



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Brown Oaks

ARCHITECTURE

Circa 1923, The Flavius H. Brown House is an outstanding example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture of the early twentieth century. The house is a two-story modest 2,400 square foot home situated on a park-like knoll covered with white oak trees that is visible from downtown Summersville.

Exterior

The house sits on a large rough-cut sandstone foundation with tooled mortar grapevine joints that gives the sandstone a distinctive look. Stone for the west and north steps of the house was quarried locally on the edge of Arbuckle Creek near the northwest boundary of the grounds. The house is a wood-frame structure clad in horizontal German clapboard siding with corner and frieze boards. The hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles and has an unusual system for draining rainwater. Instead of gutters and downspouts, the slope kicks out at the cornice line with scuppers that pour rainwater directly into stone trenches on the ground. There are two corbeled brick chimneys. Windows are double-hung sashes, with six lights over one on the second floor and nine lights over one on the first floor, arranged in groups of three. The two-story gabled portico with a fanlight in the gable pediment and the two-story Doric columns were additions made in later years that gives the front facade more of a neoclassical appearance.

The Carriage House was completed in 1934, near the end of the Great Depression when Dr. Brown's financial situation enabled him to do so. The foundation is constructed of brick manufactured by the Walker Family of Summersville and was laid by Jim Walker. Using salvaged materials from the old Victorian house that originally stood on the property, Dr. Brown and his sons took on the task of building the remainder of the structure. It utilizes a Jenny Lind style construction method on the second floor. (The walls have no studs or internal framing. Vertical planks are attached to the sill and a ribbon board at the top around the perimeter of the building. These vertical plank walls act as structural elements that support the roof.) Like the main

house the exterior is clad in clapboard and has a hip roof with asphalt shingles.

The original building had three parking bays that were later extended on the front to accommodate the larger cars of the day. The rooms on the second floor, accessed by an exterior staircase, were used during the warmer months as bedrooms for the older boys when family or guests came for extended visits. A wood shed was attached to the back of the building. During the restoration the doors on the parking bays were replaced with faux doors and an entry door was added to make the Carriage House more useable for rental and event purposes.

The well house is a period appropriate reproduction placed around the original well casing that the family used for years. An antique wooden rope pulley hangs from its ceiling. The reproduction well house was installed as an Eagle Scout project in 2006 to complement the historic property.

Interior

The house floor plan is symmetrically balanced around a center hall on each of its two stories. The Entry Hall contains the main staircase plus a back foyer on the first floor and a bathroom on the second floor. Under the main stairs is a small staircase that leads to a full basement with a storm cellar entrance in its foundation.

The first floor consists of a drawing room, the central hall, a gathering/dining room, kitchen, butler's pantry and a handicap restroom. The Drawing Room is the largest space in the home, running its full depth. It has a fireplace, long window seats on each end and two doors that lead to the large side porch with hand-cut stone stairs that access the side yard. The substantial staircase to the second floor is located just inside the front entry. The Gathering Room to the right of the center hall, has a fireplace flanked by two built-in china cabinets and a set of three foot wide pocket doors that can be closed to ward off drafts from the front door and hallway. The Kitchen and Butler's Pantry were stripped of their 1980s' updates and have been replaced with an "unfitted" style more appropriate to the period. A handicap restroom was added next to the kitchen when the house was undergoing its restoration.

The second floor has four bedrooms that radiate off the central hallway. During the early years, three of the bedrooms each contained two double beds to sleep the large family. Every bedroom has one small closet, typical of simpler times, to hang several people's wardrobes. The original bathroom is located at the back of the central hall and still retains its wall-mount sink. Dr. Brown and his wife raised nine children in this limited space.