

## **THE OLD MANSE**

### **171 Landon Lane, Orange, Virginia**

Old Manse is an 1868 Greek Revival home located in Orange County, Town of Orange.

In 1867 the Trustees of Orange Presbyterian Church purchased 10 acres of land from Thomas Scott. The church intended to build a manse on the property for their new pastor, but at the end of the Civil War, with the collapse of Confederate currency, money was tight and the church was unable to proceed.

Rev. Isaac W. K. Handy arrived in 1868 and took over the project. He financed it by selling farmland he owned in Missouri, plus funds Handy had raised "in the North and in Richmond," according to his personal papers. Handy purchased new land for the manse, plus two adjoining parcels creating the current 46.2 acres the home is on today. Handy lived in the Old Manse with his wife, Rebecca, two sons, and two daughters until 1870. Handy also wrote and published two books while living in the Old Manse.

The Original 1868 structure consists of a columned front porch, and a double door entrance with transom windows leading to a gracious front hall. The first-floor rooms are accented with golden oak flooring inlaid with walnut and 12-foot ceilings. Floor to ceiling windows throughout the home provide an open well-lit atmosphere. There is a parlor to the left upon entering featuring original ogee crown molding and an antique piano. The sitting room to the right highlights built in shelving and dental molding. Off the sitting room and well sat to the south where the current sunroom is now located, was the outdoor kitchen. The pantry occupied the first-floor bath space. At the rear of the foyer a transverse stair leads to a second story foyer and two bedrooms located directly above the parlor and sitting room. The Pastor's office is located between the two, with French doors leading to the upper porch at the front of the home. A grand architectural feature at the rear of the home to the east, features a columned Porte cochere designed to allow carriages to pass through while sheltering passengers from the elements. Above the Porte cochere is a large porch which provides panoramic views of Red Hill, famous for Lee's Civil war encampment.

Original to the Old Manse is a smoke house, Bank Barn, horse stalls, a tobacco shed and corn crib, two spring-fed wells (one remaining), and a gas house used to supply lighting for the manse. All original rooms contain original working fireplaces, four from the original structure and two additional with Landon Browning's upgrades.

In 1910 George Landon Browning purchased the property and lived there until his death in 1947. Landon Browning upgraded the home to include electric power and indoor

plumbing. He added the dining room with a notable hand carved Carrera marble mantle, indoor kitchen, pantry closet, kitchen porch, a large master bedroom, three bathrooms, a pool and pool house complete with a brick outdoor oven. He installed the Koi pond and added gardens off the south porch. From old photographs there was a matching wing to the south. There is evidence of a fire in the attic near the chimney on the south side which may have destroyed these rooms, and the house was repaired without them. The basement, and matching excavations support the theory of the double wing expansion.

Landon Browning's trust sold the manse to Dr. B.C. Willis around 1947, who in turn deeded it to his daughter Mary Francis Willis and her Husband Worner Martin Kempe, and then to their son, Martin Kempe. In 2019 Rita Carroll purchased the manse. She is currently renovating the home in line with the National Historic Standard, repairing the plaster and lathe by hand, renovating the kitchen in line with correct period features such as matching Carrera marble counters, and black walnut shelving milled from the property. In 2020 the house was raised and the post and beam foundations on the south and sitting room joists were replaced with hand cut timber and the plumbing and electric were upgraded. The kitchen and baths were repaired. The chimneys were restacked and roof repaired in 2021, the porches dismantled, stripped and repaired in 2022-2023, and siding repaired and the whole house was painted in 2024. Ms. Carroll still farms the land and is currently working on the upper level and the gardens around the *home*.

- *Rita Carroll, owner*