

HISTORIC RESOURCE NOMINATION

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Landmarks Commission

City of Madison Planning Division
215 Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
PO Box 2985
Madison, WI 53701-2985
(608) 266-6552



1.) Identification of Historic Resource

Resource type (choose one): ☒ Landmark ☐ Historic District

Common Name

Kathryn Clarenbach Family Residence

Historic Name

Kathryn Clarenbach Family Residence, originally Edward and M. Helen Samp Residence

Current Use

Residence

Location of Historic Resource

Street Address

2229 Eton Ridge, Madison, Wisconsin 53726

Parcel Number(s)

070921411040

Legal Description

Hillington Subdivision, Block 38, Lot 6

2.) Form Prepared By

Name and Title

Gary Tipler

Organization Represented

Madison Trust for Historic Preservation

807 Jenifer Street, Madison, WI 53703

Address

608-852-4695

Telephone Number

garytip8778@gmail.com

Email Address

As the preparer of this document, I am signing below to signify that I believe this document is complete and contains true and accurate information.



Signature

Gary Tipler

Printed Name

10/16/2023

Date Submitted

3.) General Historical Data

Original Owner

Edward and M. Helen Samp

Original Use

Residence

Architect/Builder/Designer

Unknown

Architectural Style

Colonial Revival

Date of Construction/Period of Significance

Constructed 1924

Period of Significance August 1, 1960-March 4, 1994

Moved or Original Site?

Original

Physical Condition (excellent, good, fair, poor, deteriorated, ruins)

Excellent

4.) Describe Present and Original Character and Features

Location

The Kathryn Clarenbach Family Residence, 2229 Eton Ridge, Madison, is located within the West Lawn Heights Historic District, which was listed on the Wisconsin State Register of Historic Places on October 17, 1997, and on the National Register on March 5, 1998.

Siting

The Kathryn Clarenbach Family Residence is sited on an interior lot of 6,000 square feet on the south side of Eton Ridge. The house is set back slightly from the street in conformance with its neighbors. The primary façade faces north. There is a driveway on the east side of the house leading to a one-story garage wing at the rear. A narrow side yard is on the west side of the house. A rear yard slopes from the house down toward the rear of the lot.

Exterior

The two-story Colonial Revival house is generally symmetrical in appearance. It is a wooden clapboard house set on a cast concrete foundation. The front (north) façade has a central entrance flanked by double-hung windows on each side with similar second-story windows above the windows below and the entrance. A gabled roof tops the house with the end gables facing the sides, and a projecting eave with soffit and fascia. The entrance door pavilion projects slightly and is trimmed with flat wood sheathing and a parapet-type entablature of panels and moldings across the top. The door is paneled and there is a fan light above with narrow sidelights and panels below them that frame the door. The floor is raised above a concrete stoop with iron side rails and with two steps down to a concrete walk leading to the public sidewalk. The upper sashes of the double-hung windows have four-over-four lights separated by muntins. There are wood blinds with shutter dogs and hinges on each of the façade windows. Chimneys crown the roof, where gables face the sides of the lot. A window planter box held with brackets is located beneath the first-floor windows.

The east and west sides of this side-gabled wing are very similar. A brick masonry chimney extends through the roof on the east side, separating in symmetrical patterns paired horizontal fixed-sash windows on the first floor, double-hung windows on the second and quarter-round windows in the attic. On the west side of the building there is no chimney on the wall and it only pierces the roof on this side. There is a horizontal fixed-sash window on the front half and paired double-hung windows on the rear half of the first floor, and small paired hinged single-sash windows in the attic with three-over-three lights. Both sides have gable returns of fascia and soffits. The west chimney is a false one that achieves façade symmetry.

The rear wing adjoins the west side of the rear wall of the house. It consists of a two-story section of a single-wide room depth – a room that possibly was a second-floor, three-season porch originally, and a one-story extension that serves the double-door garage. A roof ridge joins the main roof of the house, though below that of the front of the house. The roof cornice of fascia and soffits is below that of the main house roof, as well. On the west wall of the rear wing extension is a paired window to serve the second-floor room, a lowered paired window to serve the breakfast nook of the kitchen and a window to serve the garage. On the rear walls of the rear wing, a gable end features a narrow attic venting window and has modest returns on the wall and a horizontal trim joining them below, which paired double-hung windows and a centered second floor door opens to a nearly flat deck above part of the garage. A simple spindled rail with corner posts edges the deck. From the garage, a single double-hung window faces the rear yard. On the east side of the rear of the main part of the house a single window is on the second floor and a set of paired windows is on the first floor. On the east side of the rear wing a set of paired windows is on the second floor and a set of two garage doors – one newer and the other original -- and a former raised passage door to the kitchen which no longer has a rear stair to serve it. The drive and rear pad are set at a lower level than the first floor. The rear yard slopes abruptly at first, and gradually toward the rear. Trees and shrubs are largely on the periphery of the lot.

Interior

A front entrance vestibule has a door separating it from the large living room that runs from front to back on the east side of the house. The stair to the second floor is straight ahead from the entrance. A wide doorway opens to the dining room on the front west quarter of the first floor from the living room. The kitchen door is at the rear wall of the dining room. The kitchen occupies part of the rear west part of the house. At the southwest corner of the kitchen is a small breakfast nook. A stair to the basement from the kitchen is beneath the stair to the second floor. A door from the kitchen leads to a stair to the garage. From the stair landing to the second floor is the access to the rear room, originally a likely three-season-porch. A few more steps up and back toward the front of the house is a short hallway to the left toward a small corner bedroom and a bathroom. The three other bedrooms occupy a corner of the house, a small central hall also provides access to a steep stair to the attic.

The house has plaster walls throughout except for the three-season room, which has paneling likely dating to the 1960s. The first floor has oak flooring except for linoleum in the kitchen, and red, purple, green and blue-gray slate in the entrance vestibule. There are dark-stained baseboards, doors, door and window casing, and trims throughout. A finely turned Colonial newel post and narrow balusters define the stair. A dark reddish-brown textile brick fireplace with an arched masonry opening and a simple wood mantel is centered on the east living room wall. An extension of the mantle to the south/rear wall is the top of the built-in bookcase cabinets. The bookcase cabinets have twelve-pane glazed doors.

The kitchen appears to be largely original to an earlier time, unknown. The cabinets and the trims may always have been painted.

The dates of light fixtures throughout are unknown.

5.) Describe Significance of Property and Conformance to Designation Criteria

Per MGO 41.07 or 41.10:

- ☐ (a) The landmark/district is associated with broad patterns of cultural, political, economic, or social history of the nation, state, or community.
- ☒ (b) The landmark/district is associated with the lives of important persons, and/or with important events in national, state, or local history.
- ☐ (c) The landmark/district encompasses an area of particular archaeological or anthropological significance.
- ☐ (d) The landmark/district embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type inherently valuable for its representation of a period, style, or method of construction, or of indigenous materials or craftsmanship.
- ☐ (e) The landmark/district is representative of the work of a master builder, designer, or architect.

Introduction

The house at 2229 Eton Ridge is being nominated as a Madison Landmark, under Criterion B for its association with Kathryn “Kay” Clarenbach, a local, state, and national leader of the Women’s Movement.

The period of significance is from 1960-1994, reflecting the time that the house was home to Kathryn Clarenbach and her family. This covers the date that the family moved in to the home on August 1, 1960 until her passing on March 4, 1994.

Significance

The house at 2229 Eton Ridge is significant to Madison, the state, and the nation, for its association with the work of Kathryn “Kay” Clarenbach, who was a principal leader in the development of the “second wave” of the feminist or modern women’s movement in Wisconsin and the United States.¹

The house is closely associated with her life and work. It was at her home where she did much of her organizational work on each and every one of her tasks and projects to increase opportunities and equity for women. She wrote letters, speeches, position papers at this house; planned events, held meetings, and entertained and housed guests here, including state and national leaders of the emerging modern women’s movement.²

Kathryn Clarenbach’s defining roles within the second wave of the feminist or modern women’s movement that arose during the 1960s and 1970s were the creation of organizational structure and support for many of the functions of the movement, its institutions and its organizations.

Her leadership within the Wisconsin Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women (from 1962 to 1979) led to her work in educating and advising women’s commissions and organizations throughout

¹ On the “second wave” of the women’s movement. Following World War II, when male veterans rejoined the workforce, many employers released their female employees, who often returned to female-only service jobs or to housekeeping and rearing children. Technology simplified housekeeping, the post-war baby boom was maturing, and women sought higher education and career development. While working outside the home had previously been common for lower income women and women of color, this social shift led to more middle-class white women wanting to enter the workforce.

² Author’s conversation with Janet (Clarenbach) Mallon, June, 2022. Email exchange with David Clarenbach and Janet Mallon, August 20, 2023.

the nation. In 1975, Clarenbach served as executive director of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year. She was subsequently appointed as the Deputy Coordinator of the National Women's Conference Committee that took place in Houston in November 1977.

Clarenbach was a founder and first chair of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966 and of the Wisconsin Women's Network in 1980. The house also served as the office for the fledgling National Organization for Women during its first year, beginning in June, 1966.

In these roles, Clarenbach used education as the underlying method of furthering the goals of the movement. She informed and motivated women on the challenges and opportunities for improvement for women in domestic, civic, and work environments. As an expert in political science and economics, she frequently made the case that women played a critical role in the economy. She did this by organizing surveys, workshops, and conferences; making speeches; producing many publications; and by providing interviews and written statements for state, local and national newspapers and radio media.

Her efforts catalyzed self-evaluation in the women she influenced, their engagement in community groups and developed local leadership that broadly contributed to the grassroots growth of the Women's Movement. With a calm, certain and insightful manner she was able to forge coalitions that bridged the disparate associations of long-established women's associations and those of the emerging feminist movement.

State and national politicians and feminist leaders recognized Clarenbach for her organizational and leadership skills and abilities, but she was also widely appreciated as being "kind, thoughtful and concerned for others, warm, gracious, fun-loving, witty and full of humor," which was useful in brokering alliances and moving forward women's issues, according to friend and colleague Connie Threinen. She emphasized the importance of balancing family life with her career, and described her marriage as a partnership that allowed for both parties to have a career and support their children.³ Her devotion to family life and developing its balance with career was one of the principal themes in her work, which culminated in her book *The Marriage Partnership*, published in 1979.

During her entire illustrious career in aiding the development of the modern women's movement, Clarenbach conducted much of her work at home at 2229 Eton Ridge. She and Henry worked to maintain a balance between careers and family life. When offered a faculty position, Clarenbach chose a three-quarter-time position in consideration of her family. She added, "I got into some very bad habits of bringing work home, so I put three-quarter time in the office and then another three quarters at home."⁴ Janet and David noted that she frequently "took advantage of the relative quiet and tranquility of her home work spaces, whether at the kitchen or dining table, living room recliner, the picnic table or lawn chair in the back yard with a glass of iced coffee and her yellow legal pad." She also did this "during her Washington and later New York positions, to compose and focus on her writing tasks."⁵

In her speeches Clarenbach often spoke of her primary commitment to family – maintaining a working partnership with her husband Henry and raising three children. She provided discerning guidance and

³ Connie Threinen, "Kathryn Clarenbach was Advocate and Pioneer for Women's Rights." *The Stateswoman*. April-June, 1994, 2.

⁴ "Documenting the Midwestern Origins of the Twentieth Century Women's Movement." State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Project 1231A, Tapes 56-57. Mss 823, Box 2. 1-2. Transcripts of oral history interviews with Pat Calchina are noted hereafter as KC transcripts. KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 229.

⁵ Author's conversation with Janet (Clarenbach) Mallon, June, 2022. Email exchange with David Clarenbach and Janet Mallon, August 20, 2023.

standards for her children to achieve their goals, largely in public service. For instance, her eldest daughter Sara had worked on case research for a divorce law case book by Ruth Bader Ginsburg.⁶ Sara became an attorney in California, providing services to Spanish-speaking communities. In her retirement, Sara directed community engagement and media relations for Salud, an organization that provides medical care for indigent communities. David became Wisconsin's youngest State Representative at age 20 in 1974 and served nine terms in the Wisconsin State Assembly, five as Speaker Pro Tem. He ushered in the first statewide gay rights bill in the nation. After leaving office in 1992, he served as executive director of the Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a national civil rights fundraising organization in Washington, D.C. Kathryn's youngest daughter Janet became a New York State science teacher, grades 7-12, with certifications in biology, earth science, and general science.

Concurrent with Kathryn's work on the national stage of the growing women's movement, Henry was politically involved, serving as a delegate to the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago and was active in the anti-war movement of the 1960s. His participation in the rallies and protests with David had an energizing effect that would become part of David's mission to effect change in his work as an elected official at the county and state levels. Henry retired from his real estate business in 1977 due to the advance of Parkinson's disease and was cared for at home. He died in June, 1987.

During the last years of her mother's life, Sara left her job in California to live at the Eton Ridge house to help David care for their mother. During this time, Sara also worked on David's congressional campaign.

Kathryn Clarenbach died at home with family by her side on March 4, 1994.

Early Life and Education

Kathryn "Kay" Dorothy (Frederick) Clarenbach (1920-94) was born on October 7, 1920, in Sparta, Wisconsin, to Nina Vivian Hubbell and Alexander Ernst Frederick. She was the third of four children and the only daughter.

Kathryn Clarenbach was inspired by her parents. She reminisced, "My mother had been a country school teacher... She was a natural teacher, and all four of us had a built-in tutor... she read every afternoon... and wrote for an hour every morning... She loved researching and writing her papers for the Sparta Literary Club." She served as the only woman on the Sparta School Board for many years. "I never thought of my mother as being especially independent, modern, or liberated. But within the context of her life and times I realize now that she was all three."⁷

Kathryn Clarenbach's parents encouraged her to read and write at an early age and graduated valedictorian in her class from Sparta High School in 1937 at age 16. She came to Madison that year to study political science, earned a BA (1941), MA (1942) and PhD (1946) degrees in political science at the University of Wisconsin.⁸

She met political science graduate student classmate Henry G. Clarenbach while at the university studying political science and economics. He had received his bachelor's degree from the University of Kansas. They were married on September 5, 1946. Ten days later she began teaching at Purdue University (1946-47), then moved to New York City to live with Henry where he was pursuing his

⁶ KC transcripts. November 17, 1987, 334.

⁷ Constance Threinen. "Kathryn Clarenbach," *Wisconsin Women: A Gifted Heritage*. American Association of University Women, Wisconsin State Division. 1982, 209.

⁸ Introduction and Abstract, Oral History Interview with Kathryn Clarenbach, September 5, 1991, Madison, Wisconsin. "Documenting the Midwestern Origins of the Twentieth Century Women's Movement."

master's degree at Columbia University. There she served as Executive Secretary of the Ethical Society's Encampment for Citizenship in New York City (1947-48). She also taught at Olivet College (1950-52) in Olivet, Michigan. When they moved to Missouri for a year, she held a position on the state board of the Missouri League of Women Voters. During these years, they had three children: Sara (b.1949), David (b.1953) and Janet (b.1957).⁹

Stirring the Pot

Longing for a university community, Kathryn and Henry chose to live in Madison. Henry bought the house at 2229 Eton Ridge for \$20,000 from Edward and M. Helen Samp and they moved in on August 1, 1960.

In her first year in Madison, Kathryn Clarenbach taught political science at Edgewood College and Henry got a job in Madison working for the American Cancer Society, then worked for Patrick Lucy's real estate company. Henry opened an office just blocks away on Regent Street at Allen so that he could be home when the children returned from school. The couple supported each other's careers in their marriage partnership, of which Kathryn spoke and wrote about throughout her life.¹⁰ There was a network of neighbors who helped each other with child care, knowing of Kathryn's work to promote education and equality for women.

Kathryn indicated an interest in working at the University of Wisconsin to her neighbors, most of whose husbands had university-related work. She worked with Elva Trump, along with several other neighborhood women, on a "paying" clerical project for the American College Testing Program (ACT) headed by her neighbor, University of Wisconsin Registrar Paul L. Trump. Upon completion, the group took other collaborative projects including editing a compendium of laws affecting women for the 50 states, a project for Shirley Abrahamson, a faculty member, researcher and lecturer in constitutional law and political science at the UW Law School.¹¹ In this project, Clarenbach became aware that the challenges that women commonly faced were broadly embedded in law. In Wisconsin, there were 380 provisions that treated women differently from men. This realization became a driving force in the development of her commitment to effect change through her work.¹²

While at a neighborhood picnic in that first summer on Eton Ridge, she spoke with Ted Shannon and Harold Motross, who worked with University of Wisconsin-Extension. They spoke of the Minnesota Plan for continuing education for mature women, suggested that Clarenbach volunteer and contact Martha Peterson, the Dean of Women at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Shannon and Clarenbach later worked together at the UW Extension.¹³

In 1961, Clarenbach met Martha Peterson at a Mortarboard luncheon and briefed her on the Minnesota Plan. Peterson invited her to attend weekly Extension staff meetings to discuss prospects for such a program. Clarenbach volunteered to canvas maturing women to establish their interest in continuing education. After an initial letter polling several hundred Madison-area women with connections to the university, the program garnered so much interest that Clarenbach moved from interviewing individuals to proposing a conference to engage many more women. For the women who responded, she found an abundant need for them to become more productive, to complete or continue their education, and re-

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ *The Marriage Partnership*. Wisconsin. Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1978.

¹¹ Louise Marston, "Competent, Well-Trained Mothers Stay Home-for Pay!" *Wisconsin State Journal*. October 1, 1961, 98.

¹² KC transcripts. March 10, 1989, 26. (Transcripts of oral history interviews are noted as KC transcripts.)

¹³ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 223.

enter the workforce. She saw the need to remove impediments to women's professional growth that were imposed by policies of employers and industry and the laws that govern them, and thereby expand women's contributions to society and the economy.¹⁴

Peterson and Clarenbach met with University of Wisconsin Vice-President of Academic Affairs Fred Harrington who approved funds to plan the conference as well as to develop a continuing education plan for women for the university. That evening Peterson offered Clarenbach a five-month, part-time job for the project. After consulting Henry on logistics with the family, eagerly accepted.¹⁵

Along with Ruth Doyle of the Dean of Women's Office, Clarenbach planned the Conference on Continuing Education of Women that was held February 29, 1963, at the Wisconsin Center on the University campus. For the key-note speaker, she booked Dr. Virginia Senders, the lead organizer and coordinator of the University of Minnesota Plan for Continuing Education of Women in Minneapolis. Break-out sessions covered educational needs for cultural enrichment, job opportunities, nursing, medical technology, teacher education and social work.¹⁶

The needs identified at the conference break-out discussions included: counseling and orientation, promoting the potential for women to work part or full time to families and employers, developing the plan to integrate with the university framework, programs be developed statewide, and that training and employer participation be part of the plan.¹⁷

Based on the conference and planning project, Kathryn Clarenbach developed a plan for a statewide response to President John F. Kennedy's Commission on the Status of Women, and created a basis for establishing a Wisconsin commission. As a result, she was offered an ongoing position as the first Director of University Education of Women (1962-67) in the office of Martha Peterson, the Dean of Women.¹⁸

Clarenbach had noted the development of the Kennedy administration's Commission on the Status of Women in 1961, per the recommendation of Assistant US Secretary of Labor, Esther Peterson, who had followed the example of the United Nations in 1946.¹⁹ The commission's charge was to examine problems and opportunities for women in commerce, education and society with a focus on legislative and employment discrimination against women. The commission's report, "American Woman," was completed in October 1963, recommending that each state establish an analogous commission, long after Clarenbach had begun her work.²⁰

Kathryn Clarenbach's Achievements in the Development of the Women's Movement

Kathryn "Kay" Clarenbach served as the director of University Education of Women (1962-67), and as a University of Wisconsin-Extension Specialist for Continuing Education for Women (1967-72). It was from

¹⁴ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 223-226.

¹⁵ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 226-227.

¹⁶ "Education Conference Set for Tuesday on 'U' Campus," *Wisconsin State Journal*. February 19, 1962, 14.

¹⁷ Samuel C. Reynolds, "U.W. Session Charts Use of Talents, Women's Power Isn't Underestimated," *Wisconsin State Journal*. February 21, 1962, 11.

¹⁸ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 229.

¹⁹ Op. cit., Library of Congress, American Memory. Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman's Party, 5. Immediately following World War II in 1946, the National Woman's Party was instrumental in the establishment of a permanent United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

²⁰ "Presidential Commission on the Status of Women." <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Presidential>.

these positions that she was able to accomplish considerable organizational work in developing educational conferences, news releases, and publications to benefit the education of women.

Clarenbach created, acquired funding for, and served as the director of the Carnegie-sponsored E.B. Fred Fellowship Program at the University of Wisconsin to enable women to acquire their Ph.D.'s. She stimulated changes in policies and practices necessary to create an effective program.²¹

In 1962, Clarenbach began work to create the organizational structure and basis for a Wisconsin Commission on the Status of Women. Clarenbach had followed the work of Esther Peterson and recommended to Governor Reynolds a year of planning to establish credibility and demonstrate the need for developing a state commission, and hold a statewide conference. Clarenbach booked Peterson as the keynote speaker at the February 1963, Professional Opportunities Conference for about 50 leaders of Wisconsin women's organizations. At the conference, there was unanimous approval for a statewide commission, which Clarenbach believed could do more for women than the university.

In March, 1963, Clarenbach met with Geraldine Hinkle, administrative assistant to the Dean of Letters and Sciences at the University of Wisconsin and state president of Business and Professional Women (BPW), who had participated in the Professional Opportunities Conference, and with Marguerite Gilmore, head of the regional office of the Women's Bureau of the US Labor Department. The three of them met with Wisconsin Governor John Reynolds to pitch the idea of a state Status of Women Commission. Reynolds was an admirer of Eleanor Roosevelt, who had been Kennedy's figurative chair of his commission, and immediately embraced the idea. Clarenbach proposed that a statewide conference first be held to "compare the findings of the Kennedy commission with the circumstances in Wisconsin and so that other local leadership could emerge."²²

Reynolds asked Clarenbach to chair a committee to plan the statewide conference that was held in February, 1964. Over 300 women from across the state attended the conference to discuss education, job training, employment, pay equity, child care and health care. Clarenbach produced a comprehensive report on the issues and a proposal for a Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. Governor Reynolds readily approved it and asked her to chair the commission.

From the beginning of her work in this area, Clarenbach made the effort to reach women of all walks, from the educated, white women associated with traditional women's clubs, to the racially diverse, disadvantaged, working, poor and rural women. Her work at finding appointments for the Wisconsin Governor's Commission represented her ideals. Catherine Conroy, a founder of the Communications Workers of America, was asked by Clarenbach to serve on the commission to represent union women. "Kay conscientiously looked for women from all around the state, from all walks of life, minority women. She was really conscientious about having a truly representative commission."²³ Commission appointments were confirmed by Governor Reynolds by May 1964.

²¹ Wisconsin Women's Network and the Wisconsin Women's Council. *A Tribute to Kay Clarenbach: 25 Years, Looking Back, Moving Forward. October 20, 1988, Sheraton Inn, Madison, Wisconsin.* (Madison: The Network, 1988.)

Connie Threinen, "Kathryn Clarenbach was Advocate and Pioneer for Women's Rights." *Stateswoman*. April-June, 1994, 2.

²² KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 242-243.

²³ Jamakaya. *Like Our Sisters Before Us: Women of Wisconsin Labor.* (Milwaukee: Wisconsin Labor History Society, 1998), 30.

The Wisconsin commission had no budget for its first ten years, however university administrators encouraged Clarenbach to use university resources with respect to premises of the Wisconsin Idea.²⁴ Clarenbach had identified the issues, how the committees would be set, key areas of concern and knowledge of the talent and resources around the state. Due to her organizational skills and hard work, Clarenbach claimed the Wisconsin commission was “light years ahead of the other states that had to start from scratch.”²⁵

Under Clarenbach’s leadership, “the Commission articulated issues of importance to women and gained public support for much of the change, which has taken place in Wisconsin’s laws and practices relating to women,” according to the Wisconsin Women’s Network. The commission identified 280 provisions in state statutes that treated men and women differently, held speaking engagements and workshops throughout the state, met with legislators and lobbied for changes and improvements to laws governing women, and brought about significant changes in Wisconsin state law.²⁶

Of her work to change Wisconsin state laws and subsequently those of other states through her work, Clarenbach said: “It not only changed my life, it has subsequently become my life.”²⁷

By 1967, all 50 states had commissions on the status of women established by the Business and Professional Women’s (BPW) Foundation, other women’s organizations and state governments, though some had been established in name only, had incomplete representation of prospective constituencies, and little structure.²⁸ Clarenbach responded to the patchwork of commissions by writing and producing a manual, published by the US Department of Labor, to provide states and cities with recommendations for structure, funding, media development, education, and engaging constituencies of women’s and business groups alike.²⁹

On June 30, 1966, at the third National Conference of Commissions on the Status of Women in Washington, D.C., which she had helped organize, Kathryn Clarenbach and 28 women founded the National Organization for Women (NOW). It was to be a private organization similar to the National Association of Colored People (NAACP) with the intent of working outside of the government to change policies and enact laws to benefit women. The action was sparked by the failure of representatives of the Women’s Bureau of the US Labor Department, the sponsor of the event, acting on behalf of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to take up proposals by conference attendees to enforce protection against discrimination in employment based on sex (gender discrimination), which the National Women’s Party had successfully lobbied to have included in Title VII. Subsequently the law was enacted to cover discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin and the EEOC was intended to enforce it.³⁰

²⁴ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 261.

²⁵ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 246.

²⁶ Wisconsin Women’s Network and the Wisconsin Women’s Council, *A Tribute to Kay Clarenbach: 25 Years, Looking Back, Moving Forward*. October 20, 1988, Sheraton Inn, Madison, Wisconsin. (Madison, WI: The Network, 1988).

²⁷ KC transcripts. November 3, 1987, 242.

²⁸ National Association of Commissions for Women, “Our History.” <https://www.nacw.org/history.html>.

²⁹ Kathryn F. Clarenbach and Marian L. Thompson. *Handbook for State and City Commissions on the Status of Women*. Madison. WI: University of Wisconsin-Extension, 1968.

³⁰ Op. cit., Library of Congress, American Memory. Women of Protest: Photographs from the Records of the National Woman’s Party, 5.

Clarenbach had privately appealed to Women's Bureau staff previously on that proposal to enforce the protection against gender discrimination, but without success.³¹

On the evening of June 30, the 28 women met in the hotel room of Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, established the organization's purpose statement and name, then discussed its organizational management. Clarenbach was nominated as a temporary chair due to her appeal to moderate women and feminist activists, alike. She agreed to serve the position, to appoint and guide the temporary steering committee that planned NOW's founding conference in October, 1966.

Of the 196 women present at the October NOW conference who were listed as founders, 134 were from the Midwest, the result of Clarenbach's regional networking from her previous work at the state level in Wisconsin and the relationships she had established with journalists.³²

On a phone call, NOW steering committee member, Yale University law professor and attorney Dr. Pauli Murray asked Clarenbach if she would serve as NOW's first elected chair.³³ Though Clarenbach was unable to attend the conference, she agreed to serve.³⁴ She was elected as chair of NOW, a position she held until 1970, along with Betty Friedan as president. During the first year, the organization was housed at the Clarenbach home on Eton Ridge.³⁵

Under Clarenbach's guidance, NOW membership and local chapters grew across the country. In 1967, she suggested that "local chapters... may turn out to be the major action vehicles as well as the route to membership involvement." She had supported simple founding criteria for membership – that prospective members reject racism and sexism. She believed that a key way to encourage membership was "through its numerous task forces, ranging in subjects from women in the media to religion to child care." The task forces each had a chairperson and issued statements that outlined NOW's action agenda and statements that "are basic documents of philosophy and will only reflect NOW thinking when they become the products of many minds..."³⁶

Under Clarenbach's leadership, NOW was able to effect change at a national level. In October 1968, NOW persuaded President Lyndon Johnson to amend Executive Order 11246, which prohibited federal contractors from discriminating on the basis of race, color, religion and national origins, to add prohibition of discrimination based on sex.³⁷

³¹ KC transcripts. November. 17, 1987, 270; Toni Carabillo, Judith Meuli and June Bundy Csida. *Feminist Chronicles, 1953-1993*. (Los Angeles: Women's Graphics 1993), 18-30. 10, 12, 13, 19, 20, 24, 28, 29, 30, 34.

³² Carabillo, *Feminist Chronicles, 1953-1993*, 24, 25. Analoyce Clapp, a contributor to the Milwaukee Sentinel, covered the first Wisconsin conference; KC transcripts. Nov. 17, 1987, 272, 273, 276; Gerda Lerner, *Living with History/Making Social Change*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 89; Dorothy Witte Austin of the *Milwaukee Journal* was asked by Clarenbach to cover the NOW organizational conference in October, 1966.

³³ In 1965, Dr. Pauli Murray was the first African American individual to receive a JSD from Yale Law School. She was a member of the President's Commission the Status of Women and a one-time protégé of Eleanor Roosevelt. <https://www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/pauli-murray>; Carabillo, *Feminist Chronicles*, 11, 15.

³⁴ KC transcripts. November 17, 1987, 267.

³⁵ Author's interview with David Clarenbach, May 23, 2022.

³⁶ Stephanie Gilmore, *Groundswell, Grassroots Feminist Activism in Postwar America*. (New York: Routledge, 2013), 66.

³⁷ Annis Pratt and Florence Howe, editors, *The Politics of Women's Studies: Testimony from Thirty Founding Mothers*. (New York: Feminist Press. City University of New York, 2000), 85.

Due to the wide recognition of Clarenbach's highly-organized Wisconsin Commission on the Status of Women and her outreach on assisting state and city commissions, Catherine East of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor asked Clarenbach to serve as the first chair of the Interstate Association of Commissions on the Status of Women in 1970, by. She served until 1972, helping groups to organize in many other states, regions, and territories. The organization was renamed the National Association of Commissions for Women in 1975, which expanded its role to serve city and county commissions. In 1968, Clarenbach had foreseen the expansion of these commissions and had written and published a guide for communities to establish state and local commissions.³⁸

Concurrent with her state and national involvements, were many civic contributions. Clarenbach served as the first lay chair of the Board of Trustees (1968-72) and later a member of the President's Advisory Council (1977-80) of Alverno College, a four-year liberal arts women's college in Milwaukee. She noted that one of her greatest achievements was getting its first woman president appointed.³⁹

At the University of Wisconsin while teaching political science, Clarenbach served as a founding member of the Association of Women Faculty in 1970. She was elected to its governing board in 1971. She worked with Joan I. Roberts, a visiting assistant professor who taught the first women's history class at the university. They organized faculty and staff to develop a Women's Studies program that was approved in 1975. As part of the growth of the program, noted historian Gerda Lerner came to Madison in 1980 to develop the first PhD program in Women's Studies. Lerner soon became friends with Clarenbach and documented much of her work and that of women who contributed to the development of the modern Women's Movement in the Midwest.⁴⁰

In 1971, Women's Movement leaders Gloria Steinem, Bella Abzug, and Betty Friedan planned to create an organization to help train and elect women to political offices and called upon Clarenbach to chair the organizational conference. The recognition of her abilities to find accord across various factions led to her participation in the establishment of the National Women's Political Caucus.

Clarenbach was engaged in the work of several committees, boards and commissions during the nationwide abortion debates of the early 1970s. Her most noted involvement was that as president of the Interstate Association of Commissions on the Status of Women, she became a signatory on the original *amicus curiae* briefs in the Roe v. Wade case in 1973, in support of abortion rights.⁴¹

Clarenbach began working on marital property reform in 1974 while serving as chair of the Wisconsin Commission on the Status of Women following the failure of the referendum to approve an equal rights amendment to the Wisconsin State Constitution. The commission undertook educating and engendering support of the property rights movement and the recognition of value for women's unpaid domestic work among women's organizations at the state and national levels by publishing books and pamphlets.

In 1975, Clarenbach and the Commission created an ad hoc committee of legislators, practitioners, law professors, University of Wisconsin-Extension staff and representatives of citizen groups, including the League of Women Voters, to study alternative laws governing spousal property rights and make

³⁸ Kathryn F. Clarenbach and Marian L. Thompson, *Handbook for State and City Commissions on the Status of Women*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Extension, 1968.)

³⁹ Sister Joel Reed, President, Alverno College, "Tribute to Kay Clarenbach." Alverno College, March 12, 1994. Clarenbach family collection.

⁴⁰ Op. cit., Pratt and Howe, editors, *The Politics of Women's Studies*. 85, 86.

⁴¹ Sara Clarenbach, National Women's Hall of Fame Nomination of Kathryn F. Clarenbach. February, 1996. Clarenbach family collection; KC transcripts. March 10, 1989, 36, 37.

recommendations for reform. Clarenbach asked Wisconsin Assembly Representative Mary Lou Munts to take the legislative lead divorce and equal property rights reform. Munts led the efforts through years of legislative committee hearings to eventually secure the law's passage in March, 1984.⁴²

In 1975, Clarenbach was asked and agreed to serve as executive director of the National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year at the recommendation of Catherine East of the Woman's Bureau and at the request of peace and women's rights activist US Representative Bella Abzug. The National Commission on the Observance of International Women's Year was created by presidential decree to promote it following the United Nations designation of 1975 as International Women's Year and March 8 as International Women's Day, in 1972. Subsequently, Clarenbach was also appointed to the position of Deputy Coordinator of the National Women's Conference Committee to take place in Houston in November 1977. She planned 56 state and territorial conventions to identify issues of concern to women and select delegates in preparation for the National Women's Conference.⁴³

Clarenbach had often spoken of the parallel efforts of the civil rights work of these groups and stated that the goals and achievements of the work for women's rights could not succeed without their mutual support. The success of her outreach efforts was well noted among the participants at the Houston conference. Clarenbach made a particularly strong effort to engage Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American women's groups from the 56 states and territories. For example, in Wisconsin, four regional events were held for rural women whose concerns revealed "the diversity of needs of rural women from farm wife entrepreneurs to Spanish-speaking migrants to tribal women on reservations." In 1977, more than 1,200 Wisconsin women convened in Madison to elect delegates to the National Women's Conference held that June in Houston.⁴⁴

The National Women's Conference featured working sessions and prominent speakers including Coretta Scott King, First Lady Betty Ford, and former First Ladies Lady Bird Johnson and Pat Nixon. Referred to as a constitutional convention for women with over 18,000 observers in attendance, the 1,442 elected delegates "were asked to identify the barriers that prevent women from participating fully and equally in all aspects of national life, to develop recommendations on how to remove those barriers and to establish a timetable for achieving those goals. Roughly 130,000 women participated in making those decisions in state meetings prior to the conference." The delegates drafted a national plan for federal action to remove barriers to equal treatment of women in 26 areas, including education, health, and childcare.⁴⁵ According to University of Wisconsin History Professor Gerda Lerner, "That was the biggest gathering of women and women's organizations in the 20th century."⁴⁶

Clarenbach managed the preparation of a high-quality illustrated report, *The Spirit of Houston, The First National Women's Conference: An Official Report to the President, the Congress and the People of the United States*. It was published as a book in March, 1978, and submitted to President Carter and the US

⁴² June Miller Weisberger, "The Wisconsin Marital Property Act: Highlights of the Wisconsin Experience in Developing a Model for Comprehensive Common Law Property Reform," *Wisconsin Women's Law Journal*, Vol. 1, Spring, 1985, 24-29; KC transcripts. November 17, 1987, 324, and March 10, 1989, 36, 37.

⁴³ KC transcripts. November 17, 1987, 325, 326.

⁴⁴ Genevieve G. McBride, editor, *Women's Wisconsin: From Native Matriarchies to the New Millennium*. (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2005), 445.

⁴⁵ *Wisconsin Women & the National Plan of Action: Resolutions Adopted at the Wisconsin State Meeting & the National Women's Conference, 1977*. (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Governor's Commission on the Status of Women, 1978).

⁴⁶ "A Mother of Women's Rights", Judy Mann, Washington Post. March 16, 1994, Editorial page.

Congress.⁴⁷ During the two-year-long planning effort, she was on leave from the university and commuted between Washington, DC, and her home each week to be with her family, during which times she wrote “constantly and vigorously ... with diligence and focus” for the projects.⁴⁸

Several other accomplishments by Kathryn Clarenbach are worth noting:

- In 1971, the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA), originally proposed in 1923 to guarantee equal legal rights for all American citizens without regard to sex, was reintroduced and overwhelmingly approved by Congress, then submitted to states for ratification. Wisconsin was one of the first states to ratify the ERA in April 1972, partly due to the broad educational work throughout the state by Kathryn Clarenbach. The ratification by 38 states over the following ten years fell short by three states.⁴⁹ It failed due to the controversy that fueled both opposition and support of the women’s movement.⁵⁰
- In 1977, the Wisconsin Legislature passed the landmark “no-fault” divorce law that was more equal and less stressful for women and children that Clarenbach had championed since 1967.⁵¹ It was the first of its kind in the nation and became a model for several other states. She inspired women professors in the law school to research divorce law and draft a model law, and worked with a coalition of women’s organizations to build support for it.
- In 1977, Clarenbach served as a principal consultant to the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs and authored the booklet, *Educational Needs of Rural Women and Girls, Report of the National Advisory Council on Women's Educational Programs*.
- In 1978, after Governor Lee Dreyfus abruptly ended the Governor’s Commission on the Status of Women, Clarenbach and long-time friend and colleague Constance Threinen, led the founding of the Wisconsin Women’s Network (WWN). The organization continued the work to advance women’s rights and became a coalition of over 100 Wisconsin organizations. Threinen had worked with Clarenbach since their earliest projects at the University of Wisconsin-Extension, in Women’s Education Resources and was her “her right-hand woman” according to Denise Matyka, a friend of both women and who served on WWN’s board.⁵²
- In 1981, Clarenbach served as president of NOW’s Legal Defense and Education Fund, “dedicated to advancing women’s rights and gender equality in equal education opportunities,

⁴⁷ “National Commission on the Observance of International Women’s Year,”

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Commission_on_the_Observance_of_International_Womens%27s_Year](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Commission_on_the_Observance_of_International_Womens%27s_Year;); Gerald R. Ford, Executive Order 11832, Establishing a National Conference on the Observance of International Women’s Year 1975. Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley, eds., The American Presidency Project.

<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/241456>; Jimmy Carter, National Commission on the Observance of International Women’s Year, 1975 “Appointment of Members and Presiding Officer of the Commission, Peters and Wooley, eds., American Presidency Project, <https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/243434>.

⁴⁸ Email exchange with David Clarenbach and Janet Mallon, August 20, 2023.

⁴⁹ National Organization for Women, “Chronology of the Equal Rights Amendment 1923-1996.”

<https://now.org/resource/chronology-of-the-equal-rights-amendment-1923-1996>.

⁵⁰ The National Archives, “Martha Griffiths and the Equal Rights Amendment,”

<https://www.archives.gov/legislative/features/griffiths>; Support for the Equal Rights Amendment was levied by women’s groups led by the National Organization for Women and advocates Bella Abzug, Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem. ERA support dissipated due to organized opposition led by Phyllis Schlafly and conservative groups.

⁵¹ Joseph A. Ranney, Attorney at Law, “Traditional values and no-fault divorce,” Articles on Wisconsin Legal History, <https://www.wicourts.gov/courts/history/article45.htm>.

⁵² Constance Threinen, Biography files of Kathryn Clarenbach, Threinen Family Collection;

Author’s conversation with Denise Matyka, April 30, 2023; *1994 Wisconsin Women’s Network Awards Dinner Honoring Constance Fuller Threinen, Stateswoman of the Year*. November 17, 1994.

fairness in the courts, ending gender-based violence, workplace equality and economic empowerment.”⁵³

- In 1982-83, she served as Vice-President of the Southwest-Wisconsin Coalition of Labor Union Women, and helped to organize and raise funds for the National Forum for Women and its Woodstock Conference Center in Illinois.
- In 1983, Governor Tony Earl named Clarenbach to the Wisconsin Women's Council, created by state statute to carry on some of the work that the Commission for the Status of Women had done. She served on the Council until 1986.⁵⁴

As to Clarenbach's efforts to educate the public and promote reform, she gave as many as 40 speeches a year to business, industry and women's organizations in Wisconsin and across the country.⁵⁵ She developed working relationships with media contacts as the go-to person on women's issues and legislation. Beginning in the early 1970s, she often preferred working behind the scenes, so that her associates could represent the movement. She produced, wrote or edited nearly 30 publications for the UW-Extension and the Wisconsin Commission on the Status of Women, and produced two documentary films for public television, "Never Underestimate the Power of a Woman" (1972) and "NOW: Her Story" (1983). From 1979 to 1983, she was a familiar weekly voice on Wisconsin Public Radio's *Morning People*.

One of the outstanding achievements to which Clarenbach contributed was the passage in March 1984 by the Wisconsin Legislature of the 1983 AB 200, the Marital Property Reform Bill, signed into law by Governor Earl on April 4, 1984. Wisconsin was the first state to adopt a version of the Uniform Marital Property Act that served as a model for several other states.

Following her retirement in 1987, she participated in a series of taped interviews over several years, arranged by her friend, colleague and women's historian Gerda Lerner as a part of an oral history project to document the women's movement origins in Wisconsin and the Midwest. The principal interviewer was Pat Calchina. The recordings and transcripts provide a valuable and unparalleled resource of previously unpublished stories of the women's movement.

Many awards recognized Kathryn Clarenbach for her exemplary and tireless work on behalf of furthering women's rights and improving opportunities for women.

We must all, whether woman or man, critically examine the culture in which we live and act, and do battle against the culturally destructive forces of which sexism and racism are among the more obnoxious in order to help build a responsible and creative society.⁵⁶

— Kathryn Clarenbach, October 20, 1988.⁵⁷

⁵³ Legal Momentum. NOW's Legal and Educational Defense Fund was founded in 1970 and renamed Legal Momentum in 2004. <https://www.legalmomentum.org/about-us/history>.

⁵⁴ Women's Council Programs - 1983 to present. State of Wisconsin Women's Council. <https://womenscouncil.wi.gov/Pages/AboutUs/History.aspx>.

⁵⁵ KC transcripts. November 17, 1987, 306.

⁵⁶ Op. cit., Threinen, "Kathryn Clarenbach," *Wisconsin Women: A Gifted Heritage*. 307. Awards included the Milwaukee Sentinel, Woman of the Year, 1967; Wisconsin NOW, Woman of the Year, 1980; B'nai B'rith Human Rights Award; Wisconsin Civil Libertarian of the Year, WCLU; First Annual Human Relations Award, Hall of Respect, Madison Public Schools; and a naming of two floors of Elizabeth Waters Hall of the University of Wisconsin.

⁵⁷ *Wisconsin Women's Network and the Wisconsin Women's Council, A Tribute to Kay Clarenbach: 25 Years, Looking Back, Moving Forward*. October 20, 1988, Sheraton Inn, Madison, Wisconsin. (Madison: The Network, 1988.)

Summary

Under Kathryn Clarenbach's leadership as a staff and civic volunteer, her work on commissions and women's organizations engaged the public, established communications and coalitions, and created records, educational documents and policy papers that articulated issues of importance to women. Her work helped gain public support for much of the change that was undertaken in laws and practices relating to women in Wisconsin and throughout the United States. In her speeches and writings, she emphasized the importance of serving all women of all races, ethnic heritages, abilities and means, young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural, conservative and liberal alike.

Her dignified bearing and academic credentials lent credibility to her positions on the demands of the evolving feminist and women's rights movement factions. As a founder and foremost organizer of many organizations, she served as a facilitator and mediator who bridged the gaps between traditional women's groups and feminist activists, with cool confidence, humor and grace.

Kathryn Clarenbach's achievements were exemplary in her family life, her organizational and educational work and should be acknowledged by the designation of the house in which she lived, conducted much of her work and raised her family, as a Madison landmark.

Kay was the foremost organizer of the modern women's movement, recognized as such by all who worked with her. She usually acted behind the scenes, modestly and without drawing attention to herself, the inspirer of others, the facilitator, the mediator of conflicts, the reliable, sustaining force without which there is no social change.

—Gerda Lerner, Kathryn Clarenbach's memorial service. Madison, WI. March 12, 1994.

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7.) Additional Information
Photographs



Drive and front view looking southwest. 2229 Eaton Ridge, 2023.



Front entrance looking southeast. 2229 Eaton Ridge, 2023.



Rear view looking northwest. 2229 Eaton Ridge, 2023.



Front view looking southeast. 2229 Eaton Ridge, 2023.

Historic Images



Kathryn Clarenbach. Wisconsin State Journal Archives. Undated.



Dr. Kathryn Clarenbach and Betty Friedan at the second annual meeting of the National Organization for Women (NOW). November 19, 1967. Photo by Marcia Cohen.



Governor's Commission on the Status of Women. May 8, 1968. Milwaukee Sentinel. Gary Tipler collection.



David Clarenbach, California Governor Jerry Brown, Kathryn Clarenbach at 2229 Eton Ridge. 1980. David Clarenbach collection.



Clarenbach family. L-R: Janet, Kathryn, David, Henry, Sara. 1980. David Clarenbach collection.