

THE PRESIDENT'S HOUSE:

Past & Present



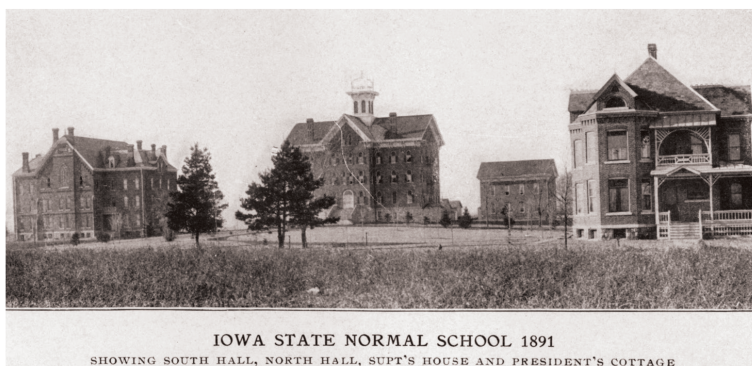
The History

Prior to 1890, the chief executive officer of the Iowa State Normal School, now the University of Northern Iowa, lived in quarters in the classroom buildings. These quarters were inadequate for President and Mrs. Homer H. Seerley and their four young children, who arrived on campus in 1886. Consequently, in 1890, the state built a two-story brick house, known as the President's Cottage, for the family on the eastern edge of campus. This building is now the Honors Cottage.

As the faculty and student enrollment grew, the President's Cottage proved too small for the entertainment and receptions the president was expected to provide as part of his professional responsibility. So, in 1907, the Normal School Board of Trustees authorized the construction of a new President's House at a cost not to exceed \$16,000. The president and his family moved into the new house on Monday, October 4, 1909.

The final cost of the building was \$18,000, a bit higher than the original budget figure. All utilities—heat, light and telephone—were brought to the house through a tunnel. The house has about 6,000 square feet of living space on four levels, is finished with maple and oak woodwork and paneling and has 25 rooms.

All UNI presidents have been required to live in the campus house since it was completed. It's used as living space for the president and his family, and for official open houses and receptions.



Iowa State Normal School 1891.



The current President's House under construction in 1909.



The Price family circa 1950.



The Maucker family on the front porch
circa 1951.



Mark and Cheryl Nook, 2017.



James E. Robinson, superintendent of buildings and grounds from 1890-1930, designed both homes and supervised their construction. He oversaw the development of the 14 buildings that make up the central campus.

The Exterior

The exterior of the house has seen few changes, except for the addition of the porches to the original footprint. Changes in presidential administrations seem to have been appropriate times to make other improvements to the interior.

Beginning in the summer of 1983, following President Kamerick's resignation, the building underwent major renovation, restoration and maintenance in preparation for the new president, Constantine Curris, his wife Jo and their family. Prior to that only modest interior decorating improvements had been made.

This project was extensive and substantial with costs totaling more than \$200,000. The work included a new heating, cooling and ventilation system. This was more than a decade after President Maucker recommended the installation of central air conditioning in the President's House. Other work included an electrical service upgrade, repairs to a basement wall, a new foundation under the back porch, new carpeting on the main level, refinishing the woodwork, remodeling the kitchen, landscaping and installing a privacy fence around the backyard.

President Curris resigned in 1995, and President Robert Koob and his wife Yvonne moved into the President's House.

During the Koob's residence in the house, there were substantial improvements to the exterior. Probably the most noticeable change was in the driveway to the house. Formerly, the driveway leading back to the garage had opened onto College Street. That portion of the driveway was closed, regraded and sodded so the only vehicle access to the garage was to the west, onto Wisconsin street. In addition, there were substantial improvements to the drainage and landscaping around the house. A black metal fence was erected along the College Street side of the house, and attractive perennial beds, including hostas, were established or enhanced.



Resident Presidents

1886-1928

HOMER H. AND CLARA SEERLEY

1928-1940

ORVAL R. AND HELEN LATHAM

1940-1950

MALCOLM P. AND MARY PRICE

1951-1970

JAMES W. AND HELGA MAUCKER

1970-1983

JOHN J. AND ELAINE KAMERICK

1983-1995

CONSTANTINE W. AND JO HERN CURRIS

1995-2006

ROBERT D. AND YVONNE KOOB

2006-2013

BENJAMIN J. AND PAT ALLEN

2013-2016

WILLIAM N. AND JUDY RUUD

2017-PRESENT

MARK A. AND CHERYL NOOK

The original dining room walls featured decorative paintings on canvas, including “charming landscape views by a skilled Polish artist.”



President Price's daughter Nancy's 1945 wedding to Howard Thompson.



President Koob's wife Yvonne enjoying some company in 1998.



Ben and Pat Allen with Dalai Lama in library 2010.



Kitchen in private quarters.

Mrs. Maucker grew lemon trees in the home, a hobby she pursued after smelling the flowering blossoms on a trip to California.



New master bathroom update in 2017.



New 3rd floor restroom installed in 2017.



Basement billiard table.

The Interior

When President Koob resigned in 2006, there was another opportunity to improve and repair the house in anticipation of the arrival of President Benjamin Allen and his wife Pat. A new roof was put on in the summer of 2006 and there were extensive repairs to the porches. There were also some improvements made throughout the interior of the home. President and Mrs. Allen made a personal contribution to the home by providing new furniture to create an inviting atmosphere.

Internal renovations to the house continued in 2014 and 2016. After President Allen retired in 2013, and before President Bill Ruud and his wife Judy arrived on campus, the electrical wiring was updated and a kitchen was put in the private residence area. President Ruud resigned in 2016, which gave the university yet another opportunity to make improvements to the home. Before President Mark Nook and his wife Cheryl moved to the house in February 2017, all of the plumbing was updated.



Fun Facts

Mrs. Maucker maintained maps in the dining room to pinpoint the travels around the world of her children.

Two of the Seerley daughters were married in the house, and one of them, Esther Seerley Culley, gave birth to her son Homer, in the house.

The home was equipped with a telephone connected to classrooms to allow the president to communicate easily with faculty.

Special guests to the house include Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King, Jr., Nancy Price, Jessica Tandy, Hume Cronyn, Van Cliburn, Marian McPartland, Myrna Loy, Ricardo Montalban, William O. Douglas and Joan Fontaine, Dalai Lama.

UNI

**University of
Northern Iowa**