

Mariemont Preservation Foundation

Transcript of Oral History Interview with MRS. RUTH JAAP

Mrs. Jaap and her husband and son, moved to Mariemont in 1925. They were the first family to live south of Wooster Pike, originally on Albert Place and then on Miami Bluff Drive. Mrs. Jaap describes the frustrations of living in Mariemont at that time during the construction period. She and her husband were actively involved in the Mariemont Church and other early organizations.

INTERVIEWER'S NAME: Lois Ralston

DATE OF INTERVIEW: 1984

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Mount Healthy Christian Home, 8097 Hamilton Ave., Cincinnati, Ohio

Ruth Jaap and her husband came to Mariemont in the early days of Mariemont when her husband was associated with the Jack Orr Advertising Agency. Ruth Jaap's special talent was in the area of organ music. She played as an organist for many of the Protestant churches in the Eastern Hills Area of the City and was the first organist in the Mariemont Community Church. After her husband's death, Mrs. Jaap was associated with the Eastern Hills Journal for many years in their Advertising Department. In her new home, Mrs. Jaap is playing the organ for the weekly sing-along at the Home, and sharing her talent with the residents there. Ruth was an early resident in Mariemont and can remember some of the nice things about her days there that will be interesting for all of us to know. Ruth will introduce herself, and give a little introduction to her own memories:

"I will introduce myself and my husband and son, George, as of 1925, we came to Cincinnati from Chicago and when my husband announced that we were moving to Cincinnati, it was a great surprise. Well, anyway, we came to Cincinnati and the first thing we did was contact a Realtor. We didn't have any idea where we might want to live, and he suggested that if we didn't mind, he'd ask us a few questions and if we were Methodist we might like to live in the vicinity of Madisonville. If we were Catholics we might go to Price Hill, and if we were Jewish, maybe we would go to Avondale. And then he told us about Mariemont, the experimental village that was under construction at the time and that sounded wonderful to us, and so we landed in Mariemont in the very early days.

We were the first family to live south of Wooster Pike. It was unfinished and we had a deadline when we needed to get to Cincinnati, so they hurried up and finished one unit in Albert Place, and that's where we moved in. No sidewalks, no paved streets. They put down a few boards so that the movers could get the furniture across some mud and sand, but the walk collapsed when they were carrying my piano in. That wasn't very funny, but it is certainly something to remember. Now we can smile about it. The first night we were there, we heard hoof beats in

the night and we wondered what that was all about. We all got up and looked out the window, and here was the security man (that's what they call them now, I guess they called them Paul Revere then, maybe, I don't know), but anyway he was the security man and he was making his rounds in this acreage of Mariemont on horseback. Well, that was a big surprise.

We had a lot of "firsts" living in Albert place. We were the first hook-up on the Central Heating Plant which no longer exists in Mariemont. All the people who were originally on the central heating had to buy their own heating units later on, but ours was an experiment and it was very frustrating at times because all we had for day and night for days, was bang, bang, bang, bang on the heating pipes. Mr. Livingood, who was next to Mary Emery in this development, came with a crew of men when we complained so bitterly about what was going on and he finally got all the bugs out of the heating plant."

Q. Did you ever live anywhere else besides Albert Place? Did they ever get the place ready that you hoped?

A. When we first went to Mariemont there was no property for sale, per se. Even the places that people lived in were rental properties. They did not become owners of the property, but they did open up some land sale and we were the first family to buy a lot on Miami Bluff Drive, overlooking the Clare Freight Yard. And that was another frustrating experience which we didn't realize was going to happen until the first night we slept in the place and the trains below started switching and bumping and we thought we were in the midst of an earthquake. And when we woke up in the morning and found cinders on our bed, we realized that all the smoke stacks down there, of course they were coal operated engines, had no lids on the smoke stacks. Well we went through that for quite some time, but they did iron out some of those "bugs" as time went on.

Our son went to the Dale Park School. It was the first class to go to Dale Park, and the first year he was there they had a little skit down in the hollow behind Dale Park. It was around Easter time and my son was an Easter bunny. I had to make a costume and he had bunny ears and tail, and a carrot, and he did a lot of hopping around the hollow there. He went through seven grades in Dale Park School.

The Church was organized in our living room and my husband was one of the first Elders. I was the first organist there and Wallace McGill was the soloist and we worked together for quite some time. He became the producer of the telephone/radio hour many, many years ago.

Q. What was his connection with Mariemont?

A. Well, he was sort of an all-purpose person around here, but one of his main things was to deliver the mail. We had no house to house mail delivery, it was all delivered to the Mariemont Company and then he went around to distribute it. He went on to New York to produce the Telephone Hour.

The Inn was not yet finished, but in the meantime there was a Men's Club that had been organized and my husband was "so-called" President of that and they had their New Year's Eve dance in the Inn. Part of it was finished and could be used for a party situation.

Q. I believe the Marie Jordan said that is where she met her husband?

A. I think so. We had a great time, that was for sure.

Q. In the Church, were you just the organist or did you direct the singing?

A. No. Wallace McGill was just the soloist.

And then after about 5 years of the existence of Mariemont, the Masons got together and organized the Masonic Lodge, and my husband took his Blue Lodge degree work there and became their fifth Master. Through the years we have very much become a Masonic-oriented family.

Q. Do you remember the name of the first Master?

A. Mr. Wilkinson.

Getting back to our home up there on the Bluff, one morning there was a rap on the door. My husband was still at home having his breakfast. It turned out to be a hobo from the yards below, and he wanted some breakfast. He wanted a cup of coffee, and I didn't think I should invite him in, so I suggested he go to the Salvation Army, or there were many places where he could go and get assistance. By that time my husband knew what was going on and he came to the door. We had a little rock garden outside the back entrance, so he picked up a rock as we didn't know whether the hobo was going to force entry or not. But anyway, when he saw my husband pick up the rock, he departed. But we did have a burglary while we lived there and they broke the front window of the living room that was a picture leaded glass window and cost a lot to replace. They could have gotten in other ways but they chose to destroy the window. We had two dogs in the basement and they clawed the door because they knew that my son and I had gone to the Good Eat shop in Mariemont. My husband was in Pittsburgh at the time, so when we got back the house had been ransacked and the dogs had tried to get to them but they had been locked in the basement, so that didn't help a bit.

Q. Did you have any police protection while you were there in Mariemont by yourself?

A. No. Of course after they got the sidewalks and streets paved and all that sort of thing, we had no more horseback policing at night and I don't remember whether they came in from adjacent areas like Fairfax or Madison Place. I know they used the Madison Place Fire Department, but they certainly didn't have any police protection per se like they have now.

Q. I guess there was a bus line wasn't there to downtown?

A. No, there was a inter-urban or trolley on what is now Murray. The terminal was Milford and we could take that to go down to Cincinnati.

Q. The house that you lived in is now occupied, I believe, by John Hudson.

A. Yes, that's right.

Q. Did he buy it from you?

A. No, there was an intervening person, but I just don't remember when he took over. My husband has been gone for 42 years. I think he would be amazed at the changes in Mariemont. It has become quite a cosmopolitan community.

Q. Do you have any connections with Mariemont now, people living there today?

A. Oh, many, many friends there, a lot of them of course have passed one. Well, when you get to be 89 years of age, as I am, many of your friends have passed on. This has been a nostalgic experience, but it was a lot of fun living in Mariemont. We enjoyed it as a family very, very much, and it is nice to reminisce about it. I appreciate this opportunity. I feel honored.

Q. It has been a little trip back into the past for me too, and I am sure that all the little bits of interest that fill in the recorded story of Mariemont will add to the pleasure of those who hear about it later on. I certainly do thank you very much.

Following this conversation, Mrs. Jaap gave an additional item of interest that I thought was worth recording. She mentioned that the stones that came over from the old barn in England to be used as the Church roof in Mariemont, came to New York, many of them covered with fungus and moss. Because of the possibility of there being some infectious disease brought in in that way, the roof stones were in quarantine in New York for some time before moving on to the Mariemont where they were used.