

VISITOR'S GUIDE TO
MOODY MANSION

GALVESTON ISLAND, TEXAS

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WELCOME

Thank you for visiting Moody Mansion. We invite you to tour the mansion's first and second floors at your own pace. The rooms have been carefully restored to their early twentieth-century appearance, and contain furniture used by the Moody family. We hope you will enjoy learning about the Moody family and seeing their home.

W.L. Moody, Jr., and his wife, Libbie, purchased this home in 1900. It was built between 1893 and 1895 by Narcissa Worsham Willis, Alabama-born widow of Galveston entrepreneur and cotton broker Richard Short Willis. His death in 1892 left his 64-year-old widow a very wealthy woman. After her husband's death, Narcissa Willis demolished their existing house on this site and built this grand mansion to compete with those already lining Galveston's fashionable Broadway.

Narcissa Willis chose as her architect Englishman William Tyndall. Tyndall claimed to have studied under Edward Pugin, son of England's great nineteenth-century architect A. W. N. Pugin, and he is known to have designed and operated hydropathic establishments and Turkish baths in London. After a stint on Avery Island, Louisiana, Tyndall arrived in Galveston in the early 1880s. He designed municipal, commercial and domestic buildings, but this house is the grandest of his designs to survive.

Narcissa Willis died in 1899, willing her house to her daughter Olive, who put it up for sale. The house was still for sale during the Great Storm of 1900; afterwards, W.L. Moody, Jr., was the only bidder who did not retract his offer. Just weeks after the hurricane, he bought the house for approximately \$20,000.

Please help us preserve the house and collections by:

- Supervising small children
- Not sitting on furniture or touching objects, walls, or woodwork
- Not smoking, chewing gum, eating, or drinking inside

Photography and videography are encouraged.

Weapons are not welcome in Moody Mansion.

If you have questions, staff members are available inside the house to assist you.

THE MOODY FAMILY

WILLIAM LEWIS MOODY, SR.

William Lewis Moody, Sr., earned a law degree in Virginia and came to Fairfield, Texas, in the 1850s. He served in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. After spending several months in Union prison camps and later being wounded in Mississippi, he was promoted to Colonel and spent the last months of the war in Austin.



Recognizing that Galveston offered more opportunities than Fairfield, he and his wife, Pherabe, moved their small family here in 1866. Among many business and municipal involvements, he was a founder and president of the Galveston Cotton Exchange, a founder and director of the Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railroad, and Chairman of the Galveston Committee that persuaded Congress to fund Galveston's development as a deep water harbor.

Active in Democratic politics, William Lewis Moody, Sr., was elected to the State Legislature in 1873 but served only briefly; Governor Richard Coke appointed him Texas Financial Agent, and he and his family spent a year in New York City where he sold Texas bonds. He was a friend and major supporter of William Jennings Bryan, three-time Democratic candidate for president.

He remained active in business until just a few days before his death at age 92 in 1920.

WILLIAM LEWIS MOODY, JR.

William Lewis Moody, Jr., who moved his family to this house in the autumn of 1900, was born in Fairfield, Texas, in 1865 and was brought to Galveston by his parents the following year. Educated in Virginia, Germany, and Texas, he joined his father, William Lewis Moody, Sr., in the family firm at the age of twenty-one. The Moodys' business activities focused on cotton brokerage and banking. Under the younger Moody, banking was strengthened, and in 1916 the company was divided into W.L. Moody and Company Bankers, Unincorporated, and W.L. Moody Cotton Company. W.L. Moody, Jr., became president of these enterprises upon his father's death in 1920.

In 1905, Moody entered the insurance field



with his investment in the American National Insurance Company. In 1920 he established the American Printing Company, and in 1923 and 1925 he bought the Galveston News and the Galveston Tribune, respectively. In 1927 he formed the National Hotel Corporation. Mr. Moody also owned a number of ranches and farms in Texas, Oklahoma, West Virginia, and Mexico.

After an active life in which he relished business dealings as well as his favorite pastimes of fishing and duck hunting, W.L. Moody, Jr., died in 1954 at the age of 89. He is also remembered for establishing the Moody Foundation, which has been a major force in health, education, and historic preservation in Texas.

LIBBIE SHEARN MOODY

Libbie Rice Shearn was born in 1869, daughter of a prominent Houston family. W.L. Moody, Jr., met her in April, 1890, and after a brief but ardent courtship, proposed to her in May; they were married before the end of August.



Libbie made her husband and their four children the focus of her life. As child care and household management duties permitted, she pursued her interests in the Wednesday Club and the YWCA as well as several hereditary organizations, including the Daughters of the American Revolution and the Daughters of the Republic of Texas. The couple's letters, exchanged during times they were apart, point up the role each played in their marriage, with Mrs. Moody shopping for the family's clothes and sending her husband instructions for work to be done on the house. His letters report on

business matters and on seasonal maintenance taking place at home. In all social and domestic matters Mr. Moody referred to his wife as "the Boss" and himself as her "star boarder." Matters of child care, schooling, social engagements, and so on, were decided between them after written discussion, with Mrs. Moody often expressing her desire that they could be together to talk over a problem.

At her death in 1943, Libbie Shearn Moody left a quarter of her estate to First Methodist (now Moody Memorial Methodist) Church in Galveston.

MARY MOODY NORTHEN

Mary Elizabeth Moody, born in Houston in 1892, was the quiet, sensitive first born, educated largely at home, who surprised her parents by thoroughly enjoying her 1911-1912 debut season.

In 1915 Mary married local insurance man Edwin Clyde ("Mike")



The Moody children, c. 1904, from left: Shearn, Mary, Libbie and William III

Northern and settled two blocks from her parents in a modest house. Childless, she and Mr. Northern lived quietly, their social life revolving around family and a few close friends. When Mike Northern died in May, 1954, Mary moved back into her old home with her father. Mr. Moody died in July, just seven weeks after his son-in-law.

W.L. Moody's death left Mary Moody Northern executor of his will and head of the Moody enterprises, including banks, newspapers, hotels, ranches, cotton, and the American National Insurance Company, as well as chair of the Moody Foundation. In this last role, Mrs. Northern actively supported many historical and philanthropic programs, and was a leading player in many public agencies, including the Texas Historical Commission and the Texas Commission on the Arts.

After Mrs. Northern's death in 1986 at age 94, Mary Moody Northern, Inc., a private foundation established in 1964, undertook the restoration of the Moody Mansion as a museum to honor her family.

WILLIAM LEWIS MOODY III

W. L. Moody III was born in Galveston in 1894. He attended the Hill School in Pottstown, Pennsylvania, and Culver Military Academy in Culver, Indiana, and then entered the family business, becoming President of the American Bank and Trust Company at 18. In 1923, he and Odie Richard Seagraves established the Moody-Seagraves Company, a natural gas conglomerate. By 1928, W.L. Moody III was wealthier than his father, but lost his firm in the 1930s and

reentered the family businesses, which he helped manage until the 1950s, when he again struck out on his own in ranching and finance. W.L. Moody III died in San Antonio in 1992 at age 98.

SHEARN MOODY, SR.

Shearn Moody, Sr., was born in 1895. After early education in Galveston, he attended preparatory schools in the East and Arizona, and served in the Navy during World War I. At 21, Shearn Moody, Sr., entered the family's business interests as a partner in W.L. Moody Bankers, Unincorporated. He helped manage the National Hotel Company, and was a vice president of the American National Insurance Company. In 1925 he established his own firm, Security National Fire Insurance. His interest in athletics led him to purchase a baseball franchise in the Texas League in 1931, the same year in which he married Frances Russell in San Diego, California. Shearn Moody, Sr., whom his father called his "trusted associate," died on February 28, 1936, at the young age of 40, leaving behind his wife of only five years and two young sons, Shearn Moody, Jr., and Robert L. Moody, Sr.

LIBBIE MOODY THOMPSON

Youngest of the Moody children, Libbie was born in 1897. Libbie was a vivacious 14-year-old when Mary made her debut in 1911 – too young to go to the dance, but not too young to want to. According to family lore, she sneaked downstairs and out to the gallery where she made faces at the young men through the ballroom window until she was asked inside to dance.

She graduated from Galveston's Ball High School before attending Holton Arms School in Washington, D. C.

Libbie met her future husband, Clark W. Thompson, while he was stationed in Galveston as a Marine during World War I. In 1933, Thompson was elected to his first term as a U.S. Congressman; he later served from 1947 to 1967. The Thompson home in Washington, a center for social and political activities, became known as the "Texas Embassy." Mrs. Thompson died on January 8, 1990, aged 92.

MOODY MANSION

GROUND FLOOR

William Tyndall's design for the ground floor contained servants' quarters, service areas, and mechanical elements to support the family's rooms on the first and second floors above. Among these were four bedrooms, a kitchen, pantry, laundry, potting room, servants' hall, furnace room, coal and wood stores, and wine bins. A staircase, a dumbwaiter, and a hand-powered elevator provided access to the rooms above.

The ground floor now houses the Galveston Children's Museum, an independent non-profit organization established in 2014.

There is little documentation of the Moodys' servants, but evidence suggests from four to six worked here, including a cook, a launderer, a driver, a part-time gardener, a man-of-all-work, and presumably housemaids to do the cleaning. For several years there was a nursemaid to help Mrs. Moody with the children, although Mrs. Moody took on much of the child care herself.

In Tyndall's plan, life on the ground floor would have centered in the servants' hall, a room where staff took their meals, rested between tasks, and listened for the ring of a bell from the annunciator and speaking tube system. Another hub of ground floor activity was the kitchen. The stove was placed in a recess in the west wall; a screened safe protected foodstuffs at the east end of the kitchen. A variety of work tables probably were placed in the center of the room, with cabinets and iceboxes along the walls.

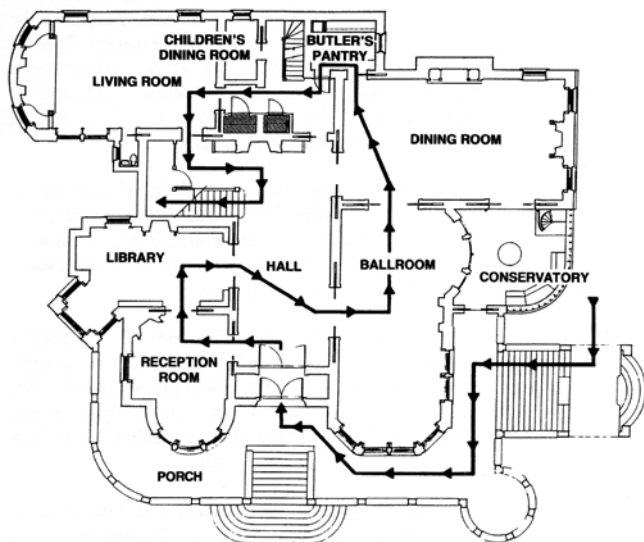
When the house was built, several elements of a self-contained water system were in or near the kitchen. Beneath the kitchen floor was the largest of four cisterns, which collected rainwater for household uses. Another was beneath the furnace room floor, one was on the third floor, and one was outdoors. The kitchen probably contained a copper boiler to provide hot water, as well as a hand-operated pump to fill the third floor cistern, which pressurized the entire system. Just outside the kitchen door is a manifold of pipes and valves; these were shut-offs for fixtures throughout the house. Near the elevator is the house's original main electrical panel, in which strips of lead protected against trouble in the direct current system.

PORCH

The style of the house, Richardsonian Romanesque, took its name from the American architect Henry Hobson Richardson (1838-1886). Richardson put his stamp on Romanesque Revival, a style

that found its inspiration in medieval Europe. Romanesque revival buildings were usually monumental in scale, often featuring masonry construction, strong horizontal lines, asymmetrical massing, irregular rooflines, turrets, and arches. Adapting the style to Galveston's climate, Tyndall included several porches, or galleries, important for coping with summer's heat before air conditioning, and gave the house maximum southern exposure to catch prevailing breezes.

FIRST FLOOR



VESTIBULE AND HALL

Entering the house, one passes through heavy oak doors into a small mosaic-floored vestibule with oak wainscoting and a vaulted ceiling that retains its original plaster and stenciled decoration. A second pair of doors opens into the hall.

In 1895, this would have been called a "living hall" because of its size, its decorations, and its furnishings. A concept derived from the medieval hall, these later living halls revived a romanticized vision of the middle ages, rather than an accurate recreation. Such living halls often provided comfortable seating to permit them to function as informal sitting rooms, as opposed to the more austere halls of earlier decades, intended only as passages and waiting areas.

The hall's oak paneling and Doric pilasters make visual references to classical antiquity and to the Renaissance. As an introduction to the house, the hall clearly stated the social position of the owners. This use of the hall was common during the eighteenth and nineteenth

centuries and is characterized by ornate, uncomfortable furniture. A central table with a small silver-plated tray that functioned as a card receiver is a reminder of the formal social practice of calling.

The hall, like the majority of rooms in the house, is lighted by the original combination gas and electric fixtures. Electrical power became available in Galveston in 1882, when service was established by the Brush Electric Light and Power Company. The combination fixtures also used gas as an alternate and more proven illuminant.

The Pottier & Stymus Company, a well-known firm from New York City's top rank of interior decorators, completed the new house. While the firm was capable of providing all manner of interior furnishings, its major contribution here was the interior woodwork, which would have been manufactured in New York and sent to Galveston by ship or rail.

RECEPTION ROOM

The most stylistically formal room in the house, the reception room was meant for highly formalized social interactions, such as receiving callers. Reception rooms at the turn of the century were usually decorated in a French style, often the rococo or Louis XV style, complemented by gilt furniture, decorative painting, silks, and lace.

This room's ornaments include well-carved naturalistic motifs decorating the door and window frames, the mantelpiece, and the finely detailed cast bronze sconces. The seating furniture appears so fragile as to demand that its users be on their best behavior. The palette of soft colors complements the delicacy of the furnishings, and suggests the refinement and gentility expected of the room's occupants.

The ceiling painting of cherubs in a cloud-filled sky was probably done by Virgilio Tojetti, an Italian-born painter living in New York. Tojetti, who studied in Paris under leading French academic artists Jean-Leon Gerome and William Adolphe Bouguereau, had come to the United States in 1870. The original ceiling painting was damaged several times by storms, and was finally destroyed in the aftermath of hurricane Alicia in 1983. Wisconsin's Conrad Schmitt Studios recreated the mural.

The reception room was where the family received guests when entertaining. For example, on December 12, 1911, the night W.L. and Libbie Moody marked Mary's introduction into society with a dance in honor of her debut, they received guests in this room, which was banked with floral tributes from friends and family.

In the room's northwest corner, a square cast iron grate covers a duct that supplied hot air from one of the basement's two furnaces. Similar grates are visible in rooms throughout the house.

LIBRARY

The Empire revival style library reflects changes in libraries' function in the late nineteenth century. Earlier libraries often contained ceiling-height bookcases, but by the last third of the century, many domestic libraries became rooms for family gatherings as well as serious study, and so contained both books and family collections. Half-height bookcases accommodated this change by bringing books within reach of children.

The library included books on geopolitical topics, such as the works of Alfred Thayer Mahan and William Jennings Bryan, as well as children's books and sets of literary classics. The latter were used by Mrs. Moody in association with the programs and activities of the Wednesday Club, a Galveston reading and social group.

Into the Empire revival style library, decorated with characteristic motifs such as wreaths and torches, the Moodys introduced objects in other styles, most notably oriental furniture. The elaborately carved desk and chair in the skylight niche on the west wall, for example, were made in Japan, probably around 1900.

BALLROOM AND CONSERVATORY

According to William Tyndall's drawings, the room used by the Moodys as a ballroom was intended to be a drawing room, but was left unfinished for years. Early photographs show the Moodys used the room as an informal sitting room. In about 1910, however, the Moodys moved to finish the space as a ballroom. Improvements to the room included a plaster cornice, moldings, a pier glass, and electric sconces and chandeliers.

This room was used for a variety of occasions, including weddings, funerals, and receptions. Mary and Libbie were honored here when their parents gave balls for them, and Mary was married to E. C. Northen here in 1915. After World War II, the room was redecorated as a drawing room in time for the wedding of William Lewis Moody IV, Mr. Moody's grandson. Mourners gathered here for the funerals of W.L. Moody, Jr., and Shearn Moody, Sr.

East of the ballroom, a conservatory housed an assortment of decorative plants. Its proximity to the dining room is typical of late nineteenth century houses, and its location on the house's east side permitted bright light without the intense heat of Galveston's afternoon sun. In the center of the tiled floor is a cast iron fountain decorated with frogs and lily pads. Beneath the tiered wooden plant bench is a manifold of pipes that served as a radiator, supplied with hot water from a small boiler in the potting room below. The conservatory was the domain of Mrs. Moody, who maintained a life-long interest in plants and flowers.

DINING ROOM

Architecture, rather than furniture, dominates the dining room. Although large, the room never contained much furniture, and the combination of the built-in sideboard and the placement of the hanging light fixtures restricted possibilities for furniture placement. The scale of the room, measuring 20 feet by 40 feet, is possible only because of Tyndall's use of a steel ceiling beam.

The decorative character of the room is most strongly influenced by the Renaissance style of the coffered ceiling featuring plaster panels and beams finished to match the room's mahogany woodwork. The plaster frieze just below the cornice is decorated with Dutch metal, a predominantly copper alloy. In the fireplace, a pair of massive silverplated andirons contributes to the Renaissance theme. Above the mantel, a painted cast plaster relief panel depicts a woodland hunt scene.

The dining chairs and extension table were manufactured in Cincinnati, Ohio, by the Robert Mitchell Furniture Company. The Mitchell firm, with origins in the 1830s, was one of the largest furniture makers in the Midwest, at one time maintaining branches as far south as New Orleans.

Near the room's northeast corner stands an oriental folding screen that originally shielded the diners' view of the butler's pantry, a quiet testament to the separation between family and servants.

The dining room continued as a center for family life even after the Moody children married and left home. The younger Moodys, with their spouses and children, came to Sunday supper each week, and after the 1920 death of W.L. Moody, Jr.'s father, major holidays were celebrated here.

BUTLER'S PANTRY & CHILDREN'S DINING ROOM

In large households, it was generally the butler's responsibility to see that all silver was properly cared for and secured, often in pantries that allowed silver and fine tableware to be washed and stored outside the kitchen. This pantry was connected to the kitchen and other service areas via the speaking tube and call bell system. In the northwest corner of the pantry, a dumbwaiter allowed food and utensils to be passed between the dining room and the kitchen.

The small room to the west of the back staircase was originally designated as the children's dining room. In wealthy families, it would have been typical for children to eat separately until they were of an age to join adult family members. Although there is no evidence that the Moodys used the room this way, its presence indicates that, like servants, children of wealthy parents were often not accorded equal status.

LIVING ROOM

Least formal of the first floor rooms, the living room, with its raised fireplace, inglenooks, sponge-painted canvas-covered walls, and birch woodwork, was intended to be a billiard room and contrasts markedly with the French styles and more elaborate finishes of the reception room and library. Furniture in the room is likewise less formal. Wicker chairs, rocking chairs, armchairs, and sofas in a variety of styles permit relaxed postures not possible in the reception or dining rooms. The living room's placement at the back of the house is another signal of its informality. Farthest from the front door, the living room served as a refuge from the strictures of public behavior, inviting intimacy and repose.

The half bathroom that opens off the south of the room is the only bathroom on the first floor, probably intended for the men who might use it while relaxing and playing billiards after dinner, again suggesting that the room was intended for more informal uses than other first floor spaces.

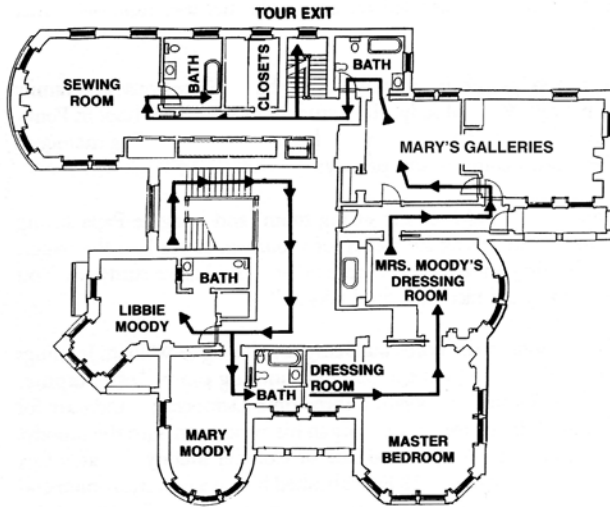
For the Moodys, the living room was the heart of the house and family life. In 1909 W.L. Moody III, a student at the Hill School in Pennsylvania, wrote a homesick letter to his sister Mary, evoking memories of the room's comfort and privacy:

"Tonight . . . I could see the sitting room, and imagine Papa sitting close to the fire eating ice cream, or snoozing, or reading the paper, Mama hearing Shearn his lessons, and you and Libbie studying. You don't know how nice that fire looks . . ."

STAINED GLASS WINDOW

A large stained glass window above the stair landing depicts a classically garbed family before a pedimented doorway. Above them, a cherub holds a banner with the inscription "Salve," Latin for "hail," or "welcome." The quotation beneath, "Welcome ever smiles," is taken from Shakespeare's *Troilus and Cressida*. Emblems or inscriptions emphasizing hospitality were common in houses of the wealthy during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, and were often found on or near hall fireplaces. The window is by an unknown manufacturer, possibly made in New York by Pottier & Stymus or by a subcontractor.

SECOND FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR HALL

No documentation describes the hall's furnishings during the early twentieth century; it is now furnished with items of hall furniture that were probably used in the house W.L. Moody, Jr., owned before moving here, and from his father's house.

The hallway's walls are stenciled with aluminum lacquer; the ceiling is further enhanced by the addition of aluminum leaf. Aluminum was the logical choice for such bright effects, as it is not subject to tarnishing nearly so quickly as silver.

SECOND FLOOR BEDROOMS

While the first floor rooms differ markedly in historic styles and in decorative techniques, the second floor rooms are more notable for their similarities and for their relative simplicity. Throughout the bedrooms, cornices are of the same profile, decorated with the same moldings; woodwork differs slightly in detailing, but is similar in overall configuration. Various woods are used in different rooms, including birdseye maple, birch, and sycamore. The palette of subdued tones of beige, cream, mustard, and pink on the walls is very much in keeping with early twentieth-century taste.

Furniture in the bedrooms is in many of the same styles as that in first floor rooms, but with far less ornamentation. Light woods, especially birdseye maple, predominate. Much of the bedroom furniture is by Robert Mitchell Furniture Company of Cincinnati.

BATH AND DRESSING ROOMS

Compressed into the small bathroom between the two front bedrooms on the second floor are a bidet, a toilet, a bath water heater, a bath tub with shower, and a basin.

Bidets were never popular in America, and may have been installed in the house at Mrs. Willis' request, or may have been included by architect William Tyndall, whose career in England included work with hydropathic establishments and Turkish baths.

On the wall above the tub is a gas-fired bath water heater that was lighted only when hot water was needed to supplement that available from the taps, which was heated by a boiler in the kitchen. The toilet, with its overhead tank, is a replacement of an original fixture, probably of the same configuration.

Just beyond the bathroom is Mr. Moody's dressing room of similar size, which, like the bath, opens onto a small porch.

Mrs. Moody's dressing room, directly behind the master bedroom, was designed as a nursery, which explains the raised bath tub. The Moody family used the room as a nursery for only a short time; afterwards, Mrs. Moody took this as her dressing room or day room.

From her desk, Mrs. Moody directed the household. She planned and directed major activities such as painting, refinishing floors and shutters, and similar jobs usually done in the summer when the family was away. More importantly, through close training and supervision of the servants, she kept the house running smoothly.

A bedroom isolated at the rear of the house was used as a guest bedroom and sick room. In the adjacent bathroom, a substantial amount of original plaster and paintwork is still in place, repaired to demonstrate the plastering techniques used in the house.

MARY'S GALLERIES

These rooms were bedrooms for the two Moody sons, William L. Moody III and Shearn Moody, Sr. They are now used for rotating exhibits focused on Mrs. Northen's collections, travels, interests, collections and other topics.

REAR HALL, ELEVATOR AND CLOSETS

The back hallway of the second floor, like that of the first floor, functioned primarily to connect service passages. The back staircase and the elevator that opens off the back hallway run between the two main service areas of the house, the ground floor and the third floor, while the main stair connects only the first and second floors that contained the family's rooms. The elevator itself, manufactured in Cincinnati, was driven by pulling on ropes inside the car, which operated a system of pulleys, gears, and brakes to raise and lower

the car and prevent it from falling. Given its size and location at the back of the house, it is likely that the elevator was intended for servants' use to move items such as luggage and laundry. It has been replaced in the same location by a small electric elevator operated by staff to assist guests who have difficulty climbing stairs. Some of the woodwork from the original elevator were used in the construction of its replacement.

A room with three closets opposite the elevator in the back hallway takes the place of a sewing room shown in Tyndall's original plans.

THIRD FLOOR

Moody Mansion's third floor is used for storage and staff workspace. Not part of daily self-guided tours, it is part of behind-the-scenes all-access guided tours available on a limited basis with advance reservations.

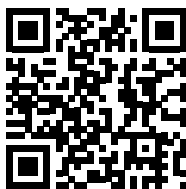
There is little documentation of the third floor's use save for Tyndall's floor plan, which labeled most of the spaces as bedrooms (in households with large staffs, trusted servants, such as nurses, governesses, or ladies' maids often had bedrooms on the top floor).

One large third floor room was labeled a theatre. Built without a stage, it was intended for family entertainments.

Two small rooms on this floor were labeled as cisterns on Tyndall's floor plan. They would have provided the water pressure necessary to have running water throughout the house's plumbing system.

Above the third floor and around a central skylight is a small attic.

Mrs. Moody purchased many of the family's clothes, but also sewed and frequently hired seamstresses who would work in a quiet room on the third floor that sometimes served as a guest bedroom.



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