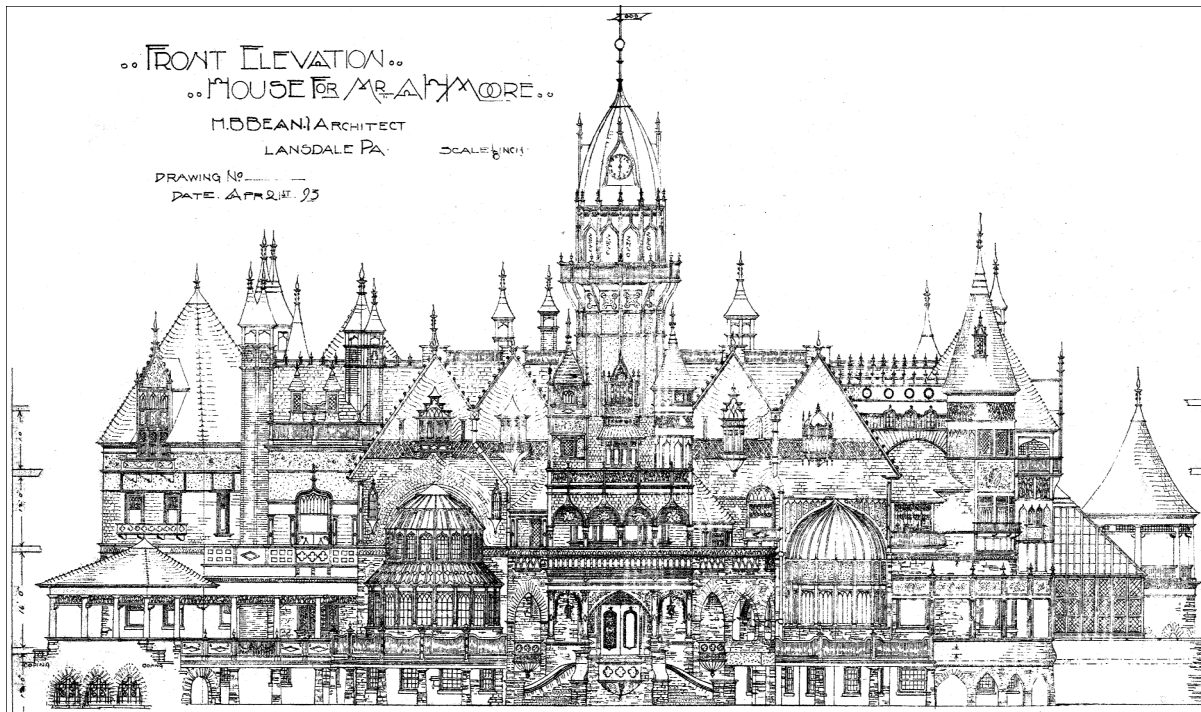


BACK IN TIME—3

The Palace of Dashed Dreams



Family feud derailed Montgomery Twp. mansion

By **DICK SHEARER**

Don't mess with Daddy.

Had A.H. Moore taken that advice, the North Penn area would have its own Biltmore Estate today.

The little cottage seen in the architect's drawing (above) was supposed to be the dream home of Moore, son of a wealthy Philadelphia liquor baron. Well, here's the way the story goes:

Back in 1893, the younger Moore hired Lansdale architect Milton B. Bean to design his dream mansion on a tract of land he bought along Bethlehem Pike

at what is now Richardson Road across from Montgomery Baptist Church in Montgomery Township.

Money was not a problem, or at least that's what the son thought. Details of this epic legend were described in an April 1963 chapter of *The Reporter's* Memory Lane column.

Moore had a flair for the good life. He and his equally rich friends fancied the chance to get out of the city and enjoy the fruits of the rural countryside. But they needed a destination and he wanted to impress them with his little farmhouse.

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The Pink Palace

More than a century later, only the gates survive

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Once he enlisted Bean it wasn't long before construction began. First, a stately wall was erected around the property. The grounds included reflecting pools, fountains, a guard house or two, gardens and statuary.

The landscaping was one thing, the house was something else. Bean pulled out all the stops and came up with this little four-story-high shack, not including the clock tower in the middle. There was plenty of room to roam – the place was supposed to be 320 feet long from stem to stern (longer than a football field).

According to Bean's son, Bruce, who was an infant at the time all of this took place, his father worked on the project for almost a year, enlisting the help of a well-known Philadelphia architect when necessary. Moore didn't make things easy for Bean: he constantly sent lengthy lists of changes he wanted incorporated in the plans.

As you can see from the drawing, solariums were all the rage in the 1890s so Moore ordered two of them, one on either side of the 150-foot clock tower. There was to be a grand entrance stairway and a greenhouse to say nothing of all the balconies and turrets that jutted out every 50 feet or so.

But the crowning jewel was supposed to be the extensive use of pink marble – perhaps more pink marble than Moore could hope to obtain. For obvious reasons

this place was nicknamed “The Pink Palace” by locals who watched in awe as construction progressed.

About the time the walls were going up Moore and his father had some sort of falling out. We don't know why. Perhaps the old man came to the conclusion that his offspring was a spendthrift. We wonder how he might arrive at that conclusion.

Like a flash the project was abandoned and Bean was forced to sue to receive payment for his services. He was finally awarded \$2,500.

For years, what was left of the Pink Palace sat like a Medieval ruin that disappeared little by little as people helped themselves to the spoils.

The land was finally bought by Lansdale contractor Harry Richardson, hence the name Richardson Road.

Up until a few years ago small bits of the foundation could still be found in open stretches of the tract. We didn't venture out there this winter to see if anything remains.

We know one thing survived: The gates. Salvaged by Richardson, he had them erected at the entrance to his Oak Park development at West Main St. and Squirrel Lane. They continue to stand guard today.

This tale makes us wonder if local history would have been altered had the Pink Palace been built. And would we now have a tourist trap on our hands?