11-2005

Landmark Report (Vol. 25, no. 2)

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The Landmark Association and Meyer Mortgage present a

**Christmas Tour of Homes**

Saturday, December 3, 2005
12:00 – 5:00 p.m.

Tickets: $10
Can be purchased at any door on day of tour

John & Alicia Carmichael .................................................... 1310 College
Shannon & Kerry Morgan .................................................... 1239 State
Jim Skaggs ........................................................................ 1234 State
David & Fleur Whitaker .................................................... 1246 State
David & Kim Jones ............................................................. 1252 State
Dorian & Elaine Walker ..................................................... 1303 State
Wayne & Julia Tarrant ......................................................... 1357 State
Service One Credit Union ................................................. 15th & College Heights Blvd.

Refreshments will be available at Service One Credit Union.

Landmark's store and Silent Auction will be located in the offices of Peridot Pictures at 1267 State Street.

Our Silent Auction items include an anniversary Pit game (invented here in Bowling Green around 1903 by Edgar Cayce) and a selection of Barbecue Seasonings from Southern Delight Gourmet Foods donated by Robin Zeigler, a pink etched Depression-era vase and a silver serving tray from Bill & Rosalyn Stamps, a caned chair donated by Colonel Bob Spiller, a copy of Irene Sumpter's *Our Heritage: Warren County Landmarks* (out of print), and several other impressive items donated by Sam Terry, Riverview at Hobson Grove, Eileen Starr, and Jonathan Jeffrey.

We will have all of our books, prints, videos, maps, etc. available at the store along with several things from shops around town.
Architectural Details

We are planning our annual tea for late spring this year. It will be held at 610 East Main, the home of Edward Faye. This home was designed by Creedmore Freemon for Bowling Green modernist, Carrie Burnam Taylor in 1906. Carrie Taylor enjoyed an enviable reputation as one of the upper South's most creative fashion designers. She opened her business in 1880 and eventually employed over 300 women in a factory that was located near the present day Chamber of Commerce on State Street. In addition to the delightful tea, we hope to have a short vintner prepared for presentation about Mrs. Taylor's work.

Put April 8th on your calendar to visit the Landmark booth at the Southern Kentucky Book Fest. We will be selling all our wares and soliciting new memberships. This is a grand opportunity to let the community know about our work.

With internet access you never know where you might receive a question. Recently I received an e-mail from Eric Remi Robeir of Ypres, Belgium to come to the office. He was requesting information about his great uncle Remi Robeir who died in an accident in Bowling Green on July 1, 1921. In his e-mail, Robeir noted that his uncle "immigrated to Kentucky some years earlier." He ended with a further plea: "Is there a chance, even remote, some information can be found about him." Unfortunately there is no index for the newspaper of that time period. I looked in the Fairview Cemetery index, but I didn't locate Mr. Robeir so I turned to the St. Joseph Cemetery index. There I found that Raymond actually died on July 1, 1920 and was buried the next day. It noted that his funeral mass was given by Thomas Jefferson Hayes, the priest at St. Joseph Catholic Church. It also noted that the funeral was handled by the J.M. Gerard Company, but the most startling information was the cause which was simply listed as "burned." I tried to find information about him on the census to no avail, and I could not locate a tombstone for him. I emailed Mr. Robeir back with this information and asked if his great uncle died in an automobile accident? I added: "There were a number of people who were killed in oil rig accidents here during the time period." A few days later Mr. Robeir e-mailed back with thanks and added a little more information: "We thought Remi (Raymond) died in 1921, but apparently it was the year before. He was the second son in a family with five children. Ernest, his brother being my granddad. Family think he came to the U.S., a couple of years before his death, as what you would probably call a fortune seeker. As it seems looking for oil. Nobody really knows, but (some) say he died in a fire caused by an oil rig accident. I recall my grandma telling stories that he tried to save someone who had fallen in an oil pit and it caught fire and several people died. But this might well be an effort to make a hero out of someone who went looking for fortune but didn't have his ship come in. It might have sounded better for family on the other side of the ocean. But then again who knows it might be true. When I was a kid my dad made jokes about me being family of a would be oil tycoon. But that never happened, the way he ended up." Raymond's death certificate filed July 9, 1920 does confirm that he was a "driller," that he "burned to death," and that he was 29 years old. The oil boom in southcentral Kentucky began in Allen County and quickly spread to adjoining Warren. Most of the drilling activity in this county took place from 1919 to 1927.

**Gunnison Homes: A Brief History**

(Editor's Note: The following article was written by Robeir, who believes that the system he designed would be verifiable enough of an expert on Gunnison Homes a prefabricated home manufacturer once located in New Albany, Indiana. He made a presentation for Landmark on November 13th. Afterwards several people went over to Josephine Avenue, where we identified at least 10 Gunnison homes in the 700 block. Ship was able to look at the houses and quickly determine the model type. A copy of this newsletter will be sent to the occupants of each Gunnison home in that area to inform them about this fascinating piece of our local history.)

The first half of the twentieth century saw a change in the housing needs of the United States as more individuals sought easily built, affordable housing. These changing needs mandated that the construction industry re-evaluate what could be offered to the public. Various groups and individuals began to look at prefabrication as the answer to this need. Numerous proposals were developed that sought to part the construction of panels that would be fabricated on the same assembly line and cost concrete.

In the early 1930s, Foster Gunnison, Sr. wanted a successful design that could be assembled to meet different needs. Some panels would be solid while others would have windows or doors pre-installed and pre-finished. In addition, they would be assembled that could be easily shipped. These houses and quickly determine the total wall thickness of 2". The glued up panels were then placed into a heated press so that the various elements bonded together. These panels could be assembled to meet different needs. Some panels would be solid while others would have windows or doors pre-installed and pre-finished. In addition, they would be assembled that could be easily shipped. These houses and quickly determine the total wall thickness of 2". The glued up panels were then placed into a heated press so that the various elements bonded together. These panels could be assembled to meet different needs. Some panels would be solid while others would have windows or doors pre-installed and pre-finished. In addition, they would be assembled that could be easily shipped. These houses and quickly determine the total wall thickness of 2". The glued up panels were then placed into a heated press so that the various elements bonded together. These panels could be assembled to meet different needs. Some panels would be solid while others would have windows or doors pre-installed and pre-finished. In addition, they would be assembled that could be easily shipped.

Gunnison Homes sold approximately 5,000 units. With the outbreak of World War II, many industries changed direction and began manufacturing materials for the war effort. Gunnison was no different. His prefabrication system was used to provide housing for the military and other facilities on the home front. Successful building firms were put in charge of constructing individual houses delivered, but the system was adaptable to the construction of barracks and other buildings as well. As war was ended and an eventual end could be seen, manufacturers began looking to the future and the needs for post-war housing. Gunnison's success both before and during the war was such that others began to take notice. One such company was United States Steel. They saw a boom in affordable housing on the horizon and knew that Gunnison Homes had a proven track record. In the 1930s, with the end of World War II, many industries began to make overtures to Gunnison. In April of that year, they acquired a 70% interest in the company making Gunnison Homes a subsidiary of U.S. Steel. Foster Gunnison remained with the company as general manager so that quality could be maintained.

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Landmark Has Tried Run Cemetery Tour

Landmark has wanted to conduct an evening cemetery tour with costumed interpreters for several years. The Association has sponsored tours of Fairview since the early-1990s as well as tours of St. Joseph Cemetery. This year, we came one step closer to a full blown costumed cemetery tour with our October 30 trek through Bowling Green's oldebar city. Nearly 40 guests followed Amos Taylor, the cemetery's gravegarden's, to visit some of the cemetery's interesting characters. Amos explained that the stones on the tombstones were interesting and helpful, but the dash in between was more interesting. Guests were able to visit Robert W. Ogden, the benefactor for continued on page 6

Engraving Shows Ruins of City's First L&N Depot

The Kentucky Library recently purchased the engraving you see here depicting Bowling Green's first L&N depot as it lay in ruins after the Confederates torched it in their retreat from the city. The company was too difficult an object to attract General U.S. Grant, positioned at Paducah, began a river attack on Fort Henry, located on the Tennessee River, on 6 February 1862. The attack forced the surrender of Fort Henry and a retreat of forces to Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River. Johnston, fearing the supply lines would be cut, evacuated Bowling Green on 11 February 1862. On 13 February, retreating Confederates dynamited the stone pillars supporting the L&N iron bridge across the Barren River. The city's evacuation continued, and on 14 February 1862 Union forces located on the Barren River's north side began shelling the town. The roundhouse, located across the tracks from the depot, was filled with corn, flour, bacon and other provisions. Union forces made it the center of heavy shelling in an attempt to keep the Confederates from destroying the supplies. Many shells sank in the snow and slush falling to explode.

Unfortunately the roundhouse and several other L&N dependencies fell victim to the departing Confederates. Some local citizens were forced from their homes, including Johanna Underwood and her family. While staying with family friends, Underwood experienced the torching of the depot and left the following account: "At about 9:00 o'clock that night, five Texas Rangers dashed up to the Depot. Three got off while two held the horses. In a moment they had lighted torches in their hands, rushing in and out of the Depot and other buildings. Soon...fire and flames were bursting out everywhere. When their work was surely accomplished, they leaped on their horses and galloped away, leaving behind a fearful and magnificent sight. By morning, nothing was left of the railroad buildings but twisted iron and red glowing ashes, with a odor of burning bacon and corn permeating the atmosphere for some distance." If you are interested in Bowling Green's railroad heritage, you may want to stop by Landmark's store on the Christmas tour and pick up a copy of Bittersweet: The Louisville & Nashville Railroad and Warren County, Kentucky for $7.50.  

Gunnison Homes (cont'd)

pre pared and was begun on construction of a new manufacturing plant. When completed in 1946, the new home of Gunnison Homes was the largest prefabricated manufacturing facility in the world. Raw materials arrived on one side of the plant from a railroad spur line and completed house packages left the plant by either rail car or trailer truck.

Gunnison Homes continued to expand its line of houses through the remainder of the 1940s. By 1950, there were fourteen basic floor plans that could then be altered by the addition of various options. The affordability of the product and the network of trained salesmen established them as an industry leader.

In 1953, Foster Gunnison decided it was time to retire. In the spring of that year, he sold his remaining interest in Gunnison Homes, Inc. to U.S. Steel. Almost immediately Gunnison Homes, Inc. became U.S. Steel Homes. To their credit, U.S. Steel kept the concept developed by Gunnison in place and continued to provide a high quality product. The 1950s did see changes as newer, more mainstream designs were introduced. But no matter how the designs changed, they all continued to take advantage of the benefits offered by assembly line production.

U.S. Steel maintained its commitment to the building industry and the people of New Albany throughout the 1960s. However, as what had been in life, the times finally caught up with the prefabricated housing industry. Declining sales finally sealed the fate of this one time leader. In 1974, U.S. Steel Homes closed the New Albany plant for good. With its demise, an important page in the history of prefabricated housing was turned. Today the dream of Foster Gunnison is a footnote to history that can still be seen in communities both large and small across the United States in the numerous examples of his homes that are still being inhabited.  

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Bowling Green's Ogden College; Pauline Tabler Webster, the most venerable madam; Emma Johnson, Bowling Green's own Lizzie Borden who chopped him up and burned her mother, and Kee Shaw, a Chinaman who was found in a laundry and was murdered in 1898.

Here is what Emma Johnson had to tell the audience: "Welcome to my living room; my name is Medium, I'm a little embarrassed to tell you my story. They say I did it, but honestly I don't remember anything. I do remember that day, because it was so hot and dry but we had to keep working despite the weather. There is no end to work on a farm because there is something the tour participants. Things were hard all over. My husband Hose is buried with me over in Section 7, and he was and I just glad to have a place to live. We were right in the middle of the Big Depression; we didn't call it that back then. We just knew we were in hard times. We lived with my mama, Sarah Whalin. You've probably heard of the Whalins, they're up from around the Richmond area. We lived on the other side of Big Barren River when all the water was removed. I used to talk to them, and I say I like to tell you the whole story, because you might think bad of me."

Gravedigger: "Amen.

Johnson: "Now you haul us down Amos Taylor, you didn't have no harm. You don't have no right to talk like you are above me. I know you used to buy corn from my back yard. My mama used to tell me it was a good man, and you talk to me like I'm a little child."

Gravedigger: "I've got every right. You were convicted for killing your mama. There was a lot of people that were beating and degrading some sins and murdering your own flesh and blood."

Johnson: (Raises her hand toward him) "Shut up, or I'll put my eye on you. Now don't let Amos prejudice you against me. Like I say, I really don't remember what happen. My mama and I were on the farm feeding the chickens in the chicken house. We had a terrible lice infestation on the birds, so we were getting rid of all the old nests. After we gut put near finished I left her to finish the job, while I got on with other chores. We were just beginning to get truck in from the garden, so I was busy canning our first mess of butter beans.

"Really don't remember where mama went. I told the police that she probably went to an over's house. The police came to my house in the early evening of June 16, and my own noisy neighbor Newt Todd called and told them that he saw me hit my mama on the head with a stick early in the morning. He didn't have a telephone, so he went over to the general store there on Barren River Road where he could get in touch with the police. They didn't come out until the early evening. I told them I hadn't seen mama all day. They didn't believe me."

"They took me to the courthouse there in Bowling Green and asked me all kinds of questions. Even asked me if I hit him. Now who could hate their mama? They kept asking me questions. I began to feel crazy. I often worried about going crazy. You see my daddy committed suicide and mamas that happen, I don't know what I was thinking of. I even talked about it, and I had a mental aunt that lived in the orphanage over at Hopkinsville. After seventeen hours of questioning, I couldn't take it anymore. I told them I remembered leaving mama in the chicken house, and when I went back later she had suffered from one of her frequent heart attacks and fell in the fire and it consumed part of her. I told them they left me to go back to the house. I could show them where the ashes were. They took me out there, and I showed them where the ashes were."
Perhaps you could pass this newsletter along to someone you think would be interested in supporting Landmark’s efforts in historic preservation advocacy.

I (we) want to support the Historic Preservation efforts in Bowling Green and Warren County.

Name _______________________________________

Mailing Address _______________________________________

City ___________________ State ______ Zip __________

Telephone __________________ E-mail __________________

------------------- Levels of Membership -------------------

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I have enclosed $ __________________ to support the Irene Moss Sumpter Preservation Endowment Fund.

Checks should be payable to: Landmark Association

P.O. Box 1812
Bowling Green, KY 42102-1812