



"A man's house is his castle."

This Old Doctor's House

by Jessica Westerland

Many people can identify with visiting their grandparents, or other relatives homes and looking at pictures or objects that hold significance and history for their family. Sitting next to the new things of today, these pieces are living history, that keeps the memory of the past alive today. Nestled in amongst the condominiums, restaurants and other new buildings being built every day, there are houses in the Wildwoods that do the same, keep history alive for the island. The Pryor family owns one of these homes that can be called living history.

The house was originally built in 1907 by a Philadelphia doctor that spared no expense when building the four story home at 120 E. Crocus Rd. The house has an enormous stained glass window rumored to be Tiffany. The ground floor was the servant floor, with rooms for the butler, maids and servants and also contained a huge kitchen with 5 stoves and a dumbwaiter going to the second floor by the dining room. A steep, tight set of stairs gave the servants access to the second floor, which held the dining room, a library, and 2 sitting rooms, one for males and one for females. The third floor contained all of the bedrooms, and the fourth floor was a spare floor for storage. The house had and still has servant bells in many of the rooms, so the servants could be called on. The doctor was very wealthy, and had the whole house lit with gas light fixtures, many of which are still on the walls.

After being owned by the wealthy doctor, the house changed hands and became The Victorian Inn owned by a woman named Emma Meade in the 1940s and 50s. When her daughter, Helen and her niece Dorothea visited recently, Helen recognized an old brass bed in one of the guest rooms as the bed she slept on in the attic. In her time, the attic was for the children, while the rest of the house held all of the rooms for the boarders.

After The Victorian Inn closed, it was sold to Ukrainians who opened a restaurant on the first floor called "Slavuta," and used the rest of the house as a boarding house for the employees and other visiting Ukrainians. There is an article in Svoboda, a Ukrainian daily paper printed in Jersey City from August 23, 1969 describing the Wildwoods in the summer as the destination of approximately 5,000 visiting Ukrainians from all over Canada and the US. The article gave instructions on how to find other Ukrainians in the Wildwoods by walking along the water on the beach until they come to a fishing pier, under which many Ukrainians are guaranteed to be. This is the Wildwood Crest fishing pier that has recently been restored on Heather Rd. beach.

The paper goes on to explain that the "Ukrainian Riviera" was the area around Crocus and Heather Streets because they were home to many Ukrainian establishments that would welcome fellow Ukrainians including "Slavuta" and another establishment Maria, as homes that offer food in addition to lodging. In addition to the Pryor's home, there are at least two other former Ukrainian boarding houses still standing, one of which still operates.

The house later was passed onto Emma Mead who hoped to open a toy and doll shop inside. Her husband was a writer for the Leader, who wrote under the name John Sparrow. Emma used

the house mostly for vacation. Due to medical problems, she left the house to itself for 20 years, and then decided to sell it. This is when Nancy and Dan Pryor fell in love with it. They bought it at a real estate sale, and loved this impressive structure despite the fact that it was filled with junk and needed repairs and restoration.

Repairing and restoring is exactly what they are doing. Because it had been a boarding house for several different owners, there were many small bedrooms, amounting to 36, that had been created with false walls for boarders. After tearing down the false walls and stripping everything down to the original structure, they began to re-finish and restore the floors, walls and windows to their original splendor. There are 75 windows, with peeling paint and Beebe gun bullet holes that have to be restored, and the original pine floors have just been refinished so they glow with their original golden hue. Nancy stripped about 6 layers of wallpaper off almost all of the rooms in the house, to get down to the original plaster.

The Pryors have renamed the mansion "The Summer Wind" after Nancy's favorite Frank Sinatra song. Nancy, Dan, their daughter Brittney and Daschund dog Pebbles, split their time between their main home and this one so they have more time to restore it. All four stories are now a work in progress, and its decor is an eclectic combination of the old with the new. The second floor, which is the main floor, holds a view of a stunning stained glass window surrounded by the antique woods and a painting scheme that was based on the harvest colors and jewel tones in the window.

The Pryors have bought antique furniture, chairs and paintings to stay true to the house's original heritage. That isn't to say the modern isn't present, on top of an early model TV they picked up at a yard sale is a flat screen TV with a Wii balance board tucked next to it on the floor. The third floor contains bedrooms that are painted the colors of a summer sunset, and Brittney's room has all the sparkling decorations every other teenager's room contains.

Piece by piece the Pryors are changing the house from its dark and cluttered feel back to its original open and airy presence. Even though they have scoured every nook and cranny of the house and know it inside and out, there are still a few mysteries that linger. Nancy and her family tell stories about the strange noises they hear in the house. They acknowledge that the house is old, and floors creak and windows rattle, but they have repeatedly heard footsteps on the stairs when no one was there, and what sounds like someone bowling or playing with a heavy ball up in the attic above their daughter's room.

Despite the fact that it is a work in progress, the Pryors love "The Summer Wind" for everything it embodies: its history, its heritage, its stunning architecture. This house is so loved by its previous owners that some of them come back every year to visit. People passing by are taken in by its charm, and knock on the door just to tell the Pryors how much they are impressed. Nancy and Dan are working hard to make sure this house and its charm remains standing, so future generations and visitors can enjoy this bit of living Wildwood history.

Servant 's bells



120 E. Crocus Rd., Wildwood Crest, circa 1948. . .

. . . and fully restored "The Summer Winds," 2010



Dan, Nancy & Brittney Pryor in their newly restored, century old, Wildwood Crest home.



Much mystery still remains about who the doctor was that built this magnificent estate. If you have any information, please contact the Pryors at pryorfamily1@verizon.net or drive on over to Crocus and you'll likely find the Pryor's as they continue their labor of love bringing back the old grandeur of this lovely house.



The house as it appeared when the Pryor's purchased it. (Two photos above, & one to right)