Landmark Report (Vol. 32, no. 1)

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Elm Grove located at 1006 South Park Drive is the home of Steve & Jeannie Snodgrass.

Elm Grove: Bowling Green’s Edenic Estate

By Jonathan Jeffrey

Jeannie Snodgrass figuratively calls her home Nirvana, her own little Eden right in the center of Bowling Green. This beautiful property has been called Elm Grove for over 200 years. This piece of land is the heart of one of Warren County’s most hallowed estates, a treasured property that was home to four generations of Covingtons and later the showplace farm and dairy for two generations of the Smith family. The history of any home cannot be severed from the people that lived there, and one of Jeannie’s reasons for favoring historic properties is the fact that they’ve been lived in. Someone else has tread the floorboards fretting over a sick child or a wounded husband, someone else has trudged through the endless chores of food preparation and laundry, another woman has put her hand to the soil and

(continued on page 3)
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**Annual Meeting Held on May 22**

The Landmark Association annual meeting was held at Lo Go Lo, a renovated meeting space in the Old Galloway Building at 601 State Street. The facility is owned and managed by the proprietors of the Brickyard. The large meeting hall is designed to break down into smaller venues. Members applauded the work of the owners in an effective adaptive-use project.

At the fine meal, the Association was treated by a presentation by Roy Buckberry about neighborhood groceries in Bowling Green. Afterwards, awards were presented by president Dr. Jeffrey Adams. General House Awards were given to Michelle Dillaha for work done at 1230 Park Street, Brad Wayland for work done at 1260 State Street, and Mitch Wright for work done at 1246 Chestnut Street. Dan Murph received a Landmark Building Award for transformation of the old Dollar General Store into the Sky Ranch Professional Lofts at 124 Elm Avenue. The Jane Morris Award went to Michael Smart for restoration of a historic property near the Kentucky Ale House.

Finally, the Association's highest honor, the Heritage Award, was presented to Emily Shapard, president of上次内容的延续。今年，该协会的年度活动之一——"古迹月"期间，乔纳森·杰弗里对芬顿广场公园和其他建筑物进行了参观，包括历史悠久的温菲尔德·托比小学。在活动结束时，学生们宣布了对沃伦县法院的尊敬之情，“我的老肯塔基之家”，这是肯塔基州和肯塔基州历史遗产委员会发起的州内大规模活动的一部分。

**Landmark Report** is published three times a year by The Landmark Association of Bowling Green-Warren County, P.O. Box 1812 Bowling Green, KY 42102 (270) 782-0037

**Landmark Report** encourages unsolicited articles or suggestions for articles and will consider all for publication.

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The story starts with Elijah Moodyman Covington and Harriet (Baldwin) Covington. Mr. Covington came to Warren County from North Carolina around 1792. As county surveyor, Covington had ample opportunity to view and purchase properties, and he eventually amassed over 20,000 acres in Warren County and several adjoining counties. In 1812, he and his family moved from the Gapper River section to Bowling Green. He chose a piece of fertile, relatively flat land on the outskirts of town. He built a commodious, but not ostentatious, home where he and his wife eventually had ten children, 5 girls and 5 boys. His property included slave quarters and other appropriate outbuildings, none of which have survived. He was enamored with names that started with ‘E’s as, evidenced by some of the names he gave his children: Erasmus, Euclid, Eugene, and Eliza. Elijah died in 1844, and today his remains, as well as most of the rest of his family, rest in Fairview Cemetery. Euclid Covington died in mid-February 1888 and was buried in Fairview Cemetery. Four months later Wells Covington, had the bodies of family members that were buried at Elm Grove disinterred and moved to the Family Reunion Cemetery. The Gerard funeral ledgers indicate that the cost of moving seven bodies from Elm Grove to Fairview was $45. At that time, new grave markers were erected for family members. A portion of the original stone ledger from Harriet Covington’s grave remains at Elm Grove.

The Covingtons were an admired clan. Here’s what John B. Rodes had to say about them in an interview: “They were never bitter men—their Covingtons. Nor have there ever been any reformers among them, but they ran in the world as they found it and it was good. There was never a fanatic in the whole tribe, nor a puritan. The usual Covington respected piety and conformed in religion, though he was never cramped by it. It was a good world, and all the good things were never made solely for the sinner. They loved good liquor but drank seldom to excess, had a gentle weakness for women but usually kept out of trouble…They never became absorbed in causes. Even in the Civil War none were deeply involved. They owned their slaves and were sympathetic with the South, but none engaged in battle.”

Harram Covington perished a full two decades before Mr. Covington. When he died, his estate passed first to his brother-in-law, Euclid Covington, who had his hands in all types of Covington’s agricultural projects. One of the men who knew the most about was the Portage Railroad, which was built on land given by Euclid. It ran from the Barren River boat landing to downtown Bowling Green, carrying both freight and passengers. Completed in 1837, it is said to be the second railroad constructed in Kentucky. Both Euclid and his brother Albert died within a year of each other, so the family farm was passed on to the only male heir who carried the Covington name, Albert’s son Robert Wells Covington. Thus in 1888 Robert owned two of the largest and most productive farms in the county. He eventually fell under the spell of Elm Grove and moved there with his wife Mary Wickliff, a talented artist from Shelby County, whom he had married in 1892. She painted beautiful portraits. She painting. Two examples of her portrait work are in the collection of the Kentucky Museum and several others samples can be found in private collections throughout the city. No known pieces of her china painting have survived. Actually the only surviving evidence that she participated in china painting in this comes from a letter, recently donated to the Department of Library Special Collections at WKU by Barbara Garg, written by Wickliff to a counterpart, Daisy. In the letter, penned on Elm Grove stationery, Wickliff writes: “Dear Daisy, I receive your Ohio to be fried—a chocolate pot, bell, parasol handles and a plate. I have a box. Plates ready, but oh! they looked all right but I put them in the oven—they seemed so full of dust afterwards that I was afraid to risk all and I sent them to a cleaner. Now more lovely in town. Will you use this one comes out. Please send me word when you fire, so I can get the things as soon as possible to have them re-fired. Would a dozen plates and chocolate pot justify you in firing in case you do not fire very soon again? I think the color on the handle of pot may run or scale, but it does not matter as I shall use a good deal of gold.”

The quaint log cabin at Elm Grove, east of the main house, was built in 1907 as a private art museum and studio for Wickliff. With its company of limited edition books. It had been used year-round. Later, when the Smiths lived here, we knew that it was used for a time by a tenant family who looked out for the farm and for the elder Smiths. Eventually they moved to another house nearby. It is possible that with its large (continued on page 4)
July 1971

The log cabin northeast of the main house was built in 1907 as a studio for McKIlame Covington, a talented artist.

Charles Asher Smith bought Elm Grove and 576 acres of land for $40,000 in 1919. One of his contemporaries noted that he had covetously eyed the farm as early as the late-nineteenth century but did not have the means to purchase it. In 1899 C.A. eyed something much prettier in Allen County, Luther. August K. Ham, the daughter of Tobias and Ollie (Lady Olliet) Ham. She was the granddaughter of a well-known Baptist minister from south central Kentucky. Mordecai Fowler Ham, who pastored several churches in Warren and Allen counties at varying times. Lucy was the sister of the second Mordecai Fowler Ham (grandson of the aforementioned), who went on to become one of the best known southern evangelists of the early twentieth century. He held huge revival meetings across the state. He was a product of his era, a fundamentalist, ardent proponent of prohibition, and quite honestly a bit of a bigot. At one of Ham’s evangelistic meetings held in Charlotte, North Carolina, a young Billy Graham was converted. They remained in close enough contact that Billy Graham preached Ham’s funeral in 1961.

With an adventurous spirit and nothing to lose, Charles and his young bride trekked to Montana to seek their fortunes in and of all things sheep. Charles was industrious and scientific in his approach, and he soon possessed one of the largest sheep herds in the Big Sky state. In 1907 he returned to Kentucky where he purchased the noteworthy McElown farm near Woodburn consisting of 551 acres. Again he diligently went about improving the farm: erecting barns and other outbuildings, installing a modern heating plant and a lighting plant for both his residence and barns. With the exception of 35 acres of timber, the farm was “under a perfect state of cultivation,” producing tobacco, hay and corn. He also erected a huge silo for storage of silage.

The Smiths had two children: Luther born in 1900 and Mary in 1902. Several surviving photographs indicate that Charles A. Smith and his wife Lucy and their two children Luther and Mary, co, 1904.

The Smiths attended First Baptist Church, although Luther was confirmed, especially in older age. Miss Mary attended regularly, and one contemporary remembered her attending until her health waned. The friend reminisced in particular about Mary’s rather large feet and how her shoes featured cut out holes for her bunions.

The family’s hard work paid off. In 1921, the local paper reported that Charles had sold an outstanding crop of tobacco only two years after purchasing the farm. The crop grown on 3.75 acres sold for $200 per acre or $814; the grades being sold at $32 for leaf, $8.50 for lugs, and $2 for trash. The paper noted: “This land was filled with trees when purchased by Smith from Major Covington and this is the first time it has ever been cultivated.” Only four years later, the newspaper exclaimed on the front page that Smith was adding an ice cream manufacturing plant to the farm which would include strictly modern and up-to-date machinery with a capacity of 400 gallons per day. Smith intended to use cream from his own dairy herd, some of which he had brought with him from Woodburn. It is here that Miss Mary found her place and where many Bowling Greeners came to love this plain spoken woman when they paid their dairy bills on Sunday afternoons. After settling accounts, customers could enjoy a free pint of ice cream, a tradition that continued for decades. Many also remember that the pints were often split in two vertically, so you could savor two different flavors of the dairy’s rich ice cream.

Elm Grove milk and dairy products were delivered by a series of wagons. The Snodgrass family owns a bride-used on one of the horses.

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Mary and Luther were already adults, 19 and 17 years in age. Luther attended Kentucky Military Institute, although he did not graduate. Mary attended county public schools. Honestly, the family had means, but everyone still learned the value of hard work, Miss Mary in particular learned the benefits of industrious activity. Luther, was not known in the community or by his family as a hard worker, but he wielded a hammer and did other things that benefited the family such as bookkeeping, investing, banking, correspondence, and he handled real estate transactions.

They were members of First Baptist Church, although Luther was confirmed, especially in older age. Miss Mary attended regularly, and one contemporary remembered her attending until her health waned. The friend reminisced in particular about Mary’s rather large feet and how her shoes featured cut out holes for her bunions.

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Elm Grove milk and dairy products were delivered by a series of wagons. The Snavgrass family owns a bride-used on one of the horses.

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Shortly before celebrating New Year’s Eve, the Smith family awoke to find their home on fire. The Smiths had retired at about 10 o’clock that evening and roused at 2:00 a.m. with Elm Grove in flames. Investigators determined the fire’s cause to be faulty wiring in the attic, where the family had stored several thousand pounds of wool that no doubt exacerbated the conflagration. The family saved the majority of their furniture, even though the house was totally engulfed in flames within thirty minutes of being discovered. The newspaper reported that “within an hour after the fire, scores of automobiles were parked about the house, and women in evening gowns and pajamas were among the scores who watched the house burn to the ground.” The fire did spread to the adjoining dairy operation, destroying considerable refrigeration equipment and several pieces of expensive equipment.

Elm Grove milk and dairy products were delivered by a series of wagons. The Snodgrass family owns a bride-used on one of the horses.
The ruins of Elm Grove after the fire of 1939. Processing equipment. With the help of several other local dairies and the Pet Milk Plant, Elm Grove Dairy did not miss one day of deliveries.

When asked about the home a few days later, Mary Smith said: "We will probably rebuild, but we haven't had time to think about it." Soon thereafter, the Smiths started rebuilding in earnest. They hired the best contractors to construct their new home on the existing foundations which were all that was left after the cleanup. Undoubtedly they paid premiums to hasten the building's completion as the family moved into their new home before the year ended.

It would be interesting to know if they hired an architect to design the house. Trained architect James Maurice Ingram was practicing in Bowling Green at the time, but we also had several talented draftsmen and carpenters that were capable of seeing such a project to completion. The resulting house was a simple design with plenty of windows, an expensive verandah, and an attached port cochere. The side-gabled roof featured three dormers, each crowning a set of windows on the second floor. The rooms were commodious and a number of them featured a simple wood wainscoting and paneling.

The current owners and I believe the elaborate wainscoting and cornices currently in the public rooms was added later and that was confirmed by a Smith family friend who visited the house frequently.

One thing that many Bowling Greeners fondly recall about Elm Grove was its seemed isolation, just outside of the hubbub of the city. One of the favorite activities of young folks here in the 1950s and 1960s was to park on the soft lane leading to the house to—How shall we say?—get acquainted. A short excerpt from Bob Dickey’s first book Near Misses documents an encounter he had at Elm Grove with a young lady: "It was beginning to look like this would, despite all my worrying, turn out to be a perfect night to drive through the back lane to Elm Grove Dairy where it was possible to park and look at the moon for a while without being disturbed..."

Everyone loved Elm Grove dairy products, particularly the rich ice cream made on the property.

The community treasured Elm Grove as did the Smith family. It was their home and sheltered them well for many years. The first member of the Smith family to die here was Leila, Charles’s sister who never married. Luther and Mary had undoubtedly observed how someone could live and survive without a spouse when in the bosom of the family. Leila died in 1947 at the age of 85. Charles passed in 1956 and his wife Lucy followed in 1967. Although it is unclear when the dairy operation stopped operation, people have noted that they were still coming to pay their bills in the early-1960s. Siblings Luther and Mary Smith continued to run the farm with tenant help. Undoubtedly Luther was a little lost after Mary died in 1983. They had simple tastes and entertained only very close friends. After Luther died in 1986, the Daily News reported rather incredulously that “A Bowling Green man” who died on the 23rd of June 1986 “willed about 600 acres of land to the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association.” Luther’s May 7, 1985 will proved the statement correct.

The Smith’s 617 acres of land was sold in three tracts: Elm Grove, land on Lovers Lane, and acreage on Campbell Lane. After the estate was settled, the land was auctioned on December 2, 1987. The auction brochure contained one of the few colored photographs of the house prior to it being painted. The house and 289 acres was sold to Reginald Ayers, Steve Blanton and J.C. Taylor for almost $2.5 million dollars. The house passed through several hands over the next decade. The majority of the land became Hartland, a mixed-use development that included a golf course, mixed housing, offices, and the site of the Bowling Green Convention Center. In 1998 Steve and Jeannie Snodgrass bought the property and moved in during the infamous hailstorm of 1998. They made a number of improvements to the house without disturbing its historic integrity, including reinforcing the ash flooring on the first floor, exposing brick in the sun room area, modernizing the kitchen and bathrooms, installing quality wood flooring upstairs, updating light fixtures, finishing out and converting the basement and attic into family and work areas, as well as pouring the circular drive outside and customizing the landscaping. Most importantly, they’ve made the house their own—their little Nirvana right in the heart of what this author calls the best little hometown in American—Bowling Green, Kentucky.

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Heirs of All the Past, Trustees for All the Future

by Jean E. Nehm

Peering inside the boxes, one finds treasured items including letters, invitations, poems, photographs with people carefully identified, newspaper clippings, booklets tied with gold ribbon, and a detailed record of all activities and birthdays over many generations. While these items may sound as if these boxes belong to a loving family, they are, in fact, keepakes of a Bowling Green literary club known as the Current Topic Club.

The founding of this club occurred on February 23, 1895, at 1224 Kentucky Street in a modest white frame house, the home of Mrs. Ely Adams. The ladies elected Mrs. John Galloway president, Mrs. Will Jones (considered the founder) vice president, Mrs. D. M. Lawson treasurer, and Miss Eliza Anderson secretary. A committee of Mrs. Barr, Mrs. Porter, and Mrs. Cathertson was formed to write the constitution and by-laws and to suggest a suitable name for their new club. Mrs. Jones, Miss Anderson, and Miss Roylston formed another committee to select topics for study. When the ladies met again, they unanimously decided that “the most suitable and appropriate name would be Current Topic Club.” On January 14, 1897, a committee announced that the club colors would be white and gold, and the goldenrod (not selected as Kentucky’s state flower until 1926) its emblem. Mrs. Thomas wrote a poem about the flower for the occasion:

The Goldenrod

A rowgish elf in dappled green,
To guard his tent with goldenrod,
A roguish elf in dappled green,
To dance with the nymphs of the wood.

A fairy’s wheel spun silken thread
To robe its form in royal gown,
A fairy’s wheel spun silken thread
To dance around the Goldenrod.

The oldest known surviving yearbook sporting the Current Topic Club’s logo dates from 1909. Butler College art professor Beulah Strong designed the unique moniker.

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While today on annual yearbooks and on a commemorative brick in space to give you some an assigned topic.

In 1914, members began to discuss Causes of the European War. All previous hesitancy in public speaking must have dissipated by then, for the subject was one which every member wanted to discuss, and it was with great difficulty that we succeeded in suppressing that eager spirit and patriotism in order that Mrs. Adams could proceed with her paper. Two years later, the topic was Preparedness for War. This program "so stirred the ladies that the round table discussion which followed crowded as completely the discussion of the subject for the coming year, and we were only cooled down by the appearance of our hostess with such delicious fresh strawberry cream in rum kisses which pleasantly reminded us that she had been to the city and had not forgotten us.

Interest in many contemporary topics ran parallel to major events over the years: the League of Nations, women's suffrage, Einstein's theory of relativity, aviation, the building of Boulder Dam, King Edward and Mrs. Simpson, Annie Oakley, and the European Common Market.

Sometimes the topic was not one from the major news headlines of the day but was still of great interest for women. One example is their discussion of playgrounds in 1915. Roll call was taken, with members offering an interesting topic for a given discussion, or reading a prepared paper on an assigned topic.

Meeting on alternate Thursdays beginning in September, Current Topic Club members followed a structured protocol. Roll call was taken, with members offering an interesting topic in response to their names, which were always called for two women who could attend meetings until a vacancy was filled. For members who failed to contribute an appropriate current topic, the Pres. would issue a letter "Extemporaneous speaking is urged upon all members, and I would that I had space to give you some laughable accounts of our efforts along this line, frightened as we are at the sound of our own voices. While we have not mastered the art of speaking, yet we are proud of the progress we have made and realize that continued practice is the keynote of success and a conversational club a means. Opportunities for speaking took several forms: answering roll call, contributing comments about a current topic in a group discussion, or reading a prepared paper on an assigned topic.

In the early years, women who had been active members for at least twenty-five years and an associate membership for two women who could attend meetings until a vacancy became available for a full membership. Fines were assessed for absences (10 cents), and members voted to drop any member who missed three consecutive meetings without "good and sufficient reason." A $5 cent fine was assessed to members who failed to contribute an appropriate current topic during roll call.

By the 1940s, members were "on the cusp" to give papers on assigned topics. Late 1990s' topics included Hypnotism, China, Japan, Literary Outlook of America, Louis Pasteur (who died the same year the club began), and the Electrical Outlook. Being sick did not release a member's responsibility to contribute on a topic. For example, in March, 1895, the secretary wrote, "Mrs. Lawson, being absent on acct. of illness, went a very interesting paper on "Facts of Napoleon's Life" which was read by Mrs. Jones."
Members of the Current Topic Club at the organization’s centennial, 1995. The members are, back row, left to right: Jene Flitt, Gail Brooks, Mary Ann Berry, Dabbs Medalsie, Vickie Campbell, Jamie Higgin, Laura Buckley, George Anna McKenzie, Glathen Betterworth, Mary Lucas, Jean Harris, Mary Lloyd Moore, Mary Frances Willock, Kay Cole, Carrie Goff, front row, left to right: Casey Lester, Mamie Medalsie, Betty Jo Beard, Nell Douglas Goddodle, Gayle Hurley, Virginia Spalding, Ducho Jones, Mary Belle Willock, and Peggy Brooks.

Bowling Green Country Club. Photos in an album in the club’s collection tell the story of this memorable event. Husband were invited to the black tie affair, and the ladies wore beautiful dresses, some modern and some from an earlier time. George Anna McKenzie was pleased to wear her mother’s black velvet dress with a white hand-worked collar, which had been purchased in 1939 for an important trip to New York for the American Saddlebred Horse Show held in Madison Square Garden. At the tables, guests found place cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon. Following a dinner of salad, blackberry chicken with rice pilaf, and peas, cards written in calligraphy and centennial programs tied with gold ribbon.

From the Lindberg kidnapping right up to O.J., you have studied it all and had your say. You are better informed than our Fortnightly group, but—you know, it’s pretty amazing you’ve been 22 years longer in the loop! As we close this toast, we’d just like to say—we never saw ladies looking this way—with your lovely smiles and beautiful smiles—how could you have traveled these many miles? Now, if we may, we wish your club Happy One-Hundredth Birthday!

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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.

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