

The Leroy Wiley House: A Study in Domestic Architecture

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Relative beauty, in architecture, is the expression of elevated and refined ideas of a man's life.¹ This quote from Andrew Jackson Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* expresses the crucial issue in studying domestic architecture. The house is essentially a social expression of the inhabitants and the builder. As Nancy Shick and Douglas Meyer argue, a home is an autobiography that reflects a family's financial resources, values, tastes, aspirations, and cultural heritage.² If read carefully, the exterior forms and internal details of a house illustrate something of the daily life of the family that inhabits it. These authors illustrate how a home represents something deeper than just a structure that provides shelter from the elements. It is a social construction built to mirror the thoughts of those living within its walls. The persistence of certain social themes within American domestic architecture from the founding of the English colonies to the present makes the built environment an important source of evidence for the course of American history. A detailed study of one house, in this case, the Leroy Wiley house of Charleston, Illinois, can demonstrate important trends in American social history and thought.

There existed a long building tradition within the Wiley family, and the home located at 814 Fourth Street clearly manifests their grasp of what the built environment meant in society. By studying the abstract of the house, the floor plan, an architectural history of Charleston, census records, family histories, architectural sources, and the same nineteenth-century style books the Wileys had at their disposal the values and ideals that the builders hoped to illustrate through the home's construction becomes evident. Leroy Wiley, the man responsible for the construction of the house, built in accordance with the designs and styles advertised by the plan-books and promoted by the social reformers of the mid-nineteenth century. Leroy Wiley did not, as many other American builders did at the time, construct the exterior of the house according to the new Italianate style and then use a traditional eighteenth century floor plan for its interior. Instead, the interior and exterior of the house illustrate how the Wileys followed the urgent pleas of the plan-book writers, who insisted that the construction of their total designs offered the best way to reform the nation and perfect society.

The plan-book authors of the mid-nineteenth century promoted the new "Picturesque" architecture and helped to supplant the older, more traditional Georgian and Greek Revival structures. The new houses of the Gothic, Italianate, and bracketed styles represented the order and self-discipline that became the image of the ideal middle-class Victorian family.³ The American Picturesque movement in architecture began in America a decade before the Civil War as more and more classical revival homes began to be replaced by Gothic style cottages and Italianate villas. The shift in style represented the results of a crusade that became a major reform movement in the era. During this time of change and reform, the emotional effect that was given off by the building through its plan, paint, and landscape became very important. Architects believed that an ennobling landscape or an exalting environment could improve society by radiating posi-

¹ Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*. (New York, 1830), 5.

² Nancy F. Shick and Douglas K. Meyer, *Pictorial Landscape History of Charleston, Illinois*. (Charleston, IL, 1985), 99.

³ Clifford E. Clark, *The American Family Home*. (Chapel Hill, 1986), 37.

tive values and feelings to the inhabitants of the residence. Their views paralleled how other forms of art were looked at in moral terms during this period. Therefore, architecture became a social tool which could be used to tame men as well as nature. The architects used their work to contribute to the moral improvement of America through the three-dimensional pieces of art they produced on the landscape.

One of the main goals of the architects and their plan books was to design houses that could illustrate the moral character of the owner. As their ideas became more popular, architects became as interested in the psychology of the house as they were in the bricks and mortar. The architect who became the catalyst for this movement in the 1840s was Andrew Jackson Downing. He helped to create the reform aspects of architecture with his two works, *Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Landscape Gardening and Cottage Residences*. The books, published in 1841 and 1842 respectively, defined the aesthetic theory of the new moral movement and provided plans for the different kinds of revival houses that could be built. Downing's publications not only contained architectural drawings and theories behind the designs, but they also set the standard for beauty and order in the second half of the nineteenth century. The new volumes of house plans transformed the nature of architectural manuals and created a revolution in the styles of rural building.⁴ A flood of new publications featuring plans and elevations were written steadily until 1870 when professional architects began to control the entire construction of private homes.

Downing's writings helped builders to envision houses as living things. He asserted that each style had a face, and on those faces were expressions that directly reflected how other people would perceive the moral attitude of the owner. He strictly argued, however, that the Picturesque house could not be used as a mask to misinterpret any immoral behavior by the owner. These designs were only to be used by those people who were prepared

to make the "outward form...express our best ideal in life." People interested in building a house, Downing wrote, had to be careful to select true architectural forms. Home owners were not to build a lie, for it was easily seen if the house became "foreign to our habits, education, tastes and manners." Italianate houses became one of Downing's favorite Picturesque forms. He praised the Italianate style of house for its originality, boldness, energy, and variety of character.⁵ He felt that houses of this kind "expressed not wholly the spirit of the country life nor town life, but something...as mingling of both." Therefore, this style of house became very popular with owners who wished to build on rectangular suburban lots because the structure represented the fine contrast between rural retreat and urban bustle. Although his work has been criticized for its emphasis on the elite classes of society, Downing's work caused radical changes to the shape and plans of ordinary American houses. These changes were the first since the introduction of classical principles in the last quarter of the seventeenth century.⁶

A second influence on the new Picturesque housing types was the shift in attitudes toward the concepts of taste and beauty that grew out of the romantic movement of the 1830s. Classical revival architects had accepted the theory that forms were beautiful because they displayed principles of harmony and simplicity. Change came later in the nineteenth century as Downing and others argued that real beauty rested only in the thoughts that the buildings raised in the mind of the viewer. Such writing created an aesthetic theory that combined architectural forms and spiritual ideals. Later, the American reformers added an ethical dimension to Picturesque architecture. The result of this movement was that taste and the perception of beauty were interrelated to help further the moral development of the individual. It followed from this theory that the environment a person was surrounded by was a crucial factor in shaping his or her personality.

⁵ Roger Kennedy, *Architecture. Men, Women and Money in America, 1600-1860*. (New York, 1985), 459.

⁶ *Early, Romanticism and American Architecture*, 67.

These ideas, however, did not fully separate the Picturesque movement from the Classical reform builders. Instead, what separated these two groups was the Victorian movement's concentration on creating a new, private, domestic life style for middle class Americans. The new reform movement focused on revitalizing self-control within the home rather than fostering republican virtue in the public order.⁷

A shift in the belief structure of the Protestant population became an important factor that linked Picturesque architectural styles to the reform movement. Religious leaders argued in the 1850s that the best way to promote Christianity in society was to create a home atmosphere that bred obedience and responsibility. Increasingly, raising children in the proper Christian manner relied heavily on the home environment. Protestant religious leaders believed placing a child in a Christian home with God fearing parents set the stage for proper development. As authors such as Downing popularized a new arrangement of interior spaces, editors of the architectural journals began to promote their house designs by linking them with the Protestant ideals. These new plans differed from the regularity and simplicity that had dominated American building during the Classical reform movements. Designs specifically marketed as being Christian became increasingly popular because a home, which contained both beauty and order, provided the best atmosphere for a mother and father to instill proper discipline and morals upon their children. The layout of the rooms and the arrangement of the interior spaces were advertised to enhance the development of family life and build interaction, exploration, and cooperation.⁸ Evidence of such thinking is seen in the creation of specialty children's spaces such as bedrooms and nurseries. These added features allowed children to develop a sense of individualism, although it was carefully confined to the limits of the home. The inclusion of these

children's rooms indicates the importance that the mid-nineteenth-century Americans placed on the early years of life.

Plan-book writers and reformers expanded Downing's ideas to create room arrangements and functions that carefully took the new middle class family ideal into consideration. Gervase Wheeler argued in his writings that "a building is, in fact, as it were a human body; its parts are all dependent upon one another, and progressive in degree, and yet they are members of one united whole-imperfect if one be removed or not fully developed."⁹ Wheeler and other reformers wished to see the unity of the whole family reinforced by the arrangement of rooms while also providing spaces for the pursuits of the individual members. To meet these needs, each room in the house was given a specific function. Space was provided for the scholarly upper-middle class gentleman by including a library or study. This room was often placed near the back of the house in a quiet room lending itself to reflection and reading. Specialized spaces were also included in the planning of the second floor. As was already mentioned, this floor included spaces specifically designed to encourage the moral development of children. An equally important function provided by the second floor were rooms for women and young girls. Architects who designed in the reform tradition recognized the importance of giving the women of the house their own private spaces away from the pressures of the kitchen and laundry rooms. These relaxation spaces, placed far away from the domestic spheres of the house, allowed women to sit and follow their own literary or creative interests. Each of these specialized rooms was designed to help all members of the family feel a true spiritual connection to the home.

As rooms began to take on specific functions for individualism, the plan-book drawings also included space for family interaction and communication. Two rooms in the house, the front parlor and the dining room, were specifically designed for activities that would bring the family together. The front parlor was

⁷ Clifford E. Clark, "Domestic Architecture as an Index to Social History: The Romantic Revival and the Cult of Domesticity in America, 1840-1870," in *Material Life in America*. Ed. Robert Blair St. George. (Boston, 1988), 539.

⁸ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 37.

⁹ Clark, *The American Family Home*, 40.

meant to be a showcase for the family. It was the formal gathering place in the house because here the success of the family was shown to visitors. It was also to be a direct reflection of the elegance and appearance of the women who lived in the house. The dining room was laid out with more interest in function, rather than formality. It was meant to be attractive, but its location near the pantry or kitchen encouraged its daily use. Of all the rooms in the houses envisioned by the architects and reformers, the dining room was to be the one in which the family members spent the largest amount of time communally and had the most interactions.¹⁰

The designs the architects used to emphasize the domestic reform also differentiated heavily between the public and private spheres of the home. This division was not new to American society as the hall and parlor designs of the eighteenth-century attempted to perform the same function. What makes mid-nineteenth-century plans different was the degree to which the divisions were carried out. By the time the Wiley house was constructed, the divisions had become an obsession in the reform literature because of the new codes of social interaction defined by the etiquette books. Often, the most segregated room in the house was the kitchen. Because of the nature of cooking and preparing food, the kitchen was almost always placed at the rear of the house. Sometimes, these food preparation areas were even placed in the basement. In the case of wealthier families who could afford servants, separate rear entrances accompanied the kitchen spaces. This allowed these people to arrive at and leave the house without disturbing the more elegant front areas of the home.

The architects and plan-book writers were also consistent in their calls for the functions of the front entrance hall and the parlor. Divisions caused by these spaces reveal that they were critical to controlling social behavior. Elaborate furnishings of the parlor clearly indicated that this room was to be a showplace

where guests could be entertained. The room did not radiate an atmosphere of relaxation, rather it presented an appropriate area to hold subdued and dignified receptions for friends and acquaintances. The hall was an intermediate space that separated the front entry from the parlor and dining room. Its main function was to hold guests and preserve the privacy of the other rooms. Again, etiquette manuals and the house pattern books influenced architecture by spelling out the specific functions of each room and helping to create a more formal set of social relationships. They also created architectural styles, which included a hierarchy of rooms, and established which rooms were more formal than the rest.

Historians have had some difficulty establishing the relationship between the reform movement and domestic architecture. In his study of domestic architecture, Clifford Clark makes heavy use of direct quotes from a variety of reform writers. He shows the progression of the reform movement as it evolved from a shift in architectural style to a major reform crusade of the time.¹¹ His evidence of a sweeping reform movement, however, falls short because he is not able to identify the extent to which the builders of homes implemented the reforms within the walls of their homes. Neil Harris was one of the first historians to comment on the social importance of the crusade in domestic architecture. He states that architects recognized that Americans needed good houses because their architecture was an instrument of civilization and awakened the desire for refinements.¹² His arguments, however, overemphasize the upper class origins of the movement because he concentrated heavily on the works of Andrew Jackson Downing.

The architects and reformers worked hard to convince the American public during the mid-nineteenth century of the merits of their house plans. But to what extent was the ideal plan carried out in everyday life? Clifford Clark expanded on his earlier

¹¹ Clark, "Domestic Architecture," 543.

¹² Neil Harris, *The Artist in American Society* (New York, 1966), 208.

work and studied houses built using the Picturesque ideals in three American cities to answer this question. His book, *The American Family Home*, gives strong evidence that although the Italianate and other plan-book designs were immensely popular with the American people, the appearance of their universal acceptance in American building is deceptive. He argues the fashionable plan-book homes were built first by members of the upper class and then were taken up by the middle class. The conservatism of the middle class however, insured that the strong continuities of vernacular architecture would persist. The houses Clark uses as examples show that builders were quick to change the exterior of their houses to meet the trends set by the plan books. Nevertheless, the acceptance of the exteriors had little to no impact upon the interior layout of the house. Traditional living arrangements persisted in the groupings of the interior rooms, especially in the eastern part of the United States. Clark argues that the reason behind that was "few individuals or families could exercise the continuous self-control within the context of the copious affection that was demanded by the middle-class home ideal." His evidence reveals that the American population was apprehensive about incorporating the sweeping social changes called for by the plan-book authors.

The evidence presented by the built environment created by Leroy Wiley and his family, in the form of floor plans and room usage, presents different conclusions. A careful study of the floor plan and arrangement of space within the house shows that this home was built in compliance with the moral standards of the reform movement.

Clark argues that the acceptance of the plan-book houses proceeded much faster in the Midwest than in the older, eastern areas of the United States. The citizens of new towns such as Charleston were more willing to accept the new housing designs because their towns had grown quickly and before the power of tradition was firmly established.¹³ Immigrants from the Upper

South settled in the Charleston area in the late 1820s, and a small cluster of families formed a village prior to the establishment of Coles County on December 25, 1830.¹⁴ Charleston was established as a crossroads community that was linked to other east-central Illinois towns by a system of early road trails, and rivers. The settlement grew into a town in 1839 as the plat was surveyed and a uniform grid with the town square as its central focus was established. Lots of standard size were created and sold along the uniform streets. The arrival of the railroads, known as the "Big Four," in the 1850s brought immediate population growth to Charleston. Its original block grid was expanded and new subdivisions were surveyed and attached to the first town plan.

Such was the atmosphere within the city limits of Charleston as Leroy Wiley and his brother Eli were financing the purchase of the ten acres of land on which the Wiley house was built. In April and May 1863, Leroy Wiley and his wife Rebecca purchased a part of the land from Eli and began preparations for the house which now stands at 814 Fourth Street. The property was originally part of an 80-acre tract that the United States Government sold to Benjamin Parker in 1831. In 1833, Parker and his wife sold it to Charles Morton for \$1000. In 1847, Aaron and Susan Ferguson bought 10 acres of the property at a "Sheriff's Sale." It was from the Ferguson's that the Wiley brothers bought the ten acres of land for \$1,000. Census records from 1860 indicate that Leroy and Rebecca Wiley were comfortably set in the upper middle class of Charleston society. Leroy Wiley listed his occupation as that of a stone merchant with an annual income resting around \$3,500 per year. Shortly after the home's construction, Wiley left the masonry business to become one of two partners in what was to become the principal manufacturing establishment in Charleston. The Merkle-Wiley Broom Company's plant began its career with the name of Wiley & Traver in 1868. Leroy Wiley and his partner started the business and located it in the rear of their grocery on the south side of the town square. As

¹⁴ Stick and Meyer, *Pictorial Landscape History of Charleston, Illinois*, 13.

the name implies, Wiley and his partner began the business for the wholesale manufacture of brooms. Later, Leroy Wiley's son Clifford took over the business from his father and operated it until the "Charleston Broom Company" was finally established.¹⁵

Local records and photographs indicate that the Italianate style house was built by Leroy Wiley and his wife in 1867.¹⁶ There are several exterior features which tell of the Italianate construction. The original plan of the house was shaped as a cube. It was not until three years after the original construction that the shape was broken by the addition of a back kitchen. The house also had a low-pitched roof, with ornamental brackets supporting it from the underside. The exterior of the home contained the long, narrow windows characteristic of the Italianate style. Each of these windows were ornamented by arches that swept over the top surface of the glass. The final characteristic which made the Wiley home an unmistakable member of the Italianate style was its masonry construction. What makes the brickwork special for this home was the fact that the bricks were handmade, presumably by the Wileys, from clay which came from a small pond located about fifty yards south-west of the house. The use of the popular Italianate style for this home indicates that the family had a familiarity with the ideas promoted by the plan-book authors; however, as the Wiley family history illustrates, a familiarity with this style of building precedes the construction of the home at 814 Fourth Street.

Leroy and Eli Wiley's father, James Wiley, brought his wife and four children to Charleston from Bracken County, Kentucky, sometime in the 1830s. The family first settled on Big Creek, Edgar County, then moved to Paris, and finally on to Charleston. It was here that the family stayed for the rest of their lives. James and his wife, Rebecca, had a total of eight children during the course of their marriage. He was employed as a contractor in brick construction and was involved in the building of some of

the first houses in Charleston. One of the most important local structures for which James Wiley acted as contractor and supervisor was the construction of the first brick residence in Charleston. The home was built for Colonel H. R. Norfolk around 1835-36. It was built in the Italianate style and held many of the same features which were to be found in the Leroy Wiley home thirty years later. Records indicate that one of the home's most striking features were the simple rope-like designs that ran around the hood of each window.¹⁷ This construction is significant because it shows that James Wiley was constructing Italianate houses in Charleston before their appearance in the most popular stylebooks. Andrew Jackson Downing's groundbreaking works were not published until 1841. The Norfolk house illustrates James Wiley's competence as a builder and his early understanding of the social function of plan-book designs.

James Wiley was able to pass his knowledge of brick construction on to his sons before he passed away in Charleston on April 13, 1865. He was still alive at the time the property for Leroy Wiley's house was purchased, and most certainly his sons sought his expertise on what style of building would fit the property. James Wiley's oldest son, Eli, was trained as a brick mason by his father during the early years of his life. Eli Wiley had also been a stone merchant nearly up until the time the ten acres of land located was acquired. In 1860, Eli Wiley finished a study of law and began a long and successful career as a lawyer in Charleston. Nancy Shick and Douglas Meyer identify Leroy Wiley as the builder of the house at 814 Fourth Street. The brick construction is evidence that Leroy Wiley looked to the Wiley tradition concerning the construction and design. Also, with all the masonry and construction experience in the family, each of the Wiley men had to be acquainted in some way with the plan-book designs that was being promoted by the reformers. The real proof of their knowledge lies in the interior and exterior features of the Leroy Wiley house.

¹⁵ Charles E. Wilson, ed., *History of Coles County* (Chicago, 1906), 693.

¹⁶ Shick and Meyer, *Pictorial Landscape History of Charleston, Illinois*, 119.

¹⁷ The Charleston and Martoon Bicentennial Commissions, *History of Coles County, 1876-1976*. (Dallas, 1976), 46.

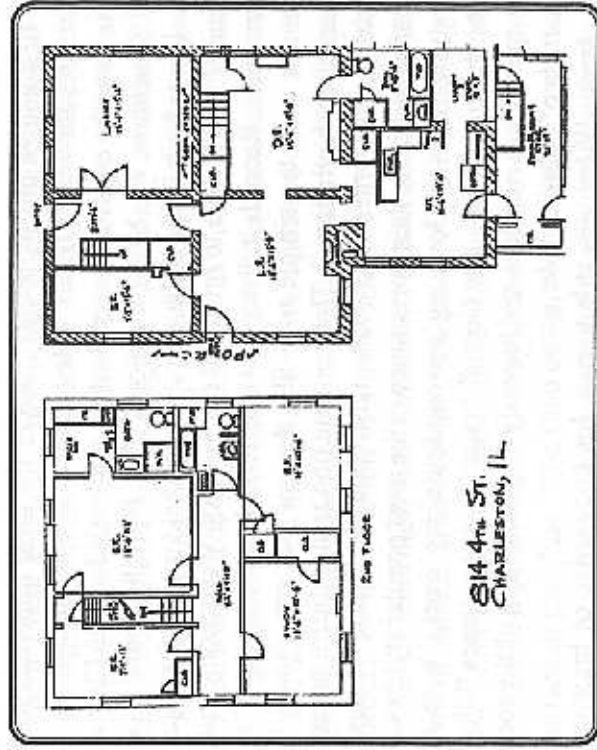


Figure 1.
Floor Plan
Leroy Wiley House

The arrangement of the rooms in the house as evidenced by the floor plan, illustrates several of the main features recommended by the reform writers (Figure 1). Starting with the layout of the entryway, the whole first floor of the home effectively achieves the separation of public and private spaces. Upon entry, a guest to the Wiley home found himself or herself greeted in a large entry hall. As is shown by the floor plan, the hall controls the movement within the house. It allowed for formal entry into the house without infringing on any of the more private family spaces of the home. Thus, the hall served as a space to manage the social relations of the Wiley family. It was built to be large enough to accommodate several visitors while giving them a sense of the overall grandeur of the home.¹⁸ Because of the hall's close location to the front entrance, it served the Wileys as a space that

was neither interior nor exterior. Rather, it was a proving ground through which unwanted guests never passed.

Also consistent with the plan book designs is the placement of the most formal room in the house, the parlor. True to the formality of the space, the Wileys designed this room to be near the front of the house. The floor plan shows the parlor's direct relationship to the front entry of the house. The parlor only had one doorway, which served as its entry and exit point. It did not allow contact, physical or visual, with any other portion of the house. Again, this design illustrates the formal nature of the room. The fact that the room has three large windows is also an indication that this space was used to entertain guests. Each window would let a significant amount of sunlight into the room during the day to create a warm atmosphere for conversation for Mrs. Wiley and any female guests who called at the house. Both the location and the function of the hall and parlor in the Wiley house are consistent with the descriptions for these rooms in the nineteenth-century plan-books. These rooms represent the first piece of evidence that links the home to the designs of the reform movement.

The kitchen of the home is also placed at the rear of the home in accordance with the popular designs of the mid-nineteenth century. Such an arrangement allowed the work of the kitchen to go on and still be hidden from the eyes of any visitors. As was indicated earlier, the present rectangular kitchen was not built at the same time as the rest of the house. It was added by the Wileys three to five years after the initial construction of the rest of the home. Due to the lack of any other structures connected to the house, the first space used for the preparation of meals was likely the basement. The stairs leading to the basement are in close proximity to the dining room, which would have helped make the feeding of the family efficient and sanitary. If this were the case, the placement of the kitchen in the basement would have also been in accordance with the plans recommended by the reform movement. The above ground room presently used as a kitchen was also built according to several reform features. It

¹⁸Clark, *The American Family Home*, 45.

also offers direct entry into the specialized dining room. The present owners of the house, Dr. and Mrs. Roger Beck, uncovered a second door leading outside from the kitchen while remodeling. The door was located on the south wall of the kitchen, near the space where the sink is located on the floor plan. Two doors in the kitchen allowed for easy access into and out of the house for any people who were involved with the upkeep of the home.

The first floor of the home features the specialization of room function that was so important to the Picturesque movement. Each room can be linked to a special activity of the family as interaction with other members of the family took place in specifically defined areas. Within the Wiley house, the dining room and the living room provided the family spaces. Here, interaction between children and parents took place centered on a well-known code of rules, such as dinner table manners. Therefore, the first floor of the house contained a structure of rooms that promoted the development of each of the members of the house.¹⁹

The plan for the arrangement of the rooms of the second floor give further insight into the Wiley's understanding of the reform functions of the Picturesque home. The greatest emphasis placed on the second floor was the creation of separate spaces for the members of the family. As has been indicated, most reformers argued that this was particularly important for the development of children. At the time of the 1860 census, Leroy and Rebecca Wiley had been blessed with three children with two more yet to be born. As the upstairs floor plan indicates, there were a total of four bedrooms available on the second floor of the home. This arrangement allowed for each of the children to have his or her own space at the time of construction. Therefore, the construction of the second floor shows that the Wileys adapted these ideas into the design of their home. The plan provided additional space for the children so that they could pursue individual activities.

Christian reformers also published views indicating their de-

sire to see every house include spaces designed for children. The new Protestant movement was lead by ministers who believed the best religious training for children was for them to grow up in a Christian home surrounded by Christian parents. They believed that children absorbed the spiritual atmosphere provided by the attitude of the parents and the home. Therefore, taste and morality became mutually dependent on one another. Evidence shows that Leroy and Rebecca Wiley were parents who would have been very interested in creating the proper Christian atmosphere for their children. Leroy was described by friends as being a kind parent and affectionate husband.²⁰ He was actively involved in the Heritage Chapel Church of Christ in Charleston from its inception. Church records indicate that James Wiley and his wife were two of the twelve charter members of the congregation in 1840. Leroy Wiley was also very active in sharing his faith with the Charleston community. As the church began to flourish in the 1850s and 1860s, Leroy organized and taught Sunday School classes with a woman named Susan Dunbar starting in 1856.²¹ From these record we see the Wiley family's desire to share their Christian beliefs with the outside community. This faith, combined with their skill as builders, indicate that the Wileys would be the type of people who would have been very interested in building a home which radiated Christian values.

The exterior forms and features of the Wiley home also illustrated the family's use of ideas described by the professional architects. Andrew Jackson Downing promoted the use of the Italianate style as being perfect for a rectangular, suburban tract of land. He encouraged Americans to take the Picturesque movement to the suburbs, as long as their personal lives fulfilled the boldness and energy of the stylistic features.²² A residential map of Charleston, IL, in 1869 shows that the Wiley property was located southwest of town. Very few houses existed around the

²⁰ *History of Edgar County Illinois*, (Chicago, 1879), 608.

²¹ *The Charleston and Mattoon Bicentennial Commissions, History of Coles County, 1876-1976*, (Dallas, 1976), 271.

²² Kennedy, *Architecture, Men, Women and Money in America, 1600-1860*, 461.

Wiley residence, so the land around the house still held a wooded, country feel. The house was set far back from the street and the front yard contained a large number of elm, oak, and maple trees. All of the trees helped to separate the house from the public street. However, the residence was closely located and within walking distance to the downtown area of Charleston where Mr. Wiley had his grocery store. The use of the Italianate style on such property fits Andrew Jackson Downing's instructions perfectly. Such a location made it possible for the Wileys to enjoy some of the conveniences associated with living in town. Again, the evidence supports the theory that the house was built in strict accordance with the ideas put forth by the plan book authors.

The final way the home fulfilled the true character of the Wiley family and echoed the writings of the reform authors was by properly displaying the economic status of the family. Andrew Jackson Downing clearly states his opinion in *The Architecture of Country Houses* that the cost of building should not exceed the means of the occupant or owner.²³ The census records of 1860 indicate that Leroy Wiley had a real income of \$3500, a figure that placed his family comfortably in the middle to upper middle class of Charleston society. The fact that the house is located on Fourth Street shows that Wiley had no interest in constructing a house that was beyond his means. At the same time the Wiley house was built, south Sixth Street and south Seventh Street became the showcase streets where the towns most impressive and pretentious houses were erected.²⁴ The architectural knowledge of the Wileys, however, helped them to exercise restraint and avoided any attempt to build a house above their social status. Instead, the Wileys built a house that was truly an expression of the values that they held most dear.

The physical exterior and interior plan of a house reads like a biography of the builder. In the case of the Wiley home, the home acts as an autobiography because Leroy Wiley played such

a large part in its construction. The evidence supplied by the house helps to illustrate what kinds of morals and values the owners wanted to communicate to their children and the outside society. In the case of the Wiley residence the floor plan, building materials, grounds, and ornament show a family who believed that the new innovations provided by the plan-book authors could help to perfect society. They understood the importance of the reform movement, and built a house in strict accordance with its rules.

²³ Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, 5.

²⁴ Stick and Meyer, *Pictorial Landscape History of Charleston, Illinois*, 99.