

Milford Will Restore Most Ancient Home

MILFORD — This community's most famous and ancient home is going to be restored.

The Parson Thorne mansion on "Silver Hill" has been donated to the incipient Milford Historical Society by J. Richard Draper, its owner, with the provision that they restore it to its colonial magnificence.

There is no Milford Historical Society at the moment, but Miss M. Catherine Downing said that is only because the routine paper work has not been carried out in the face of the "holiday rush." All other plans for its organization are in readiness.

The stately home, according to the Delaware Guide, was built in 1785 by Parson Sydenham Thorne (1747-93), but the date 1779 is carved on the wood in the attic of the structure and there is evidence that Thorne acquired the property, located at 501 NW Front St., as early as 1777. It is also quite probable that the rear wing of the edifice was standing at the time Thorne took possession.

Thorne was an avid Tory (as were most southern Delawareans) at the time of the Revolutionary War and showed unconcealed loyalty to the King and the Church of England.

It was he who built Christ Episcopal Church in Milford and he was one of the founders of the community, building mills and laying out home lots in addition to carrying out his ministry.

He apparently left no direct descendants and at the time of his death at 45, the home passed to a nephew. Parson Thorne is buried in the family burial lot.

It wasn't long before the property came into the possession of the Clayton family and the famous John M. Clayton, four times a United States Senator and Secretary of State under two Presidents spent his boyhood there. His parents are buried in the cemetery near the house.

The house has not been occupied for the past four years. It still has its woodwork consisting of beautiful paneling and corner cupboards.

Draper, the donor, who is the third generation member of his family to own Silver Hill, is an associate in the Draper family's extensive canning enterprises.