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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.
Gunnison Homes: A Brief History

(EDITOR'S NOTE: The following article was written by Randy Shipp, who became a world-renowned expert on Gunnison Homes a prefabricated home manufacturer once located in New Albany, Indiana. He made a presentation for Landmark for Landmark on November 13th. Afterwards several people went over to Josephine Avenue, where we identified at least 10 Gunnison homes. The plywood framework used on these houses are at least three more in the 700 block. Shipp was able to look at the homes 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 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 the need. Numerous proposals were developed that took advantage of the materials as wood, steel, aluminum and concrete. In the early 1930's, Foster Gunnison, Sr. wanted a successful housing designer and manufacturer from New York who had provided lighting design for such projects as the Empire State Building and Radio City Music Hall. His interest in the concept of prefabricated housing led him to join with a group of like-minded individuals, including representatives of General Electric, to study its feasibility. Having studied the subject from many angles, this group felt that the use of stressed plywood panels could offer a stronger building at an economical price. The result was a complete housing unit that could be shipped on a single trailer and re-assembled on a customer's foundation in a very short time. It was said that if the construction crew arrived at the site on Tuesday morning, the owner could have supper in his new house on Friday. To achieve his dream, Gunnison was looking for a location that could provide him easy access to the necessary materials as well as an existing transportation network that would allow him to ship his homes throughout the Eastern United States. He found the perfect site in New Albany, Indiana. Long known for the production of wood veneers, New Albany sat on the Ohio River just across from Louisville, Kentucky. He established his new company in a vacant veneer factory in 1936 and named it Gunnison Architectural Panel Co. It was in the production of plywood that he found his niche. He wanted to provide a quality dwelling that was affordable for even those of modest income. In addition, he wanted to provide a system that would be very flexible to meet a wide range of needs. By joining forces with experts in engineering, plywood production and architecture, he arrived at the system of using stressed panels that took advantage of concepts used in the manufacture of airplane wings. The structural plywood framework developed on the 1000 block provided an extremely strong yet lightweight panel. By standardizing the size of these panels at roughly 4'-0" x 8'-0", Gunnison found that he could take advantage of the assembly line manufacturing methods developed in the automotive industry. Each panel was constructed of wood studs and bracing members that were only 1-1/2" thick with 1/4" plywood glued to each side for a 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, there were panels that could be purchased on an a la carte basis and fabricated on the same assembly line. The result was a complete housing unit that could be shipped on a single trailer truck and re-assembled on a customer's foundation in a very short time. It was said that if the construction crew arrived at the site on Tuesday morning, the owner could have supper in his new house on Friday. To achieve his dream, Gunnison was looking for a location that could provide him easy access to the necessary materials as well as an existing transportation network that would allow him to ship his homes throughout the Eastern United States. He found the perfect site in New Albany, Indiana. 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Gunnison Homes (cont'd)

prepared and work began 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 the company 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 their commitment to the building industry and the people of New Albany throughout the 1960s. However, as with most things 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. 

Landmark Has Trial Run Cemetery Tour

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 on their retreat from the town. The engraving was created in 1862 during this muddy spring of that year, and the Library has sponsored the creation of a monument as well. The original engraving is on display at the Library along with a copy of the engraved print. This company has also sponsored the creation of a monument in Bowling Green to commemorate the city's role in the Civil War.

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

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 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. 

Magnitude Report 5

November 2005
Tour participants.

Taylor, I enquired, do you remember anything about the tour participants?

"I don't remember anything," Taylor replied. "But I do remember that we were looking for some turkeys hidden on the property.

"We were pursuing a rumor that turkeys were hiding in the barn yard, and we were curious to find out if they were there.

"I remember that we found some turkeys, and we were excited to find them. But I don't recall what we did with them after that.

"Anyway, we were busy looking for turkeys when we heard a noise coming from the barn yard. We went to investigate, and we found a turkey that was injured and needed our help.

"We helped the turkey, and we were happy that we could make a difference in its life.

"All in all, it was a fun day, and we learned a lot about turkeys and their habits.

"I remember that we had a lot of fun on the tour, and I hope we can do it again sometime."

Go to next page for more information...
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

LANDMARK ASSOCIATION
P.O. BOX 1812
BOWLING GREEN, KY 42102-1812

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

November 2005  Landmark Report 8