

ADSMORE

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In the summer of 1900, a large, old brick home on North Jefferson Street in Princeton was sold. Little did anyone in that small, peaceful town in Caldwell County, Kentucky, ever dream that over eighty years later the home, which was soon to be named "Adsmore", would attract thousands of visitors to it annually.

In September of 1984, Katharine Garrett, who had lived in the home for 83 years, died. By her will she left the home to the Caldwell County District Library Board of Trustees to become a museum. Not only did she leave the house, but all of the contents. English and American hand crafted antiques, beautiful mirrors, porcelains, oil paintings, portraits, china, silver, crystal, fine linens, period clothing dating between 1885—1910, family genealogical records, family correspondence and pictures, memorabilia collected by the family for over 100 years were there to become a part of Adsmore Museum.

Adsmore is on both the National Register of Historic Places and the Kentucky Register of Historic Sites. Katharine Garrett had a dream. In the early 1970s, she started planning for the fate of her much loved home. She had never married. Her only relatives were cousins about her age. She advised her attorney to contact the National Trust for Historic Preservation to see if they would be interested in owning the home. There was much correspondence and dialog between them. A representative came to Princeton to talk to her personally. He could not assure her that the house would not be sold and the contents moved to another location. This was not what she wanted. She wanted it to become a museum for Princeton and the surrounding area to enjoy. Only Miss Garrett knew of the contents of the trunks which were stored in the attic.

In July 1900, when John Parker Smith's wife Nancy Bond Kevil Smith (called Nannie) decided to buy the house, the decision was made for two of their married daughters, Katharine (Kate) Smith Williams and Mary Jane (Mayme) Smith Garrett, to buy an interest in the home along with Mrs. Smith. James and Kate Williams lived in St. Louis but Kate had consumption and was destined not to live long. She returned to Princeton often for visits. Robert Garrett, Mayme's husband, was a national bank examiner, a prestigious job at the time. He was away from home much of the time.

The home was built in 1857, by John Higgins, a Princeton merchant. Higgins, who owned two plantations in the south, had financial reverses during the Civil War and the home had to be sold at the court house steps. Colonel James Hewlett, a prominent western Kentucky lawyer, bought the house and lived there until his death after which his widow sold the home to the Smith-Garrett families. By 1947, Katharine Garrett was the sole owner.

The home was not so grand in 1900. Soon many changes were made and it became architecturally significant, not only for western Kentucky but all of Kentucky. Brinton Davis, a noted architect of the period, was hired. He was a native of Paducah but lived in Louisville at that time. He designed the front portico. It has four handsome, fluted Corinthian columns. The entrance is flanked by applied Corinthian pilasters and period lighting. The roof line was changed to a gambrel roof which provided a full attic across the top of the house. A side sitting porch was added with Doric columns. On the main floor is a large entrance hall which contains the Colonial Revival stairway. It divides on the landing with steps leading to both the front and the back of the house, an arrangement rarely seen in old homes. Also added in 1900 were beautifully handcarved Federal mantels in the downstairs rooms, making them more impressive. Central heat was added and the house got electricity in 1907. In 1920, the old frame kitchen was torn away and a new kitchen, breakfast room, pantry, and sitting porch were added to the back of the house. No additions or alterations were made after that time.

Miss Garrett related that the home was called Adsmore because an aunt who came to visit

often said, "You just should call this place ADDSMORE because you are always adding something." Very early the house was christened "Addsmore". At some point one "D" was dropped and the spelling "Adsmore" was used. Correspondence dating to 1905 verifies the name of the home.

In 1900, when the home was acquired by the Smith-Garrett families, Princeton was considered to be the Athens of the western Pennyrile region. It, like Lexington, was an educational center. Cumberland College, a Presbyterian college, was founded in Princeton in 1825. Princeton was recognized throughout the century for its excellence in education and cultural arts. It had produced fine musicians, fine doctors, artists, and teachers. Some of Kate Smith Williams' art work is on display in the home.

When Miss Garrett's bequest was made public after the reading of her will, Princeton was excited over the opportunity to see the beautiful old mansion on North Jefferson Street on the inside. The Board of Trustees assumed their responsibility with serious determination to carry out the provisions of Miss Garrett's will. Hiring a consultant to direct the restoration was the most pressing need. David Morgan of the Kentucky Heritage Commission was consulted. After much consideration, Dwight Cobb of Louisville was hired. Mr. Cobb is not only an outstanding design consultant, he is a producer. He set the stage for the story the docents tell about this affluent, hard working, fun-loving family which brings them to life in the minds of the visitors.

Mr. Cobb spent long hours in research in the home getting to know those who had lived there through the years. He read news articles, correspondence, books, and studied old photographs and other records such as death notices. He felt that the late Victorian period was the most appropriate time frame to present the house because of the exciting events in the lives of those who lived at Adsmore before 1910. The home is unique to most house museums because everything in the home was acquired by one family and was left to become part of the museum. It is also unique because it has become a living museum. Telling of the events in the lives of the families who lived or visited there has a special appeal to visitors.

While the museum does not own a million dollar collection, there is no home in our state that has a more complete collection of antiques owned by one family. Adsmore was opened for the public in November, 1986. Visitors have come from every state and every continent.

Though there was not a president of the United States or a governor of Kentucky to live or visit Adsmore, the men of the family were prominent in United States politics, banking and industry. Robert Garrett married Mary Jane Smith (Mayme) who was the oldest of the Smith daughters. She was born in 1871. She graduated from the Princeton Collegiate Institute as did all the Smith children. She studied music at the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. She married Robert Garrett in 1892. They had one child, Katharine Roberta Garrett, born March 28, 1901.

The Garretts came to Caldwell County directly from Ireland in 1848. There were six brothers who immigrated to this country. Samuel came to Caldwell County. He married Perninah Freeman in 1857. Robert was one of six children born to them. Robert Garrett organized the Farmers National Bank in Princeton. After serving as a National Bank Examiner he was appointed to the position of Supervising Receiver of the Division of Insolvent Banks. He served in this position under Andrew Mellon and held it until his death in 1930. He wrote the plan for liquidating insolvent or imperiled national banks at that crucial time in the banking industry in the United States.

Katharine Garrett, Robert and Mayme Garrett's only child, was educated at Hamilton College, Ward-Belmont College for Women in Nashville and Ogantz College in Philadelphia. During her youth, she spent much of her time in New York and Washington with her parents. After her father's death, she was a constant companion to her mother. She was a prudent business woman, loved animals, cars, and nature. She traveled extensively. She was generous with her church and a strong advocate of the library. At her death, she left all she had to Princeton.

Kate Smith, the Smith's second daughter, was born in 1873. She married James Hazelwood

Williams of St. Louis in 1894. Mr. Williams was a man of great wealth. He was the founder of the International Shoe Company. Kate developed consumption at an early age and was destined not to live long. She died in 1910, at the age of 35. The couple traveled extensively in search of a climate which would heal Kate. It was on one of these tours that Selena who was traveling with Kate and James met her husband-to-be.

Selena, the youngest of the Smith daughters was born in 1883. In 1907, she married John Eugene Osborne. He was the most colorful of the Smith sons-in-law. Born in Westport, New York, June 19, 1854, he received his degree in medicine from the University of Vermont in 1880. He was appointed assistant surgeon for the Union Pacific Railroad and went to Wyoming. In 1882, he established a wholesale and retail drug business. In 1884, he went into the livestock business and became the largest sheep rancher in the Wyoming territory. He became a banker and politician. He was elected second mayor of Rawlins, served in the territorial legislature and was elected governor of Wyoming in 1892, where he served one term. He was then elected as Wyoming representative to Congress. He served on the National Democratic Committee and was appointed in March, 1913, to President Wilson's cabinet as the first assistant Secretary of State. He held this position into Wilson's second term when he resigned to return to Wyoming to manage his real estate and livestock enterprises. He became President of the Rawlins National Bank and later served as chairman of the Board of Directors until his death, April 24, 1945. Though John Osborne was a confirmed bachelor, when he met Selena Smith while on a tour of southern Europe and the Holy Land and 28 years her senior, it was love at first sight for the couple. They returned to the states and announced their engagement. Selena confessed that her memory of Egypt, southern Italy, and the Holy Land were vague. Their wedding occurred at Adsmore in 1907. The Osbornes lived in Washington where Selena was recognized for her rare grace. The Washington Post said of her, "Mrs. Osborne, wife of the first Assistant Secretary of State has two traits most coveted by womanhood, the gift of youth and beauty." Another quote from the same paper: "Mrs. Osborne received in her drawing rooms on Tuesday and her drawing rooms were crowded to capacity. Diplomats, like others, prefer to have duty lie along primrose paths as it does when the wife of an exalted official office is as young and charming and vivacious." William Jennings Bryan was to have been best man at the Osborne wedding but was called to his home state of Nebraska and could not attend. Mrs. Bryan "took Selena under her wing" when she went to Washington and helped her in many ways. The Osbornes had one daughter, Jean Curtis. Though John was 28 years older than Selena, he lived one year longer than she. Selena died in 1942 and John in 1943.

John Parker Smith, the father of these beautiful Smith women was born in Lyon County in 1836. He was the son of Ransford Smith and Catherine Groves Howard Smith. His grandmother was Lois Chase Smith whose brother was Salmon Chase. Salmon Chase was Secretary of Treasury in Abraham Lincoln's cabinet and afterwards appointed Chief Justice of the Supreme Court where he served until his death in 1873. Nannie Smith was born Nancy Bond Kevil. Her mother, Nancy Bell, came to the United States from Ireland. She married James Early Kevil, one of the pioneer families of Caldwell County. Miss Garrett was proud of her heritage and left much data about her forebearers. The Smiths had two sons who were living away from Princeton when the home was acquired. They were James Urey and Shell.

The manner in which the home is presented to the public has great appeal. The docents tell the story as though the family is still living in the home as they take one back in time. For a museum to become a living museum, there must be authentication of the events in the lives of family members. This was no problem at Adsmore since news clippings, correspondence, pictures, personal family records, and even recorded events in books document how this family worked and played.

Adsmore Museum is an example of a successful preservation project which promotes appreciation of our heritage and a way of life about which our grandchildren can only read. Do

we stop to consider that few children have seen a home wedding. Few children see a table set with beautiful linens, fine china, crystal, and sterling silver. Few have seen a feather bed, a hat pin, an old sewing machine, an old steamer trunk, a gramophone, or a stereoptic viewer.

The purpose of the museum is to maintain and preserve the Garrett home. It is the intent to present the authentic collection of American and English antiques and personal memorabilia and artifacts within the museum to the general public for their education and pleasure and to promote a wider appreciation of our American heritage. For the young, it is an educational experience, for the older visitor, it is a time to recall memories, but for each person who comes, it is a step back in time to a period of great appeal, one which many Americans would like to recapture as a way of life. All who visit the marvelous old home experience "The Past With a Presence."

