

The James S. Thomson House: Last of Glasgow's Gilded Age Mega Mansions

By James M. (Jim) Denny

The June 10, 2018, tour of the James S. Thomson mansion will give visitors a rare chance to encounter the last surviving "mega mansion" of Glasgow's Gilded Age. At the time the Thomson house was built, 1875-76, there were two other mega mansions in or near Glasgow—Glen Eden, the Benjamin Lewis house, and Eglantine Castle, the mansion of Oswald Swinney. Eglantine Castle and the Thomson house went up during the heady era when post-Civil War Glasgow was experiencing robust growth in its population and economy. In 1878, the world's first all-steel railroad bridge would be built across the Missouri River at Glasgow, which the townspeople hoped would create as bright a future in railroading as the preceding decades had in steamboating.

Despite all these exciting new developments, the money that built the mega mansions was old money. Money made by large-scale tobacco cultivation on extensive antebellum plantations employing many slaves. These fortunes were enlarged by wise investments in tobacco manufacturing, steamboats and shipping, banking and other enterprises that were carried on sometimes at an international level.

During this time, Glasgow had a remarkable class of ambitious and enterprising men and women who were building very fine houses. But at the top of the heap, with the largest fortunes, were Benjamin and James Lewis and W. D. Swinney. Benjamin Lewis died at the dawn of this era but left generous bequests. Swinney, who died during the Civil War, left his large fortune, and extensive landholdings to his son Oswald and granddaughter Berenice Morrison. Berenice had also inherited an even larger fortune from her father, James Morrison, a merchant prince of St. Louis.

Both families were exceedingly generous to Glasgow. The cultural amenities that enabled Glasgow to shine brighter than neighboring communities during the Gilded Age were bankrolled by the large antebellum fortunes amassed by the tobacco millionaires, Swinney and the Lewis brothers. The generosity and surplus capital of the Lewis and Swinney families kept the town's two higher education institutions, Lewis College and Pritchett Institute, afloat for the several decades that they existed. Without continual propping up by the steady streams of Lewis and Oswald Swinney/Berenice Morrison contributions, neither college could have survived for very long on "new money" coming in. The beautiful and remarkable Lewis Library, Glasgow's great-



James S. Thomson

est architectural treasure, would have never been built were it not for a generous bequest of Benjamin Lewis and the efforts of his surviving brother, James. Likewise for the imposing, three-story brick Pritchett Institute, which was erected by Oswald Swinney. This large building came down many years ago to make way for the new Glasgow high school. Lewis College persisted by moving out of smaller downtown buildings into the vacated Glen Eden mansion.

In addition to giving large, the old-moneyed families wanted to live large. So large, in fact, that they built mega mansions to reflect visibly their outsized self-esteem. These houses were larger than most homes previously built in Glasgow, and all reflected the latest fashionable architectural style--the Italianate.

It must be mentioned, of course, that by the 1870s, Glasgow already had plenty of impressive large houses that were built during the 1840s and especially the prosperous decade of the 50s. Many of these fine brick and frame southern style mansions are still standing. These houses could be plenty roomy to meet the needs of large extended families. They could have anywhere from ten to upward of sixteen or more rooms, depending on how large the main blocks and rear additions were. These were old-fashioned southern vernacular Greek Revival houses with symmetrical arrangements of windows and doors across their main facades. Examples that have appeared recently in *BLHQ* are Boscobel, Thomas Shackelford's 1859 house; Sylvan Villa, ca. 1845, the large home built by W. D. Swinney that Beatrice Morrison-Fuller described so lovingly in her reminiscence of plantation life in early Missouri; and Inglewood, built by Thomas Nelson Cockerill in 1857 and later occupied by Oswald Swinney

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and members of the Thomson family.

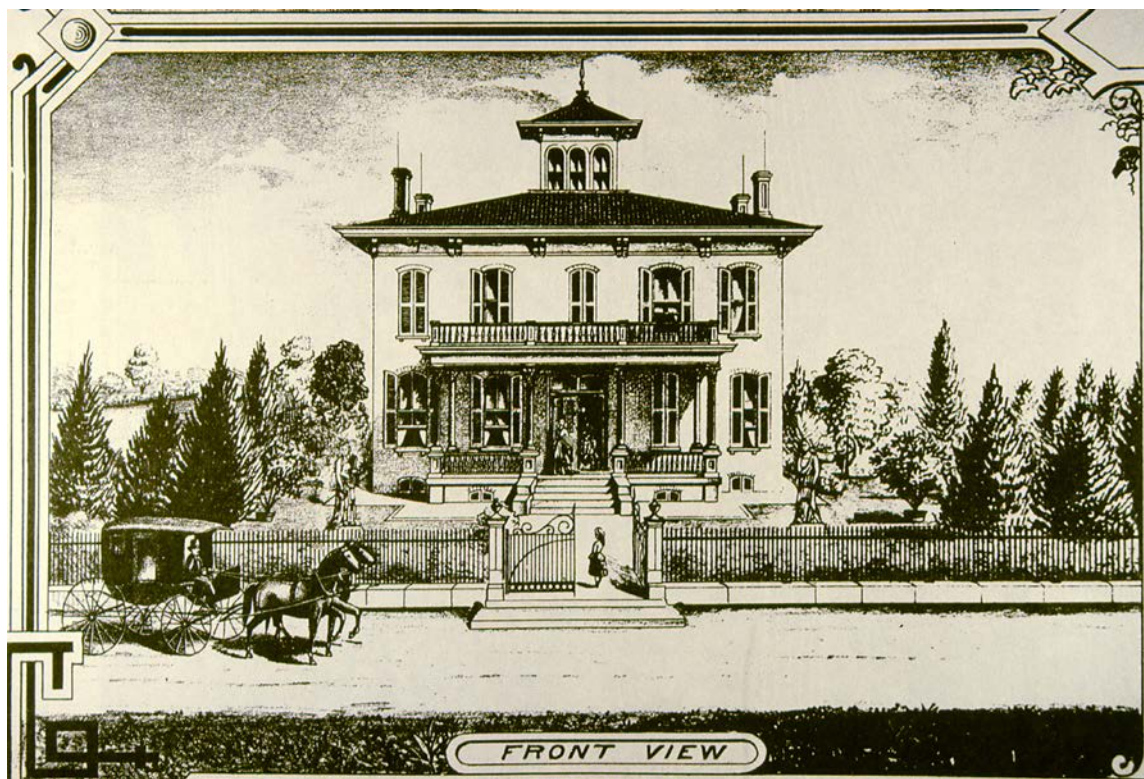
Large as these antebellum houses could be, the mega mansions were larger. They could have more than twenty-seven rooms in addition to full basements. These houses looked different as well. The classical, rectangular well-ordered look of antebellum houses was replaced by the asymmetrical, rambling Italianate look, with intersecting wings, projecting bays, towers, rambling porches, high slender windows, and low-pitched roofs supported by ornate brackets.

The Italianate style first showed up in St. Louis ca. 1850, about a decade after its arrival in America. During the 1850s the style slowly started to filter into prosperous regions of outstate Missouri. It took nearly two decades for the Italianate style to work its way to Glasgow. Hints of the coming style washed across the facade of the otherwise traditional southern mansion, Inglewood, 1857, in the form of round arched windows and an Italianate-style veranda across the front. The first full-blown Italianate house in Glasgow was, as far as we know, Glen Eden, home to Benjamin Lewis. The house was started in 1858 but not completed until 1862 in the midst of the Civil War.

The cubic shape of the main block of Glen Eden, not quite topped by a cupola, was one of the most basic Italianate house forms. The house sat on a slightly raised basement. In keeping with the new Italianate style, the windows were narrow with just two panes each. Ornate paired brackets supported a boxed cornice at the eave line, which was also in keeping with the new style. And a shallow hipped roof capped the structure, again a classic Italianate look. The cupola was not centered at the top of the main block, as is usually the case, but set back to the intersection with the large rear addition. A wide porch with slender classical columns spanned the front. Glen Eden had a familiar layout, two rooms on either side of a main hallway with an impressive staircase. Inside were large high-ceilinged rooms including an 18 by 36 foot dining room. The large rear addition of Glen Eden, when seen from the side, overwhelmed the cubic shape of the main block. The house consisted of twenty-three rooms and was probably the first house in Glasgow to have a furnace to heat the

dining room and also running water to both levels of the house.

As impressive as the house itself was, the setting was spectacular. A full two-page spread of the *1876 Illustrated Atlas Map of Howard County, Missouri*, shows views of the extensive Glen Eden grounds, along with the mansion as seen from the Missouri River and from the main road north out of Glasgow. The mansion sat within a wooded park where a wide variety of trees was planted. A driveway bordered by an iron fence approached the house from the main road and swung around the side of the house to reach the main entrance. Before doing so, the driveway



Glen Eden, Benjamin Lewis's impressive Italianate-style home built between 1858-62, was featured in the 1876 Illustrated Atlas Map of Howard County. This sketch shows the extensive Glen Eden grounds, along with the mansion as seen from the Missouri River and from the main road north out of Glasgow. Image courtesy of Jim Denny

curved around a heart-shaped ornamental garden. One fork of the driveway, still bordered with the iron fence, continued down to a landing and railroad siding beside the Missouri River. The immediate yard was surrounded by a low cut-stone wall topped by an elegant iron fence. The house was entered via ornate iron gates mounted on square stone posts that opened to a wide sidewalk leading to a flight of cut-stone stairs rising to the wide front porch.

The other two mega mansions were of the Italian Villa mode. Eglantine Castle and the Thomson house had irregular plans and imposing towers. Such houses were idealized evocations set in Glasgow, far in distance from their source of inspiration in the hills of Italy dotted with quaint villages of tile-roofed houses and occasional campaniles, or towers, that jutted into the skyline. Such rustic landscapes were filtered through the Romantic nineteenth-century sensibilities of tastemakers such as Alexander



A grand stairwell greets visitors at the end of the front hallway. Window arches feature alternating beige and red bricks with cut-stone keystones with elaborate incised design. Beige bricks are also used to great effect in the front projecting bay windows in the form of recessed panels and spandrels that add richness to the window treatment. Photos by Don Cullimore

Jackson Downing. What came out the other end was a whole Italian hilltown visually morphed into one picturesque house--the ubiquitous Italian Villa, popular in England and America.

How exactly these postwar Glasgow mansions were designed is not clear. Before the Civil War, the master builders at the local level built the fine antebellum houses of the Boonslick without ever consulting formal architectural drawings. Instead, long-established traditions that prevailed throughout the Upper South guided builders who knew how to add Federal or Greek stylistic touches.

That hand-me-down approach would not work for execution of the new Italianate style. The master carpenters and masons would need exact specifications for the novel shapes in the forms of intersecting wings, towers, projecting bays, new door and window configurations, fancy stone and brickwork, and many manufactured components that would need to be acquired. There were new high-tech running-water and gaslighting systems that had to be comprehended and installed.

Eglantine Castle and the Thomson house are both sophisticated examples of the novel and complicated Italian Villa style. Both houses had complex layouts and unfamiliar design features that would have departed from traditional building practices.

To build these new kinds of houses, surely the services would be needed of a relatively new profession--architects, especially architects who could design Italian Villas.

Unfortunately, no plans survive for the mega mansions of Glasgow. Only one Italian Villa-style house in our broader region, Ravenswood, in southern Cooper County, was definitely known to be designed by an architect, Angelo Powell, from St. Joseph. It was built around 1878. Powell's original architectural drawings survive in Ravenswood mansion. Not until the turn of the century were the great columns and crenellated tower added to transform the appearance of what was once a beautiful Italian Villa style house. There were other architects active in the Boonslick. An architect named Solomon Jenkins designed Brannock Hall, built in 1856, on the Central Methodist campus in Fayette, which also received aid from the Swinney family. The Italianate style brick building featured two towers, one on either end of an arcaded entrance. A mysterious architect named John Aldridge was the designer of Lewis Library in Glasgow. It was his only known work, but what a masterpiece of design it was, with its lovely and striking Palladian triple-arched entranceway, a beautiful evocation of the Italian Renaissance transplanted to Glasgow.

Whoever Oswald Swinney hired to design the three-story

Pritchett Institute building very likely also created the design for Eglantine Castle, which was completed in 1869. The buildings share design elements. The use of raised brick belt courses on the first story of Pritchett Institute and on the raised basement of Eglantine Castle, identical window treatments, and the use of brick quoins at the corners of both buildings all suggest the same designer.

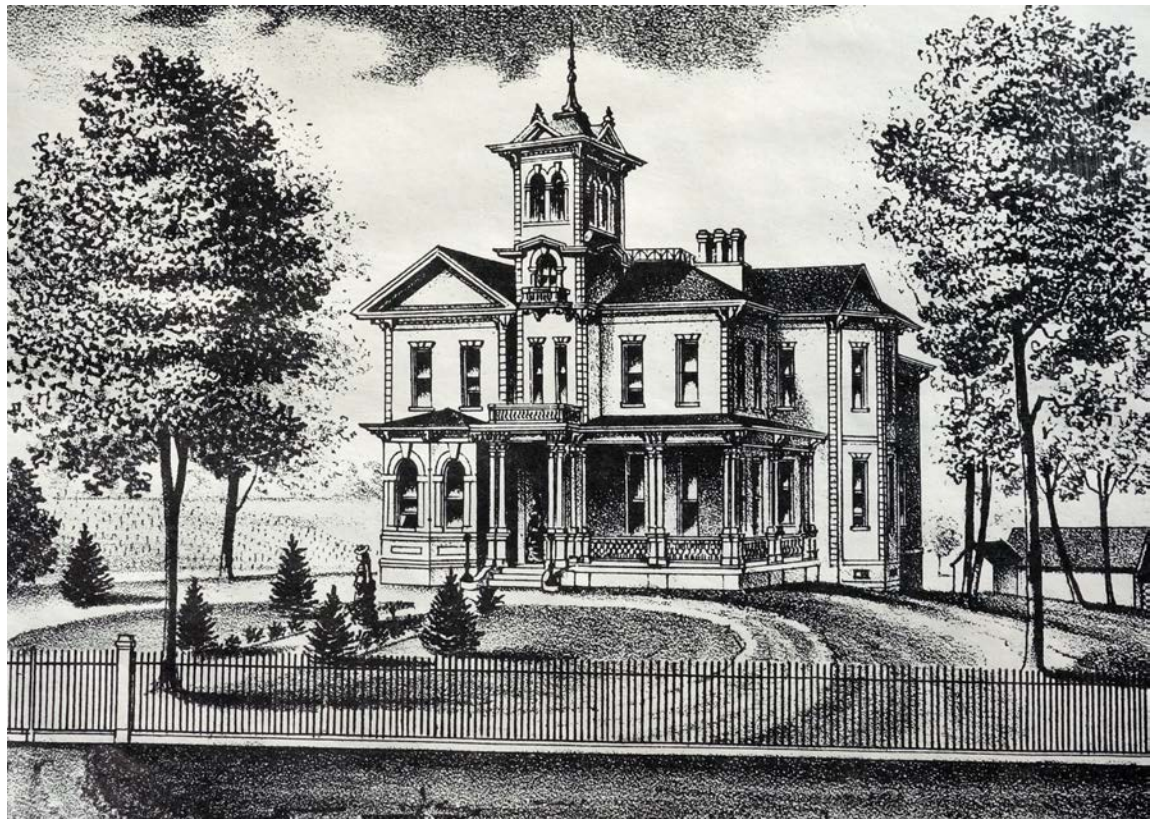
Eglantine Castle may well be one of the first Italian Villa-style houses built in the Boonslick. The whole house sat on a raised basement punctuated by windows, which gave the visual impression that the house was three stories high. The center of the mansion was dominated by the large square tower fronted by a one-story projecting bay window. It rose three stories and was capped by a straight-sided mansard roof with small oculus windows set into the center of the sloping roofs on the three sides not obstructed by a chimney. On either side of the tower were wings that intersected at a right angle. The wing to the left of the tower projected forward while the wing on the other side was set back from the tower and at a right angle. On the second story of this wing, wrapping around two sides, was a cantilevered balcony decorated by an ornate iron railing. Another large wing with two-story bay windows on opposite sides extended rearward from the house. The second-story windows of Eglantine Castle, with the exception of those in the tower, were smaller than the tall, slender windows of the first story.

The front entrance to the house was reached by a flight of steps leading to a small porch squeezed between the tower and its projecting bay on one side and forward-facing flanking wing on the other. This squeezed effect made for a less than impressive entrance to an otherwise grand house and was the most curious design quality the house had. One would expect a grand country house of this period, erected in the Boonslick where summers could be warm and humid, to feature a wide porch or verandah where residents and guests could gather and catch the breezes. Since the 1850s, most grand houses featured a large front porch as well as porches off the rear wings. Not so Eglantine Castle. Other than the small entry portico, it had no additional porches off the rear or side wings. The front entry of

the house does not present the ceremonial grandeur of Glen Eden, at least as depicted in the atlas. If the family living in Eglantine Castle wanted to relax outdoors, lawn furniture would have to be set up on the grass.

Glasgow's final mega mansion, the Thomson house, is the sole surviving mansion of the trio, and also the largest. It would be hard to find a more quintessential Italian Villa house in Missouri, or even the Midwest, than the James Thomson house. Sometimes houses such as this imposing towered home were slathered in gingerbread to the point of gaudiness, but while the Thomson house is certainly grand enough, it is more restrained stylewise. It reflects the fact that the Italianate style had one foot in the classical Italian Renaissance, as witnessed in Lewis Library, and the other in Romanticism and early Victorian decoration, which was just reaching Glasgow.

In the instance of the Thomson house, the central tower is flanked by a forward-facing wing with a distinctive classical triangular-shaped pediment lined by dentils. This motif is repeated in smaller scale on the cornice of the hip-roofed tower, which is punctuated by centered small pediments on all four sides. Another cornice-like molding separates the third and fourth stories of the tower and also has pediment-like peaks on each side. The house is laid out on a rambling plan with a large projecting wing



An artist's sketch of the Thomson house that appeared in the 1876 Illustrated Atlas Map of Howard County, when the house was brand new. Image courtesy of Jim Denny

on the west side fronted by a two-story bay window. A large wing extends to the rear, which once had gallery porches.

The windows of the Thomson house, in perfect keeping with

the Italianate style, are tall and slender, glazed with two large panes of glass. The windows on both stories of the main house, unlike Eglantine Castle, are of equal size, except for the floor-to-ceiling windows in the west parlor that give way to the veranda. Those on the first two stories have slight segmental arches. The tower window on the third story and the paired windows on the fourth story are round arched. All the brickwork of the house is executed in two colors of brick, red and beige. Window arches feature alternating beige and red bricks with cut-stone keystones that feature elaborate incised designs. The mixing of red and beige courses occurs in the quoins on the corners of the building. Beige bricks are also used to great effect in the front projecting bay window in the form of recessed panels and spandrels that add richness to the window treatment. Surely, this is some of the finest brick masonry seen in the Boonslick to that time.

A large veranda sweeps around the front and west side of the house. Starting at the front projecting bay window, the veranda wraps around the side of the house to the edge of the projecting two-story bay window on the west side. The porch is supported by paired large square posts that are elaborately decorated with wooden plinths, columns with rope moldings set into in each corner, and capitals with quatrefoil medallions. Once there were railings with thick turned balusters. Above the front entrance, the roof of the porch was enclosed by a balustrade. At the third story of the tower was a small balcony.

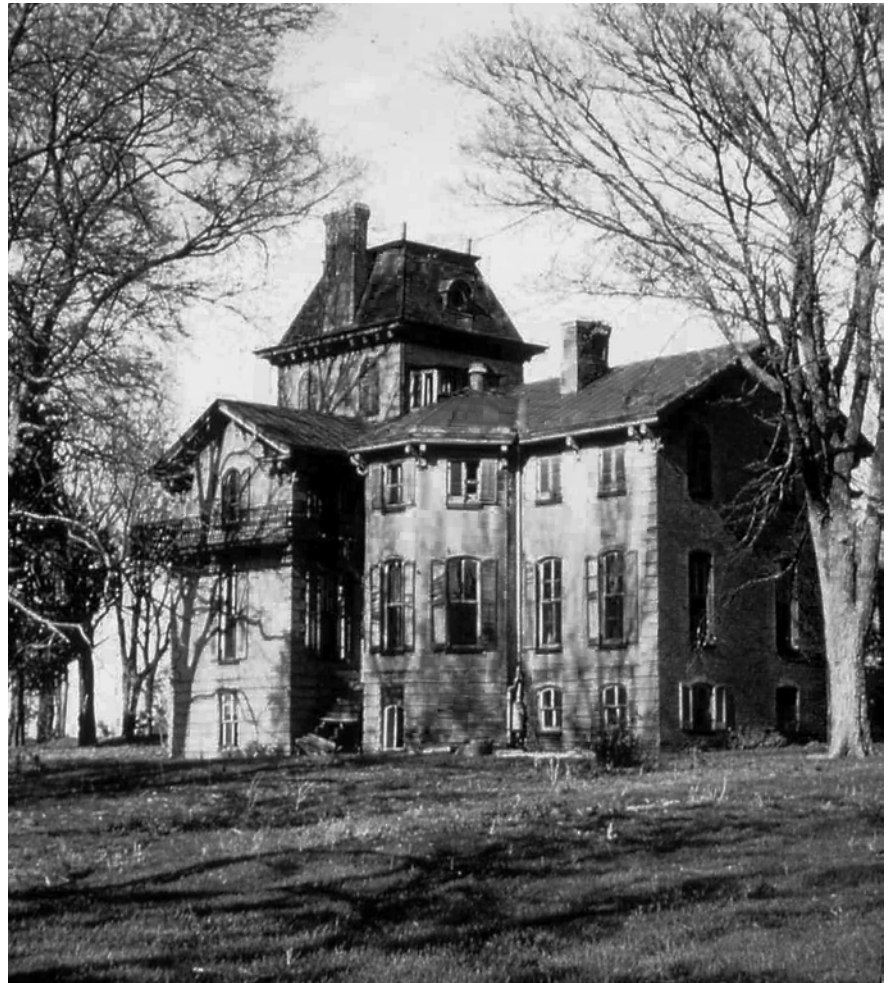
The interior of the Thomson house will provide visitors with a unique opportunity to see what the inside of a mega mansion looked like. The house is entered through two sets of double doorways. The massively constructed double-leaf walnut doors have elaborately designed panels. The initials of the builder, James S. Thomson, are etched in the transom over the door. A tile-floored foyer gives way to a second set of walnut doors with another beautiful etched-glass transom. The interior woodwork, except for the floors, is richly colored walnut. The immediate post-Civil War period was the last time fireplaces were extensively used to heat houses, and the Thomson house features mantles in the Italianate style. The hallway, floored in alternating oak and walnut boards, is dominated by a grand stairway. The ceilings are adorned with ornately decorated medallions and fine plaster cornices. The front bay window encloses an intimate nook flanked by Corinthian columns. The front end of the upstairs hall is partitioned by a door, sidelights, and transom filled with ruby glass into what was once a sewing room. There is a large built-in china cabinet in the dining room. Across the hallway, double French doors open to the parlor.

The house also reflected the latest technology. Water collected in a large tank was distributed through lead pipes to a zinc bath tub, one of the first to have piped-in water, and to elsewhere

in the house. An original water fountain, set in a niche with a marble basin and old faucets, exists in the second-floor hallway. A carbide gas system once powered gas lamps throughout the house. A dumb waiter brought coal from the basement to the upper rooms. Dust traps set into baseboards on both floors opened to chutes that sent sweepings to the basement.

Fate and or ill fortune visited all three builders of Glasgow's mega mansions and cut short whatever plans they might have laid for long occupancies in their magnificent residences.

Benjamin Lewis was, of course, the most tragic of the trio. The memory of his hideous night in Glen Eden will always haunt Glasgow's history and folklore. There is an element of



Eglantine Castle, an Italianate-style house built by Oswald Swinney, became the family home in 1869. Bernice and her husband, John P. Fuller, lived there during their Glasgow years. Photo by E. P. Puckett

hubris to his story; it was almost an act of insanity for him to remain voluntarily in Glasgow during the period of the Battle of Glasgow, October 15, 1864, and its aftermath, when the town fell into secessionist hands. He was not only extremely rich, but he was also a well-known and much disliked Unionist. But there he stayed in Glen Eden, his splendid new mansion, even though there were no Union forces within many miles of Glasgow, and the now defenseless town had been thrown wide open to every

kind of rebel. He could have fled like many Glasgow citizens, but didn't. What was he thinking?

Lewis had a target on his back. He had been very outspoken and zealous in his support of the Union cause, even to the extent of urging Federal authorities, just two months before the Battle of Glasgow, to levy assessments of \$5,000 on rebels and rebel sympathizers throughout Howard County. He knew of a list of such traitors in the Glasgow area because he may have helped compile it. He had freed his 150 slaves in 1863, which also was noted with much disapproval by southern neighbors. Somehow, word of Lewis's actions reached the ears of one of Missouri's most feared guerrillas, William "Bloody Bill" Anderson. On the evening of October 21, 1864, with just one aide, Bloody Bill rode up to Glen Eden for the express purpose of collecting that \$5,000 assessment in person from the hated Unionist.

There are vivid accounts of the tortures Lewis endured at the hands of Anderson and his associate, as they afflicted an ordeal of beating, clubbing, stomping, and kicking that drug on for hours and left Lewis broken and all but dead. He only had \$1,000 of the \$5,000 demanded, so he was dragged into town at gunpoint, while his wife and friends tried to obtain the remaining amount. A favorite legend around Glasgow has been that the required ransom money was obtained from Mrs. Lizzie Thomson, wife of James Thomson, who had secreted sufficient cash in flower pots. Other accounts, however, state that the banker William Dunicca (who had already been robbed by William Quantrill) came up with the necessary funds. Whoever provided the money, it was enough to save what was left of Benjamin Lewis's life.

Lewis may have gotten some satisfaction from the learning that Anderson was killed by Union soldiers in Ray County just a week after his fateful visit to Glen Eden. But the tobacco magnate never recovered from his nightmarish experience. His health failed to bounce back and he died on February 2, 1866. He had built his grand mansion and beautiful estate, Glen Eden, when he was just 52, to enjoy into his old age. He only lived there four years.

At the time James Oswald Swinney had reached the age of 38, he was rich thanks to some \$3 million dollars worth of inherited wealth. He was ready to undertake one of the largest building campaigns ever embarked upon by any Glasgow citizen. In doing so he indulged his philanthropic side while giving full reign to his personal ambition to build a splendid and stylish mansion that would seal his place at the top of the Glasgow

pecking order. Almost at the same time, he built the three-story Pritchett Institute and Eglantine Castle. He must have single-handedly kept the regional brick foundries running, for nearly three quarters of a million bricks were required to the erect two edifices, which cost a combined \$600,000, with about half that amount going to each. Oswald spared no expense in furnishing the house either. He not only patronized local merchants but also ranged as far as St. Louis, Philadelphia, and Boston to acquire the most elegant items to fill his mansion. Later, on a world tour, he also acquired marble busts from Italy of himself and "Eve" (probably his wife, Maria).

Oswald had one major problem. He was far better at spend-



Inglewood, built by Thomas Nelson Cockerill in 1857 and later occupied by Oswald Swinney and members of the Thomson family. Photo by Don Cullimore

ing money than he was at keeping or making it. In contrast to his niece, Berenice, whose fortune was in the hands of skilled St. Louis bankers, Oswald fancied that he could handle his own financial affairs. Instead he plunged into foolish investments and managed to squander not only his own vast inheritance but also a part of Berenice's. For the remainder of his and Maria's lives they would be dependent on the charity of their young niece. The situation could have been worse. Berenice bought the beautiful and roomy Cockerill mansion, Inglewood, for Oswald and Maria to live in.

Oswald got to live in Eglantine Castle for about a decade, until 1879. That he could not continue to occupy the house was simply because he could no longer afford to do so on the allowance Berenice gave him, "[Eglantine Castle] would do for a rich man to live on, but would bring a poor man in debt every year. . . we cannot use it, as the treasury now stands."

Twenty years would pass before someone rich enough to live in Eglantine Castle would come along and give it new life. That

person would be none other than Berenice, herself, who had married John Fuller in the intervening years. They combined their names to become the Morrison-Fullers.

Berenice had taken over from Oswald the philanthropic burden of keeping Pritchett Institute afloat, and she also had an abiding interest in Morrison Observatory. While still a teenager, Berenice had donated the funds to build and operate the observatory. Berenice and John made the decision to return to Berenice's Glasgow roots. Workmen began to refurbish Eglantine Castle and in 1898, the Morrison-Fullers moved in to set up housekeeping.

The house must have been a showplace during this time, for Berenice had traveled the world several times over and had sent many items home to add to the fine furnishings inherited through her Morrison and Swinney connections. It must have been an opulent place to attend Pritchett Institute functions or meetings of the Thursday Club or the Lewis Library Board, on which Berenice served.

Unfortunately, the whole Glasgow experience ultimately soured Berenice and John on the prospect of a long-term residency in the town. Berenice found herself becoming frustrated with the management of Morrison Observatory and was convinced that it should be moved out of Glasgow to some respectable institution willing to take it.

But the worst problems with Glasgow were stirred up by Berenice's brilliant but erratic husband, John, who had an uncanny ability to fire up controversy and to get into acrimonious feuds with practically every leading citizen in Glasgow. The outrageous behavior of John Morrison-Fuller drove some of Glasgow's most upright and sober civic leaders to the point of attempted murder. The Morrison-Fullers became increasingly socially isolated as John's antics grew more and more scandalous. By 1909, the Morrison-Fullers were tired of Glasgow. And Glasgow citizens were thoroughly fed up with John, although they continued to court Berenice as a source of philanthropy. John died in an accident a year after leaving Glasgow and was immediately expunged from the town's collective memory. Berenice maintained a continued interest in the latest Morrison Observatory news and

other Pritchett Institute affairs, but she came back to Glasgow again only once or twice during the long life left to her.

At age 60, James S. Thomson was the oldest of the trio to undertake the building of a mega mansion. By then he was one of Glasgow's most respectable bankers. He had come to Glasgow not long after the town's founding in the early 1840s, established himself as an early merchant, and started trading in the lucrative tobacco business. W. D. Swinney was his brother-in-law and sometime business associate. Around 1860, he decided to open a bank. During the Civil War, Thomson ran afoul of the local Union military authorities in Glasgow and ended up banished to New York City for awhile. In 1864, he was back in Glasgow and formed a partnership with William F. Dunnica to establish the banking firm Thomson and Dunnica. This association contin-

ued until Dunnica suffered a paralytic stroke in 1881 and retired from the banking business.

In 1875, when Thomson was looking around for inspiration for the house he was about to build, he had the magnificent example of Eglantine Castle. But he also had a more modest, sensible and probably far cheaper example in the new home his fellow banker, George Billings Harrison, had just built. This house was a striking example of the new Italianate style but built on a very modest and livable scale. His Italianate cottage



Boscobel, Thomas Shackelford's 1859 house, a classic example of old-fashioned southern vernacular Greek Revival houses with symmetrical arrangements of windows and doors across their main facades. Photo by Don Cullimore

presented a low exterior profile but had two floors of rooms to accommodate a large family, if need be. This comfortable home has proven over time to be very inhabitable and has always been occupied by some appreciative owner.

Instead, Thomson chose to build the largest of the mega mansions. Almost nothing is known about how he went about getting this remarkable house built or how he lived in it with his wife, Elizabeth, the by then famous "Aunt Lizzie" who had saved the life of Benjamin Lewis. Prior to building the mega mansion, Thomson and his family resided in a large brick house rented from the Swinney family.

James Thomson must have set the Glasgow gossips into overdrive when in 1883 he laid "Aunt Lizzie," his wife of 43 years, to rest and just six months later married a second lady

named Elizabeth. To say he married someone young enough to be his daughter would be an understatement. He married someone young enough to be his granddaughter! His new wife was forty years his junior. Within five years, the couple produced two daughters. She was a member of the distinguished Vaughn family, and, importantly, Oswald and Berenice liked her. Their good graces were a gift that kept on giving.

Modern historians have not yet plumbed the reasons for James S. Thomson's catastrophic financial demise. It would not be unreasonable to suspect that Thomson's money pit of a house played a prominent role in the collapse of his fortunes. But he must have, like Oswald, had other financial calamities that in the end left him destitute. The writer of his obituary, C. W. Pritchett (who also composed Oswald's obituary), simply stated that sometimes Thomson built up a large business and prospered but that as the years went on he met with reverses and financial disaster. By the time the reverses took effect, James S. Thomson and his wife and daughters were living at Inglewood with Oswald and Maria. Inglewood had become a last asylum for the broken builders of Glasgow's mega mansions.

By the turn of the century, the now widowed Elizabeth Thomson and her children were the only survivors still living in Inglewood, thanks to the charity of Oswald and Berenice, who had become friends with the Thomson daughters. Finally, in 1902, Elizabeth Thomson left Inglewood and Glasgow to join a daughter in Chicago.

The first of the mega mansions to disappear from Glasgow's cultural landscape was Glen Eden. After the death of her husband, Benjamin Lewis, ownership of the house fell to his wife, Eleanor, but it is not known if she continued to live in such a huge house haunted by such terrible memories. In 1882, Lewis College moved into the mansion. The previous location of Lewis College in several buildings in Glasgow had proven inadequate to its needs. The college remained at Glen Eden for the remainder of that institution's ten-year existence. After the turn of the century Glen Eden became the property of Edwin Price. In 1908, a fire destroyed Glen Eden. Some of the elegant iron fence could be seen for several years afterward before being carried away.

The next owner of Eglantine Castle was John P. Donovan, a stock raiser who purchased the house and farm from Berenice

in 1913. Five years later, a young girl of sixteen, Olive Conran, spent the night in Eglantine Castle. Her parents were the guests of the Donovans, who seemed to be friendly and welcoming country folk. She remembered the cavernous quality of the rooms and hallway during a frightening first night. Her recollections, after touring the house in daylight, were of a towering house with three floors, each reached by a winding staircase, and more narrow stairs still to the topmost room of the tower where a magnificent prospect of the Boonslick countryside could be had. She thought the house, the largest one she had ever seen, had twenty-seven rooms. The house was really two stories on a raised basement (which may have had finished rooms, creating the impression that it had three stories), and had, according to recent research, seventeen rooms on the main floors.

Some time after the Donovan occupancy, Eglantine suffered a not too uncommon fate of houses too large to be lived in by ordinary people. It was abandoned. For decades it sat empty, a familiar landmark for motorists traveling from Glasgow to Fayette. This author once, along with some pals, tramped through the empty and scary house one Halloween night long ago. This must have been a frequent rite of passage to test the fear threshold of many a wayward youth. Some time in the seventies someone finally put the house to the torch, and Eglantine Castle, like Glen Eden, disappeared from the landscape.

Fortunately there is a much happier and ongoing outcome for the Thomson house. In 1898, the mega mansion came into the possession of none other than the ever-prudent banker with the modest but beautiful house, George Billings Harrison. In 1903 he sold the house to the author's grandfather, James H. Denny. A successful attorney and son-in-law of Thomas Shackelford, Denny and his wife, Maud, produced five children who no doubt helped fill the 28-room house. Two of the Denny children were born in the house, including the author's father, John Harrison Denny.

James H. Denny died in 1935; in 1945 the heirs agreed to sell the house to John Harrison Denny, who succeeded his father and grandfather, Thomas Shackelford, as a Glasgow lawyer. By 1950, Jack and his wife Elaine had converted the Denny family home into seven apartments. The children of some of those tenants were the childhood playmates of the author. During the



Sylvan Villa, ca. 1845, the large home built by W. D. Swinney that Beatrice Morrison-Fuller described so lovingly in her reminiscence of plantation life in early Missouri. Image from *Historic American Buildings Survey*

fifties, there was a housing shortage in Glasgow, which the apartments helped alleviate. But as the decade wore on, the number of tenants declined. By the sixties, the six decades long stewardship of the great mansion by the Denny family ended. Fortunately, subsequent owners of the house have appreciated the exceptional grandeur of the house and have preserved it to the present day.

As visitors can observe on June 10, 2018, the last of the Glasgow mega mansions maintains its awe and splendor as one of Glasgow's most historic and grandest houses.

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Author's Note: The Internet is a treasure trove of information about the Italianate style in Italy, England, and America. There are hundreds of images of Italianate houses. An excellent site for Missouri examples is Dave's Victorian House Site (<http://faculty.wcas.northwestern.edu/~infocom/scndempr/index.html>). The Thomson house is illustrated on this site along with an interesting commentary. Photographs of the Thomson house can be found on Pinterest, if a person is lucky enough to enter a proper search term. One lesson that can be carried away from looking at numerous Italianate houses on the Internet is that in almost any context, at the state and national level, the Thomson House is a very impressive example of the Italian Villa style and deserves a larger appreciative audience.

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Above, historic George Harrison House, circa 1872. Now owned by Mark and Susan Freese, the house was the site of the Society's 2016 summer meeting in Glasgow. Photo by Don Cullimore

Right, AM Engineering Company, St. Louis, architectural sketch for Pritchett Institute in Glasgow. Established in 1866, it became Pritchett College after 1897 and closed in 1922. Image courtesy of Scarritt-Royster-Swinney Family Papers Collection, SHSMO-KC

