

Historic Homes - S. H. Lasley and his House

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Built in 1879 by S. H. Lasley, a local banker.

The property on which this house was built was originally owned by Ophir Goodno in 1875. However, he lost the property in 1876 for not paying the taxes. Edward P. Ferry then bought the land from the Auditor General in October 1876.

Samuel Henry Lasley was born in Muskegon on 21 November 1840. His mother, who was part Indian, was also born in Muskegon in 1812. His father was a Frenchman and pioneer lumberman having built one of the first lumber mills in Muskegon. Lasley received his early education in Grand Haven and attended college in Appleton, Wisconsin.

Lasley came to Montague in the Fall of 1866 to take charge of the mercantile business of Ferry, Dowling & Co. The following Spring he was admitted as a partner, continuing until 1872, when he took a larger interest, and the firm was called S. H. Lasley & Co. Edward P. Ferry and George Dowling had a lesser interest in the firm. In July 1885 he sold the business and became cashier of the First National Bank in Whitehall. He continued in that position in 1894, when it became Whitehall State Savings Bank. The bank failed and closed in 1897.

Lasley had married Mrs. Isabelle A. (ne Lewis) Rumsey on 10 June 1874 in Albion, MI. At the time, she had a young daughter named Charlotte.

As Ferry and Lasley were friends, they must have had a gentlemen's agreement whereby Lasley could begin building his house in 1879 on land that Ferry owned. Lasley actually purchased the land from E. W. Ferry on 14 June 1880 for \$422.98.

The Italianate Victorian house Lasley built is very similar in design and style to the Edward Payson Ferry house in Grand Haven located at 514 Lafayette Street. The stone foundation is Indiana limestone which was brought as ballast on returning lumbering boats. The house has three sitting rooms, a dining room, kitchen, pantry and laundry room, wood room, bathroom, sun room and large front entry on the main floor. Upstairs are four bedrooms and a bathroom. There is also a maid's room which has its own stairway from the kitchen. There was a two-story barn behind the house on Mead Street.

In December 1892, it was reported in the local paper that Lasley had sold his house for \$3,000 to Abel T. Page of Grand Rapids, who planned to make it their summer home. At the time it had 38 apple trees surrounding the house. Across Prospect Street (now Old Channel Trail), there were grapes on the slope to White Lake, and a vegetable garden spot. Other garden details included lilacs and pussy willows, and a watering system. There was a huge pump down on the lake flats that supplied water for many of the houses along Prospect Street. There was also a ram in Coon Creek that pumped water into a storage tank. This supplied water for the greenhouse porch on the south side of the house. Cisterns caught rain water which was used for laundry and bathing. A hand pump at the well furnished drinking water.

Since the Pages were going to use the house as a summer home, they allowed the Lasley's to remain in the house. In March 1893, a reception was held for the Lasley's at their home before they left for Muskegon. At the time, it was one of the largest social events ever seen on White Lake. The spacious home was filled with upwards of two hundred people. While a resident of Montague, Lasley was elected register of deeds. He also served as Supervisor of the township and president of the village.

In 1900, S. H. Lasley and his wife were listed as residing in Muskegon. His stepdaughter "Lottie" was teaching school at the Pillsbury School in Muskegon. In 1920, Lasley was living in the "Old Folks Home" in Muskegon. He died at Hackley Hospital on 21 March 1921. His wife Isabelle died 5 August 1921 in Battle Creek. They are both buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Muskegon.

Abel Town Page acquired the Lasley house in 1892. Around 1896 Mark Covell acquired the house and sold it to J. W. Steffe for \$1,400 in November 1896. They owned the house for a short time before selling it to Mr. & Mrs. C. D. Burdick in March 1897 for \$1,900. In May 1909, William Sweet bought the house for \$2,000 from Mr. & Mrs. Burdick when they moved to Grand Rapids.

In September 1909, while the Sweets were living in the house, an alarm was sounded and the fire department rushed up the hill to the house. As it turned out, a stove brush and rag behind the kitchen stove caught fire and created quite a smudge.

In April 1913, a party of about 40 merry makers descended on the Sweet home bring a delicious supper with them. It was a complete surprise to the Sweets, who were busy packing and getting ready to move to their new home.

J. D. Wilson of the Wilson & Hendrie Foundry bought the handsome residence in 1913. He lived there until his death in December 1915. Then his wife died while living there in 1940, leaving it to their daughter Jessie who died in February 1941.

Since September 1941, the Edward Scharmer family has owned and lived in the house. Mr. Scharmer was elected the mayor of Montague in 1947, a position he held until he resigned from the office in 1958 to seek a position on the Muskegon County Road Commission.

Edward C. Scharmer, Jr. was born in Muskegon on 20 January 1901, and graduated from Muskegon High School. In 1920 he went to work for the Muskegon Road Commission and became a specialist in highway development. In 1945 he left the road commission to open a private survey office in Muskegon.

Ed married Esther Mae O'Connell in Grand Rapids on 28 June 1930. They had two children: Sue Ellen (1931-2015) and Roger Phillip (1934-). Ed died of an apparent heart attack while tending his garden at his home in Montague on 14 September 1975. His wife Esther died in Muskegon on 31 August 1989. They are both buried in Oak Grove Cemetery.

In 1995, the back 2-story kitchen and service wing were converted into a 2-floor apartment with its own private terrace and garden area. The front portion of the house is occupied by Roger Scharmer.