

# Silver tea at new mansion to benefit old one

Mrs. Sam C. Ford, a former first lady of Montana, will be an honor guest during a silver tea and reception from 3 to 6 p.m. Friday at the executive mansion, 2 Carson. Entertainment is planned.

She and all other living members of "First Families" who resided at the "Governor's Old Mansion" will be honored at the event. Its purpose is to further restoration of the former executive mansion, to acquaint interested Montanans with progress and planning involved in the project and to invite them to join the effort.

The Committee for Restoration of the Governor's Old Mansion is anxious to receive contributions of money, appropriate period furniture and authentic information which can be compiled into the history of this home and its residents, a member said.

### Contributions needed

Checks may be made out to "The Governor's Old Mansion Restoration Fund" and mailed, presented during the tea or given to any committee member.

Hostesses will be Mrs. Ford

and Mrs. Frank Vavrin. Alfred Weber will be the organist.

Mrs. William Burkhardt has assisted Mrs. Babcock in engaging program participants. Mrs. Jack Marlow is decorations chairman. Mrs. Vern Harris is chairman of all hostesses and assistants. Publicity has been handled by Mrs. Babcock.

Door hostesses will be Mrs. Carl Hibarger, Mrs. Peter Meloy, Mrs. Ernie Neath and Mrs. Fred Gannon.

### Entertainment

A movie, "An Escape to Montana's Glacier Park," will be shown in the lower reception hall. This will be the second showing of the movie in Helena. It features an original musical score by Scott Warden.

In addition to the movie, which will be presented twice during the afternoon, slides will be presented which show some of the restoration which has been accomplished on the former executive mansion.

Other entertainment will include selections by the Helena Symphony Ensemble under the direction of Richard Shackelford, vocal selections by Mr. and Mrs. Harold Paulsen

and Mrs. Frank Vavrin. Alfred Weber will be the organist.

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### In shuttered silence

The old mansion is receiving nationwide publicity and is listed in American Heritage's National Register of Historic Places.

For the present, the structure stands in shuttered silence under a new roof, but with restoration it will be open to visitors and hopefully will be second only to Montana's Historical Museum as a magnet to attract tourists to the state.

The former mansion, at the corner of Sixth and Ewing, is historically important for two reasons — its architecture and for having housed Montana governors from 1913 through 1959.

It was constructed in 1884-85 at a time when the most lavish architecture was being employed in Helena building, both residential and commercial. Its builder, W. A. Chessman, spared no expense to make it the outstanding mansion of its kind in the state at a cost of \$85,000.

### Authentic furnishings

Current restoration activity centers around securing authentic antique furnishings compatible with the period in which "this old house" was built as well as pieces which could be placed on loan because of their historic significance.

Outside restoration on the old mansion is practically complete except for a few minor items. Some electrical work and plumbing have been done and the contract for renovating the interior has been let and the work started. This includes work to be done on the carriage house.

"After 16 years and four attempts, the dream of restoring the Governor's Old Mansion is finally about to be realized," Mrs. Babcock said.

The introduction of House Bill No. 477 in the 1969 Legislature by Lester Loble II resulted in the appropriation of \$35,000. In December 1969 the State of Montana authorized the renovation, remodeling and repair of the former executive mansion and entered a lease agreement with the City of Helena for 50 years, with option to renew.

An Executive Board for the Governor's Old Mansion was appointed by the city commission. Its members are Joe Maierle, chairman; John Schroeder, co-chairman; George Schotte, Loble, Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Babcock, Mrs. Ford, Mrs. Gannon, Mrs. Kaiserman, Mrs. Sherman Smith and Dave Lewis. Since then, William E. Ashton, Mrs. James E. Brichett and Mayor Stephen F. Kelm have been added to their numbers.

### Governor Toole's desk

Some of the former furnishings have been acquired by the committee, secured by organizations and promised by other groups or individuals.

### Plastics help

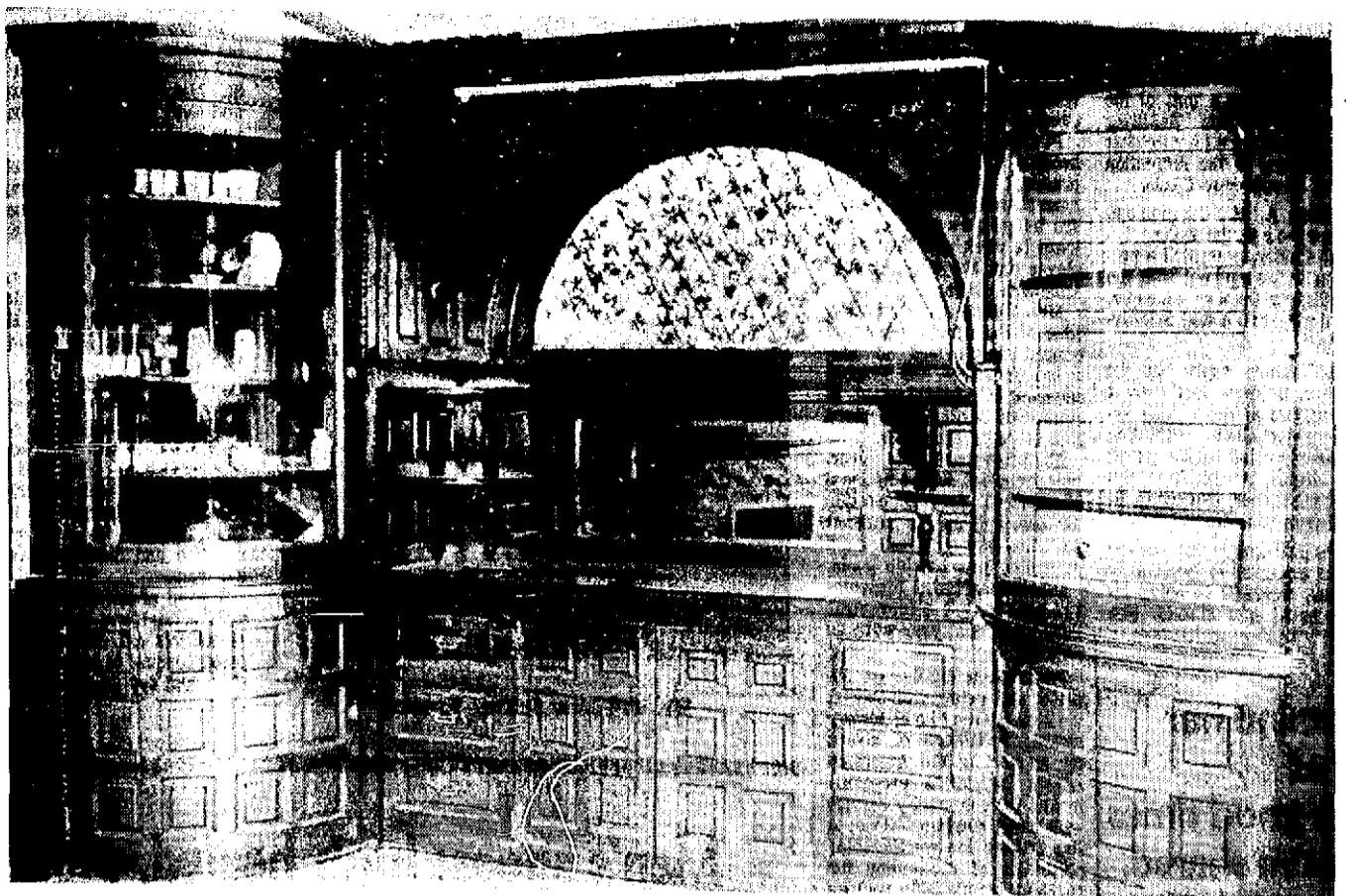
When you think what one single 20th Century creation, plastics, has done for civilization, none of us can possibly wish for yesterday. Besides, among other things, keeping fire and assorted unmentionables from nibbling on fresh food, it has aided the medical field . . . heavily.

Artificial arms and hands, neck braces, prostheses for ear deformities, auxiliary ventricles, and many more physical substitutes, have given plastic materials a chance to show their versatility. It takes little thought to know what that can mean.

But most important, plastics have given a new world to people who now view their misfortune as a challenge rather than a tragedy. This 20th Century has been good to us!

### White sauces

Cheese is a great flavorizer in white sauces for casseroles, in scalloped dishes, or over cooked vegetables.



ELEGANCE, WARMTH OF WOOD—This floor-to-ceiling wooden sideboard and china closets flanking it are built-ins in the dining room of the Governor's Old Mansion, Sixth and Ewing. The Committee for Restoration is seeking furnishings of the

era of the 1800s to furnish the former official residence of Montana "First Families" who lived there from 1913-59. (Photo by Gordon Warren)

The Zonta Club of Helena has purchased an ornately hand-carved desk which was owned and especially made for Gov. Joseph K. Toole, first governor of Montana. Altrusa Club members have pledged a donation as have many individuals.

Acquired by the committee are a bedroom set and chandeliers. It has been assured that the dining room set which was used by all the first families who resided at the former mansion will be returned for use there.

Carved men, similar in appearance to Atlas, hold the table on their wooden shoulders. The large, wide-seated, rather high-backed chairs which go with the table are

upholstered in brown leather. "The chair frames are topped by carved open-mouthed animal heads, which made wonderful places in which to park a wad of gum before starting a meal, even though it resulted in punishment," according to Emily Stewart, oldest daughter of Gov. Samuel Stewart. A china cabinet and silver chest of the same design carved from heavy oak wood are part of the set.

### Landscaping of grounds

Helena Garden Club members have indicated an interest in landscaping of the grounds and have donated a sizeable amount for the work to include a sprinkling sys-

tem, tree trimming and shrub planting.

With the help of all Montanans, the restoration committee hopes to establish a living memorial to the first families who resided in the old Chessman home.

First of the nine families to live there during its years as a governor's mansion was that of Samuel Vernon Stewart who was inaugurated as governor of the State of Montana in January 1913. For about three months after his arrival in Helena, he and his family resided in a house on the corner of Harrison and Holter, then called Spruce Street.

The house on Ewing was selected March 4, 1913 for its

accessibility to the Capitol, its roominess, attractiveness and general solidarity although the location was less fashionable than several houses also considered as a possible official residence.

### "Galloping Swede"

Last family to live there was that of the "Galloping Swede," Gov. J. Hugo Aronson, who moved to the present mansion during his last year in office. Families of governors Dixon, Erickson, Cooney, Holt, Ayers, Ford and Bonner also lived there.

Helena is probably the richest city in its architectural heritage in the western part of the United States, according to John DeHaas, restora-

tion and preservation authority. DeHaas is professor of design and history at Montana State University's school of architecture.

He pointed out that the Thomas Edison birthplace in Milan, Ohio (population 1,400) attracts more than 25,000 visitors annually. With Americans becoming more interested in their western history and willing to drive thousands of miles to see authentic areas, the value of the old mansion as a historic landmark is immense.

Montana's historical buildings reflect the economic, social and political conditions of the period and are an accurate barometer of the taste of its people.

## Engaged

The engagement of Barbara Ruth Samson to Thomas J. Crane has been announced by her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Thomas C. Samson, 1714 University.

A December 30 wedding is planned.

Miss Samson expects to be graduated in February from Kinman Business College, Spokane.

Her fiance, son of Mr. and Mrs. M. J. Crane, Gruber Estates, attends Spokane Community College.

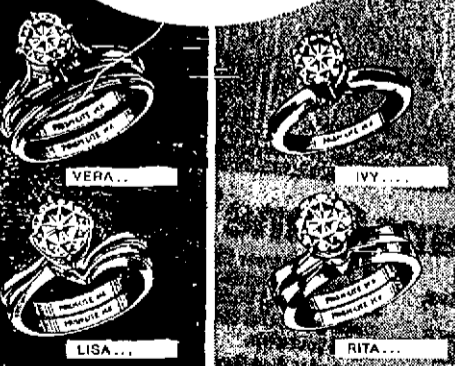


Barbara Samson

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