

*"A future with a past"*

# LANDMARK REPORT

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## We Shared In Its History: 1123 State Street

by Sue Lynn Stone

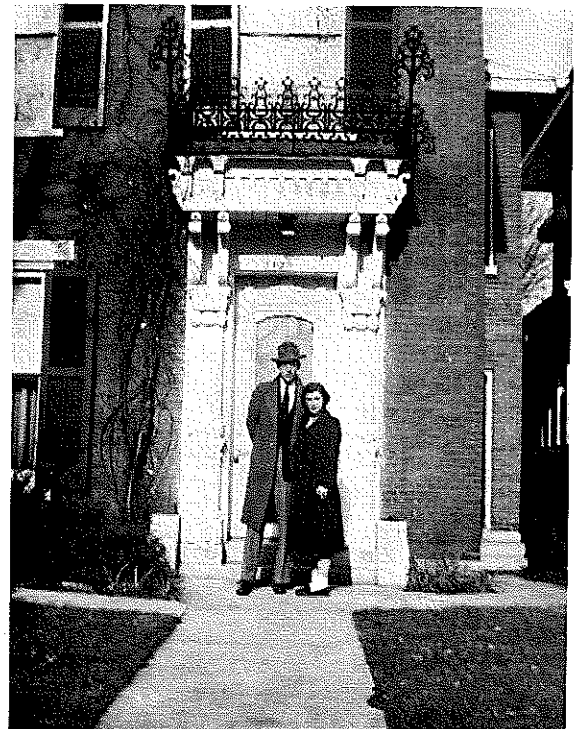
*(Editor's Note: The State Street Methodist Church has recently purchased the home at 1123 State Street for educational space. I asked Sue Lynn Stone, who grew up in the house to reflect on her years there and share with us things about the house and its occupants)*

I was reared on stories of our house, then educated by the University to look at it with a historian's eye, and now try to recount a blended story of fact and tradition. During my college years, Irene Moss Sumpter included the Adams-Goodrum residence in her Bowling Green landmarks book. Its publication probably was the catalyst for my interview with my grandmother, Nelle Jane Shanks Stone, concerning her earliest memories of being in the house (notes of which I found years later when I had completely forgotten the conversation, but not its contents). As a young graduate with a bachelor's degree in history, I met with Dick Pfefferkorn to discuss career opportunities and, to my surprise, found a photograph of my front door adorned his office wall. Much of who I am comes from the 20+ years I spent at 1123 State Street; even my name "Sue Lynn" first belonged to an earlier resident of apartment 2.

The year 1844 is always told as its building date. In walking its interior and exterior with an eye for renovations, I have come to appreciate through the years the house as physical evidence of how a downtown residence survived and was renovated to meet the changing needs of its residents. It was originally built as a Greek Revival townhouse constructed using a Flemish-bond brick pattern. As several interior walls are three-bricks thick, I suspect the original house consisted of two rooms over two rooms and later was

expanded to four rooms over four. When the three southern rooms separated by a concrete goldfish pond were added, a former exterior window became a mirrored shelf in the front parlor. Grandmother remembers visiting Aunt Alice before the exterior door facing the south was modified into a window in the Sun Room. She also recalled a servant's staircase behind the second room (which would become the elevated toilet which graced the rock hewn basement). The framed enclosed back porches, both upstairs and downstairs, appear to be later modifications. Its last addition, probably in the late 1930s was a kitchen for apartment 2 on the northwest corner of the house.

My father, Dan Ray Stone, recounts that it was his great grandmother's sister Alice Goodrum's independence which first brought the house into our family. As a spinster with failing eyesight, Alice overheard her brothers planning to share their homes with her in sequential two year periods. Unwilling to be a permanently revolving guest, she acquired a bank loan to purchase 1123 State Street as a "overnight guest house." When downtown hotels would fill, hotel clerks would refer travelers to her home. Dying of typhoid fever at



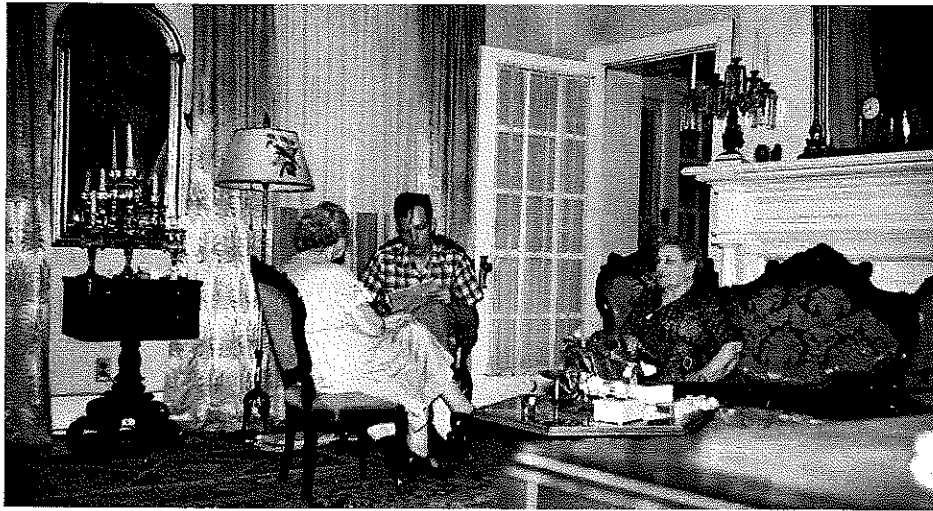
*Dan and Frankie Stone at the front entrance of their home at 1123 State Street.*

her residence in 1924, *The Park City Daily News* described Alice Goodrum as "one of the best beloved women in Bowling Green."

Alice's brother J. Willis Goodrum, his wife, Hattie Massey Goodrum, and her sister Johnnie Massey Clay next occupied the house. Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Goodrum later remodeled the private residence into apartments. Frugal women, they closed the former doorway into apartment 2 by using a gilded

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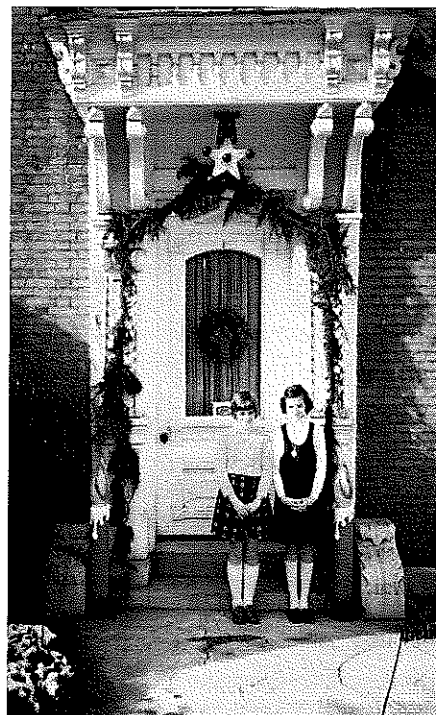
*Interior photo at 1123 State Street featuring Dan Stone.*

mirror on a table created by gilding the legs of a kitchen stove and cutting a piece of marble. Upstairs, short cabinet doors were bolted together and painted to create doors for long openings in apartment 4. Murphy beds which folded into the wall and were covered by hinged double doors were installed in apartments 4 & 5. By splitting a former bedroom in apartment 5 into two rooms, a kitchen and bedroom were created. Prior to its adaptation as an apartment building, a staircase graced the northeast corner of the parlor which was divided by columns and the southern side of the room was one step lower than the staircase's base. As part of the conversion, they enclosed the staircase in order to construct an additional room upstairs.

Probably the most interesting renovation was the raising of the downstairs floor 18 inches. The explanation I have always heard was that at the time you stepped down from street level into the front yard and then down again into the house. The continued paving of State Street had made occupants' view out the front windows street level. The decision was made to raise the floors and the doorway to the home. Adding the elaborately scrolled wooden entrance with cast iron fencing above, the Victorian doorway is out of character

with the windows, but remains the house's most prominent feature.

I do not know much about the women I affectionately call the "Massey Sisters." From time to time as work was done on the house, uncovering a crystal pitcher and photo albums added to their mystic in my childish eyes. Johnnie Massey Clay diligently supported



*The front entrance decorated for Christmas in the late-1960s.*

mission activities in the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, serving as a editor of two publications and president of the Women's Board of Missions from 1916-1936. Under her leadership the Colegio Americana was begun in Colombia and the building was named in her honor. In 1941, the body of Josephine Belle Goodrum Stone, my great grandmother and widow of Cumberland Presbyterian minister J. Wood Stone, was transported from City-County Hospital to her brother's home for visitation and funeral.

Late in their lives, Mrs. Clay and Mrs. Goodrum approached my grandmother and her bachelor son about purchasing the home for rental property with the understanding that they could remain in Apartment 1 for the remainder of their lives. Financing the transaction themselves, Aunt Hattie and Aunt Jack sold the Goodrum Apartments to Nelle & Dan Stone on August 1, 1952.

Soon they found themselves in the midst of a growing extended family. Before I have memories, the only other grandchild in the family would horrify Aunt Hattie and Aunt Jack by "falling dead" upstairs in #3 and making the parlor chandelier rock in #1. [You see, a small child reared on a concrete slab home delights in a floor that gives.] On one visit, the grandson witnessed from the front upstairs window a parade and the ambulance carrying out a former mayor from his residence across the street. Turning to his parents, he said: "I wish we lived in Bowling Green. Nothing ever happens in Louisville."

In November 1953, my father married Frankie Ground, one of the occupants of Apartment 4, and I arrived at 1123 State Street in November 1959, newly birthed at City-County Hospital. By then, the house contained 5 apartments, #1 occupied by Aunt Hattie and Aunt Jack,; #2 by my parents; #3 by my grandmother and her sister Clyde Cecil Brownfield; #4 by a bachelor working in Bowling Green; and #5 by Hettie Fowler, longtime

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*Carved limestone detail on the front porch.*

employee of Morris Jewelry Store.

The Stones only made two floor plan modifications during their 51 years of ownership. By the time I was old enough to need a bedroom of my own, we were living in Apt. 2, grandmother had moved downstairs into Apt. 1 after Aunt Jack's death in 1963, and a door could be cut between apartments to allow me access to the back bedroom in grandmother's side of the downstairs. Over the years, I came to describe my bedroom as "the hall." I am probably the only person in Bowling Green who got a door for her 17<sup>th</sup> birthday present. Locating the portion of the wall that had once housed a recessed china cabinet, my uncle Clifton Ground cut an entrance to the living room of Apt. 2 from the hall of Apt. 1.

The garages on the alley made car shopping an adventure. We were in search of a vehicle large enough for my 6'7" father to drive comfortably, yet small enough to fit in a garage built for a T-model Fords.

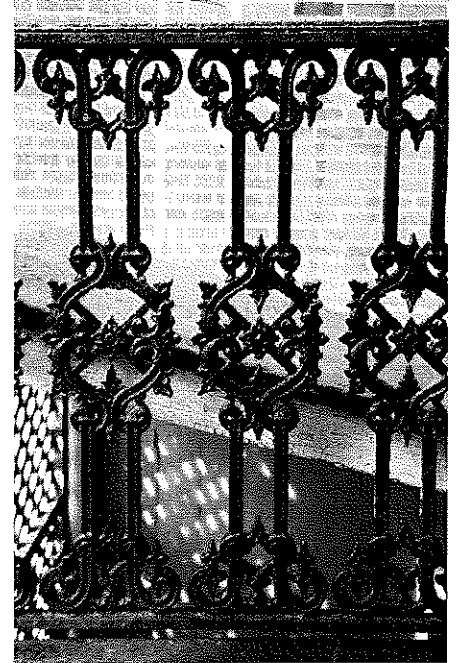
Some of my earliest memories in the house include the longtime residents upstairs, Hettie Fowler in #5,

Nellie Elliott in #3, and Gus Burks in #4. Being a proper Southern child, I learned to refer to the two former as "Aunt" and the latter as "Uncle." As the only child on the block the vast majority of my childhood, I impressed Aunt Hettie into attendance of a tea party to celebrate my deaf cat Powder Puff's birthday and probably conned tiny Aunt Nellie out of a pair of high heels and a dress in order to play dress-up.

Once I was old enough for adventure, Dad let me walk with him to town or to the post office. The Bowling Green Business University building on College Street burned in June 1963. One evening we walked home past the ruins. Its tower, the night watchman and the barricade made a lasting impression on a very young child. I also remember the day the Mansard Hotel burned as Grandma and I were downtown shopping at the time.

Having Graves-Gilbert Clinic for a neighbor had its pros and cons. My mother probably took great comfort in being able to run literally with her accident-prone preschooler for stitches when needed. Yet, as a typical child, I did not want to walk down their side of the street after one bout with stitches.

As I aged, the city block was my territory. While I was in elementary school, the old alleyway was lined with rock fences concealing deep backyards and short drives to wooden garages. By age 7, I began piano lessons with my backdoor neighbor, Nelle Dickey Bowen. Miss Nelle fascinated me by tooting her 1930s vintage car horn and then quickly backing blindly from her wooden garage into the alley. If I headed across the alley in the opposite direction, I could visit with Mrs. Russell, who lived in a fascinating house that had her husband's watch repair shop in its front rooms. It was Mrs. Russell's white French poodle, Pierre, who will always be my hero for having found Powder Puff when she was trapped in the neighbor's basement. I look back on that day and realize what a wonderful sense of community we had



*Detail of wrought iron work found on the house's back porch.*

on our block. It was not the last time I would search neighbors' basements for my deaf companion. Amazingly Powder Puff survived that congested neighborhood more than 13 years with my playhouse in the backyard as her pen.

Occasionally Aunt Hettie would take me along on her afternoon visit at Miss Ellis' boarding house, and we would sit on the front porch watching Bowling Green go by. Once, after learning that I was an avid Nancy Drew mystery reader, Miss Ellis allowed me to go in her attic. You see, Nancy Drew always found the best stuff in the attic or the basement. When I had worn out the neighbors' hospitality, my grandmother would allow me to trail her as she completed household chores.

Using my bicycle, I often "shopped" at imaginary markets located under the eaves of State Street Methodist Church, Allen Motor Company, the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, and the Graves-Gilbert pharmacy building with its majestic magnolia tree in the side yard. Using a harness and leash, I spent untold hours trying to train Powder Puff to walk

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around the block; Mr. Fletcher (of the Fletcher House on College Street) once asked to buy my cat, a blunder I have never quite gotten over. Walking to the public library where I spent many summer hours with Mrs. Thelma Freeman in the wonderful little rock children's library out back or downtown to shop for hours and "just look" at Woolworths required special permission.

As a college student, I lived upstairs in Apartment 4 (the efficiency), later Apartment 5 (the back Northwest corner of the house), and finally Apartment 3 (the Southern half of the upstairs). Returning to Bowling Green after completing graduate work at the University of Kentucky, I lived in Apartment 1 for a year.

1123 State Street will always be a part of me. As a teenager, I dreamed

of restoring the house to a single family dwelling. I equate the decision to sell 1123 State with First Baptist Church's decision to tear down the Chestnut Street facade. It was quite difficult for me to agree, yet I knew it was the best decision for my parents who had loved and cared for that house for more than 50 years. I am thankful that State Street Methodist Church will find use for it in their ministry. ▲