

POE IN AMITY STREET

BY
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POE IN AMITY STREET

By MAY GARRETTSON EVANS

Affixed to a humble little dwelling in an obscure quarter of Baltimore—No. 203 North Amity Street—is a bronze tablet bearing the following inscription:

IN THIS HOUSE LIVED
EDGAR ALLAN POE

The marker was lately placed by the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore, one of whose purposes is *To protect existing memorials of Poe in this city from neglect or encroachment*. Hitherto the Society has marked the location of the room in which Poe died in the hospital on Broadway, now the Church Home and Infirmary; and it has placed on the monument over his grave in the old Western Burial Ground, known as Westminster Churchyard, a portrait in enduring bronze—a replica of the marble medallion carved deep on the memorial stone but fast disintegrating under the stress of time and tempest.

The place in which the poet died and the place in which he is buried are familiar spots to Baltimoreans. But no place in which he *lived* seems to be generally known. Some simple directions, therefore, to those who may wish to make a pilgrimage to the house on Amity Street, may not be amiss: Go straight along West Lexington Street until you come to about the middle of its nine hundred block. There you will find, cutting through the block, the lowly street with the lovely name. A few paces up on its east side, just above Lexington Street, is No. 203 North Amity Street. You can't miss it. Besides, there is the bronze marker to guide you.

After much uncertainty and tribulation this small abode—where old echoes of song seem still to linger—has been admitted at last into Poe memorabilia in Baltimore.

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Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore

On June 4, 1938, there appeared in the *Baltimore Sun* an announcement which was startling to at least *some* Baltimoreans. The opening paragraph read:

Baltimore's Housing Authority prepared yesterday to swing into action on plans for building low rental housing units after President Roosevelt approved the city's \$18,462,400 program.

The article was accompanied by a map of "groups of 'blighted' blocks in the old residential core of the city," selected for the "slum-clearance" project of the Federal Housing Authority and the Baltimore Housing Authority, to make way for the erection of new model homes. One of these areas was listed as follows:

Site H—Bounded by Saratoga street, Fremont avenue, Lexington street and Amity street. For Negroes. Total area, 7 acres.

Amity Street, between Lexington and Saratoga Streets? Dwellings to be razed to the ground? Why! Poe once lived there!

As soon as this disconcerting fact was borne in on some members of the Poe Society they sat up with a start. Vigorous protests were voiced, and an earnest appeal was made to the Baltimore Housing Authority to spare the twin dwellings in one of which Poe is reputed to have lived with his aunt Maria Clemm, his cousin Virginia Eliza Clemm, and his paralytic grandmother, Mrs. David Poe, the mother of Mrs. Clemm, from 1832¹ or 1833 to 1835.

The Baltimore Housing Authority was most coöperative. But first the Commission put it up squarely to the Poe Society to establish the authenticity of the Poe house:

"Which one of the twin houses, 203 or 205, did he live in?" it asked. "We cannot preserve both."

Thereupon intensive examination of available material was begun. The research was devoted chiefly to a study of land records, maps, surveys, directories, house-numbering ordinances, structural details indicative of the age of the twin houses, and biographies of Poe.²

¹ It is possible that Mrs. Clemm, as several biographers state, moved to Amity Street in 1832. That she was living there as early as the spring of 1833 is evident from the fact that the directory in which her name and Amity Street address appear was "Corrected up to May 1833."

² Grateful acknowledgment is made of valuable assistance received from Mr. Edward V. Coonan, Mr. Clarence H. Forrest, Mr. John Q. Boyer, Mr. Edgar Allan Poe, Sr., Mr. G. Corner Fenhagen, Mr. Arthur P. Vollerthum, Mrs. Harry L. Eichelberger; librarians of Peabody Institute, Johns Hopkins, Enoch Pratt, and Maryland Historical Society libraries; officials of the Baltimore Housing Authority,

The evidence pointed to No. 203—fortunately little altered since it was built more than a century ago—as the home of our most distinguished poet. The Baltimore Housing Authority, after careful consideration, agreed to spare the house. Subsequently it decided to name the whole Area H project "The Edgar Allan Poe Homes." The use to which No. 203 Amity Street will be put



The Clemm-Poe House, No. 203 North Amity Street (at right) and No. 205 before Alteration.

Drawn by Howard Frech for the *Sunday Sun*, Baltimore, 1933, from an old picture.

has not yet been determined by the Housing Authority; but it is considering plans to make the house serve some philanthropic purpose for the advantage of the neighborhood.

The preserving of No. 203 North Amity Street, southernmost of the twin houses, was not, by the way, an easy task, owing to the close construction of the pair as a unit. The problem was this: How could these lightly-built semi-detached houses be separated

the City Hall, the Court House, the Bureau of Plans and Surveys and the Division of Property Location in the Municipal Building, and the Municipal (Peale) Museum. Detailed notes of the Amity Street researches are in the possession of the Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore.

and one of them demolished without causing the other to totter and fall? As the architect expressed it: "It will be like a surgical operation on Siamese twins!" But it has been accomplished—a real achievement. Even the front of the little "diving alley" between the lower floors of the houses, belonging equally to both, has been preserved and cleverly converted into an approach to the brick veranda of the adjoining new apartment building.

The interior of the two-story-and-attic dwelling is still very primitive. Wandering through the small rooms one falls inevitably to reconstructing the scene in the Clemm-Poe household of old. One sees in fancy a little family group chatting in the tiny parlor into which the front door gives direct entrance, or partaking of an all-too-meagre repast in the back room which probably served as both kitchen and dining-room. And the redoubtable Mrs. Clemm toiling carefully up the steep, step-ladderlike stairs to her room on the second floor, where she ministers tirelessly to her bedridden mother. And Poe, probably domiciled in the adjoining room, working feverishly, far into the night, in the creation of a poem or a tale. And the child Virginia climbing perilously to a cot in the attic. Or was it Poe, not Virginia, who was quartered in the attic? Biographers rather like to depict Poe in Mrs. Clemm's attic. It may be so.

Outside, one notes with rejoicing that accretions of ugly grey paint have been removed from the lovely old red bricks, and that the exterior of the building is pleasing and well proportioned—much more so, indeed, than most of the little Baltimore houses of later periods. One conjures up another picture: Mrs. Clemm and Edgar and Virginia—strange trio—sitting cooling off of a summer evening on the small box seats that once formed part of the front stoop.

The Poe Society is, naturally, deeply gratified that the Amity Street house has been saved. To quote Dr. John C. French, founder of the Society:

The name of Poe is probably known to more persons throughout the world than that of any other person who ever made his home in Baltimore. The modest dwelling in which he is believed to have served his literary apprenticeship is destined to be one of the two or three historic structures in the city most sought out by visitors in years to come.

Tradition had long associated with Poe the southernmost of the two houses (No. 203 according to the decimal system now in

vogue). And this despite the assertion to the contrary of at least one biographer, whose claim, by the way, was not accompanied by any sort of evidence. The printed word and diagram, however, took root and added to the uncertainty already existing because of the fact that these were twin houses and because their numbers had been repeatedly changed. The problem was further complicated by the disappearance from the directories of *all* house numbers in the entries of Amity Street addresses for over ten years after 1833, the year in which Mrs. Clemm's name appears.

At the outset there seemed little to go on except the following entry in the directory of 1833:

Clemm Mrs. Maria, 3 Amity st between Saratoga and Lexington sts

In the hope of finding further clues every address in the volume was scrutinized. Only two other addresses in the block on Amity Street between Lexington and Saratoga Streets were found:

Owen Thomas, 5 Amity st³

Simmons Samuel F. 1 Amity st betw Saratoga and Lexington sts⁴

Four other addresses of householders, about two blocks south of the foregoing, were listed simply as "Amity st near Baltimore." Above these few scattered dwellings which had not yet attained the dignity of bearing house numbers there was a large unimproved tract between Fayette and Lexington Streets. This part of Amity Street was not declared a public highway until nineteen years later.

There were, then, in 1833 three dwellings on Amity Street between Lexington and Saratoga Streets. No. 3, the residence of Mrs. Clemm, was obviously the middle one of the three; with a neighbor on the south (Mr. Simmons, in No. 1); and a neighbor on the north (Mr. Owens, in No. 5). Even in those days of loose

³ No. 5 Amity Street is not indicated in the directory of 1833 as being between Saratoga and Lexington Streets, but is evidently the same as in the entry: "Owen Thomas G. Amity st n of Lexington," in the succeeding directory, 1835. The old directories contain many variants of names and addresses—misspellings, changed initials, omissions, etc., including several other renderings of the name of Thomas Owen or Owens. Matchett, publisher for many years of the old Baltimore directory (or "director," as he preferred to call it), had his troubles. "Houses and parts of houses are shut up," he wailed, "and we have to take the names from their neighbors, if they know, if not, we cannot remember in all cases to call again."

⁴ J. H. Whitty and several other biographers refer to a Mrs. Samuel F. Simmons as a Baltimore neighbor and friend of Mrs. Clemm and Poe to whom Poe is said to have given the manuscript of his tale *Morella*.

numbering in Baltimore there was at least an attempt at orderly sequence of numbers.

In order to follow up the several house-numbering systems, every address in the directories (usually published biennially) from 1827 through 1855 was examined. This brought the survey up to the numbering decreed in the ordinance passed in 1853; which numbering immediately preceded that decreed by the ordinance passed in 1886—the present decimal system. The directory of 1887, the first one issued after the passage of the ordinance of 1886, contains in its preliminary pages a list of the new decimal numbers side by side with the numbers of the preceding system. (This listing of the old numbers that immediately preceded the decimal system is, in the case of the one block on Amity Street between Fayette and Lexington Streets, inconsistent in placing even numbers on the west side and odd numbers on the east side. For consistent, logical numbering in this block see Bromley's *Atlas*, 1885, Vol. I, Plate 18.)

A study was made of the addresses of householders who had lived in the same dwellings for many years and through changes in house-numbering systems. This made it possible to compare old numbers and locations of houses with those of succeeding years.

One of the most convincing results of the scrutiny of these old directories was the confirmation of the claim that there were no houses north of No. 5 until a later period than 1833. Even as late as 1865 the directory contains no addresses on the east side of the block north of the twin houses except one near the corner of Saratoga Street. A comparison with reliable maps and surveys confirmed the evidence of the directories. (See, for instance, the area on the east side of Amity Street north of the twin houses in the Poppleton-Simmons map of 1851, of which Mr. Clarence H. Forrest made an enlarged diagram to facilitate the research; the Sachse *Bird's Eye View of Baltimore*, begun about 1865 or 1866 and published in 1869; and Owen Bouldin's survey of 1842, of which the original plat is in the Bureau of Plans and Surveys, Municipal Building.⁵

⁵ A map of the city by Fielding Lucas, Jr., seems to indicate by a shaded area that the east side of the Amity Street block north of Lexington Street had been entirely built up by the time of publication, 1841. This is absolutely at variance with other records. It is possible, however, that the Bouldin 1842 survey of building lots was in progress or in contemplation in 1841, and erection of houses expected in the near future; though the evidence of other maps and the directories shows that the lots were not built upon until many years later.

It is, then, not only logical but evident that in Mrs. Clemm's time of residence in Amity Street the northernmost of the twin houses, *being also the northernmost house in the block*, must have borne the highest number, 5, in the series of three; and that No. 3 must have been the southernmost of the two houses. If, on the other hand, No. 3 was the upper one, and No. 1 the lower one, of the twin houses, where, then, could No. 5 have been? A phantom house existing somewhere in mid-air?

When the first ordinance for the numbering of houses in Baltimore, passed in 1844, decreed that numbering on streets running north and south and crossing Baltimore Street should commence at Baltimore Street, the twin houses became No. 53 and No. 55, respectively—as definitely established by a comparison of land records and directories. The number of houses at the time on North Amity Street between Baltimore and Lexington Streets had not actually approached fifty; but there was space for just about that number of building lots, improved or unimproved, in this area, including those later surveyed and built on in the tract between Fayette and Lexington Streets. It is evident therefore that the City, looking to future improvements on the vacant area, allowed for numbers which might soon be required.

When, in accordance with a later ordinance (1853), odd numbers were, for some unexplained reason, switched over to the west side and even numbers to the east side of North Amity Street, No. 53 and No. 55 became No. 46 and No. 48, respectively. (There were actually more than forty-four building lots, improved or unimproved, between Baltimore and Lexington Streets. This would have brought the first number on the east side of the block above Lexington Street into the fifties, instead of to 46, had it not been for the fact that several houses on the east side in the block between Baltimore and Fayette Streets had numbers which duplicated the numbers on other houses in the same block.)

In accordance with the ordinance (1886) introducing the decimal system, even numbers were returned to the west side of North Amity Street and odd numbers to the east side, as at present. The twin houses then became No. 203 and No. 205, respectively.

An inevitable question now arises: Where was No. 1 Amity Street in 1833? Being the next number below the southernmost of the twin houses, No. 3, it could only have been somewhere on the Amity Street side of the lot on the northeast corner of Lexington

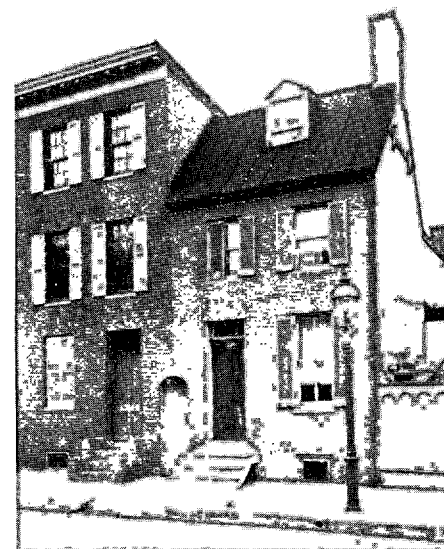
ton and Amity Streets, which extended sixty feet along Amity Street to the south wall of the twin houses.

Two theories as to the elusive No. 1—both tenable, but with the preponderance of likelihood in favor of the second—have presented themselves in the course of the research:

At first, it was surmised that No. 1 was either a former structure on the Amity Street side of the corner lot, or else the back section of a corner house, sublet as a separate dwelling place and having an Amity Street side door as its own numbered entrance, but without separate land title. There were and are in Baltimore innumerable examples of such subletting of the rear part of a corner property, with its own entrance; in some cases the sublet section using the number of the main corner house, in others adopting a number of its own in the orderly sequence of the numbering of the intersecting street. Such adopted numbers are, for convenience in identifying properties, recognized as unofficial or "memorandum" numbers and are so indicated in the municipal files.

The second theory is like unto the first—though somewhat in reverse. It developed in an interview with a former owner of No. 203 North Amity Street—Mrs. Harry L. Eichelberger, from whom the Baltimore Housing Authority acquired the house. Mrs. Eichelberger is specially qualified to speak on the subject; for, besides having inherited No. 203 North Amity Street from her father, she lived for years in the corner house, Lexington and Amity Streets, which had been in her family since 1855.

The structure of this corner property plays an important part in determining the location of No. 3 Amity Street, Mrs. Clemm's home in 1833. In 1855 Mrs. Lemuel Brown, maternal grandmother of Mrs. Eichelberger, acquired the property at the northeast corner of Lexington and Amity Streets—then a two-story-and-attic dwelling in the style of the period of the Poe house. Said Mrs. Eichelberger: "It had two rooms on each floor, with an entrance on Amity Street between the two first-floor rooms, leading to a small passage-way with a staircase. The door on Amity Street had small box seats on the sides of the stoop. The entrance to 203 Amity Street also formerly had box seats on the stoop, which I removed." In 1887 Mrs. Brown transferred the corner property to her son-in-law, Mr. Richard H. Thomas, and his wife, parents of Mrs. Eichelberger. Mr. Thomas enlarged and re-



The Clemm-Poe House, No. 203 North Amity Street (at right) and No. 205 after Alteration.

Photograph by James W. Foster.



The Clemm-Poe House after Erection of the Edgar Allan Poe Homes by the Baltimore Housing Authority.

Photograph by H. Clifton Kaufmann, Jr.

modeled the dwelling, building a double store-front in the Lexington Street section, where he conducted for a while a grocery business; replacing the attic with a full third story; adding a two-story back building; and changing the style of the Amity Street entrance. This was the form of the house when it was later acquired and occupied by Mr. Arthur P. Vollerthum, from whom it was purchased by the Baltimore Housing Authority.

I do not recall [said Mrs. Eichelberger] that there was a store-front on the Lexington Street side of the house before my father remodeled it. When it was still owned by my grandmother, I, in my girlhood, often accompanied her when she went to collect the rent from her tenant. The family entrance to the house was on Amity Street. After my marriage, and after my father had remodeled the house, my husband and child and I went there to live. The Amity Street door was still the family entrance to the dwelling. Though we used the Lexington Street decimal number, 926, it could just as well have been 201 North Amity Street for the family entrance.

Mr. Vollerthum also, during his thirty-five years' occupancy of the house, used the Lexington Street store entrance in his paint business and the Amity Street door as his family entrance, with the address, 926 West Lexington Street, serving for both.⁶

Asked her views as to the theory that No. 1 Amity Street in 1833 may have been a sublet back section of the Lexington Street corner property, with an Amity Street number, Mrs. Eichelberger expressed the opinion that it was probably the other way round—that the Amity Street door was the main entrance to the house, as in the time of her grandmother's ownership, and that the Amity Street number was used for the house proper, not merely for a subrented back room or section.

If there was any subrenting [she said], it is more likely to have been the room at the corner of Lexington and Amity Streets on the first floor. My grandmother's tenant, by the way, subrented this room to a woman who made molds for hat-blocking, probably for some factory; and I recall seeing her carry the molds out through the Amity Street door.

⁶ As early as 1842 a directory entry shows that one Joseph Hall conducted a dry goods store at the northeast corner of Lexington and Amity Streets. This, however, does not necessarily imply that the original two-story-and-attic dwelling had been altered at this time to include a store-front. (Small retail businesses were and are often conducted in private dwellings without store-fronts. Such, for instance, was the case at No. 205 North Amity Street, northernmost of the twin houses, where two sisters used to operate a grocery store in the first floor of their home.)

The owner of the corner property, from whom Mrs. Brown acquired it, was one Patrick Skiffington, carter, whose address in the directory of 1853 is given as "cor Amity and Lexington" (not Lexington and Amity)—another evidence that the corner house was formerly regarded as fronting on Amity Street.

Unexpected and fortunate confirmation of the claim that No. 1 Amity Street in 1833 was the address of the property on the corner of Lexington and Amity Streets was found in the directory of 1845, following the first numbering ordinance (1844). This directory contains the following entry:

Hellman Christian, cooper, 51 N. Amity st

There were at this time on Amity Street only a few houses between Baltimore and Fayette Streets (numbered 1 to 20); and there were no houses on Amity Street between Fayette and Lexington Streets, which, as has been stated, was not declared a public highway until 1852. It follows that No. 51 N. Amity Street in 1845 was above Lexington Street, the dwelling next below No. 53, southernmost of the twin houses. No. 1 Amity Street between Saratoga and Lexington Streets in 1833 and No. 51 North Amity Street in 1845 are mutually corroborative. Subsequently, Amity Street numbering of the house on the northeast corner of Lexington and Amity Streets disappeared from the directories. After the ordinance of 1853, when odd numbers were switched to the west side of Amity Street, the number, 51, was used on the west side of the block.

Conclusions reached with respect to changes in certain house numbers on the east side of Amity Street, between Lexington and Saratoga Streets, may be summarized as follows:

	1833	1845	1855	1887
House No. 1	51	(Lexington St.)		
House No. 3	53	46	203	
House No. 5	55	48	205	

Though in the beginning of this investigation the only problem that presented itself was the uncertainty as to which of the dwellings, 203 or 205, was the Poe house, some other pertinent questions have arisen in the course of the research. For example:

Were the twin houses built as early as 1833? If not, what house bearing the number, 3, did Mrs. Clemm occupy?

In answer to this question, it must be admitted that the exact date at which the houses were built has not yet been ascertained, owing chiefly to the fact that, on inquiry at the City Hall, it was learned that the building permits of the period had been destroyed, and that some other relevant records had disappeared. There is, however, material of other kinds which sheds light on the subject. For instance:

1823: Publication of a *Plan of the City of Baltimore as enlarged and laid out under the direction of the Commissioners appointed by the General Assembly of Maryland in February, 1818, by T. H. Poppleton, Surveyor to the Board*. The map shows Amity Street as a country region, with only a few scattered houses on it near Baltimore Street.

October 3, 1829: Luther Ratcliffe assigned to Charles Klassen for the sum of \$800 a piece of ground beginning 386 feet from the southeast corner of intersection of Saratoga and Amity Streets, and running thence southwardly, bounding on the east side of Amity Street 126 feet more or less. There is no indication of any kind that, at the time, the lot contained buildings. (The upper part of this tract included the 28-foot-front piece of ground which was set aside, probably later on, for the twin houses.)

March 5, 1830: Ordinance No. 11 was approved. It provided for the opening and extending of Lexington Street from Cove Street (now Fremont Avenue) to the city line westward; or, as in another official record, from Cove Street to Republican Street (now Carrollton Avenue). Included in the ground condemned by the City for this purpose was the lower part of the land acquired by Charles Klassen from Luther Ratcliffe on October 3, 1829.⁷

The next transfers of the property (three in number, made only a few days apart) were in the fall of 1834, and each one indicated that the ground had been improved:

October 22, 1834: Charles Klassen assigned to William Patterson for the sum of \$2083.33 the "lot fronting upon Amity Street

⁷ William H. Freeman also was a property owner in this region, and part of his land was included in the area acquired by the City for the opening and extending of Lexington Street. In the following year, 1831, Freeman had a survey made by the City of his land at the southeast intersection of Amity and Saratoga Streets, and the southwest intersection of Amity Street and Wagon Alley (north of Lexington Street). But no evidence has been found that building was begun on these tracts until periods later than Mrs. Clemm's tenancy of Amity Street. (See Owen Bouldin's surveys of 1842 and 1848.)

... together with all and singular the buildings and improvements thereon made and erected." From this lot the width of Lexington Street had been deducted in 1830, leaving about 88 feet on Amity Street—60 feet being the Amity Street side of the corner property and the remaining 28 feet the site of the twin houses. The great increase in the valuation of the property (notwithstanding its reduced dimensions) since the acquisition of the lot by Charles Klassen five years before was doubtless due to the opening of Lexington Street and the erection of buildings meanwhile. (Note that although Lexington Street in this region had been opened for several years, the corner lot is designated in the assignment as *fronting* on Amity Street.)

October 25, 1834: Patterson assigned to Samuel Moale in trust the upper part of the property on Amity Street: 28 feet front, beginning 60 feet north of Lexington Street; "together with the improvements."

November 6, 1834: Moale leased to Patterson the aforesaid 28-foot-front property; "together with the buildings."

January 31, 1835: Patterson subleased to Mary Lybrand the northernmost half of the property, "together with the use and privilege of an Alley two and a half feet wide opening into Amity Street [the "diving alley" between the lower floors of the twin houses] . . . together with all the improvements thereon made."

March 5, 1835: The southernmost half of the property was assigned by Patterson to Elijah Miller, . . . "to include completely the two story brick house erected upon the lot . . . the same being a part of all that lot and parcel of ground which was heretofore demised and leased by Samuel Moale trustee to the said William Patterson . . . together with all and singular the buildings and improvements made and erected . . ."

The evidence of all the city directories of the period shows that no owner of this property lived in it until some years after Mrs. Clemm's tenancy.

A comparison of directories with land records yields further data. Amity Street first appears in the directories of 1827, 1829, and 1831, but only in lists of Baltimore streets, lanes, and alleys; not in addresses of householders—except, in 1829, in connection with a grocery fronting on Baltimore Street, at the northeast corner of Baltimore and Amity Streets. (No directory was published

in 1832.) The first addresses of tenants on Amity Street—seven in number, as already stated—appear in the directory of 1833.

The foregoing land records and directories would seem to indicate that the twin houses were built not later than early in 1833.

Another significant piece of evidence regarding the approximate age of the twin houses, confirmatory of the conclusion that they had been built before Mrs. Clemm moved to Amity Street, has been afforded by an examination of certain structural details by Mr. John Q. Boyer, member of the Poe Society. Mr. Boyer's observations, based on his experience in the architectural field and without recourse to any public records, are as follows:

The period in which the twin houses were built I would place at about the first quarter of the nineteenth century, or approximately 1825. The characteristics of the building are: the type of frames, those for the windows without weights for the sash, which were held up by supports; the style of outside shutters, without the middle cross rail; the narrow interior trim or casing; the type of doors, some plain square-work, others tongue-and-grooved, batten doors; the Colonial mantel; the wide flooring and hewn joist—all bearing marks of hand-made material.

Mr. Boyer places the houses on the west side of the block as of a later period than the 1830's, and those north of the twin houses, on the east side (now demolished), as of a still later period.

The following statement in the Baltimore Housing Authority's Report of History and Procedures (1939) is also to the point:

A project known as the Edgar Allan Poe Homes is now rising on the site of a former slum. According to the records, this region has been a low-rent area since the time of Poe, whose initial success as a struggling poet and writer came to him while living on Amity Street. The *early nineteenth century house*, in which Poe is said to have rented a room, has been saved from demolition because of his connection with it, and because *it is typical of the less pretentious dwelling of that period.* [The italics are ours.]

There remain to be considered two other points which have been evolved in inquiring minds. The first of these:

"I wonder whether Mrs. Clemm really ever lived in Amity Street," said one doubting Thomas.

"The city directory lists her address there," was the reply.

"Directories sometimes make mistakes," the skeptic contended.

"True. But how about this newspaper notice?"

Died yesterday morning, July 7th, in the 79th year of her age, Mrs. ELIZABETH POE, relict of General Poe, of this city. Her friends are requested to attend her funeral, without further invitation, from the residence of her daughter, Mrs. William Clemm, in Amity Street, at 9 o'clock this morning.—*Baltimore American and Commercial Daily Advertiser*, July 8, 1835.

"Well, that does settle it," conceded the skeptic.⁸

Finally: What evidence is there that Poe was a member of his aunt Maria Clemm's household in Baltimore either before or after her removal to Amity Street? Did he or Mrs. Clemm specifically state that he was? No, not specifically—at least in so far as the present research has revealed. But the implications in Poe's letters and those of Mrs. Clemm so strongly support the claim that one can but accept them as evidential. Then, too, there is a cloud of witnesses in the affirmative—biographers,⁹ several of whom were Poe's or Mrs. Clemm's personal friends or acquaintances.

Since it is not expedient in a limited space to quote copiously, only a few notes bearing special personal evidence are given herewith:

As early as 1829, when Poe first came to Baltimore to live, while awaiting enrollment as a cadet at West Point, we find him in close touch with his Aunt Maria's affairs. Note, for instance, the bill of sale of a Negro slave, December 10, 1829, by Poe to one Henry Ridgway (an item recently discovered by Mr. Edward V. Coonan in the Court House, Baltimore, and kindly put by him at the disposal of the present writer). This document begins thus: "KNOW ALL MEN BY THESE PRESENTS that I Edgar A.

⁸ The directory of 1835 does not contain the name of Mrs. Clemm, though she was still a resident of Amity Street in that year. The omission is accounted for by the fact that though the directories were usually completed earlier in the year, that of 1835 was apparently belated, having been "Corrected up to September"—the month in which Mrs. Clemm was breaking up the little household preparatory to moving to Richmond. There would, therefore, have been ample time before publication to omit the name of the outgoing tenant and substitute that of an incoming one.

⁹ See Hervey Allen, H. E. Buchholz, Killis Campbell, Eugene L. Didier, William F. Gill, James A. Harrison, David K. Jackson, John A. Joyce, Joseph Wood Krutch, Emile Lauvrière, Thomas Ollive Mabbott, Mary E. Phillips, Elizabeth Ellicott Poe, Una Pope-Hennessy, Arthur Hobson Quinn, Arthur Ransome, Edward Shanks, Mary Newton Stanard, Edmund Clarence Stedman, R. H. Stoddard, Sophie Treadwell (playwright), Augustus Van Cleef, Susan Archer Weiss, J. H. Whitty (by inference: see footnote 4), Lambert A. Wilmer, Vylla Poe Wilson, George E. Woodberry, Mrs. John C. Wrenschall.

Poe agent for Maria Clemm of Baltimore City and County and State of Maryland"; and is signed by "Edgar A. Poe for Maria Clemm" and "Henry Ridgway X his mark." (*Chattel Record*, Liber W G, No. 43, f. 180.)

In the same year, 1829, Poe writes to his foster father, John Allan, asking for "a piece of linen of which I am much in want . . . if you could get me a piece or a ½ piece at Mr. Galt's & send it to me by boat, I could get it made up gratis by my Aunt Maria."

Later, 1831-1832, in the Wilk Street home of Mrs. Clemm, Poe was a member of the household. This is recorded in an interview by Augustus Van Cleef with his relative, Mary—"Poe's Mary," *Harper's Monthly Magazine*, March, 1889). "When I first met Mr. Poe," she said, "I was about seventeen, and lived in Essex [Exeter] Street,¹⁰ I think it was, in the 'old town' of Baltimore. . . . Our house adjoined that of a Mr. Newman, who was our landlord. He had a daughter of about my own age, whose name was also Mary. Mr. Poe had at that time recently come to live with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm, after leaving West Point, and while his relations with Mr. Allen, whom he always called father, were not pleasant. Mrs. Clemm lived around the corner from us, in a street which crossed ours."

Susan Archer Weiss, who, as Susan Talley, in her youth in Richmond knew Poe personally, writes (in *The Home Life of Poe*) that when he came to Baltimore after his rupture with the Allans, Mrs. Clemm took him into her home, "and from that hour attended and cared for him. . . . And from the day on which he first entered her humble abode Poe was nevermore to be a homeless wanderer . . . even to his life's end."

Poe "lived in a very retired way with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm," writes Lambert A. Wilmer, of Baltimore, who was an intimate friend and associate of Poe's in 1832 and later (see "Recollections of Edgar A. Poe," *Baltimore Daily Commercial*, May 23, 1866¹¹).

¹⁰ No "Essex Street" appears in the list of Baltimore streets in the directory of 1831, but the following names and addresses are given: Lawson Newman, carpenter, Exeter st near Wilk; Mrs. Maria Clemm, Mechanics row, Wilk st [near Exeter]. Wilk or Wilks Street is now Eastern Avenue. The exact location of Mrs. Clemm's home there is not known.

¹¹ A copy of this issue of the *Baltimore Daily Commercial* is in the Library of Congress; also, Wilmer's article is included in Thomas Ollive Mabbott's edition of Wilmer's poetic drama, *Merlin*, 1941.

crushing to death the glories of many millions of fragrant flowers . . . its exceeding beauty spoke to our hearts in loud tones of the love and of the glory of God.

So it befalls that humble little Amity Street is transformed, by the enchantment of the poet's pen, into the resplendent Valley of the Many-Coloured Grass.

Thus it was that we lived all alone, knowing nothing of the world without the valley,—I, and my cousin, and her mother.