

EDINBORO UNIVERSITY  
OF PENNSYLVANIA

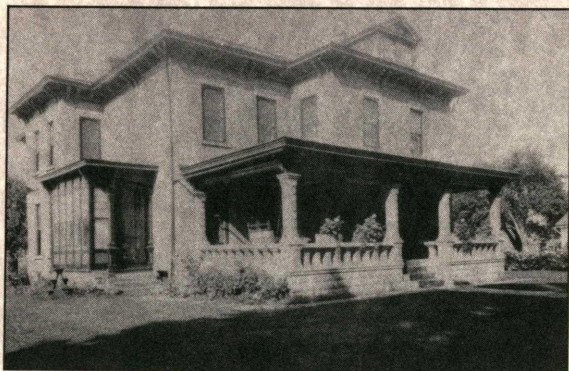


*President's Home*

*Richard Knorr*

*The President's Residence*





*The President's Residence, 1920s*

**F**or nearly as long as Edinboro University has existed as an institution of higher learning, the President's Residence at 214 Meadville Street has been a part of the school's history.

The brick house was constructed by Myron McComb in 1885 for the school's third principal, Joseph A. Cooper, at a cost of \$5,000. McComb also built the circular stairway and floor of the auditorium in Normal Hall.

Cooper acquired the property on which the house is located from Samuel T. Gibson in 1867 for the amount of \$25, and purchased three adjoining acres in 1880 for \$325.

Over the years, the house changed hands several times. It went from Cooper to Samuel T. "Canada Sam" Reeder, and back again to Cooper's sons, who sold it to John F. Bigler, one of the school's principals.

Electra Shupe bought the property in 1913 for \$8,250 and named it Villa Marcella in honor of her late husband, Dr. Marcellous Shupe, an 1881 Edinboro graduate and practicing surgeon.

Shortly before her death in 1921, she signed an option agreement with the school's trustees to purchase the house, but it would be ten years before the school exercised its option. The house was sold in 1924 by Mrs. Shupe's sister, Ella M. Skiff, to Clarence Crawford, the school's first president, for \$12,000. Skiff was not only executrix of her sister's estate, she was a trustee of the institution.

In Russell E. Vance, Jr.'s book, *A Portrait of Edinboro*, the author speculates that the money for the purchase was supplied to Crawford by the trustees, because, "in 1931 when they voted to purchase the 'Shupe Estate' as a permanent home for the college



president, Crawford sold the property to the State for the sum of one dollar."

The house underwent major renovations in 1934 when the trustees authorized nearly \$10,000 for plumbing, heating and wiring.

The front of the house features a central hallway leading to an open staircase. The first room on the right of the hallway is the library, to which additional bookcases were added in 1934. Further on the right is the formal dining room and beyond it, the kitchen. To the left of the hallway at the front of the house is a parlor. Further back is a sitting room with a working fireplace. At the rear of the house off the kitchen is a bedroom and full bath, originally designed as a maid's quarters.

The upstairs features three bedrooms, two guest rooms, and two full baths. The third floor, originally designed as attic space, now contains a bedroom.

Only a handful of presidents have resided in the Meadville Street residence since 1934. Carmon Ross became president in June of that year and was succeeded by Lyman H. VanHouten in 1941. Thomas R. Miller served from 1954 to 1966, and Chester T. McNerney was president until 1979 when President Foster F. Diebold was appointed.

The kitchen area of the President's Residence was remodeled in 1989. The original kitchen was enlarged to facilitate



*The President's Residence, 1955*



family dining and less formal official functions in a more suitable and accommodative setting.

In 1993 the front porch of the Residence was rebuilt and enclosed, providing the house with additional room for official University social functions. The design for the porch maintains the architectural style of the original building. It features white painted brick, a tongue-in-groove ceiling which closely matches the one it replaced, and windows which reflect the style popular at the time of the house's construction.

Despite the changes made over the years, the house retains many of its original elements, including the woodwork on the staircase and newell posts, tongue-in-groove floors, and windows with iron weights and the original glass. The fireplaces feature valuable antique decorative tiles that have become quite popular. The home is still heated with radiators that date from the 1920s.

The same care and attention to detail that is evident in the house's interior is also apparent on the grounds of the President's Residence. It features several trees that are more than 100 years old and has had an extensive addition of trees, shrubberies and perennials to restore the grounds' natural appearance. The property abuts an outlet creek from Edinboro Lake and is connected to it by a rustic staircase.

When the house was constructed in the 1800s, it was part of the Cooper farm. Although Cooper's two barns are gone, the stable was converted to a two-car garage, and then a three-car garage during the term of President Chester McNerney. The backyard barbecue was constructed from the bricks of the original refuse incinerator, along with the cast iron doors which date from 1901.

The President's Residence is the official home of the University president. All presidents in the 14 State System of Higher Education universities have official residences adjacent to or on the university campuses.



*Edinboro University of Pennsylvania is a member of the  
State System of Higher Education*