

*Philadelphia story*

# No place like home, Even after 200 years

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*Inquirer Society Editor*

We drove to Smyrna, Kent county, Del., to see our friend, Mrs. Cummins E. Speakman, of "Belmont Hall," which is one of Delaware's most historic still lived-in houses. And from there, we went to Dover, capital of the First State, to lunch with Dr. Robert H. Parker, the dynamic president of Wesley College, and members of his administrative staff.

It was Mrs. Speakman who introduced us to the college and Dr. Parker. Her "Cousin Annie" (internationally distinguished astronomer Annie Jump Cannon), was Wesley's most famous alumna. "Cousin Annie," who was born and reared in Dover, used to visit the Speakmans at "Belmont Hall." She died in 1941, at the age of 78. "Cousin Annie" prepared at Wesley, then an academy, for Wellesley College.

Wesley, now a two-year co-educational liberal arts college, has an Annie Jump Cannon science building, equipped for tomorrow, which we saw after lunch. It was completed last year. We also saw Carpenter Hall, a women's dormitory, that will open in the fall. Meticulously planned Carpenter Hall was a gift, in substantial part, from Walter S. Carpenter, Jr. (honorary board chairman and retired pre

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ident of E. I. du Pont de Nemours, Inc.) as a memorial to his wife, Mary Wootten Carpenter.

Before leaving Dover, we stopped off at the Bradford-Loockerman house to see Mrs. William Bradford. Mrs. Bradford (Gene) and her husband, Bill, moved from Manhattan 12 years ago. When Mr. Bradford's aunt, Mrs. Huston Culbreath, died at the age of 94, they decided to forego New York so that they could live in the ancestral abode. Members of the Loockerman and Bradford families have lived in the house since 1742.

Much of the furniture in the house was made by Philadelphia cabinetmakers in the 18th century. Mrs. Bradford showed us photostatic copies of the original inventories for the house. Most everything is still there, as it has been for generations. One of the Chippendale chairs is signed by Benjamin Randolph—with his label: "1765—Philadelphia, B. Randolph."

Mrs. Bradford asked us to linger, but we wanted to get back to Smyrna—and "Belmont Hall."

"Belmont Hall," which stands at the end of a long and stately driveway, was the home of Gen. Thomas Collins, the sixth Governor of Delaware, who was a great-great-uncle of Mrs. Speakman's late husband.

We climbed to the watchtower at the top of "Belmont Hall." During the American Revolution, a sentinel was mortally wounded while on duty there. The sentinel, a Continental soldier, died in a third-floor room. Called the Soldier's Room, it is now the bedroom of Walter Willoughby Speakman, Jr., Mrs. Speakman's 16-year-old grandson.

Members of the Speakman family have lived in Smyrna's "Belmont Hall" for more than 200 years—just as members of the Bradford family have lived in Dover's Bradford-Loockerman house. In this fast-moving age, this sort of continuity is good to see.





Mrs. Cummins E. Speakman stands in front of "Belmont Hall," her residence in Smyrna, Del., that has been the home of members of the Speakman family for more than 200 years. The earliest part of the house was built in 1686. The front was added in mid-1700's.



Walter Willoughby Speakman, Jr., who is Mrs. Cummins Speakman's 16-year-old grandson, is in the Soldier's Room in "Belmont Hall." It is his bedroom.