The Ivinson Mansion is one of the primary landmarks of our city. Today it stands in grand stature in the full city block between 2nd and 3rd Streets and 4th and 5th Streets and was adopted by the Laramie County Historical Society in 1970. The elegant home of the Laramie Plains Museum. The life of this magnificent structure can be told in four distinct phases. The mansion first served as the family home of Jane and Edward Ivinson and their adopted daughter Margaret Ellen (Maggie). This first phase lasted from 1892 to 1897. The Ivinson’s expansion of the mansion during the years 1897 to 1921 when they moved into the New Hall, the home the Wyoming Episcopal Diocese’s Jane Ivinson School for Girls. The third phase, lasting from 1957 to 1972 was the time of the mansion’s neglect and deterioration. The fourth and current phase started with the purchase of the mansion in 1972 by the Laramie Plains Museum Association as a home for its collection.

The Ivinson Family Residence

The elegant mansion was built in 1892 for Edward and Jane Ivinson, one of Laramie’s most notable pioneer couples, as a classic Queen Anne style residence. The lavish house was built twenty years later their 1868 arrival on an early passenger train into Laramie City. Mr. and Mrs. Ivinson were one of the early couples who invested both entrepreneurial ventures and cultural development in their new community, two critical elements necessary for a town to succeed. The Laramie Republican reported, “Few persons have more closely associated their lives with the intimate life of the community than have she and her husband. They came when Laramie was so new that there was not a wooden building here, and, with the exception of brief intervals, they have made their abiding place here.” The Ivinsons’ claim title to the property was issued in 1876. The property to the Cathedral Chapter of the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming. Completion in 1893 until Mr. Ivinson moved out in 1921, it served as their principal residence. In 1921 Edward formally deeded the property to the Cathedral Chapter of the Episcopal Diocese of Wyoming.

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Mary Mountain

By John Nutter with assistance from Mary Mountain

The Historic Ivinson Mansion is one of the primary landmarks of our city. Today it stands in grand stature in the full city block between 2nd and 3rd Streets and 4th and 5th Streets and was adopted by the Laramie County Historical Society in 1970. The elegant home of the Laramie Plains Museum. The life of this magnificent structure can be told in four distinct phases. The mansion first served as the family home of Jane and Edward Ivinson and their adopted daughter Margaret Ellen (Maggie). This first phase lasted from 1892 to 1897. The Ivinson’s expansion of the mansion during the years 1897 to 1921 when they moved into the New Hall, the home the Wyoming Episcopal Diocese’s Jane Ivinson School for Girls. The third phase, lasting from 1957 to 1972 was the time of the mansion’s neglect and deterioration. The fourth and current phase started with the purchase of the mansion in 1972 by the Laramie Plains Museum Association as a home for its collection.

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What Does the Museum Have Going This Summer?

There are weddings every weekend on the beautiful East Lawn.

Receptions in the Stunning Alice Hardie Stevens Event Center.

The Museum is OPEN full time hours: 10:00 to 4:00 and Saturday afternoons 1-4:00.

Junior Docents are back to give inspiring guided tours to our visitors.

Two Tea on Tuesdays have been held; more happens July 19 and is SOLD OUT!

Art Fest on the Ivinson Lawn is Statehood day, July 10th, 10:00 to 3:00.

Two main events that the Wyoming Museum of History is excited to share are Art Fest and Statehood Day. Art Fest is Statehood day, July 10th, 10:00 to 3:00. Art Fest is a celebration of the arts and features artists, authors, and friends of the museum. This event is free to the public and offers a variety of activities including live music, art demonstrations, and interactive exhibits. On July 10th, the museum will host a special event called Statehood Day. This event celebrates the day Wyoming became a state and features history presentations, cake, and a special exhibit on Wyoming's history. For more information, please visit the museum's website or contact the museum directly.

There will be 50th Anniversary Commemorative Ivinson Mansion book & Lap top out in time for the August Evening.

Ivinson Mansion has been a part of Wyoming's history for 50 years. To celebrate this milestone, the museum will host a special event called the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Ivinson Mansion book & Lap top out in time for the August Evening. This event will feature a special edition of the Ivinson Mansion book and a laptop showcasing stories of the mansion's history. The event will also include a tour of the mansion and a chance to meet with museum staff to learn more about the mansion and its history. For more information, please visit the museum's website or contact the museum directly.

The Wyoming Museum of History is excited to announce two main events that the museum is planning for this summer: Art Fest and Statehood Day. Art Fest will take place on July 10th, 10:00 to 3:00, and will feature a variety of activities including live music, art demonstrations, and interactive exhibits. Statehood Day will be celebrated on July 10th as well, and will feature history presentations, cake, and a special exhibit on Wyoming's history. For more information, please visit the museum's website or contact the museum directly.

In its interior, the mansion reflects the Queen Anne style with a multi-story living space, rooms which open into each other (rather than being separated by hallways), intricate wood trim, fireplaces lined with glazed tiles, a prominent wooden staircase, and ornate metal doors with stained-glass panels. An extra special feature is the grand staircase. The staircase is an extraordinary piece of craftsmanship, with intricate carvings and elaborate details that make it a focal point of the mansion.

In the middle of the mansion is a large, circular tower. The tower is adorned with a clock and a weathervane, and it provides a commanding view of the surrounding area. The tower is also home to a series of rooms, each designed to reflect the style of its time. The rooms include a ballroom, a music room, and a library, each with its own unique features and furnishings.

The mansion’s home property was not financially endowed. However, given to the Episcopal Diocese for use as a school for girls, as the 37-year era of the boarding school came to a close in 1957, the Diocese found it increasingly difficult to care for the high-maintenance property. Transportation to and from Laramie became critical and interest in a school for girls dropped. For a time, the Episcopal church maintained the house as a temporary residence for visiting dignitaries and conferences, but that was dropped in the mid-1960s. University professors and other boarders helped sporadically, but deterioration continued, and church administration dropped the idea of using the house for housing purposes. Struggles continued, and even with the donations from Mrs. Augusta Haley Ivinson to a park and hospital, and a dormitory. The girls attended the University of Wyoming Secondary Training School (affectionately known as “Prep” by students and staff) for academics, and received religious, moral, department, music, dance, physical and social education (and constant supervision). The house was made perfect for female students living outside of town on ranches and in smaller locales in the Rocky Mountain region to have a place to attend school.

The Laramie Plains Museum Association, led the community in a drive to save the historic property. Her goal was to provide a more spacious home for Laramie girls and others living in remote regions, where it is impossible to procure high school or junior high school instruction. This was a great opportunity for the Ivinson Mansion. The mansion was a happy, craky old mansion with ghostly residents. By the end of the 1960s, Diocese officials announced that they were interested in selling the property and began negotiating with businesses and speculators to sell the full square block for the creation of modern apartment buildings and parking spaces. It seemed that the beautiful and historic house was doomed to be demolished.

In the fall of 1972, volunteers began moving artifacts into the mansion and in early 1973 the museum was officially opened as Alice Hardie Stevens was honored for her efforts. The reception hall was named in her honor and became the museum’s main event space.

The Laramie Plains Museum remains in the Ivinson Mansion and on the distinctly distinguished property. It is now known as The Laramie Plains Museum and offers a variety of exhibits and programs to celebrate the history of the Laramie area. The museum is open to the public and offers a variety of programs and events throughout the year. For more information, please visit the museum’s website or contact the museum directly.
Executive Director, Mary Mountain was one of those learning the ropes from the Tea Ladies when she and Stevi Patterson were new as volunteers in 1998. She remembers helping to carry dishes up and down from the 2nd floor of the Alice Hardie Stevens for each Tea. The kitchen then had no extra room to store the vintage cups, saucers and teapots.

This photo captures our early Tea Room always packed to its brim. Service of Teas goodies was from the north wall of the room, with attendees standing in line with their plates. (With the Alice Hardie Stevens Center transformation, we now can accommodate double the amount of guests so much of the delectable foods are served to the tables on tiers. You can see Alice Freeman playing harp in the back near the large glass block window that was there prior to the historic 1910 back bar that now sits on that wall.

Alice Silver, Judy Knight and Dan Nelson pose on the old stage with the artifacts to be used for a Tea program.

The Ivinson Mansion property and its enhanced facilities make it the perfect place for such special events. We had 27 weddings from May through September and we're not done yet!

The ladies pictured were the core creators of what we now know as Tea on Tuesdays. Esther Kelley, Elinor Mullens, Sally Young, Win Bessey, Carolyn Nelson and Margaret Dickman worked together to develop these charming events in an effort to raise funds to help with the curatorial work and needs of the young museum. The idea for special Teas came as the group was preserving the old Girls School scrapbooks. They saw the tea afternoons held in the Ivinson Mansion drawing room on Tuesdays for the girls to learn Tea and serving etiquette. These lovely women taught all of us that same style and grace (and great food) as they set the high standards for our elegant sweets, savories, and very successful Tea tradition.

LEFT: Marilyn Sinclair and LPM Curator, Konnie Cronk help our guest find their tables. RIGHT: Executive Assistant, Amy Allen is the wizard behind the reservation system so that our guests can gather with their friends. We’ve continued to learn how best to make use of the new, expanded space in the Alice Hardie Stevens Center and our attending ladies have been patient with us. The Teas have always been fully created, served and cleaned up by volunteers for the benefit of
My college boyfriend and I would frequently walk by the Ivinson mansion. We soon realized that it was deserted (some would even say “haunted!”). We’d walk about the property and discovered, on the front porch, a broken wicker chair and a wooden stump. Here we’d sit for hours, holding hands, and dreaming as young lovers do.

Our favorite scenario was pretending to be Mrs. and Mrs. Ivinson. Instead of a broken chair and a stump, we’d be sitting on an elegant porch swing, dressed in our finest attire. My evening dress was of pink sateen-silk with an off the shoulder necklace and trimmed in lace a tiny pink roses. I had a matching fan with ostrich feather to catch the evening breezes. My beau, as Mr. Ivinson, was in a ruffled linen shirt and fancy, cobalt brocade vest (to match his eyes, I liked to think.) The vest had a pocket for his father’s gold watch. Matching herringbone trousers and jacket and a beaver fur top hat completed his attire. We imagined being served chilled drinks and tiny finger sandwiches from a silver tray by our faithful butler, Filmore. Never having enough nerve to enter the mansion, we’d speculate about the floor plan. If we were to live there, we would need large living and dining rooms to accommodate our friends and families when visiting. Were there enough bedrooms and bathrooms as well? Was there really a ballroom on the third floor?

One day in the fall of 1966, age 18, on my way from Safeway back to UW, I entered the abandoned Ivinson Mansion through the unlocked front door. Everywhere I stepped there was a thick layer of broken glass and remnants of broken furnishings. The image that remains most vivid over the years is the elaborate surround-shower in the master bathroom. The only two glass windows then remaining undamaged, high above in the main stairwell, helped me appreciate how beautiful the place must have been at one time. When I left through the front door, I notice that its detailed filigree brass door knob set was intact and in perfect condition, including matching interior and exterior backing plates. Only the keyed tumbler was missing. Using my pocket knife as a screwdriver, I removed the entire set, screws and all, and put everything in the Safeway bag along with my groceries.

In California, in 1977, I installed the hardware set on the door of my circa 1919 Dutch Colonial home in Woodland. I later sold the house to a friend, which included the Ivinson hardware. I visited Laramie around 2000 and took my first nostalgic tour of the restored mansion. Back in California, I told the owner of the Dutch Colonial that whenever he sold the house, I wanted to be able to remove the hardware. This came to pass in 2006. I wrote a letter to the museum sometime after, explaining my 1966 deed, and promising to redeem myself on my next trip to Laramie. I handed over these items today, 16 July 2011, to your gracious and genuinely appreciative staff. Thanks for keeping history alive!

Mary’s Note: I was truly touched that Mr. MacDonald so cautiously contacted me, asking if I wanted this original piece of history he had absconded with so long ago. A piece of our history that Mr. and Mrs. Ivinson touched again and again! Of course I did. I will always be grateful for friends of the Ivinson Mansion, like Doug, who give items that help us elevate the history we showcase here. The beautiful brass hardware that Doug returned is mounted on a table top stand near the front door from where he removed it, and is touchable by every visitor who comes to the Mansion. It is an excellent slice of our history. Thanks, Doug!