



44 Kentucky St Pratt-Faris House

According to deed records, the lot that this property stands on was laid out by John A. Armstrong and Charles Lane as part of Armstrong and Lane's Addition. John Armstrong and his wife Nancy purchased the property in 1868 for \$1000, the equivalent of \$18,298 today. Armstrong was a partner in Armstrong, Coen and Company, a planing mill also called the Keystone Planing Mill, which was located a decade later on the northwest corner of Market and 10th Street – about where the 10th Street parking garage now stands.

In 1876, Phoebe Pratt purchased the property for \$1600, the equivalent of \$36,600 today. Mrs. Pratt, the widow of Robert Pratt (an immigrant from England), died on April 4, 1877. At that time, her residence was listed as 144 14th Street. Two of Phoebe and Robert's children were Edgar

Woods Pratt and Mary Elizabeth Pratt. Edgar (1851 – 1933) was a painting contractor, like his father. Mary (1837 – 1914) married Joseph Anderson Faris.

The first city directory listing found with this address was of Joseph A. Faris, painter, in 1879. Both Faris and his brother-in-law, E.W. Pratt, are listed at this address in the 1880-81 directory. In later years, the directory states that Faris had his residence and his studio at 44 Kentucky Street, and Pratt lived there until his death in 1933.

The property was purchased in 1960 by Catherine Judkins and in 1992 by James C. Edwards. It was sold at auction on January 31, 2005 for \$63,595. REO acquired it on March 7, 2005, and Thomas Wolf bought it on July 26, 2005.

The most noted residents were J.A. Faris and his son Frederick Faris. Born the son of a St. Clairsville, Ohio, cabinetmaker, Joseph Anderson Faris (1833-1909) moved to Wheeling shortly before the Civil War to work as a marble cutter. He served in the 6th West Virginia Infantry, and after the war worked in a photography gallery in New York City before returning to Wheeling. Largely self-taught, Faris became one of Wheeling's leading artists, working as an illustrator, landscapist, history painter and portrait artist. His sketches of Wheeling scenes were published in Harper's Weekly, and his work can be found in the collections of West Virginia University's West Virginia and Regional History Collection, the West Virginia State Museum, the Museums of Oglebay Institute and the National Gallery in Washington, DC.

J.A. Faris's painting of the Second Siege of Fort Henry was painted in 1882, while he lived in this house. The painting was donated to the Museums of Oglebay Institute in 1943 by George

Seibert, according to museum records. Painted 100 years after the event that it commemorates, the canvas depicts a scene from the famous 1782 Battle of Fort Henry, popularly known as “Betty Zane’s powder run” or the “gunpowder exploit” when young Zane retrieved gunpowder by running across a field under fire and carrying it back to the fort in her apron. In 2015, the painting was restored at the Pennsylvania Art Conservatory with retouching, cleaning, re-stretching and proper framing done through the generosity of Beth and Dave Weaver. It hangs in Oglebay Mansion, just below a painting of Lydia Boggs Shepherd. J.A. Faris is also known for his Civil War-era sketch of the Embarkation of the German Rifles.

Faris’s son, Frederick F. Faris (1870 – 1927), was one of the premier architects of Wheeling. Although he was born in St. Clairsville, he would have spent much of his childhood years in this house. He attended public schools and received no formal training as an architect. He joined the office of Edgar Wells, another Wheeling architect and builder, then formed a partnership with Joseph Leiner. After that partnership dissolved, he joined with Edward Bates Franzheim and Millard Filmore Giesey in 1902 to form Franzheim, Giesey, and Faris.

He designed, or helped design, a variety of residential, commercial, and educational buildings. Among them were the Schmulbach/Wheeling Steel Building, then the tallest building, and the Market Auditorium, the longest building in Wheeling. Other notable buildings include the Wheeling Electric Company, the First National Bank of West Virginia, the Wheeling Intelligencer, the former public library, the Scottish Rite Cathedral, and numerous schools including the Triadelphia High (now Middle) School and Madison School. He also designed Mount Carmel Monastery, the former Children’s Home of Wheeling, the YMCA (now the Maxwell Center), the YWCA, Howard Mansion, the Laconia Building, the former Wheeling Country Club (now Stratford Springs), the Crispin Center at Oglebay Park, and the former water treatment plant along River Road. In 1927, he died of strep throat at age 57 and was buried at Greenwood Cemetery. At the time of his death he was known as the "dean of Wheeling architects."

The National Register nomination for the Wheeling Island Historic District describes the house. “The two-and-one-half story frame residence is dominated by its two-story porch featuring fluted square columns, a classically ornamented entablature below the broad gable porch roof having a Palladian window. Its classical detailing and scale give it a striking prominence in the streetscape of typical Island residences.” As a contributing structure in the historic district, the house is eligible for historic rehabilitation tax credits.

Prepared by Jeanne Finstein, Friends of Wheeling, October 4, 2017

Sources:

- Ohio County Deed Records
- Wheeling City Directories
- *Wheeling Intelligencer*: <http://www.theintelligencer.net/life/features/2015/11/painting-is-highlight-of-federal-dining-room/>
- Wheeling Island National Register Nomination

House photo by Joanne Sullivan

