

THE OLD STEVENS MANSION

In view of the early landscaping of the Capitol grounds at Olympia one naturally wonders just what will be done with the old Stevens home on Capitol Way and Eleventh Street. One must wish that some means could be devised by which this historic building could be preserved for all time. It will be remembered that General Hazard Stevens put the house in thorough order just before his death having in mind the idea that by thus doing it might stand for years and finally be taken over by the State, for this old pioneer building with its many cherished memories and historical connections offers a rare opportunity and one which should not be neglected of being preserved as a most interesting relic of the early beginning of this great commonwealth of Washington and a worthy memorial of one of its most distinguished citizens. As we all know General Hazard Stevens was profoundly interested in old historic landmarks, and it was largely owing to his efforts that the venerable State House in Boston was saved from the encroachments of the Boston Transit Commission. While here in Washington, from his intimate knowledge of the history of the country, he was of invaluable aid to the State Daughters of the American Revolution in locating the precise spots of the Oregon Trail and other places where monuments were to be erected.

The Stevens Mansion dates back to 1856, prior to which time Isaac Ingalls Stevens, the first governor and organizer of Washington Territory, selected the land where now stands the house, because of its eminence and of the commanding view to be obtained from it of beautiful Puget Sound, backed by the snow-clad Olympic Mountains, as soon as the intervening timber could be taken away. At that time the land on every side of the block, as far north as where now stands the Masonic Temple on Eighth Street and Capitol Way, was covered with a dense growth of native trees and underbrush and at times the roarings of cougars were heard in the woods.

As owner of the property, Governor Stevens had the great trees which covered it cut down and also those on the land surrounding it for the distance of two hundred feet on every side so as to prevent any trees falling on his land; next the huge stumps were removed and the land thoroughly cleared. This ac-

complished, he first planted an extensive vegetable garden, had a well, eighty feet in depth, dug at one side of the present back piazza and then began the building of the house. This was completed in time for the family, which consisted of the Governor and Mrs. Stevens, and their four children, Hazard, Sue, Maude and Kate, to move into it for the winter. In commemoration of this event a great house warming was given to which the whole town was invited, although this does not mean a very large assemblage as the population of the entire Territory at that time was only 3965 souls, exclusive of the Indians, and the officers and their wives from Steilacoom, and the officers of a naval vessel in the bay. Among the guests were some young women who had infants, so these, rather than forego the pleasures of a dance, brought their babies with them and after putting them to sleep in one of the big chambers, went back to dance until the wee sma' hours of the morning. There were a number of beautiful young girls in Olympia at that time, among them were Carrie and Annie Cock, Miss Hays and others. The little house, which for many years stood on the southeast corner of the block, was originally built for an office, at the same time as the mansion and used to be on the northeast corner. It is of interest to learn that it was in this little edifice that a dreadful tragedy occurred for it was here that Quiemuth, the brother of Leschi, the noted Indian chief, was shot to death, greatly to the wrath and indignation of Governor Stevens who had had him confined there for his protection against the whites.

The Governor and his family made their home in the mansion for about two years, and after they left Olympia it was occupied successively by various people. Prominent among these were: William Pickering, Governor of the Territory from 1862, to 1867, during the crucial period of the Civil War, and Elisha Peyre Ferry, Surveyor General of the Territory, afterwards its Governor and, still later, when in 1889 Washington attained statehood, its first State Governor. The Ferry family occupied the house for twelve years. Other occupants of the mansion were: Captain J. G. Parker and his wife, both well known pioneers; General T. I. McKenny, civil war veteran and Indian Agent for the Territory, and his wife and family; J. E. Brown, Registrar of the Land Office; Major Breckenridge and family. Mr. Charles Hewitt, a prominent citizen of Tumwater and of a distinguished pioneer family was born in the house. The late Judge T. N. Allen and family lived in it for twenty-nine years, and after the

Judge's disease, his widow and her sister, Miss Stamps, still continued to reside there. Since its renovation it has been occupied by tenants.

Anyone familiar with the manner in which houses of the style of this old executive mansion are being, or have been restored and preserved in most, if not all, of our cities all over the land, will realize that the one described above furnishes a rare opportunity, and one which should not be neglected, for the people, not alone of Olympia but of the entire State, to take advantage of. I know of no other state where the residence of its first Governor has been preserved. Now while the edifice is in good condition it, together with its beautiful, sightly grounds, keeping all of the fine old trees in them, should be taken possession of by our citizens, the house converted into a museum for the preservation and display of the relics of the various periods through which it has passed, and provided with a caretaker, and the picturesque grounds made into a public park, both for the benefit of the Olympians and the other citizens of Washington as well as for that of the numerous visitors to the State's charming Capitol.

Notable examples of old, historic houses, preserved and cared for in the manner described above, are Mount Vernon on the Potomac River, George Washington's venerated home; the House of the Seven Gables in Salem, Massachusetts, made famous by the novel of the same name by Nathaniel Hawthorne; the Paul Revere House in Boston; the Royal House in Medford, Massachusetts; the Van Courtland and Dykeman houses in New York, and the old Frauncis Tavern, the latter in the heart of the financial district of New York; the Lincoln House at Springfield, Illinois; and the Rochambeau House in Newport, Rhode Island; let me add still one other, in this instance of particular interest, as it was the ancestral home of Mrs. Margaret Lyman Stevens, the wife of General I. I. Stevens, also in Newport, Rhode Island, which is now in the hands of the Newport Historical Society who are converting it into an historic house. It is called the Wanton-Lyman Hazard House after Mrs. Stevens' ancestors.

Now, while acknowledging that some, not all however, of these historic edifices are more elaborate in their style of architecture than is the house under discussion, none have a more romantic history or are of as much interest and value to our city and state as is this, its first executive mansion, while in no one

of them have lived men of more varied accomplishments, or of higher types of character than he who erected this one, namely Isaac Ingalls Stevens, Washington's first Governor, and his son, General Hazard Stevens who, with Mr. P. B. Van Trump, was the first person to climb Washington's great peak, Mount Rainier.

KATE STEVENS BATES