



Greystone (106 Cayuga Heights Road) was built in 1913 for Ms. Daisy Sandidge by contractor Wm. L. Jenks of Ithaca at a cost of \$15,000 (\$350,000 in current dollars). It was designed by John V. Van Pelt of New York City and constructed of local stone. In 1918 the exterior of the house was featured in Wharton Inc. film titled *A Romance of the Air*, serving as a military field headquarters in WWI France.

Irene Castle was the second owner. She was given Greystone as a wedding present by Robert H. Treman (Cornell Class of 1878) who was the father of the groom, Robert E. Treman (Cornell Class of 1909). At the time of Irene's and Robert's marriage on May 3, 1919, Irene had been a widow for about a year, losing her husband and dance partner, Vernon, in a Royal Flying Corps training flight. At the time of Vernon's death, the Castles were a dance sensation in Europe and America, and Irene had become a leading silent film actress and fashion trendsetter. Robert was the scion of a prominent Ithaca family, an avid outdoorsman and served in WWI as a captain in command of a black soldiers' battalion deployed in France. After the war he returned to Ithaca and immersed himself in the family business, the community and Cornell alumni affairs. Robert cut a dashing figure around Ithaca; Irene described him as "handsome with a fine physique and a self confidence that comes from knowing it."

Although there are various stories about how Irene and Robert met, the *New York Times*, in reporting on their wedding, stated the "Bridegroom, the Son of Ithaca Merchant, Has Known His Wife Since Their Childhood." Robert's father attended Cornell around the same time as Irene's father, Hubert T. Foote '79. Both gentlemen were of similar social standing and it is certainly possible that they stayed in touch after their Cornell years, enjoying the company of each other and their families. Although Robert was five years Irene's senior, one can imagine the two of them playing together as children, and upon Vernon's death, Robert being a convenient and comforting presence.

After honeymooning in Lake Placid, Robert brought his bride back to Ithaca and what the *New York Times* called "a splendid house and grounds situated on Cayuga Heights Road." Irene described her new home as a "simple enough house at Cayuga Heights, but it has one tremendously large room. It was a lecture room for the former owner. It is 60 feet long. We use it for a living room but it serves for dances we want to give or for any sort of assemblage we want to arrange..." According to Irene's autobiography, she "landscaped the grounds and had a swimming pool installed with terraces leading down to it." This pool is still in use; it has no filtration as legend is Irene had salt water barreled in from the coast, feeling that "salt water was cooler than fresh."

Irene became a fixture at local horse shows, exhibiting both her horsemanship and high fashion sense. She was photographed often around Greystone with pictures appearing in *Vanity Fair*, *Vogue* and *Town and Country*. It may have been during this Ithaca idyll that the relationship between Irene and Ithaca began to sour. Irene was cosmopolitan, avant-garde, and every bit a diva, and Ithaca was, well, Upstate. Irene dressed in a fashion of which the local ladies did not approve and affected a lifestyle that was unusual by Ithaca standards. Legend is that she kept birds (Japanese robins) and monkeys in Greystone, had a cellar of liquor delivered to the house that fueled some of the liveliest parties ever seen in Ithaca (which was a dry town) and posed for the sculpture of a naked woman that marked Vernon Castle's grave.

In 1922 Irene went back on the road with her new dance revue, *Dances and Fashions*, and spent less and less time in Ithaca. In her autobiography she states, "The longer we [Irene and her dance partner, Billy Reardon] were on the road, the more Ithaca receded into the past and became an unpleasant dream to me. Occasionally Robert came out to a little town to catch our performance and spend the night, but they were embarrassing and unsuccessful reunions. I still loved Robert and I suppose I still intended to go back, but as we continued to sweep around the country, that day was pushed farther and farther over the horizon."

In July 1923 Irene filed for divorce. According to a *New York Times* report, "it was a case of incompatibility of temperament". The *Penn Yan Democrat* reinforced this notion, albeit in a somewhat catty way: "It [the divorce] must be a great joy to the Treman family. Her [Irene's] place seems to be in the limelight of the stage rather than the home fire side."

Irene Castle McLaughlin (she married Frederic McLaughlin, owner of the Chicago Blackhawks hockey franchise, on November 30, 1923) sold Greystone to the Sigma Chi Alumni Association on June 19, 1925, severing her last tie with Ithaca. She died in 1969 and her gravestone in Woodlawn Cemetery in New York City reads Irene Castle McLaughlin Enzinger—no mention of Treman...

Over the last eighty-eight years, Greystone has been the chapter house of the Alpha Phi Chapter of the Sigma Chi Fraternity. Nearly two thousand young men (and a long line of St. Bernard dogs) have made this wonderful and storied house their home during their time on the Hill.

Irene Castle's Ithaca Years

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| 1916 | Irene films the classic silent film series <i>Patria</i> in Ithaca. |
| 1918 | Irene marries Robert E. Treman in a private and undisclosed wedding in Pickens, North Carolina. |
| 1919 | Irene and Robert have a public wedding on May 3, 1919 at the Church of the Transfiguration in New York City. |
| 1921 | Robert forms Hol-Tre Producing Company to produce three films starring Irene. All three films fare poorly at the box office. |
| 1922 | Hol-Tre ceases operations. Irene and her new dance partner, Billy Reardon, open a new act called "Dances and Fashions", and spend most of the year on the road. |
| 1923 | Irene files for divorce. |
| 1925 | Irene sells Greystone to the Sigma Chi Alumni Association. |

Written by John Foote '74. He is president of the Sigma Chi Greystone Foundation and a distant relative of Irene Castle.