

THE DANIEL McLAREN HOUSE

and

EARLY GLENDALE

Among the excellent examples of houses built for railroad workers, conductors and engineers is the brick house of Mr. Daniel McLaren at 815 Greenville Avenue. It was built in 1869 by Daniel DeCamp, an early builder in Glendale. Being natural for the village to develop from the railroad right-of-way up hill, it was particularly appropriate for the railroad superintendent's home to be located close to the tracks. The commuting train out from town would make a special stop in front of this house in order that Mr. McLaren could debark, rather than wend his way home from the station some five-hundred yards further down the tracks, as did the rest of the commuters. His smooth velvety lawn, which originally stretched from Greenville to Woodbine Avenue, was said to resemble more the lawns of Clifton than any other yard in Glendale.

The McLaren house is clearly shown in the Atlas of 1869, which covered the houses erected by the end of the Civil War period. Descriptions of it are carried in both Maxwell Suburbs of Cincinnati and Teetor Past and Present of the Millcreek Valley.

This three-story brick structure is a composite of architectural styles, mostly mid (high) Victorian. An original wrought iron balcony surrounds the front bay, while a linked loop balcony surrounds its roof. The central bay window opened to the floor to permit access to the balcony. The front door is of heavily carved walnut. The windows are set off with stone sills and lintels. A porch on the southwest, at the end of the living room, was at one time enclosed, forming a conservatory, then later completely removed, leaving only the foundation for a patio today. Located on the north side was the laundry wing, raised on a level with the kitchen, with flat roof and tall chimney with chimney pot, and a picturesque porch along the east facade. This was later remodeled to house automobiles.

The interior, complete with decorated plaster ceilings, walnut staircase and marble mantles, is, like the exterior, in excellent condition. Although converted from gas to electricity, several of the chandeliers, completely original to the house, are today exactly as placed in 1869.

The dining room displays a handsome built-in storage cabinet of cherry, as well as a wood-carved mantle, executed by an associate of Cincinnati's woodworker, William Fry, at the time of the construction of the house. The floor has been replaced with handwoods, presenting a two-toned pattern. The doors also are of two shades of wood, black walnut for the heavy frame and maple for the light panels.

The library houses a handsome Brazilian rosewood bookcase. Mrs. McLaren accumulated a library in this home that was envied by many; it may well have been stored in this case. The floor in this room, as well as the rest of the house (barring the dining room and hall), is of the original pine. The plaster cornice depicts various fruits: apple, plum, grapes and pear. While the tile around the fireplace is

not original, it is noteworthy for being 17th century Delft. The paneling inserts below the windows are of butternut.

The living room of well over thirty feet features a carara marble mantle in the center of the north wall. The mirror above is original. The bay windows on the south side are treated with shutters from the old Doherty School in Walnut Hills, added much later. The plaster cornice in the bay is of egg and dart pattern and differs from the ornamentation of the rest of the room, the sleigh bell pattern. The arabesques from which the brass and copper chandelier hangs is among the loveliest found in Glendale.

The central hall houses the walnut staircase which rises two stories and sports lin-crusta paneling along the wall. The pier mirror is original. Etched colored-glass windows and transoms may be found throughout the house; particularly noteworthy are the panels in the sliding doors leading from the living room to the north patio. The cellar is floored in flagstone.

The McLaren family lived at 815 Greenville for over fifty years. By 1932 Dan McLaren was deceased, his second wife (a Firestone) had returned to Columbus to live, and the house was rented to Mrs. John Platt McLaren, a widow of Mr. McLaren's brother. Mrs. McLaren was in her late 80's, very short and quite Victorian in style, with black full dresses and white hair pulled back on her head. These being the difficult depression years, Mrs. McLaren took in a roomer, as did several other families in Glendale. Mrs. Hemingrey, an elderly invalid, depended upon the nursing skill of Mrs. McLaren, there being no nursing homes existent at this time. The spacious living room became Mrs. Hemingrey's living quarters. The front yard became overgrown, and the house was in a period of decline. It was offered for sale to Mr. Frank Miller, then living next door to the north, for as little as \$1,500, but Mr. Miller declined the offer, facing enough expenses with the large home he had just purchased.

Around 1935 Mrs. McLaren moved to 985 Willow. The house lay vacant for a while before being sold to Mrs. Tingley, from Cincinnati. She had two boys who attended the Glendale School; one later represented the village in the Second World War. Mrs. Tingley did a lot to upgrade the McLaren house, while at the same time establishing two apartments with separate kitchens on the second and third floors. The ornamental Victorian trim was removed from the exterior as being too costly to maintain; the original hot air furnace was replaced with a hot water heating system; a lavatory and upstairs bathroom were added; the laundry wing was converted into a two-car garage and the adjoining porch was removed.

In 1945 the Rev. Frank Elder, pastor of the Elm Street Presbyterian Church and recently retired, purchased the house. The home was named "Elderslie" after the family home in Scotland. Young men working at General Electric after the war roomed on the third floor before the house was reconverted into a one-family dwelling. Upon his death, his widow moved to 785 Greenville, two doors to the south on "Rat Row". James Elder, an attorney and son of Frank Elder, now owns the home. and has raised his children here, making three generations of Elders to have lived at 815 Greenville Avenue, Glendale.

The site of Glendale was chosen in the 1840's to be the railroad construction camp from which gangs worked to the north and south. Small commercial enterprises soon followed. When work was completed and the camp dismantled, these buildings remained to form a scattered settlement along the railroad right-of-way. On April 26, 1851, Crawford and Clark purchased 600 acres and laid out a subdivision for railroad personnel, and operators of the mills and factories that were springing up along the Mill Creek Valley. In 1851 the Glendale Association bought out Crawford and Clark and offered the lots of from one to twenty acres for sale. Because of the new commuting possibilities the trains allowed, businessmen did not have to stay within the horse-drawn limit of their business. The rural area to the north of the city became feasible. In the mid 50's it is estimated that it took 1 1/4 hours for a Glendale resident to travel from his home to his office in Cincinnati. The small, humble homes on both sides of the tracks, some left from early railroad workmen, have over the past eighty years been used by many young couples for "setting up housekeeping". The bigger homes were built by the wealthier officers of the companies. The convenience to the tracks is obvious. However as the village grew, the trains became more numerous, so it was fashionable to live further up hill from the tracks, the racket and the soot. The house at 825 Greenville, next door to the north, lay vacant and vandalized for the period from 1907 to 1917. Dr. Robert Allen kept his horse tethered in the front yard and the Japonica obliterated the lawn. In 1917 Mr. Daniel McLaren purchased this house, both to preserve his own property value and to salvage what had been a lovely home. He restored it for \$4,000. Mr. Frank Miller later purchased this house in 1932 for \$6,000.

Glendale was incorporated as a village in May 1855. In 1860 there were 112 heads of families recorded. In 1869 a recorded 158 votes were entered in the village poll book. The official population of Glendale in 1900 was 1,545 persons; by 1930, there were 2,360, most of the growth occurring during the prior ten years.

To maintain value, tradition tells, each house built during the early period of the village was to cost at least \$1,500 and be built as a self-contained entity, including crop land. Sugar maples, oak and ash trees were planted along the walks, and orchards were established at every residence. There were no sidewalks, only gravel paths. Likewise the streets were of gravel, always in need of repair. In 1869 Mayor Shoemaker sold hay from the Village parks for twenty-five loads of gravel for the streets. In the summer, a sprinkling cart was drawn over the streets to keep the dust down. The streets were first lighted with coal oil lamps in 1870. The Welsbach gas lamps were installed later. It was the job of the lamplighter to turn up the gas at each lamp every evening and check to be certain it was burning properly. When the moon was full, the lamps were not lighted. The lamplighter was replaced with an automatic timer, thus ending a beautiful tradition. In 1893 the first street signposts were erected, but the signs present today were designed by Mr. A. C. Denison in 1935. In 1942 the Village houses were given individual numbers. The lack of street and house markers and the winding nature of the roads themselves, while no doubt very confusing to visitors to the community, nevertheless brought pleasure to the residents who enjoyed their anonymity.

Homeowners provided their own sewer system, which consisted of laying tile out to the street. Every house had a privy, built over a cess pool or vault. When necessary, they were cleaned out, but by night

so as not to offend the sensitivities of the neighbors.

The early homes of Glendale were perpendicular, and appeared stately and dignified. The exterior walls were 13 to 17 inches thick, made with two layers of brick, an inch of air space and then a third layer of brick. The windows were very large, reaching to the base-board on the first floor. Wooden shutters were hung on both sides of the windows to insulate the rooms from the outside temperatures. The rough board floors were covered wall-to-wall with heavy Brussels, Axminster or Wilton carpets, tacked down to the floor. The stairs were long and steep; the kitchen far removed from the dining room. There was no central heating, so each room had its own heating unit, either a stove or fireplace. Coal was the fuel used. Many of the old homes still have the narrow doorway openings between rooms designed so that rooms could be closed off to preserve the heat. Chairs and sofas in the parlor were covered with hair cloth, from which one could not escape the pin pricks of the coarse fibre. The library was a smaller, cozy room where the family would spend the winter evenings. The kitchen was the warmest room of the house, often containing houseplants. Here a zinc sink with a pump would be found, supplying water for the entire house. This floor would be covered with bright oilcloth. The bedrooms were cold, with the family often wearing nightcaps to bed. In those days people did not turn up the thermostat when they were cold. They put on more clothes.

Because the houses were large and help was plentiful, much entertaining was done in the homes. Pianos were a part of the furniture in most of them. Books and music have always played a vital part in Glendale Village life.

Glendale in the 20's and 30's was a very social, if informal, community. With so many large families marrying and staying in Glendale, everyone seemed to know, if not be related to, everyone else. Receptions or teas would be held over several days to acquaint a new resident with all the neighbors. In some homes musical gatherings were not infrequent, with guests seated in rows in the spacious living rooms listening to students of music from the city. The gatherings were always held in the home, with thirty or forty people perhaps present at a time. While some homes of this period never served cocktails, others did; and Alexanders and Orange Blossoms were frequently served at private gatherings throughout the Prohibition. An invitation for supper or tea was issued by hand, a calling card left at the door if no one were at home. While it was an isolated community, it held high social prestige in Cincinnati; most men commuted into the city. Miss Devereaux, the "Blue Book" lady, was fond of this conservative, quaint community, and chose to feature its social activities in her column in the Enquirer. Progressive bridge was a common social occurrence. Dinner would be served at the several card tables, each covered with a white linen cloth, scattered throughout the first floor, followed by the cards.