

The Irwin Family

Information from Vicki Nimmo, Sem Terrace Administrator, about the Irwin family and their summer home, Rock House Lodge at their Milford estate, The Ripples.

The house was graced by numerous window boxes overflowing with beautiful multi-colored flowers. The outside walls of the house were draped with Virginia ivy.

Will Irwin's work was down town, so in the evening, after office hours, he would drive to his summer home in his stately carriage, drawn by two and sometimes four horses.

Will Irwin seemed to be quite an interesting man. He had an unusual way of planting the trees, which grace the beautiful grounds. He would throw up sticks and wherever they would fall, he would have a tree planted. This accounts for the fact that the trees are not planted in any order and that many trees are growing near one another. There were many stones along the drives. Mr. Irwin would have them whitewashed and then the next week he would have the gardener scrubbing them clean from their white coat.

When the orchard bore fruit, the city boys would come and steal the apples and pears. This vexed Mr. Irwin. He would ride through the orchard on horseback, wearing a tall black silk hat and followed by his large dog. He was so angered by this, that he ordered the gardener to uproot all the fruit trees.

After electricity came to Milford, Mr. Irwin still insisted on using oil lamps and candles in his country home. He said it gave his home the atmosphere of the country.

Mrs. Irwin was noted for her kindness in dealing with others. She had noticed that their cook had been missing Mass on Sundays and asked her the reason. The cook answered that if she went to Mass, she would not be able to have dinner finished on time. Mrs. Irwin answered that in the future they would have dinner one hour later.

Four children blessed the Irwin marriage. However sorrow came, when the twin boys died as infants and their daughter Janet died at age 12. Their youngest daughter survive".

In 1905 a swimming pool was installed. An ice skating rink was also created for winter days, but it leaked on the first trial and was never completed.

In 1915 Irwin built, for his daughter's debut and dances, the round, glass enclosed pavilion, which they called their Villa.

The Irwins had the pleasure of entertaining frequently, for their large home could provide overnight accommodations for 23 guests. At times 400 people attended these lavish parties. The Tafts and Proctors, as well as other noted families visited frequently. What a colorful sight it must have been, when all the roads leading to the Ripples were

filled with carriage after carriage being welcomed to the Irwin Villa. The Irwins hired many musicians so beautiful music was always heard coming from these grand parties.

Mr. Irwin later added two wings onto the house, making this his home for the entire year.

In 1922 the Irwin's sole heir, their daughter Anna Louise, married Frances Baldwin and was no longer interested in the property. The estate was for sale