



The Bundy House's Connection to the Fountain Hill Center

The home at 534 Fountain Street NE was built in 1884, at a moment when Grand Rapids was transforming from a river town into a confident Midwestern city of banks, law offices, and industrial ambition. In 1968 it became federally protected as part of the Heritage Hill Association.

The house was not merely a residence; it was then, as it is now, a statement.

The house was given as a wedding gift by Harvey J. Hollister, known as Grand Rapids' "pioneer banker." For over 50 years in the banking business. Hollister was part of the mergers that became Old Kent Bank. He gave the house to his daughter Mary Goodhue Hollister when she married **McGeorge Bundy**, a rising local attorney who became one of the founding partners in the firm that is known today as Varnum, and a well appreciated philanthropist and trustee of Olivet College and Butterworth Hospital.

From the beginning, the home symbolized stability, privilege, and civic responsibility—values that would echo through the generations raised within its walls.

In the early years, **McGeorge Bundy** practiced law nearby, while Mary managed a household shaped by Victorian discipline and moral seriousness. They raised their three sons in this home.

- **Nathan Hollister Bundy** (1886) Longtime Grand Rapids resident,
- **Harvey Hollister Bundy Sr** (1888) who became Assistant Secretary of State, and then Special Assistant on Atomic Matters to Secretary of War Stimson. He fathered the famous government advisors McGeorge and William Bundy.
- **Frederick McGeorge Bundy** (1900) who became a prominent businessman in Massachusetts.

While living in the Bundy House, the three sons were raised in an environment that emphasized duty, intellect, and public service. Though the family would later be associated with Ivy League institutions and Washington power, their earliest formation occurred here, in Grand Rapids.

The most noteworthy of these three sons was **Harvey Hollister Bundy Sr.** Born and raised in the Bundy House, he carried those family values with him when he left Grand Rapids for Yale, Harvard Law School, and ultimately Washington, D.C. During World War II, he became one of the most trusted civilian officials in the U.S. government, overseeing sensitive aspects of the Manhattan Project and the development of the nuclear bomb, and later helping to implement the Marshall Plan. The sense of responsibility that marked his career can be traced back to the moral framework instilled during his childhood on Fountain Street.

Through marriage, **Harvey Hollister Bundy Sr.** and **Katherine Lawrence Putnam** (married in 1917) produced five children: three sons and two daughters.

Unlike the previous generation of the Bundy family who lived in Grand Rapids, this generation was primarily raised in the Boston area. The five grandchildren were:

- **Harvey Hollister Bundy Jr.** (1916–1997): A businessman who remained largely in the private sector.
- **William Putnam "Bill" Bundy** (1917–2000): A key foreign policy advisor who served as Assistant Secretary of State and later edited Foreign Affairs.
- **McGeorge "Mac" Bundy** (1919–1996): The National Security Advisor to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, and later President of the Ford Foundation.
- **Harriet Lowell Bundy** (1920–2008): Married Gaspard d'Andelot Belin Jr., who served as General Counsel of the Treasury.
- **Katherine Lawrence Bundy** (1923–2014): Married Dr. Hugh Auchincloss Jr., a prominent surgeon.

Through their mother, Katherine Lawrence Putnam, these five children were descendants of the prominent **Lowell** and **Putnam** families, solidifying their status within the "Boston Brahmin" social circle. The Boston Brahmins, a title coined in 1860 by Oliver Wendal Holmes, marked an almost unparalleled level of confidence and a sense of entitlement to leadership upon the family. Their biographer, Kai Bird, noted that the five children, especially McGeorge and Bill, were "reared to govern," viewing the management of the United States as a natural extension of their family values of duty, intellect, and public responsibility.

It is understandable, given this family influence, that two grandsons, **McGeorge ("Mac") Bundy** and **William ("Bill") Bundy**, became defining figures of Cold War policy through the Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations.

Grandson **McGeorge Bundy**, in his role as National Security Advisor, worked with presidents Kennedy and Johnson through nuclear brinkmanship and the Vietnam war. From 1961 until 1966, he served as National Security Advisor. Following government service, he took on three roles.

- **Ford Foundation:** He served as the **President of the Ford Foundation** for 13 years, from 1966 to 1979. During this time, he focused heavily on domestic social issues and civil rights.
- **New York University:** From 1979 to 1989, he was a **Professor of History** at NYU, where he eventually became professor emeritus.
- **Carnegie Corporation:** From 1990 until his death in 1996, he was a scholar-in-residence at the Carnegie Corporation of New York, where he focused on nuclear arms control.
- **Authorship:** He spent much of his later life researching and writing about nuclear policy, culminating in his 1988 book, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years*.

Grandson **Bill Bundy** served in the CIA, and then as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, and finally as the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs (1964–1969). Following government service, Bill Bundy held these positions:

- **Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT):** He left government in 1969 to teach at the Center for International Studies at MIT.
- **Council on Foreign Relations:** He served as the Editor of Foreign Affairs, the council's influential journal, from 1972 to 1984.
- **Princeton University:** In 1972, he moved to Princeton, where he served as a visiting professor at the Woodrow Wilson School and remained a resident for the rest of his life.
- **Historical Research:** In his final decade, he wrote a critical history of the foreign policy of the Nixon administration titled *A Tangled Web*, published in 1998.

The origins of the enormous influence of the Bundy Family—discipline, confidence in expertise, belief in public service and rational governance—were forged long before Washington, in a house that still exists on Fountain Street in Grand Rapids.

The Bundy family left their home on Fountain Street in 1910, and **McGeorge Bundy Sr.** died shortly thereafter. Over time, the house passed out of private family hands, even as its symbolic weight quietly accumulated. What had once been a cradle of elite formation and national decision-making eventually found a new purpose.

Between 1910 and 1922 the Bundy House was owned by Charles and Emma Blair. Charles, a graduate of Harvard Law (1885), was the federally appointed Referee in Bankruptcy for the Western District of Michigan. While members of Fountain Street Church, Emma was involved in philanthropy, particularly through the Ladies Literary Club. During the Blairs' decade in the house, while the city was growing its furniture industries, their home was a hub for the Grand Rapids elite. Because of Charles's legal position, the Blairs hosted many visiting legal dignitaries and local business titans. The Blairs used the home as a stately legal salon where law, politics, and business were discussed in a formal, sophisticated setting.

With the Victorian era coming to a close, life changed as the very active Irwin family moved into the Bundy House. Earle Irwin (1883-1951) was the leader of Irwin Seating Company (now a global leader in public seating), and a director of Michigan National Bank, as well as a Trustee of Butterworth Hospital. The Earle and Charlotte Irwin family put a tennis court in the back yard (where the parking lot is today) and in 1924 converted the 3rd floor attic into an indoor recreation area. These changes were made especially for son William (Bill) Irwin – who was the city tennis champion at the time. There was a distinctive balcony, since removed, that the Irwins and Blairs had used for social gatherings.

Earle and Charlotte had two children, William (Bill) Irwin (1911-1996) and Charlotte Irwin Green. Through William's family, two sons, Earle "Win" Irwin and William Irwin Jr., have maintained the family legacy and ownership of Irwin Seating Co.

Here, then, is a chronological history of the home's ownership, from then until now.

1884 – 1910: The Bundy Family The home was originally a wedding gift for the fiancée of McGeorge Bundy (senior). It served as the childhood home for the prominent Bundy brothers, McGeorge and William, who later became key advisors to Presidents Kennedy and Johnson.

1910 – 1922: The Blair Family The property was sold by the Bundys to the Blairs, who maintained it as a private residence for over a decade.

1922 – 1966: The Irwin Family The family behind the Irwin Seating Company owned the home during this long tenure. They were responsible for significant internal updates, including the conversion of the third floor into a recreation space for their son.

1966 – 1974: Central Reformed Church The church purchased the property with the intent to clear the land for parking. The home was only saved from demolition by the establishment of the Heritage Hill Historic District and subsequent preservation laws. During these years the church kept it as a rental property.

1974–1975: The Marriage and Family Center was founded by Central Reformed Church as an extension of its mission to care for people in our community. Organized by Rev. Andy Atwood and the Rev. Albert DeVoogd, the nonprofit Center began leasing the first floor for office space in early 1975.

1986: As the practice grew, **the Center expanded** its lease to include the second floor, while the third floor remained a residential apartment.

1991: With the help of a generous donor, the Marriage and Family Center **purchased the Bundy House** from Central Reformed Church to ensure its long-term future. This also allowed the Center to expand to the third floor.

1996: The Center rebranded itself as **The Fountain Hill Center for Counseling and Consultation** to overcome the constraints placed on its staff by managed care, and to reflect its broadening range of services.

Today, the Bundy House serves as the **Fountain Hill Center**, a nonprofit counseling and mental health organization. This transformation is striking—and meaningful.

A home once associated with authority, intellect, and top-down decision-making now exists to support listening, healing, and personal transformation. Where national policies once had their roots, individual lives are now grounded and tended with care and compassion.

In that sense, the Fountain Hill Center does not erase the Bundy legacy; it reframes it. The house remains a place where inner lives matter, where ethical responsibility is taken seriously, and where the consequences of power—personal and collective—are acknowledged.

The Bundy House stands as an active witness to its long history as a place where purpose and power, authority and authenticity, conviction and compassion have been integrated and expressed in ways that have influenced our country, city, corporations, families, and individuals.

In the future, we aim to extend this positive impact throughout 2026 by successfully executing a \$1,000,000.00 Capital Campaign that will achieve three goals, as stated in our Case for Support:

- **Strengthen our Capacity through the Expansion & Preservation of the Bundy House:** We are converting the existing carriage house/unused garage into a new handicap-accessible service center, increasing therapy space, group program capacity, and assessment services, while creating an additional revenue stream to support our mission. Alongside this, critical maintenance—including roof, boiler, and exterior restoration—will preserve our historic Heritage Hill home for future generations.
- **Client Assistance Fund:** A dedicated fund will help bridge financial gaps, ensuring high-quality, innovative mental health care remains accessible to all, thus supporting our people-over-profit ethos.
- **Expanded Services for Community Needs:** We are broadening therapeutic and evaluative services—including specialized assessments (ADHD, autism) and programs for children and youth—to respond flexibly to evolving community needs across West Michigan. A new fund will also empower therapists to design and implement innovative programming that addresses emerging community challenges.
- **Addition of a Meditation Garden:** By adding a quiet outdoor space designed for reflection and grounding, we offer our clients and community an additional place to support their mental health.

Every generation is shaped by the spaces it preserves and the values it chooses to uphold. By investing in Fountain Hill Center, you help ensure that the compassionate, high-quality mental health care remains accessible - not just today, but for decades to come.

We invite you to partner with us in shaping this future.