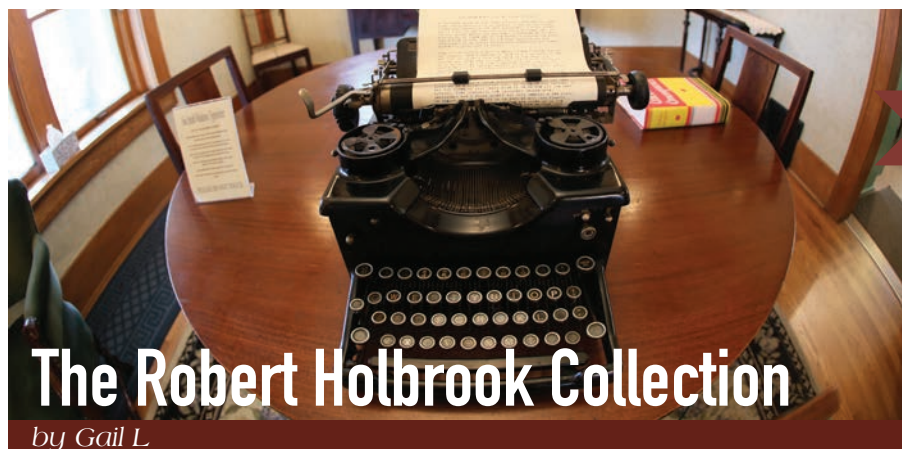




# The House Call

The Official Newsletter of Dr. Bob's Home

Spring 2015



## The Robert Holbrook Collection

by Gail L

Accepting an invitation to speak at Brown University provided a platform for the community in Rhode Island to view some of the John Hay Library holdings of materials relating to Alcoholism and Alcoholics Anonymous. The library is home to the Ernie Kurtz and Clarence Snyder collections and items once housed at 855 Ardmore.

In gratitude for my participation in this event I was graciously given time and access to the "Robert Holbrook Collection" of materials and artifacts sold to Brown by Sue Smith Windows, Dr. Bob's daughter, in 1999. It was a moving experience for me to read the names of those in attendance who signed the funeral books of both Bob and Anne. Familiar names of many who I have also known and loved. Names and addresses of early pioneers filled little address books once belonging to Anne and Bob. Reading Anne Smith's personal notes in her journal provided insight into her spiritual practices and her depth of commitment and love of God. There is a digital library at Brown where letters have been scanned from this collection describing the many wonderful attributes of Anne from those who knew and loved her. I found myself moved to be holding in my hands Dr. Bob's wallet with his name inscribed in gold. Inside was his social security card and a small plain business card with only his name on it. Leave it to Dr. Bob to keep it simple.

An exhibit of Anne Smith's coffee pot; the Cleveland Indians signed baseball; a gift to Dr. Bob, a first edition; first printing Big Book; vintage Grapevines and items relating to Marty Mann and the National Council on Alcoholism were put on display at the J. D Rockefeller Library. I talked about the items on display and included a virtual tour and history of Dr. Bob and Anne's home here in Akron.

The event included a reception followed by a talk on the "Writing of the Big Book" which was held at the Salomon Center. The talk was well attended and enthusiastically received. All in attendance had a sense of satisfaction that a bridge of communication between Akron and Rhode Island had been built that will enhance the bigger picture and support the preservation and legacy of the Smith family.

## A FOUNDERS' DAY WELCOME HOME

June 12-14, 2015

This year, the Founders' Day celebration marks the 80th year since the meeting between Bill Wilson, a rum hound from New York, and Dr. Robert Holbrook Smith, an Akron physician. This year Dr. Bob's Home is also celebrating 100 years since the home was built and a young Dr. Bob carried his bride over the threshold. So come celebrate with us during this Founders' Day weekend. Dr. Bob's Home provides free shuttles from The University of Akron so guests may tour the home, pick up a souvenir in our gift shop and enjoy a hot dog and beverage in our backyard. Dr. Bob's Home is looking forward to celebrating and commemorating not only the birth of A.A. but the 100th year of Dr. Bob's Home, the place where it all began!

Volunteers are needed for Founders' Day weekend. Visit [drbobshome.com](http://drbobshome.com) to learn more about volunteer opportunities.

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[drbobhouse@sbcglobal.net](mailto:drbobhouse@sbcglobal.net)

# Support Dr. Bob's Restoration Project

**HELP US REACH OUR \$150,000 GOAL**

We are very excited about restoring the home to the time period when Dr. Bob and Anne lived there. Interior renovations are complete and it's time to focus on the exterior.

## Exterior Renovations Include:

- Repairing the chimney, roof, rafter tails, fascia boards, trellis, front door, windows and front porch
- Replacing/restoring gutters and downspouts
- Performing an existing condition study and paint analysis
- Painting the exterior of home
- Replacing HVAC Unit in Archive House
- Adding UV protection to windows
- Construction management

We have retained Architectural Restoration Renovation Consultants, Inc., a subsidiary of Stan Hywet Hall & Gardens, to complete the existing conditions study as well as help manage the construction. Because of our National Landmark status, we must work with professionals like these to ensure we are meeting appropriate state and federal guidelines. The existing conditions study is in process and our goal is to have construction underway in the summer/fall 2015.

## Make a Gift Today!

To complete this historic restoration, **we need to raise \$150,000 in the next several months.**

Your gift may be directed toward:

- Renovations
- Endowment
- Operations

To make a gift, look for one of our donation envelopes at the home, call us at 330.864.1935, go online at [drbobshome.com](http://drbobshome.com), or mail it to Dr. Bob's Home, PO Box 449, Akron, OH 44309. Thank you for considering helping us meet our goal.

## Chairman's Corner

### We Stand at the Turning Point

Dr. Bob's Home is turning 100 years old in 2015! Reaching this milestone has been exciting, exhilarating and exasperating. As we reach the century mark, it is more evident than ever before we need always to preserve the past, understand the present and protect the future for the next 100 years of visitors.

But a century of northeast Ohio weather plus wear and tear from the many visitors to the Home have taken a toll its exterior. We can no longer go without taking on an extensive restoration and preservation project for the outside of the house.

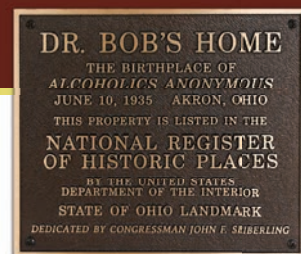
We were blessed with receiving the elite status of being named a National Historic Landmark on October 17, 2012 and the Home has been afforded many opportunities. But to maintain this status, we must follow strict guidelines set by The Department of the Interior for all renovation and restoration projects. To that end we have selected the nationally known firm ARRC (Architectural, Restoration & Renovation Consultants, Inc.), which is an affiliate of Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens in Akron. These seasoned experts are trained to ensure the historic accuracy and authentic character of projects like Dr. Bob's Home. They also provide project planning, prioritization, preservation and restoration services for the project.

Projects like these are important, but cost money. And the board of Dr. Bob's Home is committed to making sure the necessary renovations and restorations are completed with the best accuracy and craftsmanship possible. But we NEED your help, as the scope of this project is far beyond the grants we have received and our operating budget. Please consider making a gift to support the project. Gifts are tax deductible as allowed by law and can be made directly to the renovation project or can be specified to Dr. Bob's Endowment Fund.

All donations will ensure that future generations can come to the Home to see "where it all started." Thank you for being a part of this historical process and we shall be with you in the Fellowship of the Spirit and will surely see you on the Road of Happy Destiny. May God bless you and keep you- until then.

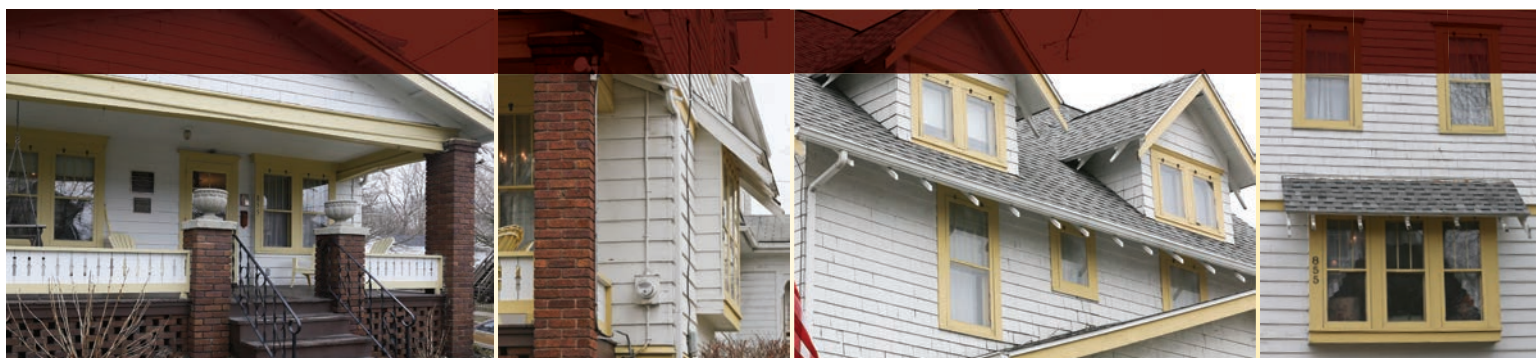
Harmon V.

Chairman, Dr. Bob's Home



### We thank the following foundations for their gifts to support our renovation project:

- The Lehner Family Foundation
- The RC and Katharine M. Musson Charitable Foundation
- Northern Ohio Golf Charities Foundation
- The Lloyd L. and Louise K. Smith Foundation





# Hurt, Heart and Home

by Carol L

The first time Dr. Bob ever set eyes on Anne Ripley was at a dance in the gym of St. Johnsbury Academy. At that time, Anne was a student at Wellesley and Dr. Bob a senior at St. Johnsbury. Smitty, their son, said this was the beginning of a 17-year "whirlwind courtship." As to why it took so long for them to marry, we will never know. We can only speculate as to the reasons why. Was it because of Dr. Bob's schooling, his internship, his work, his drinking or perhaps a combination of all these things?

In early 1914, Dr. Bob spent four months "getting well" at his boyhood home on Summer Street in St. Johnsbury. He was sure that after, what he called a "demoralizing, frightful time," he was sober for good. The following year, Dr. Bob and Anne were married on January 25, 1915 in her mother's home in Chicago.

They returned to their newly built home on 855 Ardmore Avenue in Akron, Ohio. Ardmore Avenue was a tree-lined, cobblestone street with cement street posts. Dr. Bob bought the upscale house for \$4,000. The two-story clapboard house had all the modern conveniences. They even had a bathroom off the kitchen, which was unusual for the time. For three years of their marriage they were quite happy. Dr. Bob built a good reputation professionally and personally. He was greatly respected in his community.

In 1918, their son, fondly known as Smitty, was born. Five years later, unable to have more children, the Smiths adopted their daughter, Sue. The same year Smitty was born, the 18th Amendment prohibiting the production, transport and sale of alcohol was established. Dr. Bob reasoned that this would temper his drinking. However, as he found out later, this was not to be the case. As a doctor he found access to alcohol easily, for medical purposes of course! In order to access alcohol for his personal use, he started going through the white pages to provide names for his prescriptions. There was also the local bootlegger that would oblige him whenever he needed. So, for the next 17 years, Dr. Bob fell deep into the rabbit hole of alcoholism. In time, as his disease progressed, it became more and more difficult for him to keep up appearances. Life in the Smith family household grew dark and full of unhappiness.

Over the years, Dr. Bob made many promises to his wife and children that he would stop drinking. He did what many alcoholics do, not come home, and found places to conceal his liquor supply. He'd hide booze in the bathroom clothes chute, in the coal bin, in the cracks and beams of the cellar and over door jambs. Dr. Bob tried the "beer experiment" (only drinking beer) and eventually began injecting alcohol into his beer. As he progressed, as with most alcoholic families they became increasingly affected by his drinking. Debt was piling up, Smitty would go out searching for his father, Sue would feel guilty when she refused to buy him alcohol and Anne worried and made excuses for him.

By early 1933, during the time of the "beer experiment," Anne began attending Oxford Group meetings with her friend, Henrietta Seiberling. Here she found a fellowship, a spiritual connection, and hope for her husband. Soon Anne convinced Dr. Bob to join the group. At the risk of his reputation, Dr. Bob was reluctant to share with the group that he was a "secret drinker." Even after his confession and fervent prayers of the Oxford Group members, he continued to get drunk. He tried many ways to stop drinking: attended the Oxford Group meetings regularly, affiliated himself with a church, cultivated a habit of prayer and still he got drunk.



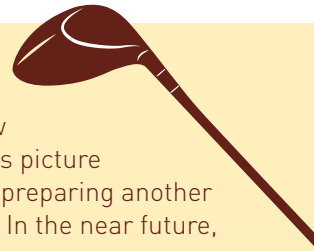
Henrietta and the Oxford Groupers began to pray for a solution for Dr. Bob. Then came the day of the phone call that rings around the world today; the call from a stranger named Bill Wilson, a rum hound from New York. Henrietta remarked, "This is manna from heaven." So the following day, what was to be a 15-minute conversation, became a six hour and 15 minute conversation of one alcoholic sharing his experience, strength and hope with another.

A spark happened that evening in the Gate Lodge of Stan Hywet that was to light the dark lives of many across this world and in the home of Dr. Bob and Anne Ripley Smith. Soon after their meeting, Bill came to live with the Smith family. Imagine this sumptuous scene: the aroma of coffee brewing on the stove, the three of them sitting around the kitchen table spending quiet time in prayer and meditation, gathered around the fireplace and Anne reading from her Oxford Group Journal and from her favorite passages of the Bible. She loved reading the story of the Good Samaritan, Corinthians and from the Book of James. Her favorite saying was "Faith without works." In spite of Dr. Bob drinking again, Anne's faith grew, and on June 10, 1935 (the generally accepted date), Dr. Bob got sober for the last time. Day by day, a woman diminished through the years of living with an alcoholic, began to flourish in her own recovery as they set out to help other wives and husbands devastated by the disease of alcoholism. When alcoholics couldn't afford hospitalization, the Smiths took them into their home and fed them with spiritual pabulum, their experience and strength and they gave them hope. Through God and the transformation that happened in their own lives, the outpour of Dr. Bob and Anne's devotion to love and service, the house at 855 Ardmore transformed into a home, a house full of miracles!

## Building and Grounds

We have made several repairs and updates to the Archives house. We installed a new sump pump in the basement, and made some minor repairs to the bathroom as well as to the drop ceiling in the basement and house furnace.

**ARCHIVES HOUSE**



## New Attractions!

In the basement of the Smith family home we now have one of Dr. Bob's golf clubs and a large canvas picture of Dr. Bob fishing. The home's Archivist, Gail L. is preparing another picture on canvas of Dr. Bob pitching horseshoes. In the near future, we will also have a framed wedding invitation.

## STAY TUNED . . .

While our restoration project is taking the house back in time, we have our volunteers working on bringing our website up to current times.

Our goal with this new website is to provide our visitors an easier way to learn about Dr. Bob, Anne and the history of the home. It will be more interactive and informative, with updated photos and relevant links all while sporting a complete new look. With the new site will also be a mobile version allowing easy viewing and navigation from your smart phone. So stay tuned to [www.drbobshome.com](http://www.drbobshome.com).



## Gift Shop

Anniversary mugs commemorating the home being built in 1915 have arrived and are \$10 each. Other new items:

- Hand-carved camel from Jerusalem
- Bookmark featuring Dr. Bob's image on one side and his last talk on the reverse.

Open noon-3p.m. daily or online at [drbobshome.com](http://drbobshome.com)



## OUR MISSION

Our primary purpose is to maintain, restore and preserve the property at 855 Ardmore Avenue which was the family home of physician Robert Holbrook Smith, affectionately called Dr. Bob, one of the founding fathers of Alcoholics Anonymous. This historic site in Akron, Ohio is the birthplace of this internationally known fellowship, which subsequently became the foundation of numerous 12 step programs that are improving the lives of millions.

Second, our ongoing mission is to help alcoholics by preserving the atmosphere of acceptance where early members achieved and maintained their sobriety. This prevailing attitude is simply expressed in our greeting "Welcome Home."

Third, to educate the local community and beyond on how Dr. Bob's home played in the formation of Alcoholics Anonymous and the manner in which alcoholics were helped in the early days.

## WISH LIST

- Period-specific items for the house
- Four (4) rocking chairs
- 1930-1940s Christmas ornaments/replicas
- 1930s rocking chair
- 1930s boxing gloves
- Diamond lion's head pin
- 1930s comic books
- Winnie the Pooh books
- Agatha Christie books

## GENERAL NEEDS

- Folding tables 60" or 72" x 30"
- 4' x 8' boardroom table
- 40" flat screen television with DVD player
- Cabinets and peg board for garage
- Computer/laptop
- House supplies: coffee, toilet paper, etc.
- Office supplies: copy paper, envelopes, etc.

## BOARD LISTING

### Executive Committee Trustees

Harmon V, Chairman	Dolly A
Kent C, Vice Chairman	Gail L
Melissa M, Treasurer	Justin C
Dennis T, Secretary	Carol L
	John S
	Wayne A