

JAMES ESTES & THE KELLEYS ISLAND SCHOOL, built 1901

By Leslie Korenko

James Estes died in Cleveland in October 1898. His occupation was listed as grape grower and the cause of death was heart disease.

The family monument came from the Hughes Granite works and cost \$5,000. It was reported that the monument was an elegant piece of work and it was installed in February 1900. "Mrs. Eva Cameron, trustee, has awarded the contract for the memorial to the Hughes Granite and Marble Co. of Clyde, O. The monument will be one of the finest in northwestern Ohio, of Romanesque design, massive, and with elaborate carvings. Competition for the work was very sharp, some 8 or 10 leading monument firms bidding, among them one from Barre, Vt., but the design submitted by the Hughes Granite and Marble Co. was pronounced the finest of all for the sum stipulated in the will, and the contract was accordingly given that enterprising company."

The Estes Family monument



James, son of J & A	1845-1898
Adeline, wife of James (Mother)	1819-1895
James (Father)	1815-1845
Lydia, wife of David Norris	1778-1854

One other thing: the Estes monument always has flowers planted and maintained during the summer. It is believed that when James Estes donated the funds to build the new school he asked only that flowers be ever placed on the family monument in remembrance. As you can see, that is still being done.

His showed great thought and foresight in considering the benefit to the community. The island was expanding and for years, there were concerns that the island's brightest and best would leave for better educational opportunities. From Datus Kelley's time, education ranked high on the list of goals for the community. It was through the largess of James Estes that the massive stone school on the corner of Ward Rd. and Division St. would be built and named after him: Estes School. A large portrait of Estes hangs in the school, but because it is behind glass, it is very difficult to photograph.



Also included in his will was a touching tribute to Nettie Cameron. It appears that James and Nettie had feelings for each other and were engaged. Unfortunately, this star-crossed love was destined for failure. Nettie will die in February 1899 of consumption just months of James's passing. It was apparent from the March codicil to the will that both he and Nettie were very ill.

The Last and Testament of James Estes of Kelley's Island, Ohio provides some interesting details: "In the name of the Benevolent Father of All, I, the said James Estes, being of sound and disposing mind and memory, considering the uncertainty of continuance in life, and desiring to make such disposition of my worldly estate as I deem best, do make, publish and declare this to be my last will and testament; hereby revoking and annulling any and all former will or wills whatsoever by me made.

First: I desire all my just debts and funeral expenses to be paid, as soon as possible after my decease.

Second: I give and bequeath:

I desire that the personal effects in the dwelling house shall be given to Thos. J. Norris and his sisters to be divided equally. Said Thos. J. Norris resides in Brandon, Wis.

I bequeath to Miss Annie Hays of Kelley's Island, O., the sum of \$7,000 which shall be paid her when she attains the age of 25 years. The said sum to be deposited in the Third Nat. Exchange Bank of Sandusky, Ohio until she shall attain the age of 25 years as stated. Provided said Bank shall pay her an annual rental of \$350 (or 5% per annum) during said period. Should said Bank decline to pay said rental then the executor shall invest the same in some safe manner as he may deem best. [Annie Hays was the daughter of early Island settler, Jacob Hayes. She was around 22 years old when she was taken in in 1888 when her mother, Ellen Fallen Hayes, died. Her father, Jacob Hayes died in 1887.]

To my cousin Thomas J. Norris of Brandon, Wis. I bequeath \$2,000 in money.

I desire that a certain mortgage held by me against the dwelling house property of John Reinheimer shall be cancelled and given to his wife, Eliza Reinheimer.

To Miss Nettie Cameron of Kelley's Island Ohio I bequeath the sum of \$10,000 in money. I desire that the sum of \$5,000 be paid to said Nettie Cameron to be used for the purpose of erecting a family monument in our cemetery lot at Kelley's Island, Ohio and in beautifying the lot. Also an additional \$1,000 to be invested by her in some good Life or Trust Co. The income from which shall be used yearly in keeping said Monument and lot in good condition. Said Nettie Cameron be hereby empowered to appoint her successor and such successors to appoint theirs and so on. Should they neglect or refuse to appoint such successors then the Probate Judge of Erie County shall make such appointments as he may deem best.

I desire the sum of \$10,000 be paid to the Directors of Kelley's Island Special School District to be used by them in the erection of a central school building on the site now occupied by the High

and Primary School in central part of the Island. And in ornamenting and beautifying the grounds.

For the purpose of paying the foregoing and any following bequests, I desire that my Wine Co. stock and all other stocks, bonds, mortgages and personal property not otherwise bequeathed shall be sold by my executor in such manner and amounts as he may deem best. The real estate shall also be sold either together or be divided as may seem most advantageous and the proceeds be used in payment of the foregoing or following bequests.

I desire that any contracts or bargains made by me shall be carried out faithfully as stipulated. I refer particularly to an agreement made with the Third Nat. Exchange Bank of Sandusky through Lawrence Cable... in a matter of John Reinheimer. Said Bank to hold all securities in their possession to secure them and my estate against possible loss.

I nominate and appoint Lawrence Cable of Sandusky to be the executor of this Will. June 15, 1897.

Codicil to Will, June 22, 1897 – Item 1 – Should there be any property of any description left, after satisfying all bequests made in said will, I desire that all such residue be added to bequest given to the Board of Education of Kelley's Island Special School District (in addition to the \$10,000 therein named) for the purpose of building said school building and beautifying the grounds, as therein stated and to become a part of said bequest.

Codicil to Will, March 17, 1898 – Item 1 - Should Miss Nettie Cameron, a beneficiary under my former will, not survive me. Or should she die leaving the whole or any part of the property due her unpaid at the time of her decease, then such residue, if any, shall be equally divided among the remaining legates who may be alive at the time such amount and balances shall be paid. Item: This shall not affect or alter my former will in any other manner than that mentioned in item one.

Next of Kin: Thos. J. Norris, George Norris, Mary Kuhn, all Cousins at Brandon Wis. A. Jeannette Watson, Cousin of Fair Water Wis. Lydia A. Austin, Cousin, Lakeside, Oregon, Horatio Norris, Cousin, Nebraska. Winfield Andres, Cousin, Greenwich, Ohio, Irwin Andrews, Cousin, Norwalk, Ohio.

By December, Lawrence Cable, as executor of the estate, filed an inventory and appraisal, and was granted leave by the court to sell the personal property, goods and chattels of the estate at private sale. The inventory and appraisal revealed that Mr. Estes was not so wealthy as was supposed, the entire value of his estate being less than \$52,000. James' property was sold in November of the next year "from the courthouse steps," and Lawrence Cable executor sold 100 acres in Lot 10 to Louis P. Brown for \$12,000.

As previously mentioned, Nettie outlived James by just a few months. February 24, 1899 "Joined in Death - Miss Nettie Cameron, a well known lady, died at her home on Kelley's Island. There was quite a romance in connection with her life. She was the fiancée of James Estes, who died a few months ago. In his will he bequeathed her \$11,000, but as the estate is in an unsettled condition she had not come into possession of the money. It will now be distributed among other heirs." The official Death Record indicates she died at the age of 43 of Consumption. While it was very unusual for a woman to have a will, Nettie had planned ahead.

Nellie/Nettie Cameron, Last Will and Testament: I give and bequeath to my sister in law Eva Cameron \$1,000. I give and bequeath to my mother Margaret Cameron all other money which I may have. I desire that no appraisal be made and that no bond be required from the executor therein after named. I leave all my jewelry and keepsakes with Eva Cameron to be divided as I have directed. I nominate and appoint my brother Mr. John Cameron to be the executor of this will and that no inventory or bond be required.

Heirs: Margaret Cameron (Mother), John Cameron (Brother), Florence Kelley (Niece), and Jean Kelley (Niece) all of Kelley's Island. The amount of personal property will be about \$5,580 per appraisal. No real estate. Distribution made as follows: Mrs. Margaret Cameron (\$4580.00), Mrs. Eva Cameron (\$1,000)."

Next, we'll discover how Estes school was finally built and the controversy surrounding it.

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