

Chapter 59

Peirson - Muth
September 22, 1977



Dr. Walter Muth and Dr. Michael McCusker converted this early period cobblestone into offices on West Pearl Street.

One of Arcadia's oldest cobblestone houses is being converted into offices for two doctors who specialize in ophthalmology. While the outside of the house retains much of its original beauty, the inside is being completely modernized.

It is expected that the offices will be open by the end of September. Dr. Michael McCusker and Dr. Walter Muth are joint owners of the property.

Mr. and Mrs. Timothy McCusker occupy the airy apartment on the second floor. Mr. McCusker is an attorney in Newark.

The house was long known as the old Peirson farm, but it dates back much farther.

In speaking of the early settlers,

"Landmarks of Wayne County" states that "among the pioneers south of the Ganargua were Lewis Jessup, William Stansel, Rev. Wesley Benton, Enoch DeKay (a miller) and Jeremiah Lusk. Silas Peirson located near Simon Burnett. He came from Long Island and was a carpenter by trade. He was the father of Henry R. Peirson and the grandfather of Silas S. Peirson. Other settlers south of the creek were Elder Roe, a Baptist Preacher; Gaius Howell, Jacob Hill who built a cobblestone house, John Norris, Jonathon Fairchild, a brother-in-law of Joel Hall."

The only cobblestone in those early days was the one on the old Peirson farm. "Landmarks" gives no dates for its erection, but it is believed to be dur-

ing the earliest cobblestone period and built by Jacob Hill.

Grace DeCann who researched the house in 1961 reports that there are no records to substantiate the age of the house. It is known that Isaac Lusk, one of the early settlers, who came here with his family in 1806 was living in the house in 1855. The house is of fieldstone cobbles, which indicates it is of the early period of cobblestone masonry between 1825 and 1835.

S. S. Peirson in his story of the Peirson family tells the Peirson story of the house. William Clark Peirson was the third son of Silas and Mary Peirson born April 6, 1821, married Caroline Clark, who was born Oct. 12, 1837 and died September 24, 1880. He died July 26, 1889. He was a farmer and lived on the old homestead just north of Hydesville. He afterwards exchanged his farm on the east side of the mill pond for the Jacob Lusk farm where he lived the remaining part of his life. He died a violent death being internally injured by backing a wagon out of the barn in harvest time.

William Clark Peirson and Caroline Peirson had these children -William Tracy, George Conway and Mary A. William Tracy (known as W.T.) was born Oct. 6, 1868, the first son of William and Caroline. He was educated in Newark High School and Union College and became bookkeeper in the First National Bank, then cashier in the Arcadia National Bank. He lived with his family in the cobblestone homestead on W. Pearl St. On Feb. 5, 1890 he married Anne Smith, daughter of the former owner of the grocery store later owned by O. W. Bumpus, called

"The People's Store" on W. Union St. They had a child, William T. Peirson who died June 10, 1898. William Tracy Peirson's brother, George Conway, owned a farm adjoining his brother's one half mile west of the New York Central Station. William Tracy fell heir to the cobblestone property.

A story written by L. T. Bryant in 1915 refers to a bear hunt at the Beckwith farm which later became the farm of W. C. Peirson, father of W. T. While the property was known for many years as the W. T. Peirson farm, there were a number of tenant farmers after W. T.'s marriage and removal to the home of his wife's parents on the north east corner of Mason and Miller Sts.

Between 1890, when W. T. Peirson married, and 1929 when he sold the property occupants who worked the farm included Dan Verbridge from 1912 to 1918. His family occupied the house. According to his daughter, Mrs. E. J. Berard of Colon Ave. there was electricity in the rear of the house, as her mother had a washing machine, but hanging oil lamps were used throughout the rest of the building. The orchard and pasture lot extended to the Ganargua and the cows were passed under the railroad to feed. The Leo Soliman family were tenant farmers from 1918 until 1929 when the Airport trustees bought the property.

While the abstract tells of the sale by William T. Peirson and his wife, Anna S., to F. Burnette Kelley, Gordon Meyer, Clifford Newton, Stuart D. Hallagan, Robert S. Bloomer as trustees for the Newark Airport Realty Committee on June 1, 1929 for \$15,000, it does not say when the house was sold to Ed-

ward C. Burgess.

At the time of the purchase by the Airport committee the land extended between lands of Elmer Cunningham and the New York Central to the Ganargua. On June 6, 1960 the airport property was turned over to the village of Newark by the trustees.

In the meantime Edward C. Burgess sold the cobblestone house under contract to a family whose name was not listed. Joseph Campbell bought this contract in 1947 and after he and his wife had made extensive repairs to the property moved into the house on Feb. 1, 1948.

During the period when the Burgesses owned the house Mr. and Mrs. Albert VanNorman and their nine children leased the farm from 1933 until 1940, according to Mrs. Gordon MacLaren, a daughter. She recalls that her brothers, Peirson, George and Leon worked the fields raising beans on the site of the present Newark Manor Nursing Home.

Joseph Campbell died Nov. 3, 1950 and his wife became owner of the property. On May 7, 1963 she sold the land of the Newark Manor Nursing Home to Geritarium, Inc. 2.67 acres.

Mrs. Melvin Brinkerhoff, the former Mrs. Joseph Campbell, recalls the planes landing on the field at the rear of their home. That didn't bother her as much as the searchlights about the field at night. She recalls that when they purchased the house there was scarcely a whole window pane in the entire residence. A wooden porch extended across the front of the house and this was in such poor condition that a tractor operator was hired to pull it off. A small

brick porch with iron railing replaced it.

The graceful semi-circular stairway in the house was opened into the living room by the removal of a partition. The back level of the house was raised to match the front of the second floor. The lovely front doorway, was surrounded by etched glass which was cracked. When the Campbells could not replace it they repaired it as it is today. Directly opposite the entrance is the stairway with its graceful sweep.

Mrs. Campbell, who later married Melvin Brinkerhoff, took the greatest interest in the grounds about the house, planting shrubs and flowers. For years it was a show place of the north side. They sold the property on April 13, 1973 to Damon D. McEndree and his wife. They in turn sold on May 9, 1977 to Michael D. McCusker and Walter Muth.

A workman on the property pointed out that during the Soliman's residence the roof on the north west corner burned. Mrs. Brinkerhoff said the charred beams could still be seen in the attic. A new roof was put on.

The interior of the house has been completely changed with no effort to retain the characteristic interior of a cobblestone. The partition has been replaced by the stairway and a modern fireplace replaces the old one in the east room. A small addition has been added on the south east to accommodate an efficiency kitchen as the old kitchen was torn out. The two large rooms across the front are waiting and reception rooms and the examining rooms are at the rear.

The upstairs apartment also has a fireplace, modern, over the one on the

first floor. The rooms are sunny and pleasant for Mr. and Mrs. Timothy McCusker.

Another building has been erected just west of the cobblestone for laboratory work, according to the contractor.

The grounds have become overgrown in recent years but Doctor McCusker says the plans include landscaping. The flagstone walk has been replaced by concrete to the future parking lot.

The house has many sophisticated features not usually found in early cobblestones. The quoins on the front part are cut limestone, but at the rear are simply large flat stones. The lintels and sills are limestone with the exception of one window in the rear which may have been put in at a later date. The doorway is of particular interest with its pillars against the house.

The brick porch was removed and a concrete porch has been added with fluted pillars supporting the roof. This is obviously for practical reasons for patients entering the house in stormy weather. The field cobbles in the front of the house are smaller than those at the rear, many of which are unusually large even in an early cobblestone.

While the features of the old cobblestone have been completely changed inside the house, the exterior with the exception of the front porch is just as it was when built. What a fine advertisement for any doctor. Where may I find Doctor McCusker or Doctor Muth? Why, in the cobblestone on West Pearl St.

Author's Update:

Doctor McCusker left in June 1981 but retained his interest in the office building. This will change when another doctor joins Doctor Muth.

