

GILLESPIE



James Lamont Haven Gillespie was born on February 6, 1888 in Covington, Kentucky. His family lived in a basement on Third Street between Madison and Washington. As a boy Haven attended Third District School, but his formal education ended in 1899 when he quit school in the Fourth grade while at the top of his class. When he reached fourteen years of age, he began working as a journeyman printer for the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and later worked for the *Cincinnati Post and Times Star*. By the time he was nineteen years old he was in charge of more than forty printers.

In 1911 Gillespie began writing songs, working as a printer at night and composing in his spare time during the day. He excelled as a lyricist, and eventually published over 975 songs. His best known song, perhaps, was "Santa Claus Is Coming To Town," which he penned on the back of an envelope in 1933. Royalties from that work alone totaled a gross of approximately \$1.25 million. His other hit songs, too numerous to list here, averaged an estimated gross income of about \$100,000 annually.

Though the man's work became known throughout the world, and he was very prominent in the Covington community, Haven Gillespie was not one for publicity. He maintained that a man should only have his name in the newspaper two times: once when he was born, and again when he died.

In 1910 Gillespie married Corene Parker of Covington. She bore him one child, a son, whom they named Haven Lamont. In 1950 the Gillespie family moved from Kentucky to Hollywood and later purchased a home in Las Vegas. There, the pressures of business and the free-swinging society soon proved to be too much for Gillespie and he eventually became an alcoholic.

However, in 1956, with the help of Alcoholics Anonymous, he licked his dependence on the inebriant. So grateful to that institution was he, that he willed the majority of his estate to it after his death.

In 1958, one year before the Gillespies celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary, Haven's wife, Corene, died. Her death hit him very hard, but he was able to bounce back and a few years later he married Josephine Kruempleman.

The Gillespie home (p. 25) is located at 509 Montgomery Street. It is a simple, two-story brick structure and was built in the mid-1800's. Besides their residence, the Gillespies also owned the house next door (511 Montgomery) which they rented. The White Mansion (below), as it was known, was laid in Flemish bond and sits atop a high, ashlar foundation. Originally it was a sixteen room, two-story structure, but now only one-half of the house remains. The one-story porch around the entrance was added later.

