

That Old House

The three-story limestone house at 1800 Goodale Blvd. was my home. It was built by my parents C.H. Walcutt and Janette Walcutt, in 1901. At that time the land was part of Columbus but was later incorporated into Grandview Heights.

I, Laura Walcutt Karns, was born in 1901 and grew up in that home so I have many and varied memories of the house and neighborhood. The basement was dug in 1900 and was allowed to settle for a year before the balance of the structure was finished. We moved in when I was seven months old. My mother told me that the house cost \$3,000 to build. It was several years before I discovered that my father had owned the land and my mother owned the quarry where the stone was cut.

There were six children in the family. A girl that only lived a few months. Then came Lester, Edna, Oscar, Laura and Harry. At the age of 93 plus, I am the only surviving member.

One of my earliest memories was of someone crying. It wasn't me or my sister and of course none of the boys cried. I asked Edna if it was mother. She replied that it wasn't and that we had a new brother. It was Harry, the last of the children.

When trying to remember events and impressions that happened eighty or eighty-five years ago it is easy to get the sequence mixed up. Some of the following may not be in order.

I recall being awakened one night and my parents taking me out to see Haley's comet. I remember it as being brighter than the other stars and I could faintly see the tail behind the ball of light. Seventy-five years later I had the opportunity to see it again. This time I could only see it through a telescope. It was a lot brighter the first time.

One morning my mother came into my room and said, "Look out the window". I did and said "Oh it snowed". "No not snow". Then I guessed "Fog " Again , "No". My guess was then water. It was the flood of 1913. The Scioto River was out of its banks. Way out of its banks. The river was about a mile from the house and the water was nearly to the bottom of the hill. Since our house sat on the top of a large hill we were in no danger. An aunt and several cousins had to leave their homes and at least one aunt stayed with us for a while. Others stayed with us also but their names escape me now.

I really don't remember the extent of damage or how much bottom land was covered by water except what I have read in later years.

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The house was heated by a coal furnace. Coal trucks would pull up to a coal chute and unload a supply of coal into the basement. One night someone decided to take advantage of this unlocked entrance. What he didn't know was that our German shepherd, Bob, slept at the bottom of the basement stairs.

Bob apparently objected to being awakened by someone that wasn't supposed to be there. Bob, took him out the window and down the hill. My father was awakened by the growls and yells of pain. He went to the window to see what was happening. Bob, had the intruder down on the ground and was chewing on anything he happened to get his teeth into. My father was a good hunter and likely could have shot the man from the house. He didn't try. Bob didn't need any help. He had the situation firmly in his grasp. Besides, he was afraid he would hit the dog. We never found out who the intruder was but seriously doubted if he ever came around our section of town again. Needless to say Bob held an honored place in our house and provided much conversation with our neighbors and schoolmates.

My sister Edna came home from High School one day. As she came in she called to the dogs. Instead of the dogs she discovered that there were two men in the house. One was searching the downstairs for anything of value. All he got were some stickpins. The one upstairs however had discovered my mother's jewelry and was gathering it in a pile on the bed. Edna's arrival apparently frightened them and the "loot" was left behind while they left as rapidly as possible. I inherited two of the bracelets from that loot. I have given them to my daughter-in-law Wanda Karns of Huntington, Indiana.

Tom and Wanda's three sons' brides wore them at their weddings, as something old. As far as I could discover they were given to my mother when she was eighteen years old. She was born in 1868. They are now about 110 years old.

One summer day we were sitting on the front porch. Being thirsty I went through the house to the kitchen to get a drink of water from the family bucket. There, was an old lady standing there. If I ever knew her name I don't remember it now. I remember she lived across from the school. I don't think that she was trying to steal anything I think she was just confused. She startled me and I yelled. She left before anyone could get to the kitchen from the porch.

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I recall when the president asked congress to declare war against Germany. The start of World War I. My brother Oscar was inducted. He received six weeks of training and was shipped overseas. He was wounded on November and died on November 9, just two days before the armistice was declared. We were notified a few days before Christmas.

After the war was over my mother was on one of the first ships taking mothers and wives to France to visit their loved ones' graves. She complained about having to share a stateroom but was happy to get to go.

Note by writer: I have seen and read a letter my grandmother sent to her family recounting her experiences. Since she was born in 1868 many women of her age could read and write very little if at all. She had beautiful handwriting and could express herself quite well.

My father was on the school board and had his name engraved on the cornerstone of the building. I don't remember my first day of school. There was no kindergarten in those days. I did meet someone there that later became rather important to me.

Ralph Karns was two years ahead of me. He reported to his mother that he had seen a cute girl with lots of curls. Fifteen years later we got married and that childhood crush lasted for 56 years. Ralph Karns, son of Ada and Harry Karns. Born 1899 died two days before his 79th birthday, Veterans Hospital, St. Petersburg, Florida.

I don't remember when there were no automobiles, but they were few and far between when I was young. Car dealers would brag that their cars would go up Walcutt's hill in high gear. As it is today you had to turn off of Goodale and then immediately start up the grade. No running start.

When cars were new many were capable of speeds up to 25 or 30 MPH and some even more, under the right conditions. The village authorities decided that for reasons of public safety a speed limit had to be enforced. The posted limits were 15 MPH. Some of the local boys took some paint and changed the limit to 45 MPH. Everybody was up in arms about that. Who would ever want to go that fast?

Note: About this time some respected scientists proved that the human body could not survive speeds of 100 MPH.

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Elmwood did not go through to Goodale. Our lots were continuous with our neighbors, the Gerlacks. Dad announced that the city wanted to extend Elmwood and he supposed that he would have to let them. When construction started the crews ran into several springs. Nobody knew how to control the water flow and the project was abandoned. It was left as an open ditch for years.

The day the dam broke

James Thurber wrote an article about that supposed event. In it he mentioned that cartoonist Wm. Ireland, of the Columbus Dispatch upon hearing the report started to run out east Broad St. He managed to get several blocks before he became exhausted. He finally rationalized that if indeed the dam had broken the water would rise faster than he could run. The reported 40-foot wall of water never came. The dam was in good shape and there was no danger of breaking. Even though we were a lot closer to the dam than Mr. Ireland was at his downtown location we would have been in no danger as our house was too far up the hill.

One spring crews arrived and started to tear up the streets. What a mess. You almost couldn't get anyplace from wherever you happened to be. The streetcars had arrived. They came out Goodale to Broadview, up the hill to First St., West to Arlington and then north to Fifth. There it would turn around and start the return trip. It cost 5 or 10 cents to ride anyplace and you could get a free transfer to ride another line if you needed one. You could ride for many miles at very little cost.

That dam car. My mother objected to that sort of language, so of course all of us would call it nothing else. Once an hour it would go out to the Scioto dam. On Sundays and holidays it was a popular place to go and picnic. The cars would be jammed that many youth would hang on the side of the cars.

Just north of Fifth Ave. on Wyandotte Rd was the Motordrome. On Sunday afternoons young men would gather and race their motorcycles. My folks did not approve of motorcycles as nobody but rowdies ever rode them. Of course it was a popular gathering place for the youth of Grandview and surrounding area.

The first church in Grandview met in the four-room schoolhouse. The first minister was Rev. Brownlee. I don't remember how long he stayed but he was replaced by Rev. Weist. He was instrumental in building the first church on Lincoln

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Road. My father gave much of the limestone for the building. It was known as the Community Church. It was non-denominational and for many years it was the only church in Grandview. Then the Methodists built a church at the corner of First and Ashland. The Presbyterians later built on the northeast area.

Did you ever meet a comic strip character? I did. A young man by the name of Dude Higgs used to come to our house with one of my brothers. The attraction was automobiles. Both of them worked on cars by the hours.

Later Dude joined the Army Air Corps and went to Hawaii. He then joined the Chinese National Airlines. His activities at this point become a bit clouded and just what he did isn't known for sure. But he did write to a friend of his Milton Caniff. Milton syndicated a comic strip called "Terry and the Pirates". Dude would make infrequent appearances in the strip under the name of Dude Hennick.

Most houses, in those days, didn't have running water. We did, but it was a bit of work. We had a couple of big tanks on the third floor. The boys would go to the pump and fill buckets and then carry them upstairs. Then we had water from the tap.

I don't remember just when we got our telephone but it was quite a convenience. All you had to do was pick up the receiver. The operator would say "Number Please". You gave her the number and she would ring for you.

Writers note: I visited the house many times as a youngster. I believe that I was about '13 or '14 the last time that I was there. I do have some memories. I remember the portico on the east side of the house. I was told that the plans called for a driveway to go around the house and across the front and then under the portico so carriages could load and unload passengers, out of the weather. The drive was never completed.

They would likely have been received in the formal living room on the southeast corner of the house. It was a room that children were not permitted to enter. It was for company only. Naturally my cousins and I would slip in there whenever possible. I seem to recall it was dark and gloomy. At least to my eyes. There were thick heavy drapes at the windows and horsehair stuffed furniture. Horsehair stuffed furniture may have been the high fashion of the day but my recollection is that it was uncomfortable. That horsehair stuck out through the fabric and it scratched. It was not a place that I wanted to go very often, and only then

because it was forbidden.

I also remember my cousins and I jumping out of a swing in the front yard, to see who could go furthest down the hill. I don't think that I won but I do remember breaking my arm. That put a rather effective end to the game.

My youngest brother Harry, and his daughter Janette and son Harry (Sonny) moved into the house to take care of it and then later my mother. They lived there until the house was sold in 1948.

Note: We had a pump in the basement. It was used to pump water to the third floor. No buckets

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