

Foreword

*Governor Ted Strickland and
First Lady Frances Strickland*

THE history of the current Ohio Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden is both educational and entertaining in its account of our first family's home's almost human struggle to endure. Homes and gardens are dependent on humans, and in the case of a governor's residence and garden, the family that lives there changes every eight years or less. As you will learn, each family brings its own distinct tastes and contributions to the integrity of the property.

A historic restoration specialist recently suggested that the Ohio Governor's Residence has three stories to tell: the story of the structure itself along with the furnishings and memorabilia of the family that gave it to the state; the history of Ohio artists and artisans whose work is displayed; and the history of the house as a home for the governors and their families. A fourth story was added during the Taft administration when First Lady Hope Taft made a concerted effort to reflect all of Ohio's diverse landscapes through the creation of the Ohio Heritage Garden. These four stories combine to make the Ohio Governor's Residence and Heritage Garden a living museum.

Garden entrance at sunrise



Pumpkin
growing in
Agriculture
Garden

This book tells these four stories in a way that shows the evolving nature of the home and garden. It begins with the embarrassing situation in 1917 that led to the legislature's decision to provide a permanent home for Ohio's governors and chronicles the move from the original home on Broad Street to the current property on 358 North Parkview Avenue. The stories of the architectural design and style of the house, the evolving interior changes through nine different administrations, and the transformation of the grounds into a heritage garden are told by those who best know them.

The metaphor of the Governor's Residence's struggle to survive is seen in the need for each administration to respect the Residence as a public facility and protect it accordingly, while at the same time living there gracefully. The state tends to the basic maintenance of the house and grounds. Those things that make a home comfortable and a public facility inviting, however, have generally been provided by the residents with the help of generous individuals and private entities whose donations of time, expertise, and resources greatly improve and enhance the property.

The first families' personal stories are fun to read. They come not only from the governors and first ladies but also from the children, who gave us the memorable stories of an alligator in the bathtub and a tree house created as a special birthday gift. Also interesting is the way each family changed the interior of the house to accommodate its particular needs and taste. The styles of decorating were influenced by

factors ranging from faithfulness to the period of the house, to what was in vogue at the time of a particular administration, to sturdiness for meeting the demands of a young family.

The most difficult period for the Residence was the eight years it was unoccupied and fell into significant disrepair. Fortunately, the “bones” of the house were robust enough to withstand the neglect. The Celeste administration recognized both the historic significance and current potential of the house and went to great lengths to restore it to its original elegance. Through a variety of resourceful means, First Lady Janet Voinovich brought unique pieces to the Residence: some items were gifts from the last private owner, others were acquired from state agencies, and many were remarkable tag sale finds.

The story of the Heritage Garden reflects not only the essence of Ohio’s geological and physiographic systems, but also forward-thinking commitment to sustainability and alternative sources of energy. We are continuing this commitment by incorporating “green” strategies in all plans for future structural improvements to the fullest extent allowed and possible.

After the efforts of four successive administrations to improve the Residence and Heritage Garden for the people of Ohio, the first families’ home is coming into its own. Public tours are available and welcome, and specially trained docents share the Residence’s stories with visitors.

On behalf of all the families who have called the Residence home, we are happy to welcome you to visit the Residence and Heritage Garden through this book. We hope that you enjoy this trip through history and that you will join us in our efforts to make this public treasure the best it can be.

Virginia creeper
leaves

