



WSFGC HEADQUARTERS HOUSE  
“The Garden House”  
2336 15th Avenue South  
Seattle, Washington 98144-5021  
425-239-4686  
[wagardenclubs.com/Garden House](http://wagardenclubs.com/Garden House)

Judge Edward A. Turner and his wife Estelle built their home, believed to be the first on Beacon Hill, on five acres in 1883. Judge Turner was a pioneer real estate developer and newspaperman from Maine.

Built by Mr. J. D. Duncan, the house was a box-like two-story structure 24 feet by 35 feet. (Many such houses are still in use in Seattle and can be found on Queen Anne Hill and Capitol Hill.) Originally built in the Italianate villa style, it featured a two-story polygonal bay and a bracketed hip roof. It was originally located about one hundred yards west, and was relocated and given its current address when Beacon Avenue South was part of a huge re-grade in 1907.

After Judge Turner died in about 1898, the house was acquired by Frederick Koepf, chief draftsman in the city engineer's office. He remodeled it in the Queen Anne style, adding a turret, leaded windows and fish-scale shingles. Porches with columns were added on the north, south, and front half of the house. The cupola was added to the front (west side) and the front half was extended. The original weather vane with a letter K on the cupola was installed when the house was remodeled by Mr. Koepf. The current whale weather vane was a garage sale purchase by caretaker Mitch Grospe.

The house sits in the center of three lots totaling about 18,000 square feet, surrounded by lawn, shrubs and a black iron fence. The house is 2-1/2 stories, rectangular in plan, with a bracketed pyramidal hip roof. The octagonal turret rises from the second story; the third story has small gabled dormers on the north and south sides. Cladding is beveled clapboards, with fish scale shingles on the turret, the gable ends and beneath the eaves. Square shingles are used on the porch railing and below the north window. The eaves have decorative brackets. Windows are primarily double-hung sash, with diamond-paned sash at the top of the turret. The front door has a transom and sidelights over paneled bases.

Later undated remodeling shows that the north side was extended to cover the entire area of the north porch. Two additional windows were added to the front side. These changes are evident in the inside and outside of the house. The main entry is at the south side of the west elevation, with a gabled pediment on the veranda roof. The veranda is open along the south elevation but enclosed along the front (west) façade. The verandas were added about 1900, as was the expansion of the living room with a seven-foot addition on the front elevation. At the north end of the veranda is the deck and parapet added in 1924. There are several small flat-roofed additions on the rear of the building, which are generally compatible in style to the original structure.

In 1923, the Jefferson Park Ladies Improvement Club (founded in 1912) acquired the house and the two adjacent lots. The club, incorporated in 1916, was a vital community group for more than fifty years. It was particularly effective in promoting development of the Jefferson Park golf course, and in having other improvements made in the park and throughout Beacon Hill. The activities included holding land for park development; ridding the community of the quarantine hospital (the “pest house”) once located in the park area; urging construction of safe lighting, walkways and staircases on the hill; working with school officials on educational issues; and promoting a branch library in the neighborhood. By 1976, the membership of the Ladies Improvement Club had dwindled, and grown older, so they were no longer able to keep up the property. They approached the Washington State Federation of Garden Clubs to take over the property, which had been listed April 22, 1976, in the National Register of Historic Buildings as the Turner-Koepf House.

In 1966 WSFGC had started a fund in hopes that they would find a property for a permanent home. On June 15, 1977, the house was officially acquired by the Washington State Federation of Garden Clubs. Through the efforts of Lois Donohue, then WSFGC President, and other state officers, by membership vote and by paying the \$2200 debt on the house, this dream was realized. Because the Federation now owned property, it became incorporated. The firm of Julin, Fosso, Sage and Anderson handled the legal work gratis and incorporation was completed on January 11, 1978. Since then it has been our state headquarters. It is administered by a rotating six-member Board of Trustees with six year terms, two of whom are elected every two years at the WSFGC annual meeting.

Helen Wolff became the first Trustees Chairman for Headquarters House and Margery Bardon was House manager. After it was concluded that a basement area for storage was badly needed, members and their husbands painstakingly excavated a basement, removing the soil one bucket at a time! In those early days, members maintained, cleaned, planted and rented out the property. In later years, rental agents were hired to show and rent the property.

On the south side is most of the original pear orchard containing some of the oldest pear trees in Seattle. The trees were imported from England and are a cross between Clapp and Bartlett. When we lost our prized Atlas cedar tree to old age and disease several years ago, that area became a flower bed planted with perennials, annuals, shrubs and trees. A bench commemorating Betty Arnold, house manager for 12 years, was also added.

The house underwent an interior renovation in 2002 with paint, wallpaper, wainscoting and window coverings. Landscaping was also upgraded, and an underground sprinkler system installed. In 2007 and 2008, exterior changes were made with the addition of a large covered veranda on the north side of the house and a handicapped accessible ramp. Funds for these improvements were donated by Ginger Knutsen in memory of her mother, Dorothy Haney. Dorothy was a 55-year member of garden clubs in both Greater Seattle and Chinook Districts. Funds and labor for an upstairs bride's room were donated by Greater Seattle District at the same time. Ginger also graciously loaned us \$50,000 for exterior painting and extensive repairs from 2008 to 2013. It's a grand old house, but requires continuous maintenance!

In 1977, the first GALA was held. This annual fundraiser began as a wine and cheese afternoon event featuring a floral design program and invitational designs in the lobby of a theater. Chaired by Lois Donahue, the first program featured designer Kenn Stephens. In the years since then it has raised \$3,000 to \$5,000 annually for the house. It still features a floral design demonstration, now done by nationally and internationally known designers. It also includes lunch as well as auction and sales rooms.

National Garden Club Schools, workshops, flower shows, teas, and fundraisers are held here on a regular basis. Our house is frequently used for meetings and classes by clubs, districts, WSFGC and individual garden club members, and rented out for weddings, showers, community meetings, and other occasions. We adopted the name "The Garden House" in March of 2008 in to better describe what we had to offer as a rental venue. Greater Seattle District still uses the house for Board Meetings and other events. The Beacon Hill Garden Club, started in 2013, meets at the House and sponsors a pear festival in August each year.

Carrying on the tradition of the Jefferson Park Ladies Improvement Club, the house continues to serve the Beacon Hill community as well as the Washington State Federation of Garden Clubs. It is a great resource with its convenient location, and spaces inside and out available for rent for events and memorable occasions.

The renovations of "The Garden House" continue to enhance the Beacon Hill community. WSFGC members are proud of their efforts to preserve this historic home and grounds, a symbol of Beacon Hill for nearly 135 years.