



# Heritage News

A quarterly newsletter of Glendale Heritage Preservation, Spring 2025

## Music Hall's Stone Contractor

In 1878, the stone contract for Cincinnati's Music Hall was awarded to Isaac Graveson's company. Isaac Graveson lived in Glendale, with his wife and five children, on the property we now call Washington Park.

Graveson left his native country of England in 1849 at the age of 23. He had been apprenticed from the age of 14 as a stone cutter. Upon arriving in Cincinnati, he found his skills were in great demand. So much so, that by 1856 he had started his own business as a stone contractor.

Graveson's company cut, sawed, and carved architectural building stone and details that adorned many landmark structures, including Spring Grove Cemetery Chapel and Lodge, College Hill Town Hall and Glendale Lyceum. His stonework also adorned homes of prominent people such as Henry Probasco, Maria Longworth and John Shillito.



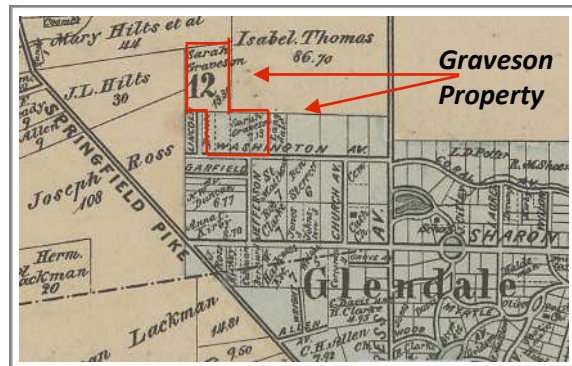
Graveson supplied stone for many of architect Samuel Hannaford's buildings which, of course, included Music Hall. Both were immigrants from England and in 1869 they returned to England together to tour architectural sites. Graveson was joined on the trip by his wife, Sarah. According to Hannaford's diary, on the return voyage Sarah gave birth to their fifth child, Grace Washington Graveson.

The highlight of Graveson's career must be the stonework he supplied for Hannaford's design of Music Hall. His company provided the stunning lobby floor, featuring a diamond-shaped geometric

pattern in red slate and white marble, bordered by black limestone. The Friends of Music Hall have recently funded the preservation and restoration of the 1878 floor. The company also provided many of the stone details on the exterior of the Hall including finials, medallions and capitals.



In February of 1876, two years prior to the Music Hall contract, Graveson acquired the Nicholas L. Bernard farm in Glendale on the north side of Washington Avenue at Jefferson Avenue. It cost \$9,500 and included the farm house and 20 acres of land. According to the deed, it was purchased by his wife, Sarah Graveson, presumably to safeguard his home from business debt.



Isaac Graveson died in 1903 at the age of 77 and was buried in Spring Grove Cemetery. In 1912, the farmhouse and four acres was purchased by the Salvation Army to become the Gamble Fresh-Air Farm (see Heritage News Winter 2024). In 1958, after the Salvation Army moved out, the property became what we now know as Washington Park. Submitted by Martin Sinnott based on [FriendsofMusicHall.org](http://FriendsofMusicHall.org) blog by Thea Tjepkema, "The Stones of Music Hall: Isaac Graveson"

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## **Glendale Heritage Preservation's 2025 Officers**



*(Left to Right) Helene Sedwick (Treasurer), Rebecca Terrell (Secretary), Elizabeth Carroll-Oldiges (President), Patrick Myers (Vice President), Carolyn Beaugrand (Vice President)*

### **The Gold Standard**

After 30 years, the Glendale Heritage Preservation Museum sign needed a facelift. The green paint had faded, and the gold leaf was no longer a sparkling yellow. We called on Ray Meyer Signs, who created the original sign, to restore the museum sign to its original condition. At the same time we added a "Gift Shop" sign, in a complementary design, to hang below the museum sign.



Apparently, the art of gold leaf lettering is a dying skill but Ray Meyer Signs had Joe Nolan on their staff to apply the 22 karat gold leaf to the sign. In fact, this was Joe Nolan's last sign he worked on. He retired after the Glendale Heritage Preservation sign was completed. Thank you, Joe!

*Submitted by Martin Sinnott*

## The Johnston House

In 1909, William Cooper Procter, the head of Procter & Gamble, hired the architectural firm of Frederick Garber & Clifford Woodward to design a house on Albion Avenue. It would be a stucco \$10,000 home at 405 Albion for his brother-in-law, Alexander Johnston, his wife Anna Titus Johnston, and their two daughters.

The house was designed in Craftsman style with a low-pitched hipped roof, wide overhangs and exposed rafters at the roofline. The modest entryway leads to a gracious flow of rooms with a handsome wood-paneled living room, a cozy library, and a dining room, each with a fireplace and built-in cupboards. In all, it was a comfortable home for a family. The back garden wall of the house was the



boundary with the Sisters of the Transfiguration Convent, an Episcopal community founded in 1898. The land for the convent had been purchased for Mother Eva by the foundress's older brother, Mortimer Matthews. William Cooper Procter purchased the land for this house from the Sisters for \$1 in October 1910.

William Cooper Procter and his wife Jane, (sister to Alexander Johnston), were unable to have children, and they adored and mentored their teenaged nieces, Margaret and Mary Elizabeth Johnston. The Procters took them to Europe, sent them to the National Cathedral School, and played tennis with the girls. When the Johnston family moved into their new house, the girls were now just a short walk up a lane to 'Woodlands,' the estate where their aunt and uncle lived. Living close by was especially comforting after their mother, Anna, died the year they moved in (1910). In 1918, Margaret married Charles Sawyer, a lawyer and politician. They had five children before she died in 1937.

Mary E. Johnston, known as Miss Mary, never married and lived in this house from the age of 19 until she was 63. She was chosen by her uncle William Cooper Procter to be the heir for his estate. He trained her to think in terms of service. "The Letters of William Cooper Procter" documents his correspondence with his niece, revealing his remarkable mentoring to prepare her for this responsibility.

As the civic heir of Mr. Procter's estate, she made major contributions to the Episcopal Church, locally and nationally, as well as establishing a College for Nursing and Health at the University of Cincinnati.

Over the years, beautiful gardens were established at the Johnston house. Living next to the Convent, a gateway opened between their gardens. The convent bells rang throughout the day, calling the sisters to prayer. Miss Mary became an Associate of the Convent, a volunteer dedicated to keeping a rule of life, to live in spiritual service. She lived with her father until he died in 1951. After her aunt, Mrs. Jane Procter, died in 1953, Miss Mary moved into the Procter estate at Woodlands. Miss Mary's life was with filled with friends who visited with her at Woodlands, as well as at her winter house in Florida and summer cottage in Canada. As her friends aged and needed care, she gifted the Convent with St. Mary's, a nursing care facility. She lived at Woodlands until her death in 1967.



After Miss Mary died in 1967, the ownership of the house at 405 Albion was passed in 1968 to her nephew Charles Sawyer, Jr., then to her niece Carolyn Sawyer. In 1978, the ownership of the house was transferred for \$1 to the Convent of the Transfiguration. Bishop Henry Hobson was the Episcopal Bishop of Southern Ohio from 1931-1959. For a period of time, he and his wife lived at the Johnston house. In 2024, the Sisters of the Transfiguration decided to have the house demolished.

*Submitted by Elizabeth W. Garber*



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## 2025 Membership Drive

For those who responded to our annual membership drive, we heartily thank every one of you.

At the time of writing this newsletter, membership for 2025 has reached 61% of last year's full total.

If you haven't yet joined, won't you please consider becoming a member? There are so many reasons to do so. "Preserving the Past for the Present" is more than just our motto - it's our purpose! It has motivated us to refurbish our gas lamps and street signs, to maintain our vast archive collection, to present museum exhibits and to send out our quarterly newsletters to you.

If you appreciate what we do for the village, you can join our efforts by sending a \$30 check to Glendale Heritage Preservation at 44 Village Square in Glendale or by paying online at [www.GlendaleHeritage.org/glendale/join](http://www.GlendaleHeritage.org/glendale/join). We would be most grateful!

*Submitted by Carolyn Beaugrand*

## Glendale House Plaques

There are now 133 Glendale houses with plaques identifying their original owner.

In 2024, Glendale Heritage Preservation installed three new house plaques, including the Elsa Van Nes Thompson House at 820 Van Nes Drive.

If your house is at least 100 years old and you would like to distinguish it with a brass plaque

commemorating its original owner, please contact Glendale Heritage Preservation. You will find an application form, with the necessary details of applying for a plaque, on our website at [www.GlendaleHeritage.org/house-plaques](http://www.GlendaleHeritage.org/house-plaques).

