THE WILCOX HOUSE

By Richard M. Hurst

The Buffalo area possesses a number of unique homes. Some are outstanding architecturally such as those designed by Frank Lloyd Wright. Others are significant for their age, such as the Coit house, which is one of the oldest in Western New York. And, of course, there are many homes which are socially important because of the prestige of the people who lived in them. Several, no longer standing, were of national historical significance, such as the Millard Fillmore home and the Grover Cleveland home. However, there is one local historic house which combines all of these significant qualities and more.

The Ansley Wilcox house at 641 Delaware Avenue is architecturally interesting, socially important, and historically significant. Here took place an event of national importance — one of the country's best known Presidents of the United States was sworn into office in this home.

When Theodore Roosevelt became President in the Ansley Wilcox home on September 14, 1901, it was the second time in history that a President had been inaugurated outside of the nation's capital. The home, now known as the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site, is under the protection of the National Parks Service. Before that event, the site had a varied history which makes a very interesting story.

However, before looking into the colorful and sometimes exciting past of the site, let us consider the events surrounding the assassination of President William McKinley and the succession to the presidency of the dynamic Theodore Roosevelt. It was an event which altered the history of the United States and even affected, to some extent, the history of the world.

In 1901, Buffalo was the site of the Pan-American Exposition, a world's fair and the first exposition to make extensive use of electricity. It generated a great deal of excitement throughout the country. Visitors came from near and far. (For the story of the Exposition, see Adventures Series pamphlet no. VI.)

One of the official visitors was the 25th President of the United States, William McKinley. September 5th, 1901, was declared President's Day at the Exposition. To a crowd of 100,000 people on the fairgrounds, the President delivered an address calling for the reduction of high tariffs.

The next day he toured Niagara Falls and then attended a public reception in the Temple of Music on the fairgrounds. About four in the afternoon, President McKinley was shaking hands with wellwishers in a reception line when Leon F. Czolgosz, a young ironworker from Detroit, approached him. Faking a handshake, he shot the President twice with a small pistol concealed in a handerchief arranged to look like a bandage around his hand.

Buffalo's first ambulance took the wounded McKinley to Emergency Hospital on the Exposition grounds. The President was operated on and then moved to the home of John G. Milburn, Exposition president, where he and his wife had been staying during their Buffalo visit. While vacationing in the Adirondacks, Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt was hurriedly notified. He rushed to Buffalo, where he stayed at the home of his friend, Ansley Wilcox. An edited version of Mr. Wilcox's own report, written in October, 1902, of the days surrounding the tragedy follows:

The people of Buffalo will always have a special interest in the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt, because it was in this city that the awful tragedy occurred which made him President . . . .

The Temple of Music where President William McKinley was shot while attending the Pan-American Exposition.

A little-known photograph of the Wilcox house in winter. What makes it the more interesting is that the man in the sleigh is Ansley Wilcox. The photo of Theodore Roosevelt depicts him in a more candid moment, his somewhat rumpled appearance fitting his vigorous public image well.

. . . Col. Roosevelt was well known to Buffalonians, and he knew the city and its people well, before that memorable week in September, 1901, when he unwillingly became the central figure of the world's gaze. His last previous visit was on May 20th of the same year, when he came here as Vice-President to open formally the Pan-American Exposition, around which all our hopes were then clustering. . . .

Only a little more than a year before this, on Washington's birthday, in 1900, Col. Roosevelt, then Governor, had come to Buffalo and delivered an address on the higher duties of citizenship . . . .

So when, on Friday, the sixth of September, he heard of the shooting of President McKinley at the Pan-American Exposition . . . he hardly stopped to consult anyone, or even to advise anyone of his movements, but simply came to where the trouble was, as fast as a special train could bring him.

It was almost by chance that I met him on Saturday noon, as he drove up to the Iroquois Hotel, and a brief conversation resulted in his coming to my house and stopping there until the following Tuesday. . . .

Those were three terribly anxious days, but on the whole not gloomy. From the first moment of his arrival, and the favorable answers which were made to his questions about the condition of the President — especially after his first hasty call on the family and physicians of the wounded man, at Mr. Milburn's house, the Vice-President seemed possessed with an abiding faith that the wound would not be fatal. . . . If

ever a man desired, yes, longed for, the recovery of another, with all his might, that did Theodore Roosevelt, when he stood in the shadow of President McKinley's threatened death. . . .

So when, on Tuesday, the fourth day after the shooting, everything seemed to be going on well . . . it was thought best that the Vice-President also should go away, in order to impress the public with that confidence in the outcome which everyone then felt. He went to join his family at a remote spot in the Adirondacks, the Tahawus Club, where he expected to stop only a day, and then to take them back to his home at Oyster Bay. His itinerary and addresses . . . were left with me; but no one thought that he would be needed.

In the middle of the night between Thursday and Friday, I was aroused by a message asking me to send instantly for the Vice-President, as the President had suddenly become worse and was in great danger. Then began the vigorous effort to annihilate time and space. A telephone message to Albany put me . . . in direct communication with Mr. Loeb, the Vice-President's secretary. He informed me that the club where Col. Roosevelt probably was at that moment, was some hours beyond the end of rail and telegraph lines . . . that he (Mr. Loeb) would try to reach him quickly by a telegram, to be forwarded by special messenger, and would also go after him on a special train. . . .

It turned out that Col. Roosevelt and his family were staying a day longer in the Adirondacks than he had expected . . . . Being thus detained, on this Friday he had started for a tramp up Mt. Marcy with a guide, before the telegram from Mr. Loeb arrived. The message was sent after him . . . .

He hurried back; as soon as possible got a wagon and drove out over the rough roads to the nearest railway station, in the dark of Friday night . . . .

Saturday, September 14th, about 1:30 p.m., he arrived in Buffalo again, and left the train at the Terrace Station. President McKinley had died early Saturday morning, and he was then the constitutional President of the United States. Naturally there was great excitement in the city, and all precautions were taken for his safety. . . .

No definite plans had been made for swearing him in, and it had not even been settled where this should be done . . . so he was asked to go to my house and get lunch, and wait for further suggestions. But he wanted no lunch, and . . . insisted on starting for Mr. Milburn's house, to make a call of sympathy and respect on the family of the dead President. This was done, and by three o'clock he was at my house again.

Then without any preparation, and almost without announcement,

The historic library shown as it appeared shortly after the inauguration. The photographer was standing in the approximate position that Roosevelt occupied while taking the oath.

the members of the cabinet came down to administer the oath of office. . . .

No one was formally invited or even notified of the ceremony. There was no time for it.

President Roosevelt met them informally in the library, as they came in. The room, not a large one, was far from full, and at the last moment the newspapermen, who were eager for admission, were all let in, but were prohibited from taking any photographs. . . .

The Secretary of War, Mr. Root, was the head of the cabinet among the six who were present . . . . Without any preliminaries, he addressed the new President, calling him "Mr. Vice-President," and on behalf of the cabinet requested him to take the oath of office.

President Roosevelt answered simply, but with great solemnity:

"Mr. Secretary — I will take the oath. And in this hour of deep and terrible national bereavement, I wish to state that it shall be my aim to continue, absolutely without variance, the policy of President McKinley, for the peace and prosperity and honor of our beloved country." . . .

The new President was standing in front of the bay window on the south side of the room. . . . After his response, Judge Hazel advanced and administered the oath to support the constitution and laws. It was taken with uplifted hand. The written oath . . . was then signed. . . . The whole ceremony was over within half an hour after the cabinet had entered the house, and the small company dispersed, leaving only the six cabinet officers with the President, who at once held an informal session in the library.

I was asked to produce the "Messages and Papers of the Presidents" — the volume containing the proclamation by President Arthur of the death of President Garfield, and did so. This was considered in the cabinet meeting, which only lasted a few minutes.

After this meeting the President . . . drafted his proclamation of the death of President McKinley, and appointed Thursday, September 19th, a day of national mourning. . . .

So began President Roosevelt's term of office. The next day, Sunday, came the local funeral ceremonies over his predecessor, and early Monday morning he started with the funeral train for Washington.

Oddly enough, during this historic event Theodore Roosevelt was wearing borrowed clothing. In his headlong rush back from the Adirondacks when President McKinley took a turn for the worse, Teddy did not think of formal clothing for a possible state ceremony. There was not time to purchase clothing, for any presidential changeover would have to be accomplished as quickly and smoothly as possible. Thus, it was decided to borrow appropriate attire. With the dignity of the situation in mind, aides to Mr. Roosevelt judiciously appraised all visitors as to stature and size as they came into the room for the inauguration ceremony. Two gentlemen who were close to Mr. Roosevelt's size were then called aside and discreetly asked to relinquish a coat and trousers for the use of the President. What sort of appeal was used is not known nor are the whereabouts of the two gentlemen during the ceremony.

The Prince Albert trousers were loaned by Mr. James A. Roberts, a local lawyer and political figure. The identity of the second gentleman is not known. In any case, Mr. Roosevelt took the oath for the highest office in the land under very solemn circumstances at a tea table in front of the fireplace in the library of a private home, using a borrowed Bible, and wearing borrowed clothing.

These, then, are the facts behind the events leading up to the inauguration of the second President of the United States to be sworn into office outside of the capital. (The first was President Chester A. Arthur, who was inaugurated in New York City, following the assassination of

James A. Garfield. However, Arthur was re-inaugurated in Washington, D.C., two days later. Roosevelt was never re-inaugurated, and his Buffalo ceremony stands as the official one.)

A description of Roosevelt as a leader closely reflects the mood, the needs, and the desires of the United States at the beginning of the twentieth century. Theodore Roosevelt was the right man at the right time. And he came to his position of leadership at 641 Delaware Avenue in Buffalo.

The story of the property begins, as do the histories of many sites in Western New York, with a survey of the Holland Land Company, conducted by Joseph Ellicott. Mr. Ellicott was an important figure in the development of Western New York, and the Holland Land Company was one of the most famous organizations ever formed for the purpose of land speculation. Originally formed by a group of Dutch investors to cash in on the inexpensive land available for settlement in this area of the state, the Holland Land Company purchased vast tracts including much of what was to become Buffalo. Unfortunately, quick profits were not realized and the original investors eventually sold their interests at a loss.

In any case, Ellicott was an agent of the company and was acting for Wilheim Willink, one of the company's proprietors. Willink sold an undeveloped tract including what was later the Wilcox property, in March, 1809, to Ebenezer Walden. He held the land for the next twenty-seven years without undertaking any major development. This was the period of the beginning of Buffalo when there was much hope for the small village, but no one was quite sure what direction the settlement would take. Land speculation was rampant, and, during this booming time, land was available but investing in it was a gamble.

Walden, who arrived in Buffalo in 1806, became the first licensed lawyer in this section of the state. As an investment Walden began purchasing lots. For the next four decades he continued to build a fortune in real estate holdings. Unlike some investors, he prospered and became a leading figure on the Niagara Frontier. He served on the committee which assessed the losses in Buffalo in 1814 after the British invaded and burned the town during the War of 1812. He later served as one of the four trustees who did the work leading to the incorporation of Buffalo by the State Legislature in 1832.

In October, 1835, Walden sold the property, including the lot upon which the Wilcox house would eventually be built, to Alanston Palmer. Palmer was also a land speculator; however, he was less fortunate than Walden. From 1827 to 1836 Palmer purchased a great deal of property in the Buffalo area including the well-known early landmark, the American

Hotel. He was considered the first millionaire in the city but his role as the "Buffalo millionaire" came to an abrupt end in the financial crash of 1837. Palmer held the Wilcox house property less than seven weeks, selling it in November to Benjamin Rathbun — interestingly enough at a loss.

Rathbun was also a leading financial figure in Buffalo and influential in the city's development. However, as with Palmer's, his personal fortune was destined for disaster. Arriving in Buffalo in 1821, he had by 1835, built up a major business. In fact, he was considered to be the area's leading heavy building contractor. In 1836, he was one of the most powerful men in the city but a tightening money situation reversed his fortunes. As a result of the collapse of his extensive commercial enterprises, he went bankrupt. His properties, including the Wilcox house site, were assigned for $1.00 in August, 1836, to executors which included Millard Fillmore, future United States President.

As an aside, it should be pointed out that the rapid turnover of ownership of this piece of property in 1835 and 1836 was typical of the period. It was symptomatic of the inflationary boom, mentioned earlier, which resulted in the Panic of 1837. This depression was caused, as are most depressions, when investors over-extended themselves. Credit and money became scarce, loans were called in, and the investors, unable to cover themselves, failed financially. Financial conditions changed rapidly, and the property which was to become 641 Delaware Avenue was caught up in these changes.

In June, 1837, the property was once again purchased at a mortgage foreclosure auction by Ebenezer Walden, the same man who had originally purchased it from the Holland Land Company in 1809. This time Walden was instrumental in ushering the property into one of the most interesting periods in its development. He first promised nine acres, including this site, to a projected "Western University" as his contribution to local education, for he was a member of a group holding a charter to establish an institution of learning. Perhaps the time was not right for such an educational institution because, despite the efforts of the committee, nothing came of this project.

Accordingly, in 1838, Walden leased the land to the Federal government as the site of a military post. Thus, the first real development of note on the site proved not to be a campus but rather a garrison, and the military phase of the property was most interesting.

During this period, there was a disruptive civil insurrection in Canada which became known as the Patriots' War. For a time, there was a chance that the United States might become involved and, should that

situation come to pass, this area would become a theatre of military action. It was with this possibility in mind that the government of the United States chose to erect a military post in Buffalo. It was a border outpost. Although the feared intervention never occurred, and the crisis faded, the post continued in existence until 1846.

During this military period the beginnings of the Wilcox House were constructed. Although buried in the interior of the structure, a portion of the commanding officer's quarters is still standing today. These quarters faced east toward the post's parade grounds and what is now Franklin Street. All that physically remains of that rather large military installation — it covered what was to be several city blocks — is the nucleus of 641 Delaware Avenue. That, and perhaps the ghosts of marching soldiers and some famous voices out of the past.

The famous voices during its military phase were many. The house, or more strictly speaking, the officers' quarters, was visited or occupied by many people whose futures held fame and power. Mexican War veteran General Winfield Scott, who was known as "Old Fuss and Feathers" because he favored plumes in his military headgear and insisted on strict enforcement of military regulations, became commandant here.

The "Buffalo Barracks" were also known at the "Poinsett Barracks" and were so named after Joel Robert Poinsett, a one-time guest in the house, who had been in the diplomatic service and who is credited with importing the holiday plant (poinsettia) from Mexico.

Future United States Presidents Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, and Millard Fillmore all visited the quarters. Jefferson Davis once served here, later going on to become the only President of the Confederate States of America during the Civil War.

The need for continuing the military installation never really developed, and in 1846, the lease was terminated, the soldiers left the barracks for the last time, and the property returned to a less exciting civilian existence.

The next year, Ebenezer Walden sold a section of his property in this area, including the Wilcox house lot, to Joseph Masten, a local lawyer and leading politician. Elected Buffalo mayor twice (1843 and 1845), he was later a Superior Court Judge. He evidently did little with the property, selling it ten years later in 1857 to the Oliver Lee and Company Bank of Buffalo.

Two years later the bank went under, and its assets were sold at public auction. The future Wilcox house site was sold to Gilbert L. Wilson, treasurer of the New York Central, which was one of the bank's creditors. Apparently, Mr. Wilson had been attempting to keep the price

Ebenezer Walden, left, the property's first owner, was an early Buffalo leader and land speculator. Albert P. Laning, center, owned the house while he was the law partner of Grover Cleveland. Dexter P. Rumsey, right, well-known in Buffalo's tanning industry, was the father of both wives of Ansley Wilcox. The house remained in the Rumsey Estate for many years.

up on the property during the bidding in order to benefit the creditors but had ended up purchasing it himself. When he died, the property passed on to his son, who sold it to the New York Central Railroad.

In 1863, the railroad sold the site to Albert P. Laning who had served in the State Assembly and was later a state senator. His law partner was Grover Cleveland, who frequently visited the Laning home. Cleveland was to serve as United States President from 1885 to 1889 and from 1893 to 1897.

Mr. Laning made several major physical changes in the structure, including the removal of the main portico from the east side of the house to the west side. Whereas the entrance had originally looked toward the parade grounds of the barracks, and later toward Franklin Street after it was cut through following the demise of the garrison, it now faced onto

Opposite page—Distinguished individuals associated with the Wilcox house property included, clockwise, from the top: John Tyler, there during the Poinsett Barracks period; Millard Fillmore, involved with the property during several of its phases; Grover Cleveland, there socially when the house was owned and occupied by his law partner; General Winfield Scott, Mexican War hero, Commandant of the Poinsett Barracks; Jefferson Davis, assigned to the barracks in his early military career; and Martin Van Buren, there during the military phase of the property. The friendship of Buffalo lawyer and civic leader Ansley Wilcox, center, and Theodore Roosevelt brought historic distinction to the house at 641 Delaware Avenue.

fashionable Delaware Avenue. This alteration was to contribute to the importance of the house in Buffalo's social scene.

Upon Laning's death the house was purchased by Frederick A. Bell, who had made his money in coal mining and was a collector of art and historical works. Two years later in November, 1883, he sold the property to Alfred Bell, who in turn sold it immediately to Dexter P. Rumsey.

With its purchase by Dexter Rumsey, the house entered into the annals of Buffalo Society. Mr. Rumsey was a community leader. His father, Aaron Rumsey, had established several tanneries and leather stores in the early days of Buffalo. After Aaron's death, his sons Dexter and Bronson took over the family business. The business was successful, and Dexter put much of his profits into land investments. Convinced that Buffalo was a city with a future, he purchased much of the undeveloped land which he felt was potentially choice residential property. While some investors considered his purchases chancy speculations, he was ultimately vindicated in his judgment. He bought large holdings in the vicinity of Delaware Park, which were so far out in the country that they became known as "Rumsey's Woods." However, the holdings eventually became prime residential property, proving Rumsey's decision quite prophetic.

Rumsey was married three times. He and his first wife, Mary Coburn, had two daughters, Cornelia and Mary Grace, both of whom at different times were married to Ansley Wilcox. Following the death of Cornelia, and Ansley's subsequent marriage to Mary Grace, the couple lived in the home at 641 Delaware for many years. In fact, when Dexter Rumsey died he left the property and the large house to his daughter, then Mrs. Mary Grace Rumsey Wilcox, for her lifetime use.

It is at the point of his marriage to Mary Grace Rumsey that Ansley Wilcox enters the story of the famous Delaware residence. Oddly enough, Mr. Wilcox never owned the house which is now known by his name. It remained in the Rumsey family and even before the death of Mary Grace, it returned to the Rumsey estate. However, it was during the period that Ansley Wilcox was the head of the house that the most significant events in its history occurred thus insuring the fame of the Wilcox name. It is due to Ansley Wilcox's friendship with Theodore Roosevelt that these events took place where they did.

Ansley Wilcox was born in 1856 in what is now Augusta, Georgia. His father was a northerner living in the South who, at the beginning of the Civil War, accepted a Confederate government commission to England since as a northerner he did not wish to serve in the Confederate Army. In order to reach England it was necessary for Mr. Wilcox to run a Yankee blockade as Southern harbors were patrolled by Northern ships.

Mr. Wilcox was successful in avoiding Northern interference and made his escape without difficulty. However, Mrs. Wilcox and the five children, including Ansley, were to join him at a later date, and by the time they attempted to leave, the war had progressed unfavorably to the South, the North was moving in, and travel proved to be quite dangerous. The six Wilcoxes departed from Augusta, Georgia, on the last train to leave before communications with the outside world were cut off by General Sherman's Army on its famous march to the sea in an attempt to cut the Confederacy in half. After this hairbreadth escape, they made their way west to Jackson, Mississippi, and gradually, as hostilities and travel connections would allow, moved north. They crossed the actual lines of battle at Memphis, Tennessee. However, their danger was not yet over. In order to proceed north, Mrs. Wilcox and the children booked passage on a steamship going up the Mississippi River and during their trip were under fire from both the Northern and Southern armies. It was undoubtedly a journey Ansley never forgot.

However, it did serve to re-establish the Wilcox family in the North. Without that exciting trip, Ansley Wilcox might have remained in the South and never have settled in Buffalo. The family rejoined Ansley's father in Montreal, Canada, and after the Civil War settled in Connecticut. Ansley went to school at Yale University and graduated in 1874 when only eighteen. After an additional year of schooling at Oxford University in England, he returned to the United States and decided to become a lawyer. He started his career in Buffalo in 1882 as a member of the firm of Crowley, Movius & Wilcox. His official career covered 35 years and ended in 1917 when he retired from the firm of Wilcox and Van Allen. Even after that he remained active in the legal field by handling estates and giving legal counsel to civic and charity organizations. He was always very active in local charity causes and helped to found the Buffalo Charity Organization Society.

In his long legal career and with his important position in the community, it was only natural that Wilcox was involved in some interesting and important cases. In one, it was established that directors of national banks could be held personally responsible for neglecting their duties regarding the bank. Another case established that ordinary lithographic prints and posters could be copyrighted, a ruling which had far reaching implications in the field of publishing. Finally, a third important case in which Wilcox was involved established that the civil service law of New York State was constitutional. This decision affected and continues to affect all government workers in New York State.

Wilcox was an independent Republican and was one of a group of

men known as the "mugwumps" who refused to support James G. Blaine, the Republican standard bearer in 1884, and helped elect Democrat Grover Cleveland to the Presidency. Besides being a friend of Buffalo's Cleveland and, obviously, Theodore Roosevelt, Wilcox also claimed a personal friendship with President William Howard Taft.

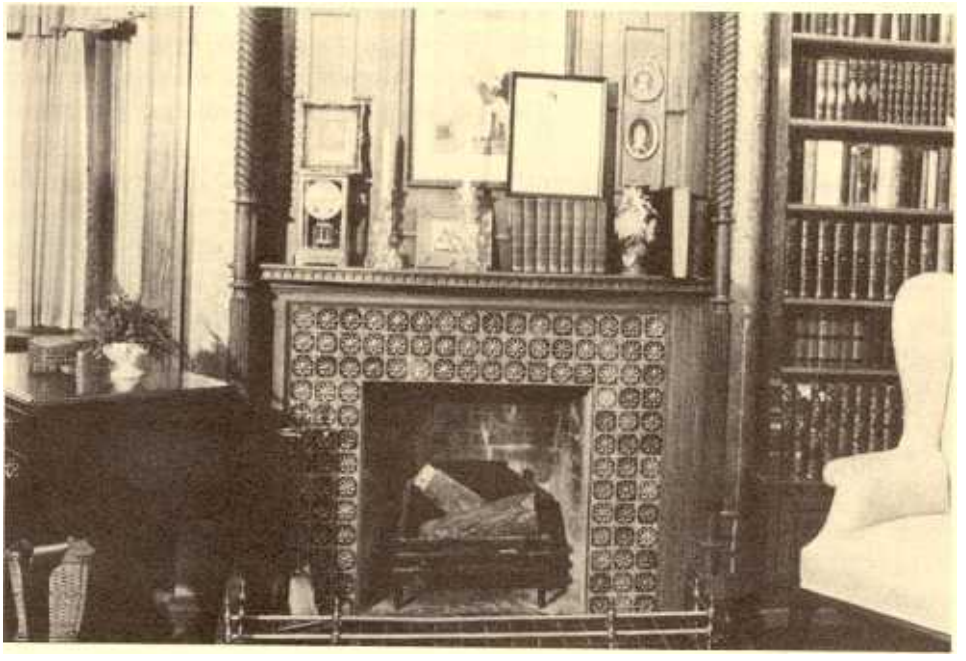
As has been pointed out, during the time in which the Wilcoxes were residing there, the house remained part of the Dexter P. Rumsey estate. Ansley Wilcox died in January, 1930, and Mary Grace passed away in October, 1933. The house, with all of its history, social importance and grandeur, then entered into a period of hard times and decline. No one knew just what to do with it. Important though it was, it had become somewhat of a relic. An attempt was made to raise funds to preserve the house as a public landmark, but the 1930's were years of the Great Depression and the drive was unsuccessful.

For five years the house lay dormant and unoccupied. Then, in 1938, Oliver M. and Kathyrn Lawrence took possession of the house although it remained part of the Rumsey estate. The next year the Lawrences tore out interior walls and converted the structure into a restaurant. To play up the history of the house, the restaurant even featured a star placed in the ceiling over the spot where Roosevelt had stood when taking the Presidential oath. Many people who visited the restaurant can still recall that star and the story it represented even though they can remember little else about the interior of the structure.

The restaurant was successful, and in 1947 the Lawrences purchased the site from the Rumsey estate. However, in September, 1959 the Kathyrn Lawrence Tearoom closed, and the famous house once again found itself in danger of destruction. But this fate was averted by the civic-minded action of the Liberty National Bank of Buffalo in 1963. The bank, which owned the property immediately south of the house, purchased the house in November, 1963 when it became known that a local contractor had demolition plans for the site.

Since the first attempts in the 1930's, the move to preserve this fine home as a major historic site had been gaining strength. Now public opinion was overwhelmingly behind the movement to save the house. After several years of diligent effort under the leadership of Buffalo attorney Owen Augspurger, the movement was a success. It was truly a community project, with the support of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, the Junior League, the Liberty National Bank and other businesses and citizen organizations.

The property became a National Historic Site in November, 1966, and the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site Foundation was incorporated



The library as it appears following restoration. Roosevelt stood before the fireplace during the inaugural ceremonies. The tiles on the fireplace are very close to the originals and had to be specially ordered since no originals could be located.

the next year to oversee the house and its restoration. The building was purchased by the Federal government in May, 1969, and the often endangered house was on its way to receiving proper recognition. Plans for the restoration of the building as a major historic site and cultural center were set in motion. It was not an easy task. The building was gutted on the first floor and the entire structure was in a state of disrepair. However, after several years of diligent research and hard work, the Wilcox house opened in 1971 with three rooms and the main hallway as part of the historical exhibit and the remainder of the first floor and second floor as a cultural center.

The library, which is obviously the most important room historically, is completely restored and appears as it did at the time of the inauguration. The room is a typical leisure room of well-to-do people of the turn of the century. It was used as a reading room, a meeting room for social gatherings including Mrs. Wilcox's "Class" (a well-known women's literary club that met weekly) and as a general area of relaxation. Mrs. Wilcox served tea in the library every day, and the room was used by the entire family much as a living room is used today. The library actually

appears somewhat cluttered by today's standards but undoubtedly was felt to be homey and pleasant by the Wilcoxes. As a period room reflecting social history the library is interesting and would be an attraction in itself even if a major occurrence in United States history had not happened within its walls.

While Mrs. Wilcox apparently made more use of the library than did her husband, he used the morning room for his daily activities. Today the morning room serve as an audio-visual center. It is partially restored. The fireplace and ornate ceiling are particularly noteworthy. In Mr. Wilcox's day, the morning room was referred to as the study. He used it for his business activities whenever he was home and especially during the evenings. As can be gathered from reading about Ansley Wilcox, he was a very active man professionally and in the community. Being hard working and industrious, he evidently thought nothing of bringing not only his work home in the evenings, but also his co-workers! It was in the morning room that these nocturnal work sessions took place. How his co-workers felt about these evening sessions is not known. Amusingly enough, Wilcox would often finish up in the morning room late at night and then decide to go out and water the shrubbery. These incidents were well remembered by the neighbors.

From pictures and the furnishings it seems that the morning room had a more relaxed atmosphere than the library. Its major function was an at-home office for Mr. Wilcox. However, the morning room does have a significance in Theodore Roosevelt's career and in the history of our country. It was in this room that President Roosevelt conducted his first official act as leader of the country. He drafted and issued the proclamation announcing the changeover in leadership and the continuation of normal government processes.

The North Parlor which was used for formal entertaining has been converted to an exhibit gallery and is devoted to exhibits pertaining to the history of the site and the Wilcox family. The main hallway and the front porch have been restored and include appropriate items to give the feeling of the life style of the family at the time of the Inauguration. The dining room was restored and opened to the public in September, 1973.

The 135 year-old Wilcox Mansion was officially open to the public on September 14, 1971. As a National Historic Site it is under the joint jurisdiction of the National Parks Service and the Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural Site Foundation. After a varied history, running the gamut from a military post to a social showcase, from moments of historic grandeur to times of endangered existence, the old house at 641 Delaware Avenue has finally received its just recognition as a major Western New York landmark.