

A story of resilience: Inside the quasi-famous 1838 'Shabby Home' in Eastwood

May 30, 2017



Earlier this year, I visited Ashdale Avenue with the hope of gaining access to one of the oldest homes in the region. With a magazine in one hand, and two talented photographers by my side, I gave the door a knock.

Marissa Hurn-Ignacio answered the door and shared a story of resilience, not just of the home, but of those who have dwelled within it.

The home itself, is quasi-famous. It was featured in a December 1934 issue of *Good Housekeeping* magazine that noted it's rich history and unique story, the very magazine I brought with me to the home.

The home was built in 1838 by local carpenter, Aaron Hoyt.

According to Pamela Priest, an ancestor of Hoyt, he lived in the Sentinel Heights area where the wood for the home originated.



Good Housekeeping magazine, 1934

The home was put together without nails, using only wooden pegs. All the lumber, including shingles, were hewn and scored by hand.

Hoyt's occupation most likely led him to build several homes in the growing village of Syracuse in the early 1800s. When this home was originally constructed, it sat at 10 Baker Street, today known as Clinton Street.

When Hoyt passed away in 1847, the home became the property of his son who owned the house until 1880, when he sold it to William Lyons.

Priest, who works at the [Onondaga Historical Association](#), has written that Williams Lyons moved the home to the back of the property at 10 Baker Street, and constructed a concrete house in its place. The wooden home sat, empty and forgotten, until 1934.

In 1934, at the encouragement of Mayor Rolland Marvin, the city of Syracuse paid to have Hoyt's former house moved to the corner of James and North Warren Streets. Marvin wanted to transform the home in a public setting to show the citizens of Syracuse that you could renovate older homes into modern model homes.

Local residents and companies provided the labor, design, materials, furnishings and landscaping for the structure. The citizens of Syracuse could watch the progress of the building in full view of anyone who passed the public square.

Improvements to the home included electric switches phone outlets, washable wallpaper, rubber kitchen floors, clothes closets, a new chimney and larger living-dining space.



Good Housekeeping magazine, 1934

The article in *Good Housekeeping* magazine notes that the structural improvements cost \$3850, while the interior furnishings and decorations cost \$1876.

Once completed, the home was opened to the public and thousands of people walked through the doors to review the restoration.

Following the public reviewing, the American Legion purchased the home and raffled it off, with tickets costing just a quarter.

An article in the 1934 edition of the *Syracuse Herald* states that the winning ticket was owned by Vera Klein of Garfield avenue, whose ticket was pulled at a ball hosted by the American Legion. Klein was awoken from sleep to be told the news and was taken to the event to claim possession of the home.

Klein in turn sold the house to Horatio Andrews who had the home moved to its current location on Ashdale Avenue in Eastwood, where he lived until his death in 1968.

Today, Marissa looks after the home that is owned by Tim Reitz. Tim is a 2015 graduate of Onondaga Community College and current United States Marine. He inherited the home in 2016 following the death of his mother, Cindy, after bravely battling cancer for several years.

"She fought as hard as she could," Tim said. Adding, "She always wanted to restore the home, but her health made it difficult to maintain the property."

When she passed, Tim was away at training in North Carolina, making it impossible for him to complete the necessary updates the home so desperately needed.

Marissa considered Cindy her best friend and knew that Tim was now facing a tough decision. It was time to either replace or repair the house. She chose the latter.



Cindy and Tim, photo provided

Marissa got to work, quickly orchestrating an effort reminiscent of the 1934 reconstruction. She called it, "her therapy."

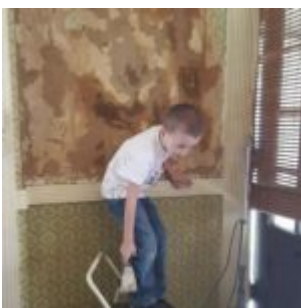


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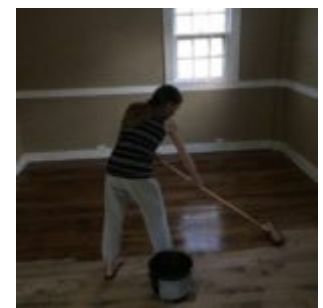


Photo provided

Word spread quickly regarding the restorations and donations poured in from the community, including help from the East Syracuse Fire Department, Property Restoration Inc. and family

members like Stephanie Hurn and John Maxam.

Marissa documented the project but kept the pictures from Tim while he was still away.

It wasn't until this past winter when Tim returned to Syracuse on a military leave, that he was able to see that his 179-year-old house had been brought back to life for a second time. An image he's certain his mom is proud to see.

Below are photographs of the home taken by Jordan Harmon and Chris Stein in accord with some of the pictures seen in the 1934 article. Note that several of the decorations used in the original restoration still remain inside the home.



Photo by Chris Stein Photo by Chris Stein Photo by Jordan Harmon Photo by Jordan Harmon Good Housekeeping magazine, 1934 Photo by Jordan Harmon



Good Housekeeping magazine, 1934 Photo by Chris Stein Photo by Jordan Harmon Photo by Chris Stein Good Housekeeping magazine, 1934 Photo by Chris Stein

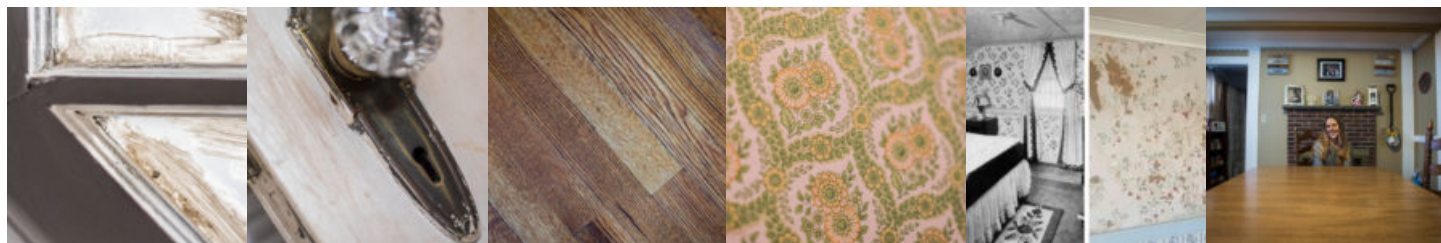


Photo by Jordan Harmon Photo by Jordan Harmon Photo by Jordan Harmon Photo by Jordan Harmon Photo provided Marissa Hurn-Ignacio sits inside the home, photo by Chris Stein

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David is a city of Syracuse resident who lives in the Eastwood Neighborhood. He manages a nonprofit program for LDACNY and volunteers his time with several local organizations. He operates the instagram account, @SyracuseHistory and co-founded Storycuse.com in the fall of 2016.

