

HISTORY OF 1325 WEST NORTH AVENUE

Clarence and Mary Dravo Pettit commissioned construction of 1325 West North Avenue in 1891 or 1892. The house was built on a double lot that Clarence Pettit had purchased for a total of \$5500 in 1890. The Pettits had the house designed by Thomas H. Scott, an architect who practiced in Pittsburgh in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Scott designed 1325 West North Avenue in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The style is expressed in the house's round corner tower, rough-cut and smooth squared stone ornamentation, the massive rounded stone arch leading to the recessed front porch, and classical Romanesque stone carving such as cushion capitals and interlacing.

The two-story brick stable at 1325 West North Avenue was built in 1895. Its estimated construction cost was \$830.

Clarence Pettit was a commission and produce merchant in Downtown Pittsburgh during most of the time that he lived at 1325 West North Avenue. Pettit had taken over the business that his father had established around the time that the Pettit family moved to Pittsburgh in the 1860s. In the early 20th century, Clarence Pettit also owned a storage company and opened a real estate office.

The Pettit family lived at 1325 West North Avenue until 1912-1913. The family then lived in Edgeworth, and left Pennsylvania by 1920. Records of the 1920 census show that 1325 West North Avenue had been converted from a single-family home to three apartments. Clarence and Mary Pettit lived in Princeton, New Jersey, when they sold the house in 1924.

Detailed information on the history of 1325 West North Avenue is contained in the following report.

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OWNERSHIP

Pre-construction

April 3, 1890 (Allegheny County Deed Book 697: 1): August H. and Anna Lawman of Allegheny City (the present North Side of Pittsburgh) conveyed the eastern half of the lot on which 1325 West North Avenue now stands to Clarence Pettit of Allegheny City for \$2750. The lot that was conveyed was located on the southern side of West North Avenue (then Fayette Street), 160' east of Manhattan Street, and measured 20' wide along Fayette Street by 132' deep to Faulsey Way (then Faulkner Street). The lot was known as Lot 19 in the plan of subdivision of Out Lot 270 (recorded in Allegheny County Deed Book 119: 389).

April 3, 1890 (Deed Book 697: 11): George and Catherine A. Zortman of Allegheny City conveyed the western half of the lot on which 1325 West North Avenue now stands to Clarence Pettit of Allegheny City for \$2750. The lot was located on the southern side of West North Avenue, 140' east of Manhattan Street, and measured 20' wide along Fayette Street by 132' deep to Faulsey Way. The lot was known as Lot 18 in the plan of subdivision of Out Lot 270.

Post-construction

Allegheny City became part of the city of Pittsburgh in 1907.

February 18, 1924 (Deed Book 2182: 329): Clarence and Mary D. Pettit of Princeton, New Jersey, conveyed 1325 West North Avenue to Walter Marcinkevich of Pittsburgh for \$14,000. The house occupied Lots 18 and 19 in the plan of subdivision of Out Lot 270.

April 24, 1924 (Deed Book 2211: 16): Walter and Ona Marcinkevich of Pittsburgh conveyed 1325 West North Avenue to John K. and Mary M. Mazukna of Pittsburgh for \$1 (tax stamps indicate a true price of \$6000) and the assumption of a mortgage of \$8000.

John K. Mazukna died on September 30, 1981.

Frederick J. Mannion purchased 1325 West North Avenue from Mary M. Mazukna on December 29, 1989 (Deed Book 8168: 205).

AGE OF 1325 WEST NORTH AVENUE

Construction

Clarence and Mary D. Pettit commissioned construction of 1325 West North Avenue in 1891 or 1892.

Plat maps of the area around 1325 West North Avenue published in 1872, 1882, and 1890 show that the house had not yet been built. Clarence Pettit purchased the lot on which 1325 West North Avenue now stands in two conveyances on April 3, 1890. Pettit paid a total of \$5500 for the property, which measured a total of 40' wide along West North Avenue (then Fayette Street) by 132' deep. This purchase, at \$1.04 per square foot, was comparable to prices paid for other undeveloped lots in Manchester at the time, and indicates that 1325 West North Avenue had not yet been built.

The 1892 Pittsburgh city directory listed Clarence Pettit as living at 91 Fayette Street (now 1325 West North Avenue) for the first time. Pettit had previously lived on Pennsylvania Avenue.

An 1893 fire insurance map confirms that 1325 West North Avenue had been built.

Allegheny County mortgage records contain no record of any loan taken by Clarence and Mary D. Pettit that appears to have been used to finance construction of 1325 West North Avenue. If the Pettits had financed construction of a house with a recorded mortgage, the loan date would make it possible to establish a narrower period of construction.

Allegheny City building permit docket, available beginning in 1894, provide no information on construction of 1325 West North Avenue.

The architect: Thomas H. Scott

An entry in *History and Commerce of Pittsburgh and Environs, 1893-1894* indicates that Pittsburgh architect Thomas H. Scott designed 1325 West North Avenue for Clarence and Mary D. Pettit.

In 1891, Thomas H. Scott's office was at 533 Wood Street, room 522, in Downtown Pittsburgh. Scott, then 26, lived on the western side of Chateau Street between North Franklin and Juniata Streets. In the early twentieth century he lived at 919 Beech Avenue in Allegheny West.

Other extant buildings that are known to have been designed by Thomas H. Scott include:

- a house at 843 Beech Avenue, Allegheny West, 1889
- the Keystone Laundry building at the northeastern corner of Sheffield and Chateau Streets, Manchester, circa 1890
- the McCance Building, bounded by Liberty Avenue, Seventh Avenue, and Smithfield Street, Downtown, circa 1890
- the Benedum-Trees Building, 221 Fourth Avenue, Downtown, 1905
- 5816 Walnut Street, Shadyside, 1909
- the Mission Pumping Station, Mission Street, South Side Slopes, 1912
- the Aspinwall Pumping Station, Delafield Road, Aspinwall, 1913
- the Garden Theatre, 12 West North Avenue, Central North Side, 1914
- an apartment building at 5423 Howe Street, Shadyside, 1916

Beginning in 1893, and continuing for at least 20 years, Thomas H. Scott was the architect for the Denny Estate, which built and managed residential and commercial rental properties in Pittsburgh. Scott's home at the beginning of the 20th century, at 919 Beech Avenue, was part of a row of houses at 917-925 Beech Avenue that the Denny Estate owned and converted from single-family homes to apartments in the early 20th century. It is likely that Scott designed the conversion of the houses to apartments.

Stable construction

Allegheny City building permit docket shows that Clarence Pettit received a permit for construction of a two-story brick stable at 91 Fayette Street (1325 West North Avenue) on October 28, 1895. The stable was to measure 22'6" wide by 36'6" deep.

A 1901 plat map confirms that the stable had been built.

The size of the stable suggests that it may have originally included modest living quarters for a coachman or driver. However, records of censuses taken in 1900 and 1910, while the Pettit family lived at 1325 West North Avenue, do not show that the stable was occupied.

Construction cost

The estimated construction cost of the stable at 1325 West North Avenue was \$830. Costs of other buildings constructed in Allegheny City within a few years of 1895 included:

- 4017 Northminster Street, Brighton Heights, \$3200, 1895
- 3504 Perrysville Avenue, Observatory Hill, \$3650, 1897
- a stable at 705 Brighton Road, Allegheny West, \$4500, 1898
- 1235 Page Street, Manchester, \$5000, 1898
- 1623 Rhine Street, Spring Hill, \$5000, 1897
- 2014 Osgood Street, Fineview, \$5400, 1894
- 3344 Perrysville Avenue, Observatory Hill, \$8400, 1896
- 940 West North Avenue, Allegheny West, \$10,000, 1895
- the Byers-Lyons House at 901 Ridge Avenue, \$80,000, 1898

The contractor: John H. Trimble & Brother

Clarence and Mary D. Pettit hired the contracting firm of John H. Trimble & Brother to construct the stable at 1325 West North Avenue. John H. Trimble & Brother was located at the corner of Knox Street and Pine Alley near the Ohio River in Manchester. John H. Trimble and his brother and business partner, James Trimble, lived on Nixon Street in Manchester.

Other work by John H. Trimble & Brother included construction of:

- an addition to a carriage house at 930 North Lincoln Avenue, Allegheny West, 1905
- a garage at 719 Brighton Road, Allegheny West, 1910
- 79 Woodland Road, Squirrel Hill, 1902
- 400 Devonshire Street, Shadyside, 1897

There are no known records that indicate that John H. Trimble & Brother also constructed 1325 West North Avenue. However, it should be noted that Clarence Pettit is known to have hired John H. Trimble & Brother for two additional projects in the 1890s. Pettit had John H. Trimble & Brother construct a row of seven houses on Reedsdale Street in 1897, and had the firm build an addition to a house he owned on Hamlin Street in 1899. Pettit's continuing use of John H. Trimble & Brother suggests he and Mary D. Pettit may also have had the firm build 1325 West North Avenue.

Architectural style

Thomas H. Scott designed 1325 West North Avenue in the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

The house at 1325 West North Avenue displays several hallmarks of the Richardsonian Romanesque style. These include the house's masonry construction, asymmetrical facade, round corner tower with conical roof, rough-cut and smooth squared stone ornamentation, transoms separated from windows by stone courses, the massive rounded stone arch leading to the recessed front porch, and use of classical Romanesque stone carving such as cushion capitals and interlacing. Art glass windows, while not specifically an element of the Richardsonian Romanesque style, were used in many Richardsonian Romanesque buildings.

Recessed front porches, such as the front porch at 1325 West North Avenue, were used in construction of a number of Richardsonian Romanesque houses built in urban settings.

The Richardsonian Romanesque style was widely used in design of public buildings and upper-class and upper-middle-class homes built in the United States between the late 1880s and about 1900. The style was used less frequently than the contemporaneous Queen Anne style because of its cost.

The Richardsonian Romanesque style was developed in the 1870s and 1880s by Boston architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Other buildings designed by Richardson in Pittsburgh were the Allegheny County Courthouse and Jail (1884-88) and Emmanuel Episcopal Church at the corner of West North and Allegheny Avenues in Allegheny West (1885-86). Richardson was among the most influential architects in the United States between the late 1880s and late 1890s.

CLARENCE AND MARY DRAVO PETTIT

Pittsburgh city directories, U.S. census records, obituaries, and other materials provide information on Clarence and Mary Dravo Pettit, the first owners of 1325 West North Avenue.

Clarence Pettit was born in Ohio in January 1857. Both of his parents were also born in Ohio. The Pettit family settled in Allegheny City in 1866-1867, initially living on Pressley Street in East Allegheny. Clarence Pettit's father, John J. Pettit, became a partner in the firm of Pettit & Newlin, commission merchants, on Smithfield Street between Second and Third Avenues in Downtown Pittsburgh.

In about 1868, the Pettit family moved to a house that John J. Pettit purchased or had built at 1320 Columbus Avenue in Manchester. At around the same time, the partnership of Pettit & Newlin dissolved and John J. Pettit began to work alone as a commission merchant on Smithfield Street. Clarence Pettit joined his father's firm, John J. Pettit & Company, commission and produce merchants, in about 1875, the year of his 18th birthday. By that time the firm was located on the southern side of Second Avenue (now Boulevard of the Allies) between Wood and Smithfield Streets.

During his early years with his father's firm, Clarence Pettit apparently divided his time between work and attending the Western University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pittsburgh), from which he graduated.

The Pettit family moved from Columbus Avenue to a larger house on a double lot at 1337 West North Avenue (then 77 Fayette Street) in the late 1870s. Clarence Pettit still lived at that address and worked for his father when he was married to Mary Dravo on February 15, 1883.

Mary Dravo was born in the Pittsburgh area in February 1860. Her parents were James Darlington Dravo and Ellen Marshall Dravo, both Pennsylvania natives. Ellen Marshall Dravo's father was Robert H. Marshall, a partner in the firm of Graff, Bennett & Company, which operated the Clinton Iron & Nail Works in Pittsburgh.

Before she was married, Mary Dravo had graduated from the Pittsburgh Female College (now Chatham College). She is known to have been an artist. A brief entry in *The Social Mirror* (1888), a book listing socially prominent Pittsburgh women, reported that "Mrs. Clarence Pettit loves art for its own sake, and devotes all her spare time to cultivation of her talents in that direction."

After marrying, Clarence and Mary Dravo Pettit began living in a house that John J. Pettit owned at 1431 (then 31) Pennsylvania Avenue in Manchester. The couple eventually had four children: R. Marshall Pettit, born

in May 1884, Carl Dravo Pettit in November 1889, Frank Rouad Pettit in May 1892, and Donald in May 1894.

Clarence Pettit took over his father's firm and renamed it Clarence Pettit & Company in about 1885. The company was located at 335 Second Avenue. John J. Pettit did not retire, but opened a real estate office in the same building.

The Pettit family still lived at 1431 Pennsylvania Avenue in 1890, when Clarence Pettit purchased the present site of 1325 West North Avenue. The family moved from 1431 Pennsylvania Avenue to their new home (then known as 91 Fayette Street) in 1891 or 1892.

In the 1890s and early 1900s, Clarence Pettit supplemented his income by investing in real estate in Manchester. Allegheny City building permit dockets show that Pettit commissioned construction of a row of seven houses at the corner of Reedsdale and Fontella Streets in 1897. Pettit also commissioned an addition to a house he owned on Hamlin Street in 1899. Mary D. Pettit had a two-story brick house built on Sheffield Street near Fulton Street in 1900.

The 1900 census was the first census taken following construction of 1325 West North Avenue. The census enumerated all six members of the Pettit family at 1325 West North Avenue. Clarence Pettit, 43, was listed in census records as a self-employed produce merchant. Mary D. Pettit, 40, had no occupation. The four Pettit children attended school.

In 1900, one servant lived at 1325 West North Avenue. She was Eliza Lets, 22. Lets had been born in England, and was brought to the United States in 1880.

Records of the 1900 census also show that 1325 West North Avenue was not mortgaged.

Clarence Pettit's commission and produce business moved from Second Avenue to 929 South Canal Street, in the present vicinity of the H.J. Heinz complex, in about 1903. In about 1906, Pettit left his longtime business and became president of the Household Storage Company at 925 South Canal Street. One of his sons, R. Marshall Pettit, was the manager of the business. Clarence Pettit opened a real estate office at 925 South Canal Street in about 1908.

Clarence and Mary D. Pettit and all or most of their children appear to have left Pittsburgh in 1912-1913. It is possible that Clarence and Mary D. Pettit moved at that time to Edgeworth, adjoining Sewickley, where Mary D. Pettit is known to have lived after she left Manchester.

The Pettit family was not enumerated in Pennsylvania in the 1920 census, and appears to have left the state by that year. When Clarence and Mary Pettit sold 1325 West North Avenue in 1924, the deed identified them as

residents of Princeton, New Jersey. Mary Pettit lived in New Jersey immediately before she died on November 22, 1925. Clarence Pettit lived in Washington D.C. before he died on February 15, 1944.

OCCUPANTS IN 1920

In 1920, according to census records, 1325 West North Avenue contained three apartments.

The first apartment at 1325 West North Avenue was rented to George M. and Jessie S. Plitt. George M. Plitt, 40, was a professor in a vocational school. He had been born in Pennsylvania, and his parents had been born in Pennsylvania and Wales. Jessie S. Plitt, 36, had no occupation. She was a native of Pennsylvania, and her parents were born in Pennsylvania and Virginia. The couple had two children: George W., 11, and Robert M., eight.

Albert and Mary G. Cook rented the second apartment that was listed in census records at 1325 West North Avenue. Albert Cook, 30, was a writer for a daily newspaper. He had been born in Maryland, as had his parents. Mary G. Cook, 27, had been born in Pennsylvania to parents born in Ohio. They had no children.

The third apartment enumerated at 1325 West North Avenue was rented to Charles S. and Amanda M. Gauger. Charles S. Gauger was a 38-year-old tinner in a retail hardware store. He had been born in Pennsylvania to parents born in Pennsylvania and New York State. Amanda M. Gauger had been born in West Virginia to parents born in West Virginia and Pennsylvania.

The 1920 census is the most recent census that provides detailed information on occupants of 1325 West North Avenue. Manuscript census records are withheld from the public for 72 years, to protect the privacy of persons enumerated.

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

The following materials accompany this report:

- Copies of parts of plat maps of the area around 1325 West North Avenue, published in 1872 and 1900
- Copies of parts of fire insurance maps of the area around 1325 West North Avenue, published in 1893, 1906, 1926, and 1926 updated to 1950
- Information on Thomas H. Scott, from *History and Commerce of Pittsburgh and Environs, 1893-1894*, and *The Book of Prominent Pennsylvanians* (1913)
- Information on Mary D. Pettit, from *The Social Mirror* (1888)
- The obituary of Mary D. Pettit, from the *Pittsburgh Gazette Times*, November 23, 1925
- The death notice of Clarence Pettit, from the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, February 17, 1944