

L
A
I
D
L
E
Y



Frederick Alexander Laidley, born in Maple Grove (now Huntington), West Virginia, migrated to the Cincinnati area in the 1850's. He soon became a leader in the transportation industry as the owner of the White Packet Line of riverboats. Commodore Laidley operated two steamers, the *City of Louisville* and the *City of Cincinnati*, plus five other ships out of the Queen City's port. In 1867 he joined the Cincinnati Chamber of Commerce as one of its original members.

Although his business was located in Cincinnati, Captain Laidley chose to reside in Covington. In 1866 he married Julia Rook and began to raise a family. The Laidley home, located at 404 East Second Street, is a Victorian structure. The original interior had many interesting features, including thirteen foot ceilings, brass light fixtures, ornate fireplaces, and a wine cellar. On the first floor was the ballroom, parlor, dining room and kitchen. A winding stairway led to the second floor from which a smaller staircase led to the cupola. From there, a beautiful view of the Cincinnati skyline could be seen.

The home was the location of numerous balls and social gatherings throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. During the winter of 1917, however, five of the captain's ships were crushed during the infamous Ice Gorge, and from then on the parties became less commonplace.

The Laidley family continued to dwell in the home until December of 1972 when the last of the Laidley children, Elsie Louise Laidley Moore, died at ninety years of age. Described by a neighbor as an "adorable lady; tall, slender and kind," Mrs. Moore willed the majority of her estate to various local organizations including the Trinity Episcopalian Church.

The house was put up for sale, and the furnishings, which included Victorian furniture, oriental rugs, china, and cut glass, were auctioned off in February of 1973. The building was purchased that year also by Dr. W. Thomas McElhinney for the sum of \$64,000. Dr. McElhinney, however, sold the house in July of 1975 to James and Frances Allen who restored it.