

A TRIP THROUGH GLEN EYRIE WITH WILLIAM J. PALMER IN 1905

The most magnificent home ever built in the Pikes Peak Region is Glen Eyrie, the fabulous estate of General William Jackson Palmer, in Queens Canon, just north of the Garden of the Gods. His manor house and satellite buildings are located in the midst of his 225 acres of crags, canons and meadows. Original bills kept by General Palmer show he spent more than a million dollars in making his estate into a place of beauty, stateliness and luxury.

The General began his first home in Queen's Canon in 1871. It was a large, comfortable house, but unpretentious. Gradually, as his fortune and plans grew, this house was reconstructed. In 1903-1905, it was partly razed and the Tudor mansion was constructed and added to at a cost of more than \$525,000, exclusive of furnishings. When General Palmer died in 1909, he was still planning construction and improvements.

In his youth, General Palmer had visited England and learned to love it. He especially admired English manor houses and the charm, age had given their exteriors. So, he sent hundreds of workmen into the lower mountains around his homesite to gather stones that through the centuries had been collecting lichens or moss. He had the stones packed in straw and carefully removed to the building place. He would allow no stone to be used if it showed a mallet or chisel mark when laid in a wall. This way the age was simulated. In England he bought the roof of a ruined church, and brought its mellowed gray-green tiles to cover his Glen Eyrie home.

The outside of the completed house, has an ancient look, and the inside copied the old in everything but discomfort. It was provided with all the luxuries that could be bought, including many lacking in homes today. As an example there is a central vacuum cleaning system with outlets in each

recorded. From the register ran a cable to a weather vane on a cliff several thousand yards away; the cable transmitted to the observer the direction and velocity of the wind.

Circling to the right, you entered the dining room, finished in oak panelling. There were 18 Chippendale chairs and an extension table which would seat 36 persons. There were sideboards and side-tables and an electric dish heater. The fireplace was of carved oak. The center of the floor was covered by a tremendous Persian rug. On the walls were prints, and about a dozen heads of game.

Connecting with the dining room was a conservatory, whose space could be added to the dining area. Off the conservatory was the master's den or study. The panelling here was oak and the furniture principally rose-wood, antique - as was the clock. The massive fireplace was of native stone. Walls were decorated with old prints, and with maps on rollers like window-shades. The den was equipped with two large closets, a wash and toilet, a vault and a safety deposit regulated by automatic lighting and latest combination lock. Vault and shelves were of steel.

The kitchen was a little apart from the main building, but connected with the dining room by a passage-way, along which were a flower room, a butler's pantry, a valet's room, and a case room. The kitchen's useful equipment included an electric stove and heater, a coal range, and an oversized sink. Kitchen odors were carried away by a pipe and fan and released a half mile away. Servants had a dining room next to the kitchen. Here were located the automatic fire extinguisher controls for the entire manor house. This dining room connected with servant's toilets and bathrooms.

Below the main floor was a ground floor that contained a bowling alley and a billiard room. Here were sofas, bookshelves, and a Steinway piano. Nearby was a steam room lined with white tile and marble for Turkish baths.

Canon intervened. He could see mountains, meadows and mesa. Dimly in the east he could see where the sky bent down to meet the plains. Closer by, clustered around the manor house he could see acres of lovely gardens, laid out at his order, and a thousand trees he had set out in the 1870's. He could see in the canon above and below the mansion, more than a score of ancillary buildings. It was a busy village.

There was a horse stable containing 13 stalls, 4 box stalls, and a hospital stall; a carriage house capable of sheltering 10 vehicles, with a coach room, a saddle room, harness room, a kitchen, dining room, nine bedrooms and two baths.

There was a pasture barn containing 2 store rooms, an outside shed for wagons, a loft, 7 box stalls, 15 single stalls, 7 bedrooms, 3 living rooms and 3 baths. There was a cow barn with accommodations for 22 cows, 5 box stalls, 17 single stalls, a milk room, 3 bedrooms and a bath. Adjoining were a silo and a root cellar, and a dairy with butter making machinery.

There was an electric power plant, capable of lighting all the buildings and the main road of the estate, and of furnishing power for motors driving all of the machinery, including the elevator. It could also heat all of the buildings. In the power building was a laundry with electric washing machines, mangles and hand irons. With this were four bedrooms and two baths.

There was a greenhouse with five glass rooms, a workroom, and superintendent's quarters including five rooms and a bath. Near this was a rustic lodge with four rooms and a bath. There was a garage with facilities for three automobiles, and two bedrooms and a bath for the chauffeurs. Set in solid masonry nearby was a huge gasoline tank. There was a refrigerated

power house. In case the power house should fail, there was a stand-by furnace in the basement of the manor house.

After General Palmer's death in 1909, the next 8 years found the manor and grounds of Glen Eyrie locked and silent. Then suddenly in 1917, a promotional story appeared in the Gazette-Telegraph telling of plans for Glen Eyrie to be made into "Americas Most Unique Club." This failed. A year later, Alexander Smith Cochran, a New York carpet maker, purchased the property.

In 1927 a public auction was held and plans again were formulated for a resort club by low bidder, the Harold Lumberg Company of New York. The estimated value was \$1,500,000. The high bid which later could not be met was \$300,000. So the second attempt at a leisure-time club for the selected wealthy was thwarted.

Glen Eyrie remained in the Cochran estate until 1938 when it was purchased by a Houston millionaire, George W. Strake. If the spirit of General Palmer was directing the future of the estate that he cherished for so long, it must have been present in the personality of Mr. Strake, for in 1953 the Rev. Billy Graham announced at a luncheon meeting in Colorado Springs, that the property might be purchased to become a religious conference center. Mr. Strake, a man of deep spiritual convictions, knew the purpose for which the Glen would be used and set the price at \$300,000 the same price offered at the public auction a quarter of a century before.

On September 30, 1953, Glen Eyrie became the property of the Navigators.