

A Little Bit of History in a Concrete Canyon

By Thomas V. Tozzi, President
Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences



Thomas V. Tozzi

In the parlor is a folding writing desk very similar to the one used by Poe and his actual rocking chair (often mentioned in his writings). Its companions, the little odd chairs and seats, are of his period as are the small center table, the clock, the hanging shelves and the corner what-not.

The closets on either side of the fireplace are original parts of the structure, one of which now holds Poe's personal bible. On the mantel is a likeness of the beloved Vir-

ginia. The large stone fireplace and brick hearth are Colonial in style, but again the broad plank floor and hand hewn beams reveal their local origin.

Throughout, the ceilings are very low, giving an atmosphere of cozy hominess. The kitchen is furnished with the few and simple objects it undoubtedly possessed. There is a quaint little cook stove, a replica of Poe's, which substituted for the kitchen fireplace. Poe bought the stove as a means of lessening the ailing Virginia's work of cooking at the wide-open hearth.

The cottage originally comprised two rooms on the ground floor and two in the attic, to which Poe added the kitchen and a lean-to, for cooking, storage space and fuel.

The color scheme of the Poe tenancy has been restored, and with the original well-scrubbed floor surfaces exposed, the interior presents the appearance which made Poe's visitors aware that despite the humble character of his home, it was most attractive. Harrison wrote of the family in their cheerful little dwelling — "the wholesomeness, beauty and brightness of their surrounding — the direst poverty might reign as it

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THE POE COTTAGE — at Kingsbridge Road and Grand Concourse

One of our Borough's oldest organizations is the Bronx Society of Arts and Sciences, which organization's prime function is the care and custody of Poe Cottage at Kingsbridge Road and Grand Concourse, where Edgar Allen Poe, great American literary figure resided from 1846 to 1849.

Many summer visitors who come to The Bronx are always fascinated and delighted by the historic charm of Poe Cottage. It was here where Poe spent the last three years of his life. The building is of simple frame construction such as was erected after the Revolutionary War. Although there is Colonial influence in its panelled doors, broad mantels, small-paned windows and shingled exterior, the cut nails, rough laths and mud plaster of its interior reflect the primitive character of workmanship during the period directly after the war.

Entering the house from a porch extending along its entire front, the visitor steps into a little hallway. To the left is a winding stairway leading to the attic. It is said that Poe had a writing table and his meager library on this upper floor. But the attic was unheated and could only have been used for work in the summer. Much of Poe's writing was done in the parlor where the only fireplace provided all the heat that was available.

During his three years in the cottage, he wrote many of his best poems—The Bells, Annabel Lee and Eureka—as well as some of his best fiction.

Directly off the front hall is a tiny bedroom where Virginia died on that sad Saturday in January, 1847. It contains the original wooden bedstead, a little painted chest of drawers, a small looking glass and a hair trunk—objects which bespeak the simplicity of their life.

LITTLE BIT OF HISTORY

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... but there is none of its
color ... or seedv neglect".

The headquarters of The Bronx
Board of Trade in the Busher Build-
ing, 349 East 149th Street, also
serves as the Society's office and
archive records of The Bronx are
to be found in the Society's files.
Members of the Board of Trade's
Directors are also Officers and
Directors of the Society and scores
of Bronx business leaders contrib-
ute annually to the Society's sup-
port which allows more than 30,-
visitors each year to visit the
Cottage.

Principal leaders of the Society
include Thomas V. Tozzi, Bronx
Attorney and former Bronx Board
Trade President, who is the So-
ciety's President; Donald Darcy,
President of the North Side
Savings Bank and former Board

of Trade Executive Secretary, who
serves as the Society's Secretary;
Miss Laura J. Mollenauer, Chair-

man of the Poe Cottage Commit-
tee and Mr. Harry G. Reiff, Cur-
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