

**MISSOURI COMMUNITY LEGACIES:
THE HEARD MEMORIAL CLUB HOUSE
SEDALIA, PETTIS COUNTY, MISSOURI**

The elegant Heard House is a historical landmark in Sedalia, Pettis County, Missouri. The house was built by Senator John T. Heard for his second wife, Lillian. Construction was begun in 1904 and finished in 1906. The home is located in the Sedalia Historic District (200 West Broadway) and is on the National Register of Historic Places. It is a two-story, buff brick, classical revival house with “eclectic Italian Renaissance” accents and it has a “hipped roof” with dormers and classical wood columns. There is a carriage house located on the property, which is one of only a few carriage houses in original form in the Sedalia area. The lot is surrounded on three sides by the original iron fence.

Senator Heard was born in Georgetown, Missouri. He served in the Missouri House of Representatives and the Missouri Senate before his election in 1884 to the U.S. House of Representatives. He represented the 6th and 7th Missouri districts until 1895. In addition, Senator Heard was a Democrat, a lawyer, and the president of the Sedalia Trust Company. Following the death of his first wife, Senator Heard married Lillian Copeland in Washington, D.C. Senator Heard passed away in 1927. In Senator Heard’s obituary, it was noted he was “always ready to assist in any civic enterprise, Mr. Heard was a citizen to whom the city pointed with pride. He had one of the most beautiful homes in the city, on the northwest corner of Broadway and Osage Avenue, which was always open to his friends, and where many of the city’s most exclusive social functions were held.”

The railroad reached Sedalia in January 1861 which brought many people to Sedalia. By the early 1900s, there was a post office, saloons, brothels, hotels, mercantile shops, and churches, but no social connections for women and they were seeking some of the connections they lost in

the larger cities they had lived in. Out of that yearning, two women's organizations were formed: the Sorosis Club and the Helen G. Steele Music Club, two of the oldest women's organizations in the State of Missouri. Both organizations are still in existence today and still meet at the Heard House. Lillian Heard was an active member of both.

The Sorosis Club was begun in 1889 by eighteen Sedalia ladies who met informally for the purpose of discussing literature. Eventually they decided to form a study club that would meet and study one topic for an entire year. During the first year, they studied U.S. History, and, during the second year, they studied American Literature. Today there are guest speakers who come in from various parts of the state and give interesting programs. The women met in different places, such as homes, the Elks Club, the public library, and various other places in Sedalia.

In 1893, the Women's Musical Club was established by Helen Gallie. It was renamed the Helen G. Steele Music Club in 1920 in honor of Helen Gallie Steele who had served as its president since 1904. The members met at the home of Mrs. Steele, who was a major factor in incorporating music into the Sedalia schools. In fact, she was the director of music programs for the schools. In 1935, a group of these women met for the purpose of forming a symphony in Sedalia. The Sedalia Symphony is the second oldest continuous symphony in the State of Missouri, the first being the St. Louis Symphony.

When Lillian Heard died in 1934, she left the house and its furnishings in trust as a memorial to her husband and provided that both the Sorosis and Helen G. Steele Music Clubs be allowed to rent the house as a meeting place. In 1935, the house was opened as a club house and the Heard Memorial Club House Board was established for the purpose of overseeing the maintenance and running of the house. Since that time, there have been very few structural

changes made to the house. A balustrade porch on the east side of the house has been removed. The former dining room and drawing room is the present meeting room. In 1952, the kitchen was modernized. What today is the dining room was originally the music room. Original hand-painted designs of musical instruments on canvas decorate one wall and the ceiling around the light fixture. The full basement includes a “summer living room,” kitchen, laundry area, baths, and servants’ quarters. There are also servants’ quarters on the north end of the second floor.

As a tribute to the blood, sweat and tears of the people who built Sedalia, the Heard House is a prime example of the excellent workmanship of both the outside structure of the house itself and the interior, including the furnishings. The interior is furnished with much of the Heard’s furniture, artifacts, and Lillian’s artwork. The house looks today much as it did at the time of Lillian’s death. Inside is an ornate staircase with ionic columns topped with lamps. On the landing located halfway to the second floor is a beautiful round-arch Venetian stained glass window. The reception room features a fireplace with an elaborate mahogany mantle and a window seat is built into the wall on the north side of the reception room. The breakfast room is a small room next to the original music room. It features stained glass windows and a built-in china cabinet with matching stained-glass doors, a small table and chairs, and a small buffet. There is even a dumbwaiter located in the butler’s pantry. The Heard House lighting fixtures are in many styles, including, craftsman, Tiffany, art nouveau and colonial revival. The reception hall and parlor have both carbide gas and electric fixtures. The upstairs rooms have walk-in closets (which was a new thing in the early 1900s) and built-in cabinets. The house has three full bathrooms and a half bathroom. These are just a few of the beautiful items featured in the home.

The carriage house was built in 1906 and is another exceptional example of craftsmanship from the turn of the century. It features double doors on opposing walls, a stable

area, and a hay loft. Presently, the Heard Memorial Club House Board is working to preserve the carriage house which needs major repair for safety considerations and historic preservation. In 2019, the Board received a \$10,000 Special Projects Grant from the Daughters of the American Revolution for the stabilization of the carriage house, but still more work must be done.

Today, the Heard House is supported through fundraisers, and donations. Interesting fundraisers include sponsored home tours of prominent Sedalia homes and selling homemade Christmas cookies during the Sedalia Christmas parade. The Board and Trustees work tirelessly to maintain and improve this property to insure its survival as an important part of Historic Downtown Sedalia. In the past, the Heard House has been rented by various groups for receptions, showers and even a small wedding. The hope is that the community will continue to make use and enjoy this beautiful home.

Stepping into the Heard House is much like stepping back in time. Standing stately on Broadway, it is a legacy left by a family whose contributions made Sedalia what it is today. The house continues to be well loved and maintained by the Heard House Memorial Club House Board and the clubwomen who preserve it.

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