

The County Seat of Hamilton County is twenty five miles southeast of Mt. Vernon on R.460 from Evansville to St. Louis. Route 460 passes the Court House square in McLeansboro, and the story is that almost every stranger who passes stops, backs up, and out come the cameras to take pictures and to ask "what is that anyway?" "What is that" is the old Cloud State Bank and the McCoy Memorial Library, immediately adjacent, formerly the home of Aaron G. Cloud.

THE ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BANK

In 1968, the University of Chicago Press in cooperation with the Illinois Sesquicentennial Commission published "Illinois Architecture From Territorial Times to the Present." The author, Frederick Koepfer with a committee of associates selected, pictured, and described 150 buildings in the State representative of the buildings which "have left their mark" and "tell the story of the strength and dignity, ingenuity and craftsmanship, ambitions and vitality of her people." The Building selected to appear on the cover of the book was the Cloud State Bank in McLeansboro.

THE KOEPER DESCRIPTION OF THE BANK

"Records tell us that the Cloud State Bank was designed by its owner, Chalon G. Cloud, who started his banking business in 1871 and completed his new building in 1882. A contemporary description refers to it as handsome and elegant as any building in Southern Illinois. In 1924, it became the People's National Bank which now uses it as a Directors Room.

"It is representative of the florid Second Empire Style that crossed the Atlantic from France and found its way into vernacular American Victorian. When the Louvre was enlarged in 1852-57, under Napoleon III, it initiated a loosely interpreted revival of the French Renaissance style of the late 16th century as seen in the original Louvre-Tuileries complex. Three of its characteristic features were frequently used in the 19th century version: the square dome, the mansard roof, and the banded column. Evidence of this style can be seen in all the leading cities of Europe."

"Some may dismiss such an example as the Cloud State Bank as architectural millinery, but none will deny its vigor. Its red and white color and assemblage of architectural motifs, make it a splendid example of American Neobaroque."

THE CLOUDS, THE MCCOYS, THE BANK, AND THE HOUSES

There are four buildings in McLeansboro associated with the Clouds and McCoys, the Bank and three large residences. It is obvious that all were designed by the same person. Three people stand out in their history, Aaron G. Cloud, Chalon Guard Cloud, his son, and Mary E. Cloud McCoy, his daughter. The records indicate that Aaron G. Cloud was involved in all four structures. All have design elements which are similar, and curiously, advanced far beyond a general knowledge of planning and craftsmanship. But there is no agreement on the architect or designer.

AARON G. CLOUD

Was born in Dearborn County, Indiana, in 1818. His family moved to Hardin County, Illinois, in 1832, and after attending common schools, he worked as a bookkeeper in Hardin County until 1846 when he went to Lawrenceburg, Indiana, and engaged in the mercantile business. In 1852, he returned to McLeansboro, continuing in the mercantile business until 1876 when he sold the business to devote full time to real estate loans and investments. He prospered and became one of the largest land owners and wealthiest men in Southern Illinois. While in Hardin County, in 1843, Mr. Cloud married Eleanor H. McCoy. Two of their four children survived, Chalon Guard Cloud and Mary E. Cloud.

CHALON GUARD CLOUD

The son, was born in 1846. He attended Asbury College, now DePauw University, earning Bachelors and Masters Degrees in 1870

The daughter, was a lady of considerable artistic ability and interest. She studied art and design in Cincinnati, Boston, and in Europe. She married Chalon Guard McCoy in 1878, a business man in McLeansboro. They had no children; he died in 1915.

THE BANK BUILDING

Early descriptions of the bank building stress its "elegance". Built of hand made red brick and fine white limestone, it was finished in walnut, cherry, and wrought iron. The security measures were incomparable and the safe and vault the largest and strongest in Southern Illinois. The clock in the tower, made in Boston, was installed in 1886, and its 800 pound bell could be heard for miles.

THE HOUSE

Now the Library and originally the home of Aaron G. Cloud and his wife Eleanor, was completed in 1884. On the first floor was the large drawing room, the library, the dining room, and butler's kitchen. The basement contained the main kitchen and servants quarters. The second floor had six large bedrooms, and the third floor a large storage room lined with aromatic cedar. The interior of the house was magnificent with much walnut, cherry, and curly maple wood work. Most notable are the fireplaces in every room with elaborate hand carved mantles, Dutch and English imported tiles, and brass and wrought iron fixtures. It appears that after the death of Mrs. Aaron Cloud in 1886, the McCoys moved in with Mr. Cloud. But he decided to build another house for himself, a large frame house on North Pearl Street. It was completed in 1893; he lived in it only a month before his death.

THE LIBRARY

Mrs. McCoy was interested in a library which had been started in McLeansboro in 1916. Title to the Aaron Cloud house had gone to Mrs. McCoy after her father's death. She died in 1921 and her will provided that her residence and grounds be left to the city for a Library to be known as the Mary E. Cloud McCoy Memorial Library, dedicated to her parents memory. An endowment fund of \$5,000 was included, also instructions that space be made for the McLeansboro Women's Club, and that second floor rooms be rented for income until needed. If the City did not accept, the building was to go to the churches of McLeansboro for use as a social center. The city promptly accepted the offer.

THE BUILDINGS TODAY

The bank stands, ornate and curiosity arousing with a contemporary styled addition joining it north of the old building. The main banking room has been remodeled to provide a large Directors room which also serves as a gallery for local art displays, and contains a number of pictures and statues from the residences. The old bank fixtures, all are stored in the basement and attic, and it would be possible to restore the interior to its original "elegance". It would seem worthy of recognition as a certified historic building, particularly if restored.

The house is admirably adapted for use as the city library and is filled with furniture and objects of art from the home along with a number of very creditable paintings by Mrs. McCoy. The fireplaces and their pictorial tile decorations are unusually fine. McLeansboro can well be proud of these two fine historic Buildings on the southwest corner of the Court House Square.

The Cloud State Bank and McCoy Memorial Library, 26th in our series of places of interest in the history of Illinois were printed by hand from wood blocks cut from tulip wood. We have had much assistance in securing historical material from Mr. Robert W. Evans, Director of Public Information, and Dr. Robert M. Sutton of the State Historical Survey at the University. Mr. Evans formerly lived in McLeansboro. Further help came from Judge Charles E. Jones, of the Fifth District Court of Appeals and Judge John D. Daily, Circuit Judge, Second Judicial District, both of McLeansboro; also from

and 1873. Later he served as a Trustee of DePauw, and established prizes in declamation and the C. G. Cloud Alcove in the DePauw Library. He had trained in his father's business, and in 1871 graduated from Business College in Cincinnati. In 1871, he established a banking business in McLeansboro in a small building. In 1881 he built the Hamilton County Bank, now termed the famous Cloud State Bank, and continued his connection with the bank until his death in 1908.

There is no record that Chalon Guard Cloud had any training in design. The record does show that in 1879, the architectural plans for "Hamilton College" may be seen at his home. The college, started in 1874 was closed in 1880, and the buildings never erected. In 1861 he married Emma E. Blades who survived him by thirty six years. They had no children. Their home was an elaborate brick structure a block south of the Bank.

Mrs. Jeannine A. Frederick, Secretary of the Alumni Offices, DePauw University. The present owners of the Bank and the Librarian were generous in showing us the buildings.

The wood cuts were made from pictures of the bank and house which appeared in the May 25, 1900 special supplement of the McLeansboro Times, secured for us by Mr. Evans from Mrs. Blanche Adams, former Librarian in the McCoy Library. The 1900 pictures show numerous details of the bank in particular which disappeared in later modernization programs. We have tried to present the structures as they appeared when the Clouds and McCoys were using them. The older pictures present a degree of landscape beautification which is gone, and we were unable to include the cast iron statue of Mr. Cloud's favorite dog which stands in the yard, and which many viewers have attempted to purchase.

FRED AND BETTY TURNER

CHRISTMAS, 1971
URBANA, ILLINOIS