

# Huxley Home “Belongs” To Barnesville

**By: Pam Aakre**  
People began their migration to Barnesville in the mid-1800's. This was a time of great optimism. Minnesota gained statehood in 1858 and the village of Barnesville was incorporated in 1882. Frontiersmen and their families came in search of rich, inexpensive farm land. Entrepreneurs came with an eye for profits. Railroads and land companies influenced the location of the prairie towns. The openings in the timber that bordered the lakes invited the pioneers to build homes and businesses. Agriculture has always been an important component to Barnesville's economy. It became even more so with the decreasing financial impact of the Great



Little has changed to the exterior of the A.C. Huxley home in the past century.

yield of 363 bushels to the acre. Huxley may have been a farmer at heart, but his wife was not. That's why A.C. built a Craftsman bungalow in Barnesville for his wife, his other love, in 1914. Located at the corner of Second Avenue and Fourth Street SE, this home has been completely renovated by its current owner, Elaine Isaak. “We were not looking to move,” said Isaak, “but after an open house walk-through when it was offered for sale, things fell in place.” Isaak and her husband purchased the home from Jesse Rostad in the fall of 2005, moving from Moorhead, MN.

“I’ve always loved antiques and we had done some renovating,” says Isaak. “Our plan from the start was to restore the home, keeping the home's character intact.”

The first transformation improved the century-old home's energy-efficiency aspect. Insulation was blown in along the outside walls.

A year after moving in, Isaak's husband was diagnosed with cancer, and the renovation project was put on hold. Following his death, Elaine provided daycare for her twin granddaughters. Once they became school-age, she decided to get the renovation project underway again.

The antique enthusiast is also a history buff. Isaak relays that the Huxley's lived in the home for only three years before moving south to Mississippi. She conveyed some of the home's owners and stories.

Dorothy Garven, a Barnesville historian, researched several of the city's historic homes and published a booklet, *Historic Barnesville: Old Houses and the People Who Lived in Them*, in 1992. One of them was the Huxley home.

Garven writes, “The house was occupied by a succession of owners including the families of Julian Thompson (1917-1920); William S. Lee, who organized the Citizens State Bank of Barnesville in 1911 (1920-1924); M.A. Desmond (1924-1942); Howard Harmon, who ran the



Little has changed with the A.C. Huxley home but the scenery has changed dramatically. This photo was taken in the early 1900's.



The colorful, leaded glass window above the built-in wooden hutch embraces the vintage appearance. The glass doors give a peek to the serving dishes stored inside. The hutch spans the width of the dining room.

local Harmon's Beer Parlor (1943-1948); and Ervin W.F. Schultz, school superintendent (1948-1953).

“The house in recent years has sometimes been dubbed ‘the dentist's house.’ It was the residence of W. Jay “Woody” Janacky, who practiced dentistry for 40 years in Barnesville and lived there from 1953 to 1979 when the current owner, R. Allan Rostad, also a dentist, bought it.” Rostad also bought Janacky's dental practice.

The Janacky family included Woody, his wife Berniece and children Gail, Kim, David and Laurie.

The Rostad family included Dr. Al, wife Laura, who served as the mayor of Barnesville from 1999-2002, and their son Jesse.

Isaak adds that at some point in time, most likely when owned by the school superintendent, that the two-story home was turned into a multiple dwelling. The main floor became a two-bedroom apartment. Likewise, the upstairs contained a two-bedroom apartment.

“That's why there are two front doors off of the front porch,” explains Isaak.

The Janacky's returned the home into a single dwelling.

Knowing the expense of contract laborers and being a person who enjoys doing a variety of do-it-yourself projects, Isaak has tackled one section of the home at a time. “I quickly got over the fear of handling power tools,” she admits.

She has done much of it herself; converting a downstairs bedroom into a TV room, changing the lighting fixtures to match the historical perspective, spending hours upon hours stripping the painted woodwork and staining it

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dark appropriate for the period of the home's construction, and remodeling the kitchen are a few projects that Isaak has completed.

“I think of myself as the caretaker of the home, but the home belongs to Barnesville,” Isaak says philosophically. She keeps that thought in mind as she restores the classic elements of the Craftsman bungalow.

To recreate a vintage look in the kitchen, Isaak faced the cabinets with anaglypta, a paintable wallpaper that has a raised pattern reminiscent of metal ceiling tiles that were popular in the early 1900s. The silver/gray/black paint completes the image of the era.

Oak is the lumber of choice for the intricate woodwork, built-in cabinetry, and beam coffered ceilings. Against the outside wall of the dining room spans a grand built-in wooden hutch with glass doors. Mirrored built-in bookcases with glass-fronted doors and tapered colonnades that reach to the ceiling set off the entry to the generously sized living room. The home also features beveled, leaded windows.

The living room fireplace that once functioned to heat the home is now aesthetically pleasing. There are original wood storage boxes on each side of the fireplace.

Isaak points out that mindful calculation and great care was taken in placing the inlaid wooden floor. The adjacent dining and living room floors each have a log cabin pattern. This design begins with a two-inch wide by two-foot long plank laid in the center of the room. Subsequent boards of the same width are placed around it extending to the edge of the room.

Going up the grand wooden

staircase, it is easy to imagine that an apartment once occupied this space.

Isaak shared a story that community dances were likely held upstairs. An alcove large enough to seat several bandmembers once flanked the entire upstairs. Isaak has divided the space into three



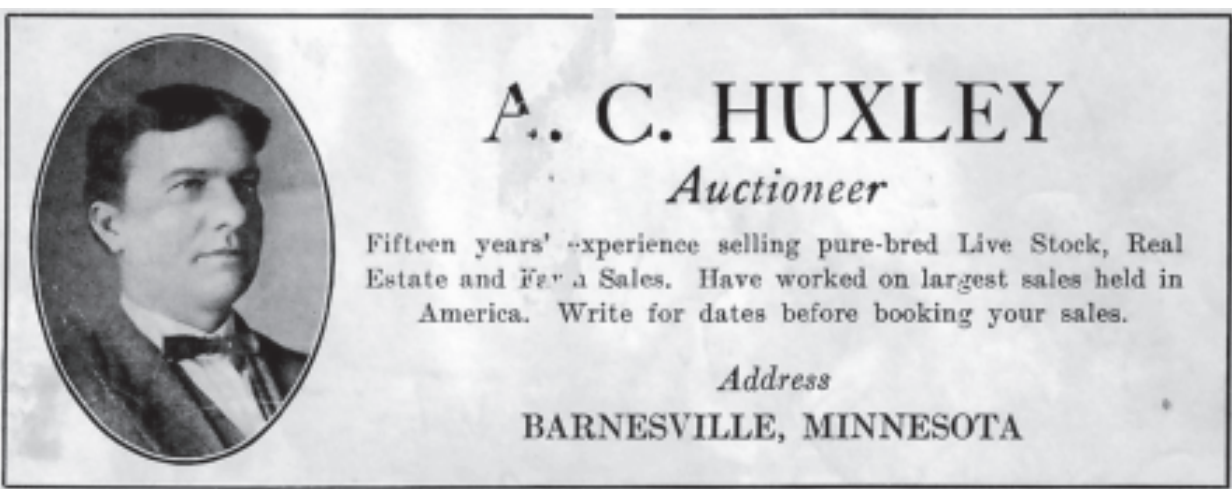
This original piece of cabinetry is located on the second floor of the home. It was a part of the kitchen when the home simultaneously sheltered two different families.



According to folklore, the upstairs of the Huxley home may have been the site of community gatherings. Isaak transformed the vast dance floor into three bedrooms, and a bathroom. Isaak took great care in choosing furniture and color style when refurbishing. Note the original radiator, still in working order, located to the right of the four-poster bed.

bedrooms and a bathroom. The alcove is now used as a sitting room just off one of the bedrooms.

Removing plaster from the walls and replacing it with sheetrock was quite the process explains Isaak. “Homes were built with full width 2x4's back then, so I needed to fir



out every stud so that the sheetrock would work.”

“While removing the plaster from the walls I discovered a secret room inside one of the dormers just above the staircase,” declares Isaak. “I'm in the process of making it a reading room,” Isaak continued.

Décor throughout the home is also of the period. “I enjoy shopping at thrift stores, antique shops, and rummage sales,” says Elaine. She has purchased several vintage furniture pieces that add to the home's character.

Dorothy Garven's research states that this beautiful brick bungalow was built at a cost of \$10,000 for Amos C. Huxley. A news item in the February 13, 1914 issue of the Barnesville Headlight, one of the town's first newspapers, states that “Mrs. A.C. Huxley entertained about 50 ladies at her beautiful new home Tuesday afternoon.”

Records show that Amos C. Huxley was a real estate dealer, affiliated with Huxley-Brown Land Co. Although the family lived in town, he was the owner of a large showplace potato and corn farm located three and one-half miles southwest of Baker. B.F. Moore managed the farm for him.

Besides owning a large farm, he was a popular auctioneer and in 1914 became the first Clay County Fair Association treasurer.

While it is unclear when Huxley first came to Barnesville, he is mentioned in newspapers as early as 1909 when he and two other

men made a trip from Minneapolis to Barnesville by automobile in a record breaking 13 hours.

It is evident that Huxley had diverse interests and engaged in many types of occupations. His stay in Barnesville was a brief interlude. He had been a telegraph and station agent in Denver, raised pure-blood Hereford cattle at Paragon and

Peru, IN, ran a car agency and was a plantation owner in Jackson, MS, and managed an apartment complex and license bureau in Indianapolis.

While the Huxley family came and went quickly over a century ago, the beautiful home that they built continues to be a Barnesville heritage.



Elaine Isaak leans against the kitchen peninsula in the renovated kitchen.



Mirrored built-in bookcases with glass-fronted doors and tapered colonnades that reach to the ceiling set off the living and dining rooms. Note the beams on the ceiling.

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