

Public Making Final Visits to Lavish Home

Illustrated on Page B

It's time to say good-by to the house of the seven fireplaces and the secret panels.

All of the past week people have been doing just that. They have been filing in, one and two and three at a time, at the house at 2425 Wilshire Blvd.

Age of Elegance

Some came to say farewell to another age, an age of lavishness and ostentation and elegance.

Some came to breathe a sigh of remembrance of parties and balls forgotten by all but the few.

Some came in recollection of the hours of drudgery and delight spent in the years the house was part of the Los Angeles County Art Institute, and some to mark in their minds the years when it was the home of the Historical Society of Southern California.

And some came to carry away—at a price—hand-carved ornamentations and pieces of marble.

Wreckers at Work

As the curious and the nostalgic went past the 4-inch-thick carriage-entrance door on the east, the wreckers nibbled away at the servants' quarters at the rear on the north.

And as the visitors oh'd and ah'd at the 70-foot expanse of the twin drawing rooms, the screech of crow-bar and the pounding of the wrecking hammers echoed the end of an era long dead.

It was the era when wealthy Edwin T. Earl reigned as political entrepreneur and newspaper publisher.

He built the house in 1898.

He died in it Jan. 2, 1918.

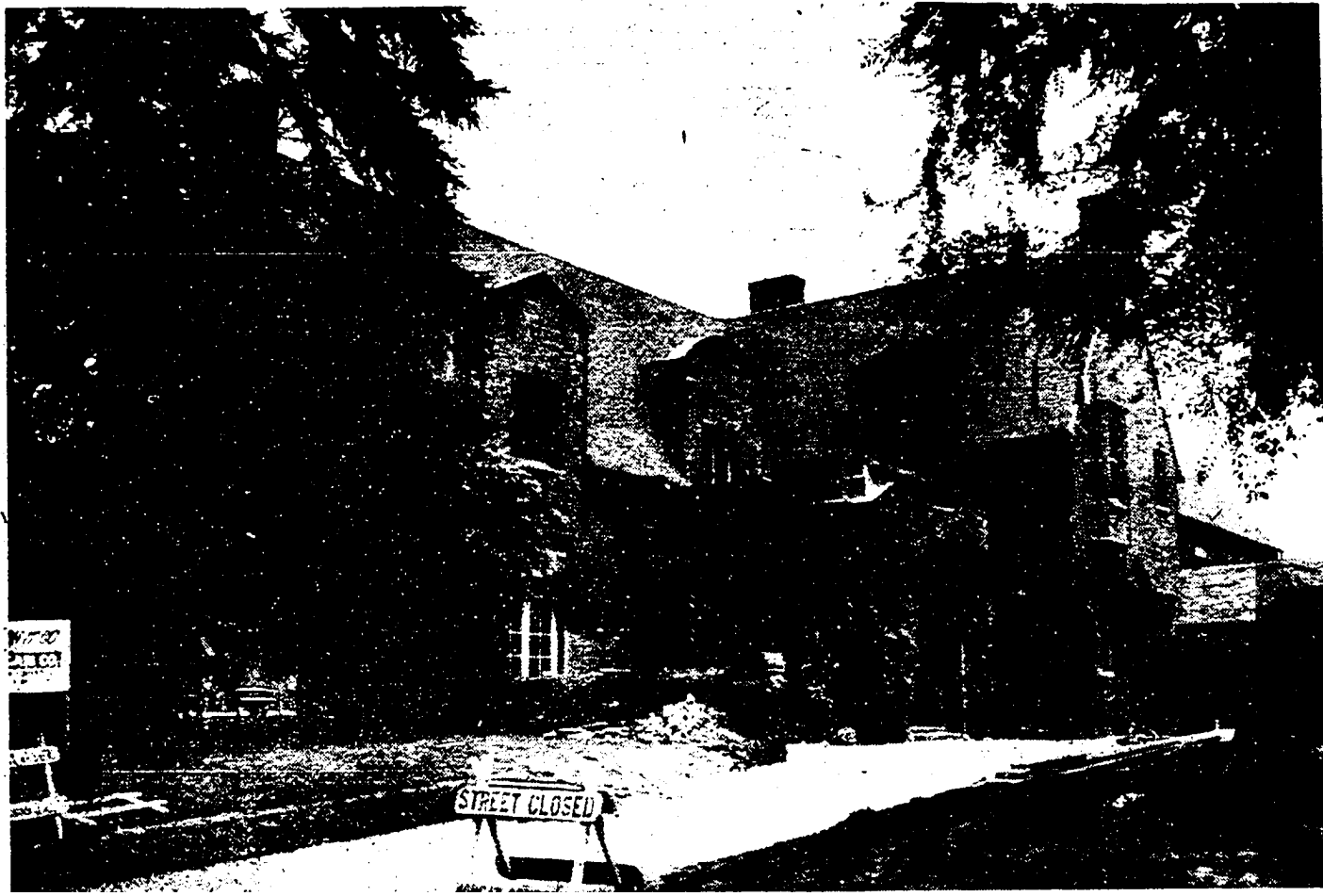
During those 20 years the house was the scene of many a social and political event.

McKinley Visited It

It was visited by at least one President, McKinley, and at least two Governors,

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Wrecking Crew Claims Elegant Edwin Earl Mansion on Wilshire



AGE OF ELEGANCE — During the past week the curious and the nostalgic have been paying a last visit to the old mansion built on Wilshire Blvd. in 1898 by millionaire Edwin T. Earl. County Art Institute building will take its place.

Story on Page 8.

Times photos by Howard W. Maxwell

WILSHIRE HOME

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George C. Pardee and Hiram Johnson.

Into it came many of the local political leaders of the period, for Earl long was famed as the political boss of the time.

"I remember it as a boy of 6 and older," said Guy Chaffee Earl Jr., nephew of Edwin T. Earl. "I was in it many times."

To him it was the acme of all that was elegant and wonderful in a home.

Walter H. Hansen, sales manager for the Horgan Co., which is wrecking the house, had shown with some pride a secret panel found beside one of the fireplaces.

At Least Six More

Guy Chaffee Earl Jr. laughed about that panel.

"There are at least six more in that drawing room," he said. "There are some in the library and a whole series in the little room across the hall from the library. Every one of the three master bedrooms has several."

He said he and other children used to search for them, each armed with a hairpin.

"We got 25 cents," he said, "for every one we could find and open."

Edwin T. Earl, a farm boy from Red Bluff, already had made millions when he built the house at 42. He had invented the refrigerated freight car, built up and sold the huge Earl Fruit Co., invested in Union Oil Co. and in other big-scale businesses.

The house was built in an age of gas lights and log fires. Four huge chimneys rise from it. There was a fireplace in every major room—dining room, library and each of the twin drawing rooms on the ground floor and one in each of the three master bedrooms upstairs.

Redwood Panels

The windows were leaded. The fireplaces were of cut stone. Window and door trims were of red sandstone. Fireplace trim usually was of marble.

The downstairs rooms all were finished in redwood panels, some of them several feet across. The ornamentation was hand-carved. Exposed beams were of huge dimensions, sometimes a foot or more across.

The grand staircase had steps 8-feet wide. The treads and rails were of oak. The hallway was 30 feet from the bottom step to the rear of the landing.

Bathroom appointments were principally in marble. An oddity of the house was that it had no bathtubs, but there was a tiled or marble-lined shower for every bedroom.

The principal master bed-

room was as large as some of today's tract houses, with a dressing room as large as some of today's bedrooms.

Guy Chaffee Earl today remembers it as a house of brocade and velvet draperies and of every comfort and delight dear to a youngster—or to his elders.

Neighbor of Gen. Otis

Others remember it as the home of the owner of the Los Angeles Express, the paper Edwin T. Earl bought in 1900, next door to the home of Gen. Harrison Gray Otis, owner of The Times. They remember that the two often were publishing enemies but not always social enemies.

"I remember," said Russell Peck, 71, who sold his Russell Peck Delivery to United Parcel Service in 1924, "seeing Gen. Otis entering the Earl house." Peck in his teen years had been a stuffer and carrier boy for The Times.

Others remembered when the Earl house was built. It was at the far edge of town. Los Angeles then had a population about equal to today's Glendale.

'Nothing but Grain'

"Beyond it," said one of them, "was nothing but grain until you came to where the Town House is now. Then the land dipped and went into a swamp and you were at the end of the world, so far as Los Angeles was concerned."

Wilshire Blvd. in those days started in front of the Otis home at the edge of MacArthur Park, then Westlake Park. It went a few blocks and then died in the swamp.

Opposite Wilshire on the east side of the park was a street then called Orange St. It later became a part of the boulevard.

Edwin T. Earl left a widow and four children.

Sold for \$99,000

Time scattered the family, and the house fell into disuse. In 1938 it was sold for \$99,000 to the county as an adjunct to the art institute.

The famed Otis house became the Otis Art Institute and then the Los Angeles County Art Institute. It was torn down and a new \$500,000 building for the institute was built on the site.

Now the Earl house, in turn, is yielding. It will become the site of an addition to the institute.

Safety Picnic Slated

The ninth annual Safety Leaders Council picnic attended by more than 1000 members will be held from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Thursday at the Pepper Tree Lane area in Griffith Park.