

23 Poplar Avenue, Woodsdale

This lovely home faces Woodlawn Avenue, once called Linden Lane. It is considered a “contributing” building in the Woodsdale-Edgwood Historic District and is described in the district nomination as a “2-story, 5 bay house with stucco façade, center recessed decorative arched opening for door with sidelights, French doors on each side with concrete balcony railing. Projecting over doorway with sway design, triple window with round arch and Corinthian columns, paired windows to sides, sun porch to south side, open porch on north.”



The first owner of the property was William H. Hornish, who purchased the lot in 1905 for \$1150. Hornish (1865 – 1951) was the acting postmaster of Wheeling and the Chairman of the Ohio County Republican Executive Committee. Although City Directories of the time list his residence as Woodlawn, no actual street address is listed, so it is unclear whether he or the next owner, Albert M. Rice, actually built the house.

Rice (1865 – 1925) purchased the property in 1915 and is listed as residing at 23 Poplar in the 1917-1918 Wheeling City Directory. A Pennsylvania native, Rice came to Wheeling in 1885 and became associated with his uncles Albert L. Rice and S. M. Rice, in the firm A. L. Rice & Company, wholesale milliners, at 1300 Main Street. At the time of his death, Rice was recognized as one of the lead authorities in his line in the Ohio valley.

Mai Forbes Simpson purchased the property in 1920. Little could be found on Mrs. Simpson, other than the fact that she is listed in the 1921-1922 City Directory as the widow of Howard Simpson and residing at 23 Poplar. Earlier Directories list a Howard Simpson as a stocks and bonds broker; perhaps he was her husband.

A 1936 will of Mrs. Simpson left the property to Jeannette Yaeger Kurner, wife of Robert J. Kurner, a painting contractor. The Kurners resided there until at least 1946. Herbert M. Sonneborn briefly owned the property from 1946 to 1948, but he probably lived elsewhere. Subsequent owners were Charles M. Swart and his wife Louisa (Jean), who purchased the property in 1948. In city directories of 1953, 1955, and 1957, Swart is listed as BBT credit manager, department manager, and advertising director. The home was sold to physician Robert T. Brandfass and his wife Mary Lou in 1957 and to Drs. Henry and Mary Marockie in 1972.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling, July 2010

Sources:

- Property deeds – Ohio County Clerk’s office
- Death records and obituaries (Hornish and Rice)
- *History of the Upper Ohio Valley*, Vol 1, pages 412-413
- *History of Wheeling City and Ohio County, West Virginia and Representative Citizens*, by Gibson Lamb Cranmer, 1902, p 626
- Wheeling City Directories
- Woodsdale-Edgwood Historic District nomination, 1995

House photo by Joanne Sullivan