

02. History of 118 Main Avenue

The Ocean Grove Camp Meeting of the United Methodist Church (CMA) purchased this property from William B. Osborn (4 August 1870). CMA first leased the land to Isaac E. Hallowell of Philadelphia (1 October 1873) though there is no record Mr. Hallowell occupied, erected a tent, or built on the lots. He, in turn, transferred the lease to Captain Lewis Raineir and his wife, Mary (14 February 1880).

[Lewis Raineir was a member of the 1st Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Cavalry in the Civil War, and was wounded at Cedar Mountain, VA, on 9 August 1862. He was mustered out when released from an infirmary a few months later. The following year (16 September 1863) he joined the 2nd Regiment, New Jersey Volunteer Cavalry, Company E, as a lieutenant and served primarily in Mississippi where he was captured at Tishamingo Creek (June 1864) and was incarcerated in the infamous prison at Andersonville, Georgia. Thirteen thousand Union soldiers died while incarcerated at this prison. After transfer to two other prisons, Raineir was paroled (2 March 1865) He continued to fight until the end of the war, rising to rank of Captain.]

In 1880 Captain Raineir became the Superintendent of Buildings and Grounds for the CMA and built himself a house at 118 Main Avenue. The house was located on six (6) lots between Main, Delaware, and Heck Avenues, an unusually large parcel for the period. Newspapers of the day noted the building for its “large, handsome porches.”



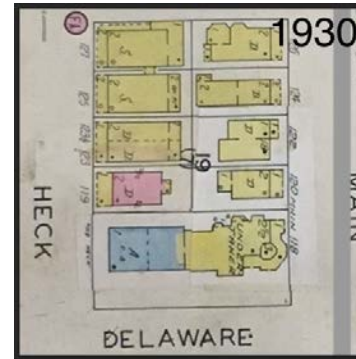
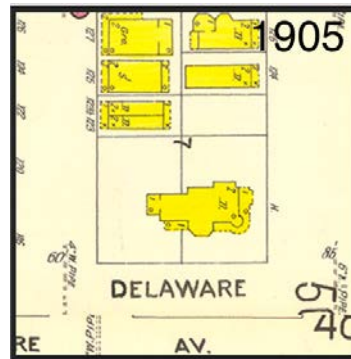
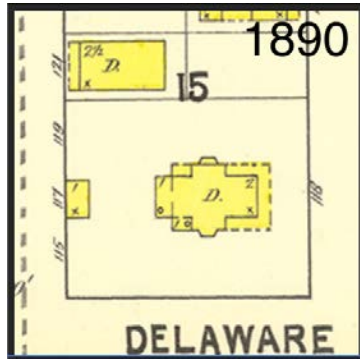
118 Main Avenue as it appears in a sketch on the 1889 aerial view map of Ocean Grove (NB: Depictions of homes on this map were often schematic, indicating massing rather than accurately depicting architectural details.)

By 1890, a house approximating the illustration above, appears on the Sanborn Insurance maps. (Note: Sanborn maps are routinely consulted when researching historic configurations of buildings in the Ocean Grove historic district.

The characteristics of this original house include its prominent cross-gable design with square front façade and continuous wraparound porches on the west, north, and east elevations. The building also had east- and west-facing bay projections, and a single-story projection at the rear.

The original house was clad in clapboard and decorative cedar shakes. Original windows (many of which remain) include a range of muntin patterns typical of the period, such as “Diamonds and Bars”, “Diamond,” and “Georgian” (also known as “Checkerboard”). The house also includes a fan windows, an arched Palladian window surmounted by decorative keystone trim, stained-glass, beveled glass, and original textured glass. Original front doors are detailed with crown and dentil moldings, decorative wood panels and trim, and half-light beveled glass.

The Sanborn Insurance Maps



A Key to Sanborn Insurance Map:

“Yellow” indicates wood construction. “D” indicates dwelling. “Numbers” indicate how many floors. “Dotted lines” indicate porches. “X” indicates shingle roof. “O” indicates metal or slate roof.

Fourteen years after first building the house, Captain Rainear undertook an extensive remodel of the building, adding a prominent, octagonal turret at the northeast corner, topped by an unusual, flared cupola dome. The wraparound porch was reconfigured to span the front, wrap around the new tower, and continue along the east elevation. The wraparound portion of the porch on the west side of the building was eliminated.



Captain Lewis Rainear's Ocean Grove
"Villa" following the 1894 renovation,
which added a turret, reconfigured the
wraparound porches, and altered the
original windows. (Image courtesy:
Camp Meeting Association of the
Methodist Church Annual of 1894)

Adding a tower to the existing house required major construction at the north and east elevations (i.e., the Main and Delaware facades). It appears the Gothic Queen Anne windows, found elsewhere in the house were, removed from the east and north elevations at this time and replaced with new, 1/1 double-hung windows. Older, original windows at the west and south were left undisturbed. This change of window styles from the typical Queen Anne to the plainer, 1/1 panes, altered the overall ornamentation of the building.

Other modifications made to the house at this time include the repositioning of the front porch pediment necessitated by the removal of the western portion of the wraparound porch.

The pediment above the front porch stairs has a bas-relief depicting a shield with ribbons, acanthus leaves, and scrolls. The wraparound frieze between above Level 2 at the east cross-gable, depicts swags and ribbons. These elements appear to have been fabricated of plaster mixed with a strengthening agent (possibly straw or horsehair) attached to a wood board base.

The Sanborn maps and the historic photo above, indicate the roof in 1894 was slate, with ornamental cresting along the ridge of both the hip and gable roofs. Such cresting was typically fabricated in copper.

The *Ocean Grove Record* commented on the 1894 renovation saying, “...some think [it] will be the most attractive villa in Ocean Grove when completed.” The reporter went on to note Captain Rinear, in his position as Superintendent of building for the CMA, was so busy overseeing the construction of the Great Auditorium and the new boardwalk at the time, that he had to rely on his builder to carry out his design at home.

In 1900, Captain Rinear resigned from the CMA to accept a similar position at Wardencllyffe on Long Island. Sold the property to Ellen Brady of New York City a year later. Captain Rinear died in 1905 and is buried in the First Methodist Church Cemetery in West Long Branch.

List of Owners of 118 Main Avenue

- 1870 — William B. Osborn sold the property 4 August 1870 to Ocean Grove Camp Meeting (CMA).
- 1873 — CMA leased the property 1 October 1873 to Isaac E. Hallowell of Philadelphia.
- 1880 — Isaac E. Hallowell sold/leased the property 14 February 1880 to Captain Lewis and Mary Rinear. (Current house constructed.)
- 1901 — Captain Lewis and Mary Rinear sold/leased the property 12 June 1901 to Ellen Brady of New York City.
- 1907 — Ellen Brady sold/leased the property 2 October 1907 to Samuel A. Reeves of Ocean Grove.
- 1915 — Samuel A. and Florence May Reeves sold/leased the property 1 April 1915 to Alfaretta Massinger of Butler, NJ.
- 1943 — The estate of Alfaretta Massinger sold/leased the property 4 September 1943 to Rita S. Feely of Ocean Grove.
- 1952 — Rita S. and John J. Feely sold/leased the property 30 July 1952 to Bradford A. and Elva M. Gesbocker of Ocean Grove.
- 1955 — Bradford A. and Elva M. Gesbocker sold/leased the property in 30 September 1955 to William P. Walton Jr. Of Ocean, NJ.

In 1956, Mr. Walton converted the house to the Ocean Grove Memorial Home. A year later Mr. Walton's son, William P. Walton, III, received his license and began working for his father. Also on staff were Robert E. Nicholson and Donald R. Newman, both of whom would work there for over 30 years. Mr. Newman and his wife Joyce lived above the funeral home.

1981 — The estate of William P. Walton Jr. sold/leased the property 29 January 1981 to William P. Walton III of Ocean, NJ.

In 1996, Thomas J. Saragusa joins William P. Walton, III as partner in the Ocean Grove Memorial Home.

2005 — William P. Walton III sold/leased the property 17 May 2005 to OGMH Properties (Thomas Saragusa), of Neptune, NJ.

2024 — OGMH Properties sold/leased the property 26 December 2025 to Albert Wilcox, Ocean Grove, NJ.
