

# The Vintage

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Miller House Museum

## MY Childhood Days IN THE Miller House

By Mary Lou (Jackson) DeMar

The “Miller House”, now the home of the Madeira Historical Society, was originally built for the Fournier family; my parents were the second owners. We always referred to it as the Fournier house because they were responsible for all the original landscaping, The Drake family was the third occupant and then finally the Millers who continued to maintain and beautify the wonderful grounds.

We moved there in the spring of 1938 and my most vivid memory is of the beautiful avenue of trees on the left of the property. They looked as if they could lead to a house that might have existed at one time. There were ‘hosts of golden daffodils’ along the way and the trees were newly leafing in a lacy arch. It was truly a fairyland to an eleven year old in love with nature.

There was a fish pond with large goldfish and water lilies and beyond that a sunken garden which would often become a lake. I was never able to use it as a swimming pool.

Across the back of the house is a solarium which seemed very large to me at the time. We had family gatherings there and I remember a birthday party given in my honor. My bedroom window opened onto the sun porch and I thought it was neat to be able to climb out of my window onto the porch where we had a wonderful view of the large, lovely yard.

My mother loved flowers and gardening so she was in her element. My father planted myrtle on the front banks, some of which is still there. He was very meticulous about grooming the grounds and we always said he had to run out to pick up every leaf as it fell.

One lazy summer afternoon, my friend and I were sitting in the front yard playing with dolls (it seems that eleven year olds matured later in those years) If a car passed by on Miami Avenue whose occupants we didn’t know, it was a real occasion. That afternoon some boys who were strangers drove by waving and whistling (we called them wolf whistles). Embarrassed to be playing with dolls, we quickly hid them behind us and that was the summer we began putting our childhood playthings behind us. We did spend lots of summer days playing monopoly on the front porch, still secretly hoping those boys would reappear, but never again did we openly display our dolls.

While living there I played the flute in a little church orchestra directed by our minister’s wife. We met in the manse next to the Presbyterian Church which was then on the corner of Laurel and Miami Avenue. One day the trumpet player in that little ensemble offered to drive me home in his father’s old Willys. I was 11 or 12, and the young trumpeter only 13 or 14, and very small for his age. He needed a davenport cushion behind him and another under him to see over the dashboard. When we arrived at my house he hopped out to open my side of the car (chivalry was still alive in those days). My surprised Mother happened to be watching out of the window and when I came in she asked “who was that little boy driving the car?” Little did we dream that little boy, would someday be my husband. Russ was only 4’8 tall as shown on his driver’s license – which he still has. (In those years one could get a driver’s license at any age as long as he could pass a driver’s test).

Across Miami Avenue where the Hosbrook bird sanctuary now exist, there was a deep woods owned by the Hosbrook’s. I thought all woods were public property to be explored. One day I filled my arms with daffodils and wild flowers, and was met by old Mr. Hosbrook who told me in no uncertain terms that I was trespassing. I don’t remember what happened to the flowers, but I was a very frightened girl and never ventured there again.

Our stay in this beautiful garden setting was too brief, only about 3 years. Because of my Dad’s health we moved to a smaller place that he and my mother could maintain.

Those short years in the Miller House were times of awakening my senses to the beauty of nature, a time of passage through childhood into young womanhood. The avenue of trees is forever in my mind’s eye and since I am a painter, that memory has found its way into some of my paintings throughout the years.



Mary Lou (Jackson) DeMar, left, and her friend, Marlyn Hoffman, who were children. Mary Lou, who lives in a Sears home, also lived in one child.

Mary Lou De Mar presented the Madeira Historical Society with this beautiful story in June 2004, and was first published in The Vintage newsletter in February 2009. The photo at left shows Mary Lou (Jackson) DeMar and her friend Marlyn Hoffman as young girls. The Presbyterian Manse is pictured to the right. This was next to the Presbyterian Church on NE corner of Miami and Laurel.



**Your New Officers and Board Members,** President, Steve Ballman, Vice President, Tim Brock, Treasurer, Donna Lienhart, Communications Secretary, Suzy Floyd, Recording Secretary, Robin LeFevre, Board Members, Doug Oppenheimer, Bob Bartlett, Tom Frietch, Les LeFevre, Todd Woellner, Board Member & Museum Director, Liz Frederick, Board Member, Museum Librarian/Archivist, Carol Heck. We are looking forward to serving the Madeira Historical Society, thank you for your confidence.

**Our Calendar,** will not include any programs again this year at the library due to lingering COVID-19, but we are planning for Miller House open houses following the same precautions that were in place in 2020. Other society events and activities are planned, but subject to change.

**The 100 foot tree,** shown in your last newsletter has been removed, no longer presenting a danger of falling onto the Miller House. Oops, we didn't think there would be much landscaping work required, but we will need some turf restoration and a new flowering tree planted. Local landscaper Bob Brockhage has provided a discounted estimate and we already have half of the funds. If you would like to assist with this project please get in touch with Doug at 561-9069. Photos; left is area of restoration needed, right is tree coming down.



**Self-Guided Tour to Madeira's Miller House Museum Grounds,** included with your newsletter has replaced the older "Guide to Woody Plants" trifold. We are still waiting for some temporary new markers and we will use what we can of the current black, metal markers. Our hope is to piggyback on the next order made by Spring Grove Cemetery in a year or so to get all new markers at a huge discount. The temporary markers are coming from CD Signs in Sharonville. Pictured below on the right is Dave Gressley, horticulturist/taxonomist from Spring Grove Cemetery and Arboretum with Carol Heck discussing the Smokebush by the courtyard. Because he lives nearby, Dave came out to the grounds three different times. He is very knowledgeable, and we feel he really loves his career. In the new guide, there is a more precise map and legend, a history page about the Miller House Museum, a dedication page, and a Kid's page.



**Miller House Yard Cleanup**, coffee and donuts, bring your own leaf rake, Saturday, March 27, from 9AM until 12 PM. This is an annual event and helps get the grounds in shape.

**Suzy Floyd**, has served the Madeira Historical Society for more than a decade as a member, and as a board member. Suzy has served as our Communications Secretary since the position was created, most importantly she has been for years posting stories about Madeira on our Website. The Madeira stories were authored by Regina Villiers, and were published in the Suburban Press over a period of 15 years, including, more than 300 stories. Regina taught in the Madeira Schools, raised two boys, and was an important member of the Madeira Historical Society.



Suzy and her husband Greg, will be relocating to Indianapolis where Greg has a new job opportunity. Suzy will be missed by the society and the Madeira community. In this photo Suzy is shown painting the plywood board that became the Model Train Exhibit; a miniature town made to look like the city of Madeira. The finished project was on display several years ago, and filled up the entire sunroom located in the back of the Miller House.

Soon, our president Steve Ballman, will begin his search for someone willing and able to replace Suzy on our board. Some of the qualifications include good computer skills, and the experience maintaining, and adding content to Websites. Contact our president Steve Ballman at 513-561-9069 to discuss your interest in this position.

**Award**, for the fourth consecutive year the Madeira Historical Society has been awarded the funds needed to provide stipends to Liz Frederick, our Museum Director and Carol Heck, our librarian and archivist. The society is thankful to have these two ladies and for the funds provided to help defray their cost as they contribute so much for the society.

**Transparency**, the Madeira Historical Society several years ago began preserving minutes, financial information, correspondence, insurance documents, and the annual 990 report, in a three ring binder. The information is available at the Miller House Museum, in the Hoffmann Library. The binders begin with year 2018 and are available for public review. The binders are available during any Open House or upon request. Call 513-561-9069.

**Volunteers Needed**, on the grounds helping to keep the many flower beds weeded and well maintained, and in the Miller House as docents, and keeping the house clean and dusted. Call 513-561-9209 to volunteer.

**Ideas**, any ideas for fundraising or ideas for increasing our membership, call our president Steve Ballman at 513-561-9069.

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# Madeira Historical Society



Miller House Museum

Letter from our President

February 12, 2021

Dear Members and Friends



So long 2020 and welcome 2021, we have been waiting for you. I hope that everyone is staying warm and well during these cold months. Don't worry, spring will be here before you know it. I'm looking to bringing my kids down to the Miller House on March 27<sup>th</sup> to help get the grounds cleaned up and ready for visitors. As you read in the newsletter, and may have noticed while driving by the Miller House, we said goodbye to another older tree on the property. With any luck, this will be the last one for a while. The Miller House itself is in good shape, although we have a few projects that we are planning, so any monetary donations will be welcome. When the Museum reopens in April there will be several new exhibits to come and see. We're working on a new exhibit we're calling "Hats for Hero's" in the sunroom and will also be displaying older sewing machines and spinning wheels set up in the upstairs girls' bedroom. Museum Director, Liz Frederick is planning training sessions for those members that expressed interest in serving as Miller House Museum Docents. Please reach out to Liz at 513-289-6777 for training.

The Madeira Historical Society has identified seven members, who passed away in 2020. These seven, all played important roles as members of the society, and their contributions will never be forgotten. They will be missed, and our prayers go out to their families.

**Regina Villiers, Cecilia Lemming, Charles Lemming, Dona Brock, Shirley Seegar, Harold V. Verbag and Ray Meyer.**

As there are still many unknowns in regards to our near future due to the lingering COVID-19, our calendar this year is a little shorter than in past years. As things change we will continue updating the calendar. As always, I wish to thank the Madeira Historical Society Board members for all that they do, and look forward to meeting and seeing as many members as possible in 2021.

Sincerely,

*Steve Ballman*

President, Madeira Historical Society