

HILL YES !

A look back at Mt Adams

Jim Steiner

Have you ever heard of a literal building? My wife thought they had something to do with computers. I wasn't sure what they were but after a little research, I know the answer. They are buildings that were built for a purpose but have been converted to a different use. A church that's been changed to a residence is an example. Mt Adams has its fair share of such buildings.

The old Mt Adams Public School on St. Gregory across from UDF is currently being converted to condominiums. It was built in 1895 by the Cincinnati School Board for the protestant children that lived on the Hill. The catholic grade school children attended kindergarten there since the two parochial schools, Holy Cross and Immaculata, didn't offer kindergarten. Before its construction, the public school children had to walk downtown for classes. Imagine that in 2006. There are inscriptions over the front door that include the members of the original building committee. The public school closed in 1976 and, until recently, housed classes for the Cincinnati Art Academy. The Art Academy moved to Over the Rhine in 2005.

Bet you've walked by 966 Pavilion St. as I have and never given it a second look. Pause for a moment the next time you go by and take it in. It's not a bowling alley anymore but that's what it's telling you it used to be when it was built in 1895. The crossed bowling pins and balls depicted in the gable are a dead giveaway. It housed two bowling lanes until the 1930's when it was converted to living space. Kids from the Hill earned spending money hand setting pins and had to be on the alert. It wasn't uncommon to get hit in the head by an errant pin. Zoning laws didn't exist when the bowling alley was built but today's laws would not permit such a business in a residential area.

Take a close look at 1138 Belvedere. Notice the name Belvedere (beautiful view) above the front door and the two arched windows to the right of the front door. The top two stories were added in 1989 so the original building, circa 1910, was one story. If the garage doors were open and you could look in you would notice that the floor sloped down from the front to the back of the building. So what do the clues mean? The first guess is usually a bank but that's not what it was. It was a silent movie theater. When the talkies arrived, it was converted to sound and lasted until the beginning of the depression. It was the first location of Crowley's Saloon in 1936. It then became a beer garden with live entertainment, a movie house again in the 1940's and known as the Flop by the locals. Holy Rollers made it a church soon after the movie house closed for the second time. The catholic kids on the Hill were forbidden to go near it. It became a theater for the third time in 1973 when the Mt Adams Cinema opened. The Cinema was a child of the 70's and showed art films, independent productions, old newsreels and early cartoons. Many people remember it running the cult film Harold and Maude for 35 straight weeks. If you called to ask when a movie began you were told when ever you arrived. So who needed TiVo?

Another virtual building is located at 1055 St. Paul Place. It is currently the headquarters of Towne Properties and was built in 1900. It's elegantly simple, some might say austere. Notice the cross to the left of the front door, experience the calming effect of the grounds and look for the corner stone at the south east corner that dates the building and contains a cross. It wasn't a church which is often guessed, but a monastery that was home to the Passionist Order of Priests who arrived on Mt Adams in 1871 and served here until 1996 when the order departed due to the priest shortage. The order was responsible for

administering both Holy Cross and Immaculata churches and their parochial schools.

As you're out and about on the Hill look for more examples of literal buildings. There are plenty more waiting for you to find them. They don't talk but give you visual clues. You have to read them. Have fun.

If you have any comments or have historical pictures of the Hill you would be willing to share, call me at 684 0101 or email me at <jamessteiner@hotmail.com>. I'd especially like to find a picture of the Belvedere when it was a silent movie house in the early part of the 20th century.

As a reminder to readers, if you wish to learn more about our neighborhood, walking tours of the Hill are offered the second Wednesday and third Saturday of the month through October. Meet at the corner of St. Gregory and Pavilion at 10 AM. \$5 for children, \$10 for adults, \$25 for families and \$100 for groups up to 15 people. Call me at the above number if you would like to schedule a special date.