JUNIOR LEAGUE OF BUFFALO
THE BUFFALO NEWS
DECORATORS'
SHOW HOUSE

Show House History

Arts & Crafts Elegance

The Edward H. Webster House

164 LINCOLN PARKWAY • BUFFALO

April 25 to May 17, 2015

Introduction

The 2015 Junior League of Buffalo/The Buffalo News Decorators' Show House was designed for Edward H. Webster and his family at 164 Lincoln Parkway by the renowned local architects, August Carl Esenwein and James Addison Johnson, and was completed in 1907.

Lincoln Parkway at the turn of the twentieth century was rapidly developing as one of the City's prime residential neighborhoods, second only to Delaware Avenue in terms of prestige. It is part of the magnificent system of parks and parkways created by America's first and foremost landscape architect, Frederick Law Olmsted, together with Calvert Vaux. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the system comprises six major parks, with several connecting parkways and circles. The northern end of Lincoln Parkway, which was officially opened in 1873, was designed to connect The Park, as Delaware Park was known, with other tree-lined streets and parkways which were accented by landscaped circles. Located on the west side of Buffalo, Chapin and Bidwell Parkways began at Chapin Place (now Gates Circle) and Bidwell Place (now Colonial Circle) respectively and converged at Soldiers Place to form Lincoln Parkway.

Lincoln Parkway 1910

One of the special features of Lincoln Parkway was the manner in which various types of traffic were separated: a central paved road exclusively for the use of private carriages was flanked on each side by a median with elm trees, grass, and a bridle path for horseback riders and bicyclists; and on the outer bands of the Parkway were narrow service roadways allowing access for carts and wagons to the residences, outlined with walkways for pedestrian traffic. Olmsted and Vaux insisted that the parkways they designed be lined with a single species of tree, the elm. The houses themselves on Lincoln Parkway had to be set back fifty feet from the street line, and the integrity of the parkways was assured with stipulations about the nature and cost of any future buildings. Significantly, during the 1901 Pan American Exposition, the grounds of which were sited immediately to the north of The Park, Buffalo was celebrated not only as the City of Light, but the City of Trees. Sadly, by the 1970s, most of the American urban elms had been blighted mainly by Dutch elm disease and also perished due to poor maintenance of gas mains and sidewalks situated near the trees.

Adjacent to the plot of land Webster purchased was the imposing Greek Revival structure funded by Buffalo entrepreneur and philanthropist John J. Albright and designed by Edward B. Green, and at its dedication in May 1905 it became the permanent home for the Albright Art Gallery, as it was then known. The 1907 Edward H. Webster House was thus very well positioned in one of the finest and most desirable neighborhoods in Buffalo. It is built in the Arts and Crafts style, unlike most of the other splendid houses on Lincoln Parkway. The substantial property exemplifies superb craftsmanship and straightforward simplicity. Using excellent quality materials and frugal ornamentation meant the designs were not competing with the earlier eclectic and indulgently ornate Victorian aesthetic. With this commission, and very mindful of the surrounding Park, Esenwein and Johnson desired that the house should emanate a feeling of peacefulness and of being at one with nature.

Albright Art Gallery 1905

The Architects of the Edward H. Webster House

Esenwein and Johnson

At the turn of the twentieth century Esenwein & Johnson was the second most active architectural practice in Buffalo, New York, after Green & Wicks. The partnership of Esenwein & Johnson was formed in 1897, August Carl Esenwein and James Addison Johnson being the senior partners. The firm's offices were located at 775-793 Ellicott Square in the City of Buffalo.

August Esenwein was born on Nov. 7, 1856 at Esenwein-Virnsberg in Wuertemburg, South Germany. He studied at private schools and in 1874, entered the Stuttgart Polytechnic University for five years, also serving a year with the Royal German army. In 1879, he went to Paris, spending two years as a draughtsman in an architect's studio.

August Esenwein

In 1880, Esenwein immigrated to America and settled in Buffalo. Initially he found employment as a draughtsman and then joined the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad's engineering department. During this time, Esenwein's architectural career received significant advancement when he won the top prize for a design for the first Buffalo Music Hall in 1882, which was then constructed under his supervision.

After leaving the railroad company, Esenwein worked by himself as an architect until 1897, when he formed a partnership with James Addison Johnson, which continued until Esenwein's death in 1926, at the age of 70, in his home at 167 Oxford Street, which he had designed. He was buried in Forest Lawn Cemetery. His wife, the former Katherine L. Haberstro, had passed away the previous year, and his son August Carl was his sole survivor.

Esenwein's professional memberships included the Pan-American Board of Architects; the Buffalo Society of Architects, and Ancient Landmarks Lodge. Whilst in solo practice, Esenwein's designs included Engine No 22; the German-American Brewery, and the Alfred Schoellkopf residence. He worked in a variety of architectural styles including Queen Anne, Richardsonian Romanesque, Italian Renaissance, and Colonial Revival, and of course, Arts and Crafts, for example, on the Edward H. Webster House and other homes in Buffalo.

James A. Johnson

James A. Johnson was born in 1865 near Syracuse, New York and was educated in America. He learned his skills in several architectural offices, including those of McKim, Mead & White in New York and Richard Morris Hunt. Johnson came to Buffalo in 1892 and practiced with James Marling (1892-1895), designing the Alexander Main Curtiss House and 780 West Ferry Street in Buffalo (now the Ronald McDonald House), and later with William H. Boughton (1895-1897), working primarily in the Colonial Revival style.

When the partnership of Esenwein & Johnson was formed in 1897, Johnson was age 32, nine years younger than Esenwein.

Ornamentation was Johnson's speciality – the motifs featuring electric motors and generators that decorate the Niagara Mohawk Building were his invention. He and William W. Kent of New York designed the inlaid marble floor of the Ellicott Square Building in 1929.

Together, Esenwein & Johnson were extremely successful, producing over 1,000 designs, ranging from mantels to multi-building complexes. Their numerous works included the design of the Temple of Music, the Administration Building, and Alt Numberg — all at the Pan American Exposition, where President McKinley was shot in 1901; the AM&A's Department Store Building; the Calumet Building; the Buffalo Museum of Science (1925-1929); the General Electric Tower/Niagara Mohawk Building, a prominent feature of the Buffalo skyline at the corner of Genesee and Washington Streets; Lafayette High School; the Masten Park High School/Fosdick-Masten High School/City Honours School; the Schoellkopf-Vom Berge Manor on Chapin Parkway (the 11th Decorators' Show House in 2001); the Century House at 100 Lincoln Parkway (the 13th Decorators' Show House in 2005); the Silverthorne House at 877 Delaware Avenue (the 14th Decorators' Show House in 2007); the Elephant House at the Buffalo Zoo (1912); and the Colonel Ward Pumping Station (1912-1916).

Ellis H. Webster

After the death of Esenwein in 1926, Johnson became advisory architect to the restoration of Old Fort Niagara. Frank B Kelly joined the firm as a partner, and the firm was finally dissolved by Kelly in 1942 after the demise of Johnson, who died in Buffalo General Hospital in 1939, at the age of 73 and was buried in Oswego.

The Owners of 164 Lincoln Parkway

The Edward H. Webster Family

In the late 1800s, Buffalo was a city of great prosperity with a burgeoning economy and a strategic location at the junction of the Great Lakes and the Erie Canal. Many European immigrants flocked to Buffalo to seek employment in the steel and grain mills. The availability of hydroelectric power from the nearby Niagara Falls from 1896 onwards meant Buffalo was the first American city to have widespread electric lighting. The Pan American Exposition, held between May 1st through November 2nd 1901, attracted thousands of visitors, both locally and nationally, and shone an international spotlight on the city.

As word of Buffalo's success spread, many business owners and entrepreneurs were drawn to the city. Ellis H. Webster, a landowner from Eden, NY, chose to do the same, in hopes of finding profitable business opportunities, and brought his family with him.

Ellis was born to one of the pioneer families of Western New York. His grandfather, Hugh Webster III, had come with ox teams to Erie County from Plainfield, New Jersey to settle in the present town of Boston with his wife and five children. Ellis' father, Edward, had purchased forested land in Eden, NY where Ellis was raised and attended the local schools. In 1850, in Kenosha, Wisconsin, Ellis married Charlotte W. Whitney. The couple had two children: Edward H., who was born on Feb. 13, 1852, and his younger sister, Jennie P., born in 1859.

When Ellis was given the opportunity to become a store clerk, he moved the Webster family from Eden to Buffalo. Shortly afterwards, he ran his own successful grocery and produce store on Seneca St. with George W. Scott until 1868, when he decided to pursue a new commercial venture in the coal trade. Possessing sound business acumen, it was not long before it became a large operation. Over the years, the company had multiple offices in Buffalo, located at 219 and 229 Erie Street, followed by offices at

308 Main Street, 30 Mechanic Street and in office number 209 at the Ellicott Square Building.

Meanwhile, Edward H., Ellis' son, began his own family in 1879, when he married Mary E. Griffith of Lyons, NY. The couple lived at 74 Swan Street with his parents, sister, and a servant, and in 1881, he and his wife welcomed their first son, Frank G. Their daughter Charlotte E. followed in 1883, and their second son, Harold E. was born in 1885. In 1900, Edward H. and his family moved to a house located at 430 Prospect Avenue, and two years later decided to commission the famed local architects, August Esenwein and James A. Johnson to build a home for them at 781 West Ferry. The property was a significant house constructed of buff Roman brick, with exterior openings featuring slightly pointed lintels with stone springs and keystones, and a very striking rathskeller, or basement.

Edward H. Webster

Mary Webster

In 1907, Edward H. again commissioned Esenwein and Johnson to design a yet larger house for their family situated a little further north away from the city. The Arts and Crafts style house, comprising 6,600 square feet, with a separate carriage house, was located at 164 Lincoln Parkway on a very desirable plot of land, and was constructed during 1907-1908. To the front, the house would have a view of the picturesque Gala Water, (now known as Hoyt Lake). Next door was the new Albright Art Gallery (now Albright-Knox Art Gallery) and a little further away to the northwest corner of The Park was the Buffalo Historical Society (later named the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, and since October 2012 it has been known as The Buffalo History Museum). It occupied the sole surviving building, the New York State pavilion, from the Pan American Exposition after it closed in 1901. The pavilion was designed by Buffalo architect George Cary: its south portico looking over Mirror Lake is meant to evoke the Parthenon in Athens. The Websters maintained memberships of these and many other cultural and professional institutions in Buffalo, which they actively supported.

They were also a very devout family; Ellis was a deacon, and in that capacity in 1899 he witnessed the cornerstone laying ceremony at the First Baptist Church, which was at the junction of North and North Pearl streets. When the stone was set into place, it is said that he pronounced, "I now declare this stone accurately and properly placed!" Edward H. was also involved in the church, and he served as Treasurer at St. Mary's Episcopal Church for upwards of 25 years.

Edward H.'s wealth and related status emanating from his successful career in the family business provided the wherewithal for him to have such grand houses built for him. Edward H. worked with his father in the coal business until 1875, when he officially joined the firm under the new name of E. Webster & Son. The ice industry was added shortly thereafter, as it was common for the coal providers for the winter to supply ice in the summer, thus ensuring yearlong employment.

Before the advent of electric refrigerators, chilling and storing perishables to prevent spoiling was difficult, and people generally had to depend on foods that could be preserved. Healthier food options for families and businesses became available when it became possible to regularly keep things cold. The ice trade began in the year 1805, when a New England entrepreneur by the name of Frederic Tudor helped to develop new technologies to harvest, transport, and store large quantities of ice for commercial use. To remove the ice blocks, snow was first cleared from the ice surface with horses pulling surface scrapers and then scored into large squares with an ice plough, which cut grooves into the ice. After, the men would use saws to cut a channel that the blocks would float along. Then the blocks would get broken apart with a breaker bar. They were pushed along the channel by a line of men with pike poles and then pulled by a conveyor belt into storage houses until the blocks

could be shipped by rail. Selling ice became a thriving and profitable business venture, especially if a company could provide ice that was not only usable for keeping food items cold, but also safe enough to be consumed in drinks.

One factor that helped E. Webster & Son to flourish was their reputation for having the cleanest water. Many people would become sick from drinking contaminated water, and typhoid fever was common. The company began cutting ice in Buffalo, but due to the sewage and oil from surrounding plants, and the possibility of Lake Erie not freezing or having ice too thin to cut, they were forced to cut only inside the breakwater, which was still too impure for consumption. In time companies were required to label their ice delivery trucks as containing "Canal Water", if it could only be used for keeping things cool.

In response to the limits of sourcing ice in Buffalo, the Websters purchased 175 acres of land from William Follett & Frank Armstrong, in the town of Machias, in Cattaraugus County. There they built two ice houses with a combined storage capacity of about 60,000 tons on the shores of Lime Lake. This lake was superior to other water sources, as it was fed by a steady stream of 50°F pure underground spring water. Later it even gained the interest of "Ripley's Believe it or Not" in 1941 due to the unusual feature of having two outlets and no inlet. The location was vastly important to the success of the Webster operation. At 1,640 ft. above sea level, it almost always could be counted on to freeze over, and running parallel to the Buffalo, New York & Philadelphia Railroad Company, shipping large quantities of ice was efficient and cost effective.

When the purity of their ice became well known, the company became one of the most trusted and widely used ice dealers in Buffalo and its surrounding areas, even as far as Cleveland. At the height of their success, with three ice houses in operation, the company shipped on the "summer ice train" around 40,000 tons of ice annually, and it became the company's primary commodity. Other ice companies soon followed, and on an average year, around 145,000 tons of ice was harvested. It was cold and dangerous work, but hundreds of men were employed, and the ice industry became a huge economic boon to the area. So desirable was this pure ice that home delivery wagons often advertised "Lime Lake Ice."

The ice blocks would be delivered, much like milk was, to families in amounts of 25, 50, 75 or 100 lb. blocks, and in the summer, children would run behind the trucks, hoping to be given a chunk of ice to suck on. To alert ice companies of how many pounds a householder would like, a card with numbers in each corner signifying the pounds desired, was hung in the front window with that number pointing upwards. The cost was generally 50¢ per week, and $20 per year, depending on the success of the winter harvest.

Lime Lake Ice Storage

In 1886, an office worker by the name of William Germann became a partner, and the name of the company was changed to E. Webster Son & Co. The Websters held memberships in The National Association of Ice Industries, The New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio Ice Association and the Eastern Ice Association, which helped them to keep abreast of developments within the ice industry.

At the turn of the century, the family built a 3,200 sq. ft. summer estate at 9848 Lake St. that overlooked the lake and the entire ice operation.

Shortly thereafter, though, the family was dealt a blow when in 1903, at the age of 81, and whilst still active in the firm, Ellis Webster died suddenly as a result of a stroke. Although both sons of Edward H. majored in Manufacturing at Yale University's Scheffield Scientific School, Harold went on to pursue a career with Pratt & Lambert paints, while eldest son and recent graduate, Frank, was brought in to help manage the company. Carrying on with the father-son tradition, there was no need to change the name of the firm.

In the book, *The Icemen Cameth: The History of the Natural Ice Industry at Lime Lake, New York*, by Jeffrey Miller, a foreword written by Mary Dennis Webster Mann, a granddaughter of Frank G. Webster, details the entire history of the family business in a poem. Below is an excerpt:

Ellis, Edward H. and Frank G., Captains of the Industry

Each generation built on Love as eldest son
was passed the glove.

Begun with coal at first suffice before
becoming Webster Ice.

From all that underground upward brings
in miracle Machias springs.

In 1907, the same year that the house at 164 Lincoln Parkway was built, the company merged with Citizens Ice Co. of Buffalo to become the Webster-Citizens Ice Company, which reduced competition, and grew their profits ever more. The company expanded their operations yet further, and built an ice house on the Upper Cassadaga Lake, in Chautauqua County, NY that was also served by a railroad running next to it, the Markham Refrigerator Ice Line.

Eventually, they became the only ice dealers left at Lime Lake, and operated all five ice houses. Some 260 acres of land surrounding Lime Lake was owned by the Webster Company or the Webster family. Despite their success, in the 1910s manufactured ice began to grow in favor, since it could be produced more cheaply and in unlimited quantities without concern for weather or other factors, making it more reliable. In light of this loss of business, organizations such as the Natural Ice Association of America sought to advance the interests of natural ice dealers. Customers were led to believe that natural ice melts more slowly than manufactured ice, but with each subsequent year, even with these common beliefs and technological advances to speed up harvesting of natural ice, it became hard to compete with plant ice manufacturing. Many companies, including Webster-Citizens Ice Co., started to invest in manufactured ice. They proceeded to build three successful plants in Buffalo; on Essex Street, Gillette Street, and Mechanic Street to service different areas, and began to depend less on natural ice harvesting.

The following years were fraught with hardships when a Webster-Citizens office and storage facility was destroyed by fire in the year 1918. The family experienced a tremendous loss when wife and mother, Mary, died in 1920. In the year 1928, at the age of 68, Edward H. died as a result of a series of strokes after being struck with paralysis at the Webster-Citizens office. He was very well liked and respected by his employees and always had close relationships with them; so many of them served as pall bearers at his funeral. His son, Frank, who was equally revered, then took over the family business. Like his father, he was also involved in many professional organizations. In addition to serving as President of Eastern Ice Manufacturing, he was also on the Board of Directors of the National Association of Ice Industry and the NYS Ice Manufacturing Association.

By this time, the company was mainly dealing in manufactured ice, but when household refrigerators started to become more common, the need for ice blocks dwindled. The market for ice declined each succeeding year until the late 1940s, although some Amish communities still harvest ice to be stored in basement ice boxes. Lime Lake then became primarily a summer recreation spot.

The home remained in the family and continued to be a place of many celebrations such as the marriage of Frank's daughter Mary Louise Webster to Spencer Kellogg II. Weekly traditions, recalled by great-granddaughter Dede Kluckhohn, involved the family gathering together after church every Sunday for brunch. They would eat at the large dining room table, until the men retired to the conservatory to smoke and the women moved to the living room. Also of interest, the daughter-in-law of Frank G., Mrs. Doris "Dodie" Webster O'Brien, was a former

Junior League of Buffalo President during the years 1952-1954 and presided over their variety show fundraiser, the "Junior League Follies."

The Obersheimer family

In 1952, Fred and Elizabeth Obersheimer purchased the house, carriage house and also a former Websters- Citizens building that was located at the corner of Spring Street and Cherry Street from the Webster family. This building was to be used for their own business, Sterling Glass. The Obersheimers were all avid sailors, and Fred belonged to three yacht clubs: The Buffalo Yacht Club, Youngstown Club, and Royal Canadian Club. In the billiard room, which is in the basement of the house, he installed three stained glass windows with nautical flags from each yacht club. An Olympic FD (Flying Dutchman) sailor, their son, Charlie, began making custom sails for himself in the attic of the house and later for others, while working part time at Sterling Glass. The attic was large enough for him to lay out a sail for a 40 foot sailboat. In 1970, he pursued his own business, which became the very successful Obersheimer Sailor Supply store.

In 1982 the house was sold to its third owners, who updated the carriage house to add living space to the first floor, and also added a garage. The house has since exchanged hands once more, in 2006.

Architecture of 164 Lincoln Parkway

The Arts and Crafts style of architecture was prevalent in America during the period 1880 to 1915 and like the majority of American architectural styles, it was derived from classic European forms. England's most celebrated proponent of this style was William Morris, who was known as the father of the English Arts and Crafts Movement. The movement imbued traditional artistic craftsmanship with notions of simplicity, utility, harmony, and nature. Morris' philosophy was that one should: "Have nothing in your houses that you do not know to be useful or believe to be beautiful". Towards the end of the nineteenth century, these ideas had spread to America, where architects like Esenwein, who began his architectural career in Europe, and Johnson, enthusiastically incorporated the Arts and Crafts characteristics into their own designs. Indeed, these architects were known for the playful manner in which they incorporated many different styles under one roof.

Exterior characteristics

Principal exterior characteristics of an Arts and Crafts style house, which can be seen in the Edward H. Webster House, include:

- Informal
- Blurring of the distinction between indoors and outdoors
- "Ground-hugging" effect, more horizontal than vertical
- Asymmetrical, often with complex plans, extensions or cantilevered (projecting) second floors
- Multiple, steeply pitched gabled roofs with upper roofs extended to cover open porches or verandas
- Wide unenclosed eaves overhang
- Decorative (false) beams or braces commonly added under gables
- Roof rafters usually exposed
- Hipped or gabled dormers
- Siding is often wood shingled, but brick and stucco are also used
- Stone reserved for foundations, lower walls
- Large chimneys with multiple flues
- Large, multi-paned windows and doors
- Small scale casement windows often with small leaded panes, sometimes in ribbons or with transoms. Exterior window treatment is minimal or non-existent
- Vertical board doors at entries, sometimes with carved beams
- Porches, either full-or-partial width, with roof supported by tapered (battered) square columns
- Staining was often preferred over painted finishes both indoors and outside

A path from Lincoln Parkway leads the way to the main entrance of the Edward H. Webster house. Several steps flanked by a low brick wall ascend to the front door, which has clearly defined leaded glass

windows and a pitched roof with a *gable* containing an engaged, or attached, *decorative baluster*, in *tympanum* with a textured stucco background. The *baluster* is a *turned upright* or column, presently painted red, supporting the roof, partially attached to the wall and partially extending from it. The *tympanum* is the triangular shaped recessed face of a *pediment* — or the space enclosed by the *lintel* and an archway over the door. The roof is supported by monumental Arts and Crafts *brackets*.

To the right of the front door is a set of three narrow windows each with *voussoirs, stone sills* and leaded Art Nouveau style windows. The *voussoirs* formed the top part of the windows and were the wedge shaped blocks forming the curved parts of the arch. The central or middle *voussoir*, which sets the arch, is the *keystone*. The *stone sills* are the horizontal *members* at the bottom of the window frames. The windows themselves consist of leaded panes decorated with leaves and flowers. The leaded Art Nouveau windows were an international style of decoration depicting foliage in flowing sinuous lines, inspired by nature and Japanese art. The windows reflect organic forms – a curvilinear depiction of leaves and flowers often in the design of vines, whether stylized or realistic. The effect was to create a general feeling of lightness and of being one with nature.

Cross Gable

Beyond the series of small windows is another larger set of three windows belonging to the dining room and to the right of this are leaded glass French doors, with unusually large leaded glass *transoms* and *sidelights*. The *transoms* are the crosspiece separating a doorway from a window or fanlight above, and the sidelights are the framed area of fixed glass alongside a door or window opening. At the end of the house to the far right is a *battered wall* — a column with sloping faces or sides making the wall narrower at the top than at the bottom.

Also of note in the front external façade is the *half timbering* in the *cross gable*. The *cross gable* consists of two perpendicular *gable roofs*, the spaces between the timber framework being filled with masonry or plaster and outlined by plain *vergeboards*. Both of the *cross gables* contain typical Arts and Crafts style *brackets*, four in each *gable*, which are painted red. Below the gable is the *corbel*, a projecting bracket of stone or brick supporting a *cornice* or *arch*. The roof is made of slate, and on the top floor between the gables is a series of three *shed dormer windows*, so named because the roof shape has only one sloping plane.

Note also that the large windows in the principal rooms are sash windows, but the panes in the lower windows are all large, single panes whereas the upper parts of the windows consist of multiple panes. This was yet another practical design consideration which afforded occupants of the house the best unobstructed views of the grounds and park outside the windows.

Interior features

The main interior features of an Arts and Crafts house, as seen in the Edward H. Webster House, often include:

- Built-in cupboards
- Cozy inglenooks, with built-in benches and ceramic tile floors
- Oak doors, sometimes with leaded glass
- Swinging doors
- Open floor plans, few hallways
- Numerous windows
- Some windows with stained or leaded glass
- Beamed ceilings
- Dark wood wainscoting and mouldings
- Built-in cabinets, shelves and seating

The most striking features of this house are the extensive leaded glass windows; the prolific use of

wainscoting and mouldings; the elegant curved staircase; the hardware and plumbing features in the many bathrooms; the splendid *rathskeller* in the basement (not open to the public); the many original gas-electric light fittings complete with the push-button switches; and the servant call boxes.

The first floor is a spacious area where the living room and dining room emanate effortlessly from the spacious hall with its gracious staircase: a versatile area which could become one large reception room

China Closet

for parties, or separate rooms for daily family use. Beyond the living room is a terrace overlooking the rear garden and carriage house; and leading off the dining room is a large enclosed porch with French doors allowing easy access to the side and front gardens and beyond to the Gala Water in Delaware Park. To the rear of the house is the kitchen, extensive china closet, the servants' hall, pantry and the servants' porch, and adjacent to the grand staircase but concealed from it is the servants' staircase leading to the principal bedrooms on the second floor and the attic above with the servants' rooms and store room.

Guests and visitors to the house would enter through the front door of the porch. This outside porch was built without an awning to allow as much natural light as possible to enter, as the front of the house is north facing so has little natural light. The door features an *Art Nouveau style stained glass window* through which one can view the outside grounds almost as an extension of the decorative glass itself. The rose accented leaded glass windows decorate the edges of the window leaving the nine central leaded panes clear to enjoy the scenery outside. From the porch one enters the vestibule which has an original mosaic tiled floor. The vestibule door leads through to the hall and like the porch door, is half wood with the upper half being stained glass, and having decorative sidelights on both sides with a repeating rose pattern. To the right of the vestibule and accessed from the hall is the lavatory and coat room – even here the wood detail

Art Nouveau Window

Vine Pattern Window

is impressive. The room contains the original hardware sink and windows as well as a glass towel rail.

Throughout the house, there is flat cove moulding, at the tops of windows, doors, fireplaces and newel posts.

The most striking feature as one enters the hall is the imposing curved staircase between two enormous *stained glass* windows which contain

a vine pattern. This grand staircase is reminiscent of the staircase of the Silverthorne House at 877 Delaware Avenue which had been constructed the year before by the same architects. Note that though the windows are flat, the frame is curved to blend with the semi-circular walls surrounding the stairwell which takes up the rounded end of the hall. Note also the hinge brackets mechanism by which the windows could be opened on a warm day to allow air to circulate. At the foot of the staircase is a *newel-post*; this is a central post from which the steps of the circular staircase ascend and which provides support for the staircase itself. The *newel-post* is hand-carved with applied bell-flowers – this was a popular classical floral motif of 3 or 5 narrow-pointed petals in a bell shape. Wainscoting lines the walls. The balusters are 4 square-edged and unadorned at the bottom, chamfered into an octagonal shape at the top.

Newel Post

To the left of the hall is the living room, which has two sets of triple windows to the front and rear of the room, and two smaller windows either side of the fireplace. The frames of the windows contain brackets for the installation of roller shades. However, the most dominant feature of the room is the monumental fireplace. This is made of iron spotted Roman brick, as used in the Darwin Martin House, and is a simple but imposing Arts and Crafts design. The wood inset panels of the fireplace go from floor to ceiling and contain Art Nouveau carvings at the top of the *palisters*, with chamfering at the top of the beams. The mantel piece with paneled mantel support is decorated with a conventional *foliated panel* and is supported by *decorative guttae*, consisting of small carved cones. The long radiator beneath the window overlooking the porch has a marble cover.

Across the hall from the living room is the dining room. It would appear that originally it was intended to have pocket doors to separate these two rooms from the hall as required, but that part of the design was not executed. Instead porte-cochere style curtains would have been hung to separate the rooms from the hall. The dining room has a beamed ceiling, but its truly outstanding feature, the custom designed tapestry covering the walls as if it were wallpaper, has now been taken down for storage and renovation. The decoration is of pastoral scenes and at the time of its construction the house would have been painted and decorated in earth tones so the overall effect would be to blend seamlessly with the natural surroundings outside. The fireplace in this room is smaller than the living room fireplace and less imposing, but has beefy Arts and Crafts cornice-like *newel posts*, a simple but effective design. This fireplace is also built from the iron spotted yellow Roman brick.

Of particular interest are the light fittings including the wall sconces. In 1896 electricity began to be transmitted from new power plants at the nearby Niagara Falls. Nikola Tesla, the inventor

of alternating current, whose monument at the Niagara Falls Park commemorates his great achievements, had predicted: "Niagara power will make Buffalo the greatest city in the world."

Initially the power supply to domestic premises was not completely reliable, so houses continued to use gas during this transitional phase. Many of the ornate light fittings were gas-electric fixtures designed to use both gas and electricity, and is one of the finest examples of engineering innovation. Where it was not practicable to install gas-electric chandeliers, for example in smaller spaces or rooms, wall sconces were used. The ones in the dining room and hall are very ornate, and somewhat reminiscent of Aladdin's lamp. The push-button switches, forerunner to the toggle switches used today, were inlaid with mother of pearl.

Samson Junior Telephone

Leading off from the dining room is the porch. This runs the length of the dining room and the brickwork would originally have been left unpainted to blend with the sandstone on the outside of the house. There are plenty of windows as the porch is north facing onto the surrounding woods, and therefore a cool area. Large French doors provide access to the front garden, and at the opposite end of the porch a smaller, single door allowed access to the rear gardens. This room doesn't particularly reflect the Arts and Crafts style because the main material is brickwork rather than wood paneling as found elsewhere throughout the house.

Note also in various rooms throughout the house the *Samson Junior Telephone* speaker intercom systems, used for the Websters to summon a servant from wherever they might be in the house. The system is still in fine working order.

To the rear of the house were the rooms accommodating the servants as they went about their work in the house or enjoyed their leisure time. The china closet and pantry have extensive in-built cupboards and shelves and sink in their original condition, along with some swing doors for easy access when they were carrying things. Deliveries would be made at the rear of the house near the servants' porch, from where there is direct access to the basement.

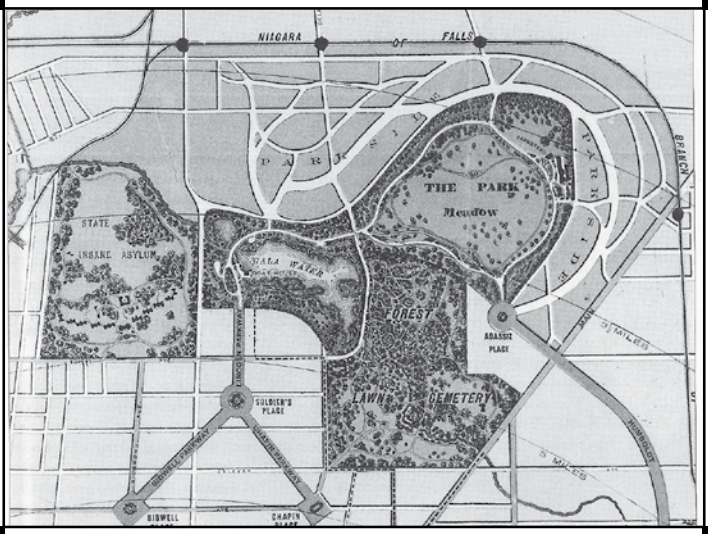
Although it is not open to the public, the basement consists of various rooms housing utilities and fixtures, plus a large ice storage safe, and a couple of bathrooms – one at the rear for servants and contractors, and one off the *rathskeller* for family members and guests who were using the basement. These rooms were usually designed for the men of the house to pursue their hobbies and socialize with their friends in an informal setting. The *rathskeller* in the Webster house was used to accommodate a large billiards table around which the room was designed, including the special ceiling light fixture. Whilst the windows on the spiral staircase descending to the basement are the original stained glass, the other windows were installed at a later date by the second owner, a keen sailor who chose to decorate the glass with the flags of the various yacht clubs he belonged to. The fireplace in this room is one of the smallest in the house, the focal point here being the billiards area.

Ascending the grand staircase one arrives at the master bedroom suite. This consists of the

master bedroom, an airy corner room, off which is a closet and the master bathroom. The room contains another large fireplace and large windows on two of the walls. The bathrooms on this floor are original with wonderful fittings and hardware. On the opposite wall to the fireplace a door leads to the sitting room, where the mistress of the house could receive female friends. The windows are stained glass and decorated with a beautiful but simple floral design, once again invoking the glories of nature outside. Returning to the hallway there is another substantial well designed linen closet. There are four further bedrooms on this floor, all with meticulously designed closets and attached or shared bathrooms. There are many working examples here of the taps and waste plunger mechanism, along with original tiling and original glass towel rails.

The servants' staircase ascends to the top floor or attic area. The space above the master suite and upstairs hallway is large and the plans indicate it was an unfinished attic, which perhaps might have been used as a ballroom. Above the rear facing bedrooms is a large room used for storage, and there are also two servants' bedrooms, and a variety of closets.

To the rear of the property is the carriage house, which over the years has undergone significant alterations. The most interesting feature here is the grill work and balustrades which once decorated the lobby of the now demolished Erie County Savings Bank and were installed in the carriage house.



Olmsted Map of Buffalo1881

Show House History

Jane C. Hamilton, Show House Historian

Jill Scherer, Historian Committee

Special Thanks

Francis R. Kowsky, architectural historian and author of:
The Best Planned City in the World: Olmsted, Vaux, and the Buffalo Park System
Published June 2013 by LALH & University of Massachussetts Press

Martin Wachadlo, architectural historian and author of:
Oakland Place: Gracious Living in Buffalo

Chuck LaChiusa creator of Buffalo Architecture and History site buffaloah.com

Dede Kluckhohn

References

Buffalo as an Architectural Museum (buffaloah.com)

Buffalo Architecture: A Guide published by the MIT Press

Jennifer Walkowski et. al *History – Buffalo Seminary* Part of the State and National Register of Historic Places Nomination

Jane Hamilton – History of Silverthorne House

Buffalo Olmsted Parks Conservancy

Albright-Knox Art Gallery

Buffalo History Museum

Buffalo and Erie County Public Library

Charles Obersheimer

Dally, Joseph. *A History of New Jersey Quakers from 1686-1788*

ICE! The Amazing History of the Ice Business. Kirkus Reviews, 19487428, 9/15/2012, Vol. 80, Issue 18 Industrial Refrigeration, Vol 58

Kunz, George. *Buffalo Memories Gone But Not Forgotten Stories: Iceman came and went.* Published in Wall St. Journal July 1986

Machias, New York, Chickasaw Sesquicentennial 1827-1977

References

Our County and Its People
A descriptive work on Erie County, New York
Edited by: Truman C. White
The Boston History Company, Published 1898

The Men of New York
a collection of biographies and portraits of citizens of the Empire state
prominent in business, professional, social, and political life
during the last decade of the nineteenth century.
Published 1898 by G.E. Matthews & Co. in Buffalo, N.Y.

Miller, Jeffrey. *The Iceman Cameth:*
The History of the Natural Ice Industry at Lime Lake, New York.
1880-1925. Published Franklinville, NY 1996

Miller, Jeffrey. *Lime Lake: An Historic Review*

Worthington, George.
Electric Review and Western Electrician. Oct. 12, 1912

The Official Railway Equipment Register August 1907

http://www.llcoa.org/limelakestories/jeff%20miller/welcome_by_jeffery_miller.htm

http://www.onlinebiographies.info/ny/erie/m-y/webster-e.htm

http://www.llcoa.org/Machias%20History/ice_houses.htm

Photographs

Beautiful Homes of Buffalo

Dede Kluckhohn

Catherine Schweitzer

Buffalo as an Architectural Museum (buffaloah.com)

Men of Buffalo
A collection of portraits of men who deserve to rank
as typical representatives of the best citizenship.
Published 1902 by A. N. Marquis & company in Chicago

Photo of Lime Lake (www.llcoa.org)

PRINTED BY

TBN DIRECT

tbndirect.com • 849-5513

OUR ROOTS RUN DEEP

As Buffalo natives, we at HUNT Real Estate ERA recognize the significance of preserving the historical architecture and heritage of our great city, and that's why we take pride in being an annual sponsor of the Decorators' Show House.

Thank you to the Junior League and Buffalo News for this ongoing partnership, which has generated over **$3.7 million** in funds to help make our community a better place to live.

HUNT®
Since 1911

Always There For You®
ERA
REAL ESTATE

REAL ESTATE | MORTGAGE | INSURANCE | TITLE