

Feature

Who lived in Haledon Hall?

By MARLENE EILERS
Staff Writer

Haledon Hall is not just the home of the registrar, admissions, and advisement. It is a state landmark chosen not for its historical heritage (George Washington never slept there), but for its architectural significance. Haledon Hall is representative of late 19th century-early 20th century architecture and although now a part of WPC, Haledon Hall still retains its original aura.

The original house was built in 1877 by John Mac Collough, a Scottish immigrant who made his money in the Paterson wool trade. Like most British immigrants, Mac Collough felt that the only way to show off his wealth in America was to build a castle, Mac Collough's Castle. From early photographs, Mac Collough's place was just that. The building was two stories high and rectangular in shape. Constructed of fieldstone with two eight sided turrets, Mac Collough's Castle had a large octagonal cupola with a domed roof. On the south side of the house there was a bay window with a mansard roof extending over the second floor. The front door was covered by a wooden vestibule, but later, Mac Collough replaced the wooden vestibule with a stone entrance way.

Although Mac Collough was wealthy, he was not a farmer and owned little land, some of which is still the campus. The only buildings on the grounds were the Coach House and what is now the maintenance building (between the Coach House and Raubinger). Mac Collough's nearest neighbors were the Gaede's. They lived near what is now Hobart Hall.

Little else is known about Mac Collough and the castle. He lived in the house until 1902 when Mac Collough's Castle went up for public auction. It was bought for a mere \$5,285 by Mrs. Garret A. Hobart (Jennie) the widow of McKinley's first vice-president. Mrs. Hobart planned to use Mac Collough's Castle (renamed Ailsa Farms) as a summer home. The Hobart's main residence was Carroll Hall in Paterson.

Garret A. Hobart served as the nation's 24th vice-president from 1897 until 1899. Had Hobart lived, he, and not Theodore Roosevelt, would have succeeded to the Presidency upon McKinley's assassination. While in Washington, Mrs. Hobart, as second lady, served as the White House's official hostess in place of the chronically ill Mrs. McKinley. After her return to New Jersey, Mrs. Hobart became a prominent leader in the social,

philanthropic, and religious activities of Paterson.

After buying Mac Collough's Castle, Mrs. Hobart, probably because of tax purposes, gave the house to her son Garret Hobart Jr., then 18.

Hobart Jr. married in 1906 to Caroline Frye Briggs and they made Ailsa Farms their permanent home. From the years between World War I and World War II, Ailsa Farms was a center of social and political activity. According to the Hobart's daughter, Mrs. Henry Kingsbury, some of the guests included General John W. Griggs, Attorney General of New Jersey; General Russell A. Alger, Secretary of War; William Frye (Caroline Hobart's grandfather), former Senator from Maine and President Pro Tem of the Senate; and other Senators and Congressmen.

In 1915, Hobart, first president of the Passaic County Park Commission and vice-president of the Paterson Savings Institute, added a red brick, three story wing to the original building. The addition included fireplaces in nearly every room and central air conditioning. When the house was completed, it contained 40 rooms, eight baths and a spiral staircase in the main entrance hall. Hobart also

removed the turrets and replaced them with lead glass bay windows, constructed a solarium on the roof and added 11 more plots of land (all of WPC and parts of Camp Veritans).

The Hobarts had three children: Garret A. Hobart 3rd., Katherine Grey (Mrs. David E. Hand), and Elizabeth Frye (Mrs. Henry A. Kingsbury). Elizabeth Frye Hobart made her debut in 1931 at Ailsa Farms and was married there four years later.

Mrs. Hobart Sr. (Jennie) sold the family home in Paterson and moved to Ailsa Farms where she died in 1941. Her son Garret Hobart Jr. also died at Ailsa Farms in the same year and Caroline Hobart lived alone in the manor house until 1948 when she sold it to the State of New Jersey for \$200,000.

New Jersey bought the property with the intention of using the property as a state college. In 1952 Paterson State Teachers' College (now the William Paterson College of New Jersey) moved from Paterson to its present site.

Although divider walls have been added to make space for offices, Haledon Hall remains virtually unchanged. The state and WPC have added nothing to the

original building that would destroy its natural beauty. All bathrooms and lighting fixtures are original as are the fireplaces, but the latter no longer work. The elevators were added by the state.

Even the rooms, despite dividers, desks and file cabinets, still retain parts of their original use. Academic Advisor, Philip Seminario's office was once the music room; the Alumni Office—pantry; records and transcripts—the dining room. Upstairs, now divided into offices, was the ballroom (note the marble fireplaces), the billiards room and the library

(the Registrar's office); Director of Educational Services, James Barrechia's office still has a workable fireplace and dark, heavy paneling, and shelving that shows the comfort and serenity of a game room. One can still picture Garret Hobart coming home after a hard day's work at the bank and shooting a few holes before dinner.

Although Alan Todt, director of Academic Advisement, calls his office the "wine cellar", the real wine cellar is actually a floor below him.

The 1915 addition also consisted of bedrooms and a general

living area. The original kitchen is now the mailroom. There is also an attic, a solarium (the door is kept locked) and a staircase that runs from the top to the bottom, but cannot be seen. This staircase was used by servants who could go about their business without interrupting the Hobarts. Parts of the staircase are now blocked, but a door (kept locked) across from Barrechia's office leads to the stairs. The stairs end in duplicating, again behind a locked door.

The Coach House housed the chauffeur and the laundress as well as the laundry. There were formal

gardens where Morrison Hall now stands.

The Hobart Manor House is one of the two remaining structures that is a remnant of a Paterson gone by. The other is Lambert Castle. It was for this reason that the WPC Bicentennial Committee headed by Ron McArthur of admissions, was able to have Haledon Hall designated as a New Jersey Historical Site. The house is now being considered as a National Historic Site and there is a proposal before the Board of Trustees to change the building's name to Hobart Hall.

March 2, 1976

March 2, 1976

