

A sneak peek into the Sloane House

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SANDUSKY - For \$3 million, anyone can own, arguably, the most historic home in Erie County. Up for sale is the Sloane House, at 403 E. Adams St. in Sandusky.



The National Park Service recognizes the Sloane House on its National Register of Historic Places. It's also a landmark and noted as an Underground Railroad House.

Tomi Johnson, of Howard Hanna, recently listed the property. Johnson serves as the realtor for property owner Chris Wiedle, a local historian who lives in Townsend Township on Sandusky County's border. Both recently invited the Register inside for an exclusive and extensive tour of this landmark building.

Preserving Parker's vision

Ruth Frost Parker, the late Sandusky philanthropist, bought the home in 2012 through a sheriff's sale.

During a three-year period, culminating with her death in 2015, Frost Parker funded structural upgrades to the home's exterior, easily visible with its yellow custard-like paint job.

Frost Parker wanted to turn the property into a bed and breakfast, which would double as a shrine to Rush Sloane. Sloane bought the house in 1853, three years after it was built. Sloane later oversaw seven additions he personally wanted.

"After (Frost Parker) died, her heirs put it up for sale, and I saw the sign in the yard and called my real estate agent," said Wiedle, who, beforehand, had never undertaken a project of this magnitude. "A week later, I was told that I owned it."

Wiedle believes he's honoring both Sloane and Frost Parker, two crucial humanitarians in Sandusky's history, with this project. "I never met her, but I wish I would have," Wiedle said. "It's a grand house, and, to me, it was something that should be saved."

Traveling back in time

Throughout the past five-plus years, Wiedle, whose contractor skills have greatly evolved while working on the Sloane House, has spent countless hours rehabbing its inside portions.

All the while, he's remained adamant about preserving its heritage and charm. "We've tried to restore it as how it would have been his home in 1880," Wiedle said. For instance, chess boards and writing tables - and certainly not electronics - occupy the three "parlors," more presently referred to as living rooms. And the bathrooms contain copper tubs, pull-chain toilets and pedestal sinks. But don't worry: All boast plumbing from this century.

Wiedle fills out each room with various amenities - think end tables, armoires, couches, beds and more decorative pieces, like carpets and paintings, along with home accents - purchased at Williamsburg, Virginia, a capital, of sorts, for historically inspired pieces. He also frequents local shops and markets for similarly aged items.

Playing decorator, he determines what pieces best suit different rooms, which include a 42-foot-long dining hall, comfortably seating 60 people, along with 10 bedrooms.

Wiedle reiterated a future buyer not only acquires the home but all furnishings as well.

Some areas, however, require a more modern touch. This would include him needing to install a higher railing and sturdier spindles for one of the wraparound staircases to meet certain codes. And the house's third, or top, floor does feature some more present-day luxuries. "We tried to salvage and restore as much as possible, but, in some areas, there wasn't too much that could be saved, like the (interior) walls," said Wiedle, stressing he'll continue completing random odd jobs until the home gets sold. "I've never wanted to live here," he said. "I just wanted to restore it." No matter who buys the property, or when that might occur, Wiedle hopes they keep this in mind: "I want them to appreciate it for what it is."

History lesson

The following is an excerpt from a piece by Ohio History Central. This article appeared in the Register's first of four commemorative bicentennial editions, publishing March 18, 2018.

Rush Sloane was an important 19th century northern Ohio political and business leader. Sloane was born in 1828 in Sandusky. He studied law with F.D. Parish, a local attorney and abolitionist. Sloane became a lawyer in 1849 and established his own practice in Sandusky.

Sloane was one of Ohio's most prominent abolitionists during the 1850s. He utilized his Sandusky home as a safe house for fugitive slaves on the Underground Railroad.

In 1852, Sloane defended seven fugitive slaves against their owners. Sloane secured the slaves' release, but one of the slaveholders proved his ownership of the African-Americans.

Federal officials arrested Sloane for interfering with the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. Tried by the U.S. District Court in Columbus, he was found guilty and fined \$4,330.30. In appreciation of his efforts, local African-Americans presented him with a silver-headed cane.

Many years later, Sloane said that the name Underground Railroad originated in 1831, when Tice Davids, a fugitive from slavery, crossed the Ohio River from Kentucky with his owner in pursuit. Upon reaching the Ohio side of the river, Davids' owner lost the trail of his slave and said that he "must of gone off on an underground road."

Later on in life:

- In 1853, Sloane bought a house, which still stands today, at 403 E. Adams St., from its first owner and builder, Samuel Torrey, according to the National Park Service. He conducted his legal services, advocating on behalf of slaves, from this residence.

- In 1855, Sloane became a probate court judge in Erie County. Six years later, he became an agent for the U.S. Post Office in Chicago. While in Chicago, Sloane became quite wealthy from his real estate investments.

- In 1865, he purchased Cedar Point and took the first steps to convert the site into a vacation spot.

- In 1867, Sloane became the president of the Sandusky, Dayton and Cincinnati Railroad.

- In 1879, he was elected mayor of Sandusky.

- In 1908, Sloane died.

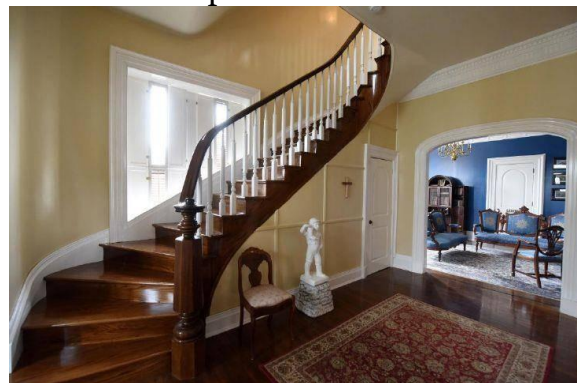
By the numbers: The Sloane House's rebirth

- 10,000: square feet
- 10: bedrooms
- 9: full bathrooms
- 3: floors and parlors, where people can lounge and relax
- 2: staircases, foyers, kitchens and half-baths
- 1: laundry room, library



The Sloane House in Sandusky features a "widow's walk," or an overlook tower providing scenic views of Sandusky.

Only a few features inside the Sloane House in Sandusky are newer. This would include the wraparound staircase's handrail and spindles.



Most of the furniture inside the Sloane House in Sandusky harkens back to the late 1880s, when Rush Sloane occupied the house.



A first-floor look at the Sloane House shows off one of the home's parlors, where people can gather, relax and talk amongst themselves.



A first-floor look at the Sloane House in Sandusky shows off its dining room, which spans 42 feet and can sit 60 comfortably.



The Sloane House in Sandusky features 10 bedrooms.



The third floor of the Sloane House in Sandusky features more modern amenities for large group parties.



The Sloane House in Sandusky offers nine full bathrooms and features yesteryear amenities in its bathrooms. This would include copper tubs, pull-chain toilets and pedestal sinks.



Among the many features inside the Sloane House is its library.

