

## Indian Rock



This house on the bluff side of Armfield Avenue, number 13 on the walking tour map, is next to one of three rock outcroppings of the bluff along Armfield Avenue. The one closest to the hotel is Balancing Rock; the second is Picnic Rock; and this, the third, is called Indian Rock because of the many Indian arrowheads which have been found in the area.

The house was built by Mary L. Means (c. 1872 - 1962) in 1912. The Means family, well-known caterers in Nashville, had come to Beersheba to operate the hotel during the summers of 1899 through 1901. It was not until ten years later that they bought land. By this time the family was living in St. Louis. On October 2, 1911, the land was sold by Gates P. Thruston of Nashville and Beersheba to Mrs. Louise Means of St. Louis for \$500. The deed reads: "Beginning on Armfield Avenue at southwest corner of G. P. Thruston's enclosed tract near Picnic Rock and Armfield Cemetery running westwardly between the Turner and Thruston lands to a stake, thence southwesterly to the center of a ravine between Indian Rock tract and Round Top tract." Thruston made the sale to improve and develop the Beersheba Springs summer resort, and it was therefore agreed that the Means family would build a residence on this tract within two years. On her next birthday, Mary L. Means was given the

lot by her mother. Miss Mary had her house built on this lot in 1912. Her brother carved with a knife on a rock in the front yard "Mary's Place."

After Miss Mary had finished school in Nashville in 1890, she began teaching kindergarten. A professor in Christian College of Columbia, Missouri, wrote the following recommendation: "During the school year of '93 and '94 we were co-workers in the same faculty. As a disciplinarian she is unexcelled, winning the hearts and confidence of the little ones with her gentle and pleasing manner. I feel that she will be an honor to any institution that may be so fortunate as to secure her services."

The Means catering business began in Nashville with Miss Mary's early ambition to earn 25 cents a week after her father's fortune had been swept away. She had subscribed that amount to a church charity and her mother had counseled her not to neglect the Lord's work. It occurred to her that neighbors who bought cakes might buy from her. The result was two customers the first week and by the end of the fourth week they had as many as they could care for. They next began making pralines and crystalized fruits. Soon they were serving hundreds of affairs attended by as many as 750 guests. In 1901, they were persuaded to come to St. Louis and open a tea shop. For sev-

eral years they made an average of 8,000 pounds of fruit cake each season, and during World War I hundreds of these cakes found their way to soldiers in France.

Before World War I Miss Mary and her mother made frequent trips to Europe to pick up new ideas about the preparation of food. One of the most important figures in the affairs of the company was Arthur Houston, an African American, who had been in the family since he was 14 years old. Roger Williams University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Science because, aside from his daily duties, he taught many others the art and science of cooking.

During the summer of the World's Fair in 1904, President Theodore Roosevelt visited St. Louis and expressed his preference for the genuine southern cooking which was served him by the Means Catering Company. R. T. Dykes, Jr., of Beersheba spent that summer working for the Means family and attended the World's Fair. Later, others from Beersheba went to St. Louis to work for Miss Mary, including Annie Tate and Clara Belle Tate.

In 1920, because of the illness of Mrs. Means, Miss Mary decided to close the business in St. Louis and return to Nashville. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* wrote, "The Means Catering Co. of Washington Blvd. Will close its doors Monday after playing an important part in the social life of the city for more than 19 years. Mrs. Mary Louise Means, 71, and her daughter, Mary L., are said to rank with catering houses of New York."

After the Means family returned to Tennessee to live, Miss Mary began taking guests in her summer home at Beersheba, the first of whom was Judge William Waller of Nashville. Another early guest was Hazel Hooper, who had been the bookkeeper for the Means Catering Company in St. Louis. She liked the place so much that in the summer of 1923 she asked to have her wedding to Luther W. Crenshaw on the front porch. Miss Mary was happy to oblige, and the Rev. James M. Bean (of the Brown-Bean house on the Backbone) officiated. The bride was accompanied by her daughter Mary from a previous marriage. Mary carried a vivid memory of the beautiful wedding with the Collins River valley in the background. Over half a century later, in 1981, she returned and must have been delighted to see the spot as beautiful as she remembered.

Another activity on Miss Mary's front porch for

several summers during the 1920s was a sewing class conducted by her for the young girls of Beersheba, who appreciated the instruction and the hospitality.

Another significant visit, though no one realized it at the time, was when, in the early 1940s Mildred Adams (Mrs. David Adams, see the White House entry) accompanied Sammy Glasgow (see The Cliffs entry) on a trip to Beersheba to inquire about The Cliffs, a house she wanted to buy. Mildred brought along her 7-year-old son Garrett, and they stayed together in one of Miss Mary's cabins. Garrett remembers, "I was up early in the morning and looked out on the view, some say the best view on the mountain. I was so excited to see the patterns of the farm fields in the valley, large squares of greens and browns. I ran to my mother and cried, 'Oh Mother! Come look at the map!'"

In 1954 Miss Mary gave the cottage to her cousin Dr. Arnie T. Sikes; and after Miss Mary's death in 1962, the Sikes spent a part of each summer at Indian Rock until Dr. Sikes' death.

Some forty years after he had seen "the map," Howell Garrett Adams had become a pediatrician living in Louisville, Kentucky. In 1983, he and his wife Lane persuaded Bessie Mai Sikes, the widow of Dr. Sikes, to sell the house to them. Bessie Mai had loved Beersheba and taken good care of the main house, but the two small cabins were in disrepair. The larger cabin, with a splendid chestnut wall dividing it into two rooms, was repaired on its original site. The smaller one was moved to a site on the hillside a little away from the other buildings. Andrew Caylor, Burt Gordon, Garrett Randolph, Burt and Rob Adams did the rebuilding.

In 2000, Sam Chester (see Laurel Point entry) and Jerry Dove helped the Adams undertake the reconstruction of the main house. Sam had to bow out for health reasons, but Jerry and Nelson Dykes, with the eye for detail and respect for tradition of true craftsmen, almost completely rebuilt the house. Nicholas King, Phillip Scruggs, Michael Kirby, Travis Green and others helped.

Garrett and Lane, their children Garrett, Rob, Burt, and Carrie, their spouses and their children are grateful for their heritage at Indian Rock and to all who have made it possible.

Margaret Brown Coppinger  
H. Garrett Adams

