

## The Swiss Inn of Vevay, An Old Landmark

JULIE LE CLERC KNOX

The old Swiss inn of Vevay was seriously damaged by fire August 11, 1943. Five brick thick in parts, the walls are still intact and the firemen assert as solid as ever. The roof was destroyed and some of the interior badly gutted but not beyond repair. This left this historic old town, a mecca for tourists, without a hotel—a serious condition.

For a century the inn has been the social center of the community. It was established in 1833 by Robert Le Clerc whose father, Pierre Louis Le Clerc, and mother came from France. Robert Le Clerc was assisted in this founding by his French-Swiss bride, daughter of Monsieur and Madame Jean Morerod. The latter was a sister of the Dufour brothers who founded Vevay in 1802; Morerod was a soldier of Napoleon and fought at Marengo. After the death of her husband in 1856, Mrs. Julie Elise Le Clerc conducted the inn until 1894, a year before her death. The original building was added to until it grew, like "The Chambered Nautilus," into the present three-story brick building of forty or more rooms.

A clarion-voiced bell in the cupola regularly summoned boarders to meals and so regular was it that the people set their timepieces by it. It was often borrowed, either with or without permission, to assist at charivaris and Halloween pranks, but woe to the luckless wight who failed to return it in time for its matutinal duties. The old bell rang out the old year and rang in the new; it tolled defiance when Fort Sumter fell, sounded taps for Lincoln, and welcomed home the heroes of the Civil War.

The old register lists some nationally known names. Among them are Henry S. Lane, who helped to make Lincoln President; Benjamin Harrison, then campaigning for governor; Daniel Voorhees, "tall sycamore of the Wabash"; "Blue Jeans" Williams, once governor of the state; William H. Venable, historian and humorist; James Whitcomb Riley; and Thomas Marshall.

For years the hospitality of the old inn was renowned. The place was known up and down the river as "The House of Candles" for there was no night clerk, and the drummers arriving on the night boats were accustomed to light them-

selves to bed with tapers left for that purpose on the desk in the "gentlemen's sitting room." This custom offered a chance for free lodging to those inclined to abuse a trust by an early, unostentatious flitting. No doubt many an errant lodger arose betimes and "silently stole away."

Cincinnati and Louisville newspapers often published reminiscences of the old-time traveling men appreciative of the old Le Clerc House, its hospitality, candles, French cookery, and its presiding genius, "Aunt Julie," as she was generally called. The spacious double parlors were a social center over which Mrs. Le Clerc and her daughters dispensed a lavish hospitality. Every evening the black hair chairs and sofas were filled with the elite of the town.

The traditions of the inn have been carried on for the past fifteen years by the present owner, Mrs. E. P. Downey, but she has now decided to retire. Thus this place, so long a friend to the public, seems abandoned to the luckless fate of a filling station or some such deterioration unless a champion arises to put it on its feet again as a hotel. "It takes a heap of livin' to make a home" and surely this old house deserves that name and a chance to continue its well-proven usefulness to Vevay and community.

## An Interesting Old Home of Vevay, Indiana

JULIE LE CLERC KNOX

Visitors of Vevay, a little town of Swiss origin in Switzerland County, always seem surprised to find so many antiques in the various old homes. One of the most notable of these interesting homes is that of Dr. and Mrs. R. M. Copeland. Having been collectors for years, they have added many antiques to those they inherited.

Recently, they sold the large brick house on Main Street and purchased from Mrs. Adelaide Fairbanks Causey an intriguing six-room bungalow on Market Street on the overhanging bank of the Ohio. This cottage was built almost one hundred years ago by Thomas Armstrong, one of the most substantial pioneers prominent in social, civic, and political movements. He was one of the first tavernkeepers of the place, and the house where he conducted the inn is still in good repair which proves he excelled as a builder. He served