

## STEWART HOUSE

ADDRESS: 1228 Wood Ave.

AREA: 12,000 sq. ft.

YEAR BUILT: 1899

COST: \$45,000

ARCHITECT: Varian & Sterner, New York & Denver

DONOR: Sarah Frances Cowles Stewart (d. 1948), wife of Philip B. Stewart, bequeathed the house to CC.

USE: Social gatherings for the college community until 2002, President's House 2002-2011

Stewart House was completed around 1898 for Mr. and Mrs. Ralph J. Preston and purchased by the Stewarts in 1902. Preston was a prominent attorney for the Colorado Springs firm Hall, Prescott and Babbitt. The house, with its brick walls, stone columns, and Greek-Corinthian style arches was one of the first homes built on "Millionaires' Row." Mrs. Preston died from complications in childbirth in 1900, and her husband immediately sold "the Castle."

Mr. and Mrs. Philip Battell Stewart bought the property in 1902 for \$45,000. Philip Stewart became a trustee of Colorado College in 1900 and coached the CC baseball team from 1902-05. He had grown up in Vermont where his father had served as governor, congressional representative and Senator. He was a successful businessman with interests in mining and Colorado politics, and a friend and hunting companion of President Theodore Roosevelt, who visited the Stewart House in 1904 or '05 before and after a Colorado hunting trip. Stewart ran for governor of Colorado unsuccessfully in 1912, became the chairman of the state Republican Party in 1915 and speaker of the Colorado House of Representatives in 1916. He was an avid conservationist and fought exploitation Colorado's natural resources as well as corruption in business.

"PB" Stewart was also an art lover and decorated his home lavishly. A fine collection of Audubon prints were displayed on the dining room walls. Oriental carpeting covered the ornately carved stairway, hung from the second floor railings and covered the floors throughout the house. Colorful fabric wall coverings from India were used in the south living rooms. The dining room held a "Jacobethan" table and sideboard and a straight-back Elizabethan chairs covered in needlepoint. These were commissioned by Mrs. Stewart to tell the story of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith. The "chinoiserie" wall covering was designed by the artist Jean Pillement round 1770. Robert Lewis Stevenson once owned the porcelain platter displayed on the mantel.

The Stewarts contributed generously to the college over the years, donating scholarships and financing the purchase of "Stewart Field" as well as its restoration after the devastating 1935 Monument Creek flood. In her will, Sarah Francis Cowles Stewart bequeathed her home to Colorado College with the provision that her husband and the caretaker family would live there until their deaths. She died in 1948. Mr. Stewart retired from CC in 1954 and died in 1957. He had been a Colorado College trustee for over fifty years.

At first the building housed visiting faculty and other guests while President Benezet attempted to find an appropriate "professional or charitable organization" to use the space. Apartments and a "Faculty

Club” were also suggested. Complaints from neighbors and zoning questions soon started to limit the possibilities. When Provost James Stauss and his wife Harriet moved in, the house once again became a social center and meeting place for the “Faculty Club.” Since Stauss’s death in 1976, a succession of residents have acted as “hosts” for college related functions.

The large, grand house contains four fireplaces upstairs and five downstairs, and has seven bedrooms. Although many of the furnishings and valuable artworks have been removed and other pieces have been donated, the dining room still holds the Stewarts’ table, chairs and sideboard, and the Stevenson platter sits on the mantle. Several family portraits decorate other rooms. The Butler’s Pantry (later the kitchen) has a “bell system.” The two-story entryway with its carved columns and paneling in black Italian walnut still provides an impressive welcome to visitors.

From 2002-2011, Stewart House was the President’s House for Richard Celeste and his family.