

S.C. Wells' Home - East Main Street

by Lynne Belluscio

Built in 1923, by Carl Wells, this impressive home was designed by noted architect and landscape designer, Harold Olmsted. Carl Wells had inherited his father's patent medicine business which was located on Church Street in the Shiloh building, (now known as the *Pennysaver* building). His father's home was a large Italianate house, known as "Dreamland" which stood south of this house. Carl's father died in 1897, and Dreamland burned to the ground in 1919.

Harold Olmsted was born in 1886 in Buffalo. He was the nephew of John and Elizabeth Olmsted who lived on East Main Street in LeRoy. He attended Harvard and studied liberal arts, fine arts and architecture. After graduation, he spent 18 months riding a bicycle around Europe and Africa. When he returned to Buffalo, he exhibited paintings and sketches of his travels in a one-man show at the Albright Art Gallery.

Olmsted worked for a variety of well-known architectural firms, and although he was never a licensed architect, he was much in demand – both for his architectural work as well as landscape design. When Carl Wells asked him to design a new house on East Main Street to replace Dreamland, Olmsted gathered all of Wells ideas. Later he wrote: "I started

actual sketches and drawings. I remember working on them in the attic bedroom of my Bryant Street house and finally hitting on the idea of a model house. This I made in cardboard (one of the first I think to do so), some three or four feet long and 18 inches high. This I put together with brass paper clips that I might take it apart and transport it, by train to LeRoy and how proud I was to set it up ..."

Olmsted commented that the plans for the house were "long" and yet, Wells insisted on adding an attached garage – something unheard of at the time. Olmsted also noted that Wells believed that "all people were created equal" and as such are deserving of a bathroom "all to themselves." Olmsted remarked that the additional bathrooms made it necessary to remove an upstairs hall. Olmsted created a large living room porch with cast iron supports.

Olmsted went to the old Buffalo Foundry on Broadway in



Dreamland - Home of Schuyler Wells - destroyed by fire.

Buffalo and rummaged through the old wooden foundry patterns and took them to the Fiene Foundry in Buffalo and had the iron supports cast for Wells' house.



118 East Main Street circa 1930.



Cast iron pillars on back porch.

