



Nana Kane's house (left) in 2013

Nana Kane's House by Olivia Gunnell

Some of my fondest memories as a young girl took place in New Boston, New Hampshire at my Great Nana Kane's home. Her big white house was on a hill at the corner between two streets. I believe they were main streets, though in her small town, they were not very busy. There was a big old tree with a huge trunk on her yard near the corner where the two streets met. At the top of the hill was a porch and the front – though rarely used – entrance to her home. At the bottom of the hill was a second entrance in the form of her garage and stone cellar, which provided a stairway up to the house.

Nana Kane's kitchen was light and comfortable. It had handmade and colorful woven rugs, and colorful bottles and plates on display by the windows to catch the light. There was a fireplace in the kitchen with baskets hanging off of it and little plastic toys inside. The blue smurf toys were particularly memorable. There were lobster dishes on display, flowers, and doilies throughout the house, but especially in the kitchen.

The bathroom was adjacent and had a wooden door with an iron latch that was unique for a home and especially a bathroom door. I remember it being hard to open for my little fingers and so I was always afraid of being permanently trapped in the bathroom. I remember little about the bathroom except that Nana Kane used a multi-colored toothpaste and I think it was peppermint. Whatever the flavor, it was different than what our family used and so it seemed to taste better.

The living room was large and open, with a large colorful rug on the floor and lots of antique chair with little matching covers on them that were held onto the chairs with colorful pins (like what you would see in a pin cushion). Recognizing that it would be dangerous to leave the needles in the chair should someone sit on one, my brother and I would thoughtfully remove all the pins we could find from the chairs for Nana Kane. It wasn't until our mom caught us doing this that we were told they were supposed to be there. The living room also had a fireplace and mantle. I recall the curtains being thin and lacey. There were cute little treasures throughout the room, scattered antique decorations. Nana Kane had blue bottles on the window sills to catch the

sunlight. There was a glass dish on a side table with pink Canadian wintergreen mints. We helped ourselves until they were moved out of reach. She also had peppermints and “old people candy” (wrapped caramels, etc.). There was a door out the back right corner of the living room that led to a small, rarely used porch and out to the yard.

Attached to the living room, near the kitchen entrance, was a long narrow and bright room (because of all the windows) with some guest beds. I remember there being a lot of white in that room. The bedspreads were white, the curtains were white, maybe even the walls. There was a wooden dresser with a mirror, too. That’s where we slept when we went to visit.

Nana Kane’s room was on the other side of the kitchen across from the door to the creepy cellar and garage. It was mostly shut off from us little kids, but the few times we did get in there, I remember she had some old suitcases, old-looking jewelry like pearls, lots of old lady slip-on shoes, and little nylons which Nana Kane always wore for socks.

I also remember there being some of that shiny grayish-rainbow pearlescent stuff like you see on the inside of a clam. Maybe it was a giant clamshell or something. I just remember it being in that house. [Olivia added in 2018: “I have since learned that those pearlescent decorations I was describing were polished abalone shells. These are basically large clam shells often containing the iridescent mother-of-pearl sheen. My great grandmother had a number of these displayed on shelves and cabinet tops in her home.”]

I mostly remember two things at Nana Kane’s. We used to eat fresh grapefruit and oranges in the kitchen, which she’d brought from her house in Florida (which had dozens of citrus trees in the backyard) and that was where I first learned (or at least saw) how to properly cut and eat a grapefruit. It was also where we always had fresh lemonade and orange juice. Nana Kane loved lobster (that must be where my parents and I got it), so I bet we had lobster or at least lobster rolls there, too, as these were her favorite.

The other thing I remember is going there for the Fourth of July. There was a parade nearby in town, and after we’d go back to Nana Kane’s lawn and the kids would hit a piñata out of the big tree mentioned earlier. We took a family picture in front of Nana Kane’s house with the American flag poking out of the side once. It’s on my parents’ fridge still I think. I do not remember much else except that she lived kind of close to a cemetery where someone, maybe Grandpa Kane, was buried. I was so sad when she sold that house. I used to want to own it someday.

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Olivia Gunnell is a writer who attended Brigham Young University. She currently resides in Utah with her husband Dalin and three young children, and hopes to move back to her beloved New Hampshire soon.

Editor's note:

I stumbled across Olivia Gunnell's blog post when I was researching a painter named Frank French, who made one or two paintings of New Boston's Church on the Hill in the late 1800s. Olivia is a distant relative of Frank French.

I liked Olivia's detailed descriptions of her great-grandmother's house, which I think are remarkable given that the author was six or seven years old when last she visited New Boston, in the 1990s.

Who was Nana Kane? Claudine Grant Kane (1915-2012) was born in New Brunswick, Canada. She was married to Howard F. Kane of New Boston for more than 50 years. They raised twin daughters, Barbara and Beverly. (Paula LeBaron remembers that the Kane twins were very pretty.)

Claudine's obituary tells us, "She was a very accomplished seamstress and was known for her ability to create fantastic family dinners, especially on Thanksgiving Day. Her apple pies were one of her most popular creations. In her earlier days Claudine was also an avid golfer, and she thoroughly enjoyed her nine grandchildren and twenty-two great grandchildren."

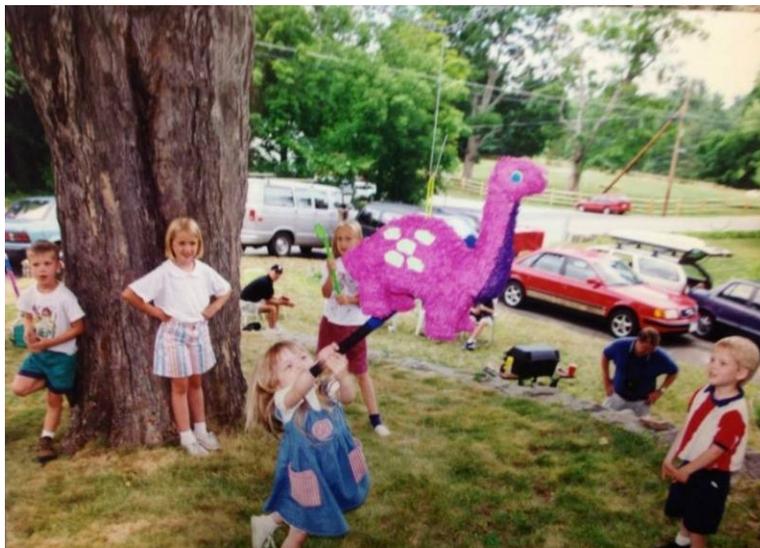
Paula LeBaron told me that the Kanes lived for a while in the house on River Road next to the Town Green, before moving to the house which Olivia remembers. "Nana's House" is on the corner of Meetinghouse Hill and Bedford Roads, near the intersection with Cemetery Road. I used a 2013 photo from Google Maps at the top of this story rather than taking a new photo, because I want to show what the house looked like with trees.



In 2016, when the Kane family no longer owned the house, part of the large tree in the front yard (see the 2013 photo) fell on the roof. The tree was removed, the roof was repaired, and the house was sold in January of 2017. The new owners moved in, and two months later an even larger tree fell across Meetinghouse Hill Road, slicing the house in half. Fortunately, no one was injured. Today the house looks good as new, and there are fewer trees around it.



I wrote to Olivia to ask permission to use her story, and she kindly sent me some family photographs. I chose one that shows two of Olivia's great-grandmothers, Mary Spencer to the left and Claudine Kane to the right. Olivia is held by her parents, Keith and Linda Searle. Linda is the daughter of Barbara (Kane) French, who was married to the late Charlie French.



The second photo shows Olivia hitting the piñata on a Fourth of July outside Claudine's home, surrounded by cousins. Do you see the empty field in the background, beyond a fence? That is where the old Church on the Hill stood until 1900, the church that was painted by Frank French, which is what brought me to Olivia's blog in the first place.

– Dan Rothman, *New Boston Historical Society*. January 2018