

ERIE CLUB HISTORY

The present Erie Clubhouse was originally the home of General Charles Manning Reed, one of Erie's wealthiest and most influential citizens of the mid-1800s. General Reed (he was a Brigadier General in the Pennsylvania Militia) was born in 1803, the only child of Rufus Seth Reed, one of Erie's first settlers in 1795. Seth Reed established a number of business enterprises, among them a store, a trading post and a hotel. Charles Reed continued in his father's business footsteps, with interests in trading posts, grist mills, distilleries, banks, stage coaches, railroads, the Erie Canal, ship building and shipping lines. When Charles Reed died in 1871, he was rumored to be the wealthiest man West of New York City. General Reed had his mansion built for his young bride. He chose a site "up and away from the center of town" on a tree shaded rise overlooking the "diamond" (what is now Perry Square). Construction began in 1846 and was completed in 1848. General Reed selected as architect Edward Smith of Buffalo, who designed a number of fine homes and buildings in that city. The builders were James and William Hoskinson, who had built the local branch of the U.S. Bank (now the old Custom House), the Reed Hotel and St. Paul's Cathedral. General Reed chose the "boss carpenter" of his shipping lines to be the carpenter for the mansion; the beautiful wood carvings throughout the building attest to the wisdom of this choice. Architecturally, the mansion is classic Greek Revival, as evidenced by its classic columns and the two welcoming "goddesses" near the Peach St. entrance, both holding symbolic "torches".

The Erie Club evolved from two organizations in the early 1880s, the Undine Boat Club and the McClane Light Guard. The Erie Club was incorporated in 1882, and its list of charter members reads like the pages of "who's who" in the business and industry of that day. The Erie Club occupied a house on West 7th Street, formerly occupied by Mr. John E Walker, a prominent Erie lawyer. The Club's stated "policy" at the time was one of "...conservatism, good living and gentlemanly conduct." The Erie Club purchased the Reed mansion in 1905 and the building has housed the Club ever since. Several renovations have been done over the years, with those done since 1985 under the careful supervision of the Preservation Committee to ensure that the work maintains the facility's historic integrity and overall decorative theme of the Club.