Sterling Park-8 Cool Acres for Stratford Children to Roam!
Dream-Like Home, Left By Will, to Be Dedicated in October

A Huge and Distinctive Program Is Under Way

It’s the House Where Cordelia Sterling and Her Brother, Who Gave $30,000,000 to Yale, Lived: Hundreds Play on Grounds; Committees Forming

BY ETHEL BECKWITH

A BEAUTIFUL thing is happening in Stratford. It’s as if some Utopian -- someone who has both brains and ideals - rubbed his eyes to suddenly see his dream come true. So swiftly has it come true that I confess I felt like a Rip Van Winkle when I drove to Stratford Saturday afternoon and got in the way of I don’t know how many children’s indoor and outdoor activities at the Sterling Home on Broad Street.

How long had this been going on? Had I been sleeping 20 years? Where did all these children come from and who or what was responsible for the invasion of joy to the long-quiet Sterling mansion?

Cordelia Sterling’s House

Here in this red-brick house, with eight acres of rolling lawns and ancient, generously shading trees, where Miss Cordelia Sterling was born, spent her philanthropic life (in the manner of her family) and at last merely closed eyes in her untroubled face-in this house had lived her brother, John Sterling, whose will left millions to Yale university.

Here, then, supplanting the tranquil life of more than a generation all through the house and all over the fine lawn, are hundreds of youngsters who, well, they aren’t tranquil at all. Today the place belongs to them.

Dedication in October

This has been modestly going on, I learned, since July 5, yet enough children have come to Sterling House to make the recent Doll Parade there a surprising success. Meanwhile, the dozens of activities of the house are branching out-the Junior Art league and the concert pajamas leading-and formal dedication is planned for early October.

In Memory of Her Father

The gift is in memory of Miss Sterling’s father, Capt. John W. Sterling, who was born in what is now Bridgeport in 1796, went to sea at the age of 14, became captain at 21 and sailed the oceans of the world until 1835, when he retired from the sea, purchased property which now forms the principal part of the Sterling Homestead and lived there until his death in 1866.

He married in 1836 Mary Judson of Stratford, who died in 1838. Their grandson, Sidney Wetmore, now lives in Litchfield. In 1839, Captain Sterling married Catharine Tomlinson Plant of Stratford and their three children, Catherine (Mrs. Rufus William Bunnell), John and Cordelia were born and brought up at the Sterling Homestead, and were pupils at the old Stratford Academy.

Labor of Love to Bunnells

This is a labor of love to which Sterling Bunnell, nephew of Miss Sterling, is devoting himself both in the interest of Stratford and in the spirit of the interest of the will.

Mr. Bunnell, son of Rufus Bunnell and an internationally known engineer who made a survey of the United States at the request of the British War Cabinet, has relinquished personal business in order to see the project safely on its feet. The enthusiasm and the planning, indeed, at the Bunnell home, are the quality to be found only in the camp of a couple of winning generals. The entire project, the writer happens to know, was the plan of Mr. Bunnell, which he suggested to Miss Sterling.

Wish No Personal Honors

Yet they do not wish to be personally identified with the project. “We want to see it developed to the greatest possible usefulness to Stratford,” Mr. Bunnell said.

To that end, the Board of Trustees and other directing voices still to be chosen, will represent every humanitarian group in the town. Already, the board includes persons of such standing as:

Sammis, Ireland on Board

Town Manager Donald Sammis, Supt. of Schools Ward F. Ireland, the Rev. F. Stanley Selleck, Mrs. Loyal Y. Graham, Dr. E.H.J. Hennessy, Mrs. Louis I. Snyder, B.V. Koodruff, Mrs. Thomas Clinton and Bailer Burritt, who directed a similar project in Monmouth county, New Jersey, last year and is a descendant of the Stratford Burritts.

H. Leroy Lewis is on the board. Also, Mrs. Arthur Wheeler, James Wales, Theodore Kreuger, Bertram Goodhue, Mrs. Wales and Anthony Marinoccio. Others are to be invited to the board and an all-women’s advisory committee is being formed.

Art and Music - In Action

And today, while its “constitution” is still in the making, the Stratford dream has sprung into vigorous action. For instance with Carroll Meeks chairman of the art committee, Mrs. Austin Cooke has gone ahead and organized a JUNIOR ART LEAGUE -- which, if you please, is planning nothing less than a puppet show at Sterling Home.

Mrs. Snyder For Concerts

Music? Mrs. Snyder, a composer, and former president of the Wednesday Afternoon Music club, announces plans for an open air concert next Sunday afternoon. There are but the initial gestures in what could hardly go wrong as not only an extremely useful center for Stratford but one that will bring distinction to the town.

Dramatics, too, are in the offing - and so many other things - to be continued.