

## Bricks and Mortar and More

### The President's Homes

By Dr. Wayne G. Marty

Two President's homes are prominent in the history of Westmar College. The first was located northeast of the main north entrance to the campus. It is pictured in the 1916 Western Union yearbook and labeled as Dr. Mock's Residence. Dr. Charles A. Mock, for whom the Library was named, was president of the college from 1911 through 1930. In 1911 there were only two college buildings—Thoren Hall and the wooden frame dormitory known as Union Hall. Dr. Mock's presidency saw the construction of the "old" gym in 1908, Dubs Hall, Wernli Hall, the Heating Plant and this first president's residence. The certainty of the construction date was enhanced by a feature in the 1916 year book entitled "Daily Happenings." A note for Nov. 1, 1916 says "President's mansion completed" and a note for Dec. 15, 1916 says "The Y.M.C.A. was entertained in President Mock's new home."

The house was sold and moved to the McNaughton farm near Kingsley on June 2, 1966 (The house is still being used at that rural location.) to clear lots 7, 8, and 9 of Block Six of the Normal Park Addition in Le Mars for the construction of the new Kime Science Hall. The Normal Park Addition was a group of 14 blocks on the south edge of Le Mars that were purchased by a group of Le Mars businessmen organized as the Le Mars Normal School Association in the late 1800s. Lots were then sold individually to fund the establishment of the Le Mars Normal School in 1892 which became Western Union College in 1900.

Alice Kruse (Class of 1929) remembers visits to the house during the Dr. Mock years. I presume it was the home for Dr. D. O. and Mrs. Ima Kime after he replaced Dr. Mock as President in 1930. Eva (Gabel) Brown (Class of 1938) remembers visits to the house for cookies when Mrs. Kime was director of the Girls' Glee Club. In 1940 a house located on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. at the Northeast corner of the campus was purchased and designated as the President's House and the "Mock Mansion" provided shelter for a variety of people thereafter. In the late 1940's and to 1958 it was known as the Miller House and occupied by Dr. Ed and Mrs. Miller, Registrar and Professor of Education. When Dr. Miller retired in 1958 the college student body was outgrowing dormitory space and the activities in the house dramatically changed. A faculty or staff person or couple lived in the house and students occupied upstairs rooms.

It was the Larson House from 1958 to 1960 when Carl Larson, Professor of Education managed the student residents. From 1960 to 1962 Bob (Class of 1959 and Admissions Counselor) and Nancy (Class of 1961) Bistline supervised the students. Nancy tells of housing boys during their first year and that the boys had some snakes as pets in their rooms. The boys loved their newborn, Stephen, but Stephen had some unplanned entertainment one day when Nancy heard Stephen giggling in the next room and found that he was crawling after a snake that had escaped to their downstairs residence.

It was the Martin House for the 1962-63 year when Milt (Class of 1953 and newly hired Phys. Ed. Professor) and Dorothy Martin were the live-in supervisors for eight girls living upstairs. They brought their new born second son, Tom, directly to the house from his birthplace in a Worthington, MN hospital so there were two little "boy dolls" to receive attention from the college girls upstairs. Carol Lange, a returning 2 year teacher (Class of 1965) was supervising resident for the final semester of use in the fall of 1963 and was charged with supervising these college gals that attracted football players to the house. Dr. Lange later returned to the faculty of Westmar and remembers that experience as challenging at the time but is aware of the high quality of those girls who have gone to do great things with their lives. One of those girls, Jan (Davolt), who married one of those football players (Quarterback Terry Christensen), has reconnected with Dr. Lange in recent years at meetings of the Delta Kappa Gamma national organization for women educators.



**"Dr. Mock's Residence"**

*From 1916 Pilot Yearbook*

At some time the house came to be known as the Poling House and all news stories relating to the moving of the house in 1966 use that name. I have no explanation for the origin of that name for the house. WAFA will be pleased to get any ideas or information from Alumni regarding the name and in a future WAFA Newsletter theories and ideas will be synthesized for a "Best we Know" report.

The New President's House on 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. was purchased by the college in 1940 from the "estate of Herbert S. Martin, a person of unsound mind..." A search with the amazing Google technology of our age provided a Time Magazine article dated Jan. 16, 1933 that describes Martin as an attorney for the New York Life Insurance Co. In that Great Depression period a common tactic by friendly farmer neighbors during foreclosure sales was "There ain't going to be any bidders!" Lawyer Martin violated that protective principle and bid \$30,000 for a mortgage with a face value of \$33,000. The farmer crowd responded with, "Lynch him! Tar and feather him! Ride him out of town on a rail!" Martin was handcuffed and forced to a telegraph office to obtain permission from the Insurance Company to raise his bid to \$33,000. There have been periodic stories of ghosts in this new President's house and some suspect that one might be the ghost of Herbert S. Martin who was treated for mental illness at some time following this event.

Dr. & Mrs. Kime were the first presidential residents of this house. College enrollment was only 200 to 400 students during the 1940's and early 1950's so receptions and small group meetings in the house left a feeling of warm welcome for both students and faculty during the Kime years of 1940 to 1956. Dr. Harry and Margaret Kalas continued this tradition but it became more difficult as the enrollment swelled to over 1000 during the 12 years of the Kalas administration. When Dr. Kalas retired in 1968 there had been only 6 Presidents during the 68 years of the college life. Dr. Mock had served for 19 years, Dr. Kime for 26 years, and Dr. Kalas for 12 years. During the remaining 29 years of the college (1968-1997) there were 11 presidents with many serving only 1 and 2 year terms.

So President's House #1 (1916 to 1940) was home to only two presidents. President's House #2 (1940 to 1997) was home to 10 presidents. Some terms were so short or they were "acting president appointments so they did not even move into the house.

The City of Le Mars became the owner of the house in 1997 when the college closed. In August 1998 LeRoy (Westmar Class of 1984) and Wanda Wichers became the owners until August 2007 when this house filled with memories (and maybe some ghosts) was transferred to Chase and Debra Anderson. The Andersons are the current proud residents of this beautiful historic property.

Next time we will discuss the Library/Administration building. Your thoughts and memories are welcome.