In Search Of

KELLWOOD

What once stood among the close maples in the center of what is known today as the Kellwood subdivision, called the attention of many people in, and past its zenith. Kellwood, the three-story brick mansion stood in the center of a large farm, which included portions of today's Highway 63 north, and the swimming pool park, as well as all of Kellwood Hills. A sheriff's sale in the 1960's sealed the fate of the mansion and its grounds, but the tales of it and the people who resided there shall perhaps never end.

Eccentric Emma, the beautiful stairs, Charles and Fred... the mention of the Kellogg name in Kirksville stirs up many fragmented memories, but unfortunately, very little is remembered.

Often the information was second-hand, “I didn’t know them but my mother did,” or more often merely rumor. Yet from the rumors come a few facts which, when paired with the deeds, court cases, and other documents, showed something of the elusive history of the house and its owners.

The house was built on a property deeded to the Rowland family in 1848, but the date of the home's completion, and who built it, is a point of controversy. Many maintain that it was built after the Civil War in 1873, when the land was owned by John Smith. Others give the date as 1877 when the McQuieres took possession of the land. Still others insist it was built in 1881 by the people who gave the mansion its name, the Warren J. Kellogg family. It seem that the names of the people who really built the house are perhaps now lost or forgotten.

Architecturally, all of the given dates are plausible. The front lower two stories of the facade were stiff, almost severe, with the classical modeled sidelights and transoms over the upper and lower main doors. Also, on the front, were quoins, pilasters, and brackets, elements of the architecture of Colonial, Greek Revival and Victorian, respectively. The two-storied, pedimented porch shows similar restraint, pointing to an ante-bellum influence. Yet, the third floor is built into a mansard, which is considered a Victorian innovation. Also on the eastern side of the house was an octagonal bay window, usually considered Victorian. Thus, the exterior of the house is a combination of so many elements, of so many time periods, It is impossible to date it on architecture alone.

Of the interior of the house even less is known. Still existing, however, is a photograph taken from the top of the spiral stairs constructed by a Kirksville man, Harry Tull. The floor plan for all that is known follows the usual ante-bellum tradition, altered perhaps by the reconstruction period's transition. The east parlor was noted for its hand-painted wallpaper and both it and the adjacent parlor, hall, and dining room were remembered for their parquet (inlaid wood) floors. Perhaps the greatest glory, it might be ventured, was the domed skylight at the top of the staircase.

Correction: Family name is McGuire rather than McQuire

The solid walnut staircase was built by Harry Tull. Stair-building was a specialty trade. It often took six months or longer to complete a stairway.

Story by John Thomas
The huge, three-story brick Kellogg home was set back from the road, almost hidden by large trees. It stood on the land which is now the swimming pool park, Kellwood Hills, and part of Highway 63 North. (Photo Courtesy of Northeast Missouri State University.)

Because of the lack of written or oral records, the owners of the property from 1848-1877 are almost unknown, except as names in legal records. The McQuires, who moved into the property in 1877 and who were rumored to have built the house, left it four years later after experiencing a series of tragic events. Those events began with the loss of all their chickens and cows (which later led to bankruptcy) and ended with the tragic death of their first child, Hubert. Later, the McQuire's daughter, Ivie, described their story as "they couldn't get out fast enough." Perhaps the animating force behind the house would be better left unspoken.

Probably the most rumored and famous owners of the house were the eccentric and reclusive Kellogg family. Coming from Ohio in 1881, they took possession of the land from the McQuires. Warren and Susan Kellogg had seven children, James, Ray W., George, Fred O., Emma, Ross, and Charlie. Of James, Ray, George, and Ross Kellogg, very little is known. Ross died when he was one year old. James married and left for Ohio, and Ray and George lived secluded, reclusive lives, as did Fred, Charles, and Emma.

The huge brick house was set back from the road, almost hidden by huge trees. Here abode the last of the Kellogg family: Emily, Charles and Fred. "They were fine old men, short in stature, very quiet and rather reclusive," as one Kirksville historian said of Charles and Fred. "Up until the 1940's and 50's, they drove their horse and buggy up town and parked on the square. Apparently, they did not like change. When the house changed hands after the Kelloggs, it was found to have neither modern plumbing nor electricity, no phone, and no interior bathrooms. They lived their lives simply and quietly, content."

Of Emma Kellogg much less is known, but much more is said. The Kelloggs, though reclusive, were hospitable, often allowing people to pick hickory nuts and wild flowers from their woods. Sometimes, people would find Emma deeply engrossed and unaware of watching eyes, preaching to the open fields and woods. Upon realizing people were watching, she ran back to the confines of the house, looking "rather like a witch." The Kelloggs also did a small business selling strawberries from a large patch east of the house, where occasionally someone saw a fleeting glimpse of Emma running for the safety of the verandah or the summer kitchen. At best, the only thing known of Emma is that she was extremely shy, using the walls of the house as a shelter against the world.

During the middle years of the twentieth century, the finances and health of the Kelloggs were failing, one of the brothers already having been claimed. Emma and Charles were made to leave the house sometime during the 1950's. Charles apparently went berserk, taking an axe and chopping up the parlor organ and breaking the Haviland china in the dining room; just how the sheriff finally calmed him down is unknown, or if this episode ever really happened at all.

Emma's reaction to leaving was much different, though rather predictable. She locked herself in her room and refused to come out. The sheriff finally broke the door down and
she was taken from the house—her spirit broken. Before she
died in Sticklel Hospital, one nurse became close to her and
remembered her as being very sweet and quiet, and very shy.

All the Kelloggs, excepting James, are laid to rest in
Forest-Llewellyn Cemetery. Of the stones, one remains an
enigma. Fred Kellogg's tombstone is marked only 1880-19__.

After the Kellogs moved away, the lean years came upon
the house, which, though in poor repair, was finally allowed
to lapse into ruin. While still standing, the house changed
hands twice. Finally, it was demolished because of its ex-
tremely poor condition. A modern house was built on the site
of the old in Kellwood Hills. This name is the only written
tribute to a family now dead—the family that gave the
development its name.

During the 1960's a brief and unsuccessful campaign was
started in order to save the house as a landmark. Even if it
had been saved, many of the interior features were gone, all
of which were irreplaceable. The staircase, during the time
the house stood unoccupied, was destroyed by vandals
wielding axes. Also, the parquet floors and handpainted
wallpaper were in extremely poor condition.

Today the house is remembered only when asked about.
Often it is confused with the Parcell's Plantation, the site of
which is nearby. Though the Parcell house was frame,
whereas Kellwood was brick, the door and window arrange-
ment was similar. At one time the houses were both owned
by the Kelloggs. Finally, various mentions of a fenced-in
causeway or walkway between the two homes led to further
confusion. Unfortunately, today both houses remain only as
yellowing newspaper clippings and cracked, fading
photographs.

Fred Kellogg's tombstone in Forest-Llewellyn
Cemetery is one of the unexplained mysteries of
the Kellogg family story. The stone reads only
1880-19__.

According to local legend, a curse was somehow fastened
upon the house. Each of its owners was scourged by
pestilence, death, madness, or bankruptcy, until the property
again changed hands. The reason for the curse, or this
rumor, is unknown, like so many other things . . . they
vanished with the house. Back at the cemetery . . . the
leaves sigh over the Kellogg plot, and if the trees know, they
don't tell.

The Kellogg house is often confused with this large
frame house known as the
Parcell Plantation. The
Parcell home was similar
in architecture to the
Kellogg place, and both
homes were at one time
owned by the Kelloggs.
The plantation, built
before the Civil War, was
reportedly damaged by
cannon fire during the
Battle of Kirksville.
(Photo Courtesy of
Kirksville Daily Express.)