

Roslyn Heights

November 20, 2012

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Notley Hawkins

Main Street Mansion

With one third of its national motto, God, Home, and Country, dedicated to the home, there is little surprise that the Missouri State Society Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) uses an elegant 1890s Boonville mansion as their state headquarters. Members of the society trace their lineage to those who supported the Revolutionary War. Men served as officers and foot soldiers, and many women donated supplies like cloth, hay, and guns. Names of veterans who are buried in Missouri are on display in the home. "We call it the last of the Main Street mansions," says State Curator Pat Holmes.

Roslyn Heights, as the "Main Street mansion" is formally known, is a historic jewel in red brick and Warrensburg limestone. Built in the Queen Anne style of Victorian architecture, the exterior is distinguished by the use of various shapes and sharp angles to create a dramatic visual appeal. The steep roof has multiple chimneys as a result of the home's eight fireplaces. "When you have a lot of things poking through the roof, you have a lot of opportunities for leaks," she adds. "It is complicated to maintain."

The maintenance of Roslyn Heights is a priority for the Missouri DAR. "I think it is one of the best-maintained historic homes in Boonville." Even in the 1890s, the home was a standout in the community. Aside from its attractive appearance and ample size, the home was one of the few at the time with flush toilets. It also had gas and electric lights, Pat says. "It represents a tangible remain of a glorious time in our nation's history."

In the backyard, a picturesque white gazebo with brown shingles acts as the centerpiece. The landscaping is a mixture of brightly colored balloon flowers, geraniums, lilies, and a selection of trees like Missouri's state tree, the dogwood, and a heritage tree grown from the cuttings of a hard maple at Mount Vernon. This outdoor space, along with the house, can be rented for weddings, family gatherings, meetings, conferences, and other social events. The interior of the home is a regal trip back in time to the Victorian era.

The home was built by Wilbur T. and Rhoda Stephens Johnson in 1895. The Johnson and Stephens families were two of the most prominent in the area. Rhoda's brother served as governor of Missouri from 1897 to 1901. The couple entertained the high society of Boonville frequently in their home until they moved to Kansas City in 1923. Two sisters then owned the home until 1961. The house remained a private residence until 1983 when former DAR State Regent Mrs. Joseph W. Towle purchased the stunning three-story house for the organization.

As the headquarters for a women's organization, Roslyn Heights uses flowers, plush velvet, silk, and lace common in Victorian décor. These elements are balanced with materials like mahogany, walnut, and metals, creating texture and an understated comfort in the home. "The house provides a base of operations for me," says Missouri State Regent Lemira Parks. "I am very comfortable there. The ladies always know this is their place and they love it."

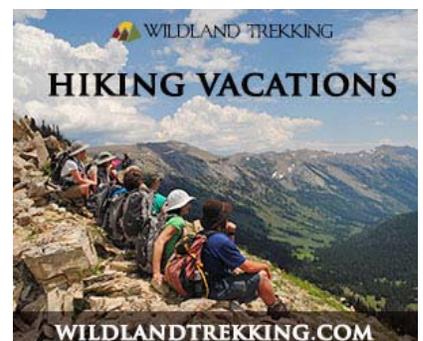
On the top floor of the house is a ballroom. The original owners used the space for dances, but the DAR uses it to display an antique shoe collection, a doll collection, two pianos, and old-fashioned spinning wheels. "Each time I tour the house, I realize how wonderful it is and often discover something I had not noticed before," says Barbara Stevens, past regent for the Hannah Cole Chapter.

Beyond the grand décor, the home also has practical uses. The basement is used as a gift shop and also has a kitchen and comfortable TV-room retreat for husbands. A small nook on the first floor is outfitted with a computer. Archives from Missouri DAR chapters are stored in a three-car garage behind the house. "Old homes have to be functional," Pat says. "It's not like a museum where you don't touch anything."

Roslyn Heights is one of more than four hundred properties at Boonville on the National Register of Historic Places. "A lot of really nice old houses from post Civil War to the turn of the century were torn down," Pat says. "This house has survived all these years. It's a focal point for our organization."

Roslyn Heights

821 Main Street , Boonville, Missouri 65233 [View Map](#)



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