zadia Wheeler sold the property and home to **Charles and Jane Kingsley** for \$1800 on February 6, 1864. Charles Kingsley had retired from farming in Sharon Township and had served as a Justice of the Peace. Upon Charles' death in 1871, his wife and youngest son **John Hampden Kingsley** resided at the home. John Kingsley married **Matilda Wilson** in 1876, and the Kingsley family continued to live at this address until 1932.

The Kingsleys were a prominent family in the Village of Manchester. **John Hampden Kingsley**, or "JH" as he was called, was a prominent businessman, owning the grist mill in Soulesville/East Manchester, a merchant (hardware/drugstore), and entrepreneur, building Manchester's first power plant to provide the village with electricity in 1892. He also dabbled in politics, serving several terms as President of the Village and on one occasion ran for the position of County Treasurer. He was very active in Manchester's Masonic Lodge No. 148 F & AM, attaining the positions of High Priest and Grand Sentinel. JH Kingsley died on September 1, 1940 at the age of 86.

**Matilda Wilson Kingsley** was a powerful personality in her own right. She was a founding member of the prestigious Saturday Club formed in 1892 – a literary/social club comprised of Manchester's prominent matrons. She was also the first woman elected to the Manchester Board of Education and served as its President in 1908, and was active in the early suffrage movement. Matilda Kingsley died on October 7, 1928 at the age of 76.

The house that now sits at 302 East Main Street was constructed in 1904. On June 19 of that year, the original 1842 structure was consumed by fire. John and Matilda Kingsley rebuilt in grand style – erecting a large frame residence with a massive stone porch and impressive stone steps. The new home not only served as the family residence, but was an excellent venue for entertaining. In 1932, JH

Kingsley, now a widower, sold 302 East Main Street to local mortician **Arthur Ernest Jenter**, who subsequently moved his mortuary business and family to the site.



*John Hampden Kingsley*



*Matilda Wilson Kingsley*

**Arthur Jenter** operated the funeral business from 1932 to 1963, expanding the building and growing the business along with his wife **Cora Grossman Jenter**. His son **Ronald Jenter**, along with wife **June**, took over the business and operated it until 1995, when **Martin Braun** and wife **Stephanie** purchased the business and lived in the home with their family. Martin Braun sold the business to **Todd Borek** and **Karl Jennings** in 2000, who operated the business as Borek-Jennings Funeral Home. The Manchester Area Historical Society purchased the home in December 2015, when Borek-Jennings relocated to a different location in Manchester.



*Arthur Ernest Jenter*

*Cora Edna Grossman Jenter*



*Ronald Arthur Jenter*