

Hegewald Family Restores Historic McGrath Home



The Hegewald family spent countless hours on the restoration of the historic mansion on the northwest side of Barnesville. Standing on the solid wood staircase is Lisa and Jim Hegewald and daughters Jasmine and Alexandria. After the house was complete the family welcomed Monte, a double doodle pup into the family.

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good portion of the front of the house done so we rested for the night.”

“Next morning we wake up and the house is glowing,” laughed Jim. “Well instead of a beautiful plum color, the house was hot pink!”

Lisa continued, “I went back to the store to see if they could help me and it just came out to be a darker hot pink. So we went with green.”

The family re-did all the window frames using the original wood. They did have to sneak a piece or two from closets to finish the work, but you would never know.

“We kept all the windows where they originally were,” explained Jim. “If you stand outside and look at them, you will see that if we move one, we’d have to move them all and they just look like they are supposed to be there.”

One thing the Hegewalds did not count on? The curiosity of the public.

“When we first bought the place and started the renovation, we had people constantly stopping by and asking questions or telling us stories about the house,” said Jim.

From the guy who stopped to relieve the time he was an occupant of the house when he was 10, to the men who swore the house was haunted after a few nights of partying in the house.

“We’d always invite them in to take a look because if we didn’t, they would ask,” said Lisa. “People were curious as to what the house looked like on the inside. And I don’t blame them.”

Jim and Lisa hosted an open house for the Barnesville Lions Club to come take a look. “I thought a couple guys would come over,” said Jim. “They all showed up. It was a fun night.”

A few treasures were found while cleaning out the house. An old



In the above photo, Jim Hegewald is working on the once solid wall between the front entry and front room. The wall was demolished and opened up with a wider doorway and columns. Lisa Hegewald captured as many of these memories as she could during the very extensive renovation project of the McGrath Mansion.

postcard was found behind a wall. It was to Mrs. John McGrath. And up in the attic an old trunk was found. It contained some old newspapers and some ripped up fabric. The newspapers have been laminated and are in the possession of Alexandria who is a bit of a history buff. “There was a funny story of a man who escaped from the asylum in Fergus Falls,” explained Alexandria. “He escaped because he wanted to go home so he hopped on the train. He was found and returned to his room at the asylum. But the funny part is that he was naked.”

John McGrath was born October 20, 1859 in Greenville, Wisconsin, son of Dennis and Ellen (Cashman) McGrath, both born in Ireland.

He first came to Barnesville in 1879 with his brothers, Thomas and Dennis F. At the time he settled here, there was no town where Barnesville is now located.

John was married to Alice Brisson on September 1, 1885. They had seven known children: Frances, Alice, Cecilia, Ruth, Lucia, John Lawrence and Harold Robert.

The McGrath family were member of the Catholic church. They took an active interest in the affairs of the community and were earnest advocates of all movements designed to further the general welfare of the township and county.

He was the first City Councilman in 1889 representing the Third Ward in what is now present day Barnesville. He served as mayor in 1891-1892 and 1903-1905 and was City Treasurer for 13 years.

He served on the school board for many years and was president in 1900-1901. He represented the 60th Legislative District as a Republican in the Minnesota Legislature. McGrath was instrumental in



establishing McGrath Park.

It was thought that John McGrath Park was named after John’s son John Lawrence who went missing in action during World War I and was presumed dead in 1918.

However, McGrath Park is named after John McGrath (senior) after he donated 10 acres of land to the city of Barnesville after the death of his brother Thomas.

Thomas, perished in a snow storm and was found frozen to death north of town in 1897. A deed recorded October 15, 1900, shows John McGrath as administrator of his late brother’s estate. For the sum of \$25 McGrath conveyed land for the park to the city. The park was officially dedicated in 1905.

John McGrath had a long and successful career in Barnesville. First he was in the hotel business and then he operated a meat market and a grocery store, sold farm machinery, and operated an implement and

harness shop. For many years he was a member of the local council and served as Justice of the Peace in and far the Barnesville township. McGrath held membership in the Knights of Columbus and in the affairs of that popular order.

McGrath died November 17, 1941 and was buried in Calvary Cemetery, St. Paul, MN. His widow Alice then sold the house in 1946.

“We still have a few things to do here and there, but for the most part, it’s nice to come home and relax,” commented Jim.

The people of Barnesville appreciate the Hegewald’s for helping preserve our heritage and plan of our future.

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Lehman’s Creating Memories In Thompson Home



The Peter and Hannah Thompson home is one of Barnesville’s oldest homes. Matthew and Jessica Lehman moved into the historic home in 2019. They are making improvements to the 1903 home, keeping the character of the residence intact.

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Since the writing of that description, the balustrades, a railing, have since been removed from the roof’s observation platform, more commonly known as a widow’s walk.



The original cast iron, claw-footed bathtub, including faucets, is situated on the third floor of the historic Thompson home.

Symmetry is another element commonly found in neoclassical homes. An anterior view of the home confirms this theme as the windows and columns are evenly spaced and are exactly the same on either side of the front door.

Neoclassical homes are big and bold. Often built on large estates, these homes represented symbols of success and status.

Arriving here around 1877, Peter E. Thompson played a pivotal role in the early growth of Barnesville and was considered to be one of the town’s prominent businessmen.

George Barnes, the town’s namesake, moved to Clay County in 1871 from Oronoco, MN. He and his partner, L.H. Tenney purchased a farm near Glyndon and lived there until 1883 when Barnes moved to Fargo.

In addition to operating a large farmstead, Barnes was a successful grain dealer and merchant. Understanding the importance of railroads to pioneer settlements, Barnes constructed his elevators and businesses near the lines to greet the incoming trains.

Because of distance from Glyndon to Barnesville, Barnes needed a person to oversee his store. He hired Thompson as a clerk in his general store. In 1880, Thompson acquired ownership of the store.

According to Seasons to Remember Barnesville: The First 100 Years a post office was established in Barnes’ general store in 1877. Customers would retrieve their mail from a dry goods box placed in a corner with pigeon holes that served as private boxes. Thompson served as the town’s first postmaster from 1878 to 1885.

In November 1881, the village of Barnesville was incorporated by an act of the Minnesota Legislature. Later that month, Thompson was elected as justice. The village was platted in 1882 and was officially registered as a municipality of Minnesota. He was elected city councilman in 1884 and served many years.

Barnesville was a bustling

town in the 1880’s. The number of businesses and services grew steadily during this period. It was also a time of political conflict.

The book, Seasons to Remember Barnesville: The First 100 Years, tells the account of a New Barnesville, incorporated January 11, 1886 by a special election, and Old Barnesville. Each village had their own government and school district.

After the two school districts were united in the fall of 1888, a committee was appointed to consult both village councils. Acknowledging that the expenditure for dual governments was too costly, a joint session of the councils in March 1889 approved a city charter and elected city government officials. P.E. Thompson, an influential, well-respected person, was Barnesville’s first mayor, 1889-1890.

Besides holding local political offices, Thompson also served as a county commissioner from 1887 to 1890. He was elected to the Minnesota State Legislature in November 1890, serving in the House for two terms.

Research done by Garven states Peter married Hannah D. Olson of Evansville, MN in 1879. Seven children were born to this union: George E., Alma M., Leslie, Julian S., Clara, Charlotte C. “Lottie,” and Stella.

The Thompson family was known to be very generous, often taking employees or ministers and their families into their home. They also donated land to establish Barnesville’s first school building, Our Savior’s Church and the Congregational Church.

Sadly, two years after moving into their new home, Peter died January 20, 1905 at the age of 52. His wife, Hannah, continued to live there until her death in 1920.

The home stayed in the Thompson

family for the next five decades. Following Hannah’s death, the home stood unoccupied for a time before George, a bachelor son, lived in it for a few years. Another son, Julian, returned home to live in it following his retirement in 1953. He lived there until his death in 1975.

The property has changed hands several times from the mid-1970s until the Lehmans ownership.

There is much history associated with the Thompson home. The Lehman family intend to preserve its rich heritage and look forward to making their own mark living in one of Barnesville’s masterpieces.



The Matthew and Jessica Lehman family chose Barnesville to raise their young family. They purchased the historic Peter and Hannah Thompson home in 2019, which was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1996.



The fireplace makes for a cozy living room. The opened pocket doors show off the grand staircase, which leads to the second floor. The paneled wainscoting, grooved railing, square top balusters and diagonal inlaid floor pattern all add to the charm of the historic home.

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