

“My Day,” Friday, 31
October 1941

By Eleanor Roosevelt

“St. Cloud, (Minn.) Wednesday— I am seeing the first snow flakes fall as I sit in a delightful enclosed porch in Mrs. Whitney’s home in St. Cloud, Minn., this morning. It is a charming spot, where one can envision hours spent looking out on stormy weather, and rejoicing over a book and a happy feeling that one is in such comfortable surroundings.”

Eleanor Roosevelt and Fred Schilplin leave the Whitney House as Roosevelt begins her tour of St. Cloud’s Schools, 30 October 1941



Photos Courtesy Stearns History Museum

The Historic South Side

The Whitney House is a part of one of St. Cloud’s most historic and architecturally significant neighborhoods. With roots in St. Cloud’s early 1850s origins, the “South Side” neighborhood (bounded by the Mississippi to the east, Division Street to the north, 9th Avenue to the west and University Avenue to the south) was built in a lush oak grove and was home to a mix of grand and humble residences, many of which still stand today. Mansions belonging to the St. Cloud business elite were congregated on the banks of the Mississippi along First Avenue. The Whitneys built their first home at 524 First Avenue South in 1891, moving it off the site to build their neo-Georgian manse in 1916/1917.

As St. Cloud State University expanded in the mid-20th century, the neighborhood became a blend of university buildings and old homes such as the Whitney House. Mrs. Whitney, who built her home so near the college campus, maintained a deep regard for her alma mater throughout her life. Today, the home is a testament to the shared heritage of Mr. and Mrs. Whitney, St. Cloud State University and the neighborhood they called home.



Wheelock and Lois Whitney, 1900

Whitney House

St. Cloud State University



Alice Whitney outside the Whitney House, ca. 1926

*Self Guided Tour
Of one of St. Cloud’s Most Historic Homes*

Written by Alexander L. Ames



Alice Wheelock Whitney, 1902

Whitney House History

The gracious Georgian Revival Whitney House was built in 1916/1917 by Albert Gideon and Alice Wheelock Whitney, leaders in the business and social world of late 19th and 20th-century St. Cloud.

After moving to St. Cloud in 1887, A.G. Whitney was a leader in the finance, real estate and utilities industries, eventually selling his local power interests to the Northern States Power Company. A.G. met a young Alice Wheelock (of Moscow, New York) when the latter moved to St. Cloud to attend the Normal School, where her sister Mary was a professor of Latin and civil government.

A.G. Whitney died in 1922, only five years after the Whitney House was built. Mrs. Whitney's 32-year widowhood was marked by her commitment to serve the community that she called home. Mrs. Whitney hosted prominent African American musicians when they were not accepted as guests in St. Cloud hotels. She was actively involved in various philanthropic organizations and donated land on which the Whitney Airport (now Whitney Senior Center) was built. When Mrs. Whitney died in 1954, her heirs assisted the St. Cloud Teachers College in acquiring the home.



First Floor

Grand Foyer, Living Room & Study

Arguably the most striking feature of the Whitney House is its grand staircase. "The main entrance opens into an immense hall," noted a newspaper article describing the new residence, "the main feature of which is the great colonial stairway with its broad landing." The first floor of the home was marked by a balance, elegance and delicacy that took advantage of the property's views of the Mississippi. "To the right," the article continues, "the living room running the full depth of the house, with its open fireplace and windows on three sides, is a most attractive apartment."

Sun Parlor

The spacious sun parlor was Mrs. Whitney's favorite room. She enjoyed spending time in this light and airy space with her grandchildren, whom she taught to play her favorite games of backgammon and anagrams here. Visitors were also welcomed to the room; Eleanor Roosevelt described the sun parlor in a 1940 newspaper article (*see back of next page*).

Dining Room, Breakfast Room & Kitchen

To the left of the grand foyer is the dining room, which opens into a breakfast room to the east. A butler's pantry leads into the kitchen. The kitchen, tiny by today's standards, was of particular importance to Mrs. Whitney— she personally revised the architect's drafts of the room, comments that can be read on the home's blueprints to this day. West of the kitchen was the maid's sitting room. The north wing of the home was made into an apartment for Whitney House dormitory supervisors from 1956-64 before turning into an academic office.

Second & Third Floors

Family Bedroom Suites

"At the head of the broad stairway is a lounging room or den, while the remainder of the second floor is taken up with bedrooms and adjoining baths, as well as a large sleeping porch," notes the 1917 *St. Cloud Daily Times* article regarding the new Whitney House.

The two offices to your left upon coming up the grand staircase were bedrooms for Wheelock Whitney, Sr. (office 201) and Alice and A.G. Whitney (office 202). Lois Whitney Forbes's bedroom was to the immediate right of the new staircase directly ahead of you, which replaced the bathrooms for the master suite and Lois's room. Pauline Whitney MacMillan's room was in office 204. The guest room, where Eleanor Roosevelt slept in 1941, is now office 209.

Third-Floor Servants' Quarters

"Commodious servants' quarters occupy the third floor," noted the *St. Cloud Daily Times*. Note the presence of the, in 1916, technologically-advanced intercom system near the ceiling mid-way down the hall. The third floor was used as study rooms when the Whitney House was a girls' dorm from 1956-64.

