

Goddard House:

Redstone Arsenal's Goddard House is one of the few structures from the ante bellum past to find useful place in the missile age, but it had to travel to its new job.

Built in 1835, the fine old home serves as a guest house for visitors and transient families.

When missile and space activities accelerated during the mid-50's, the need for such a facility became obvious as the Arsenal's work drew scores of visitors.

Casting about for a solution to a growing problem, the Army decided to move a house from the southeast part of the installation in December 1955. The 12 mile trip took two days and the only out of the way incident occurred less than a block from its new site, when utility lines had to be disconnected to let the house pass. It happened that the power disruption blacked out a Christmas cartoon show for post children, a situation quickly corrected by the Fire Department with a portable power generator.

When the house was gently set down on its new foundation, inspectors found that trip had gone so smoothly that two pop bottles and a paper cup were still upright on a second floor window sill.

Ready for occupancy in February, 1956, the new guest house was in use immediately.

First to sign the guest book, was Charles Wilson, then Secretary of Defense; followed by Wilber Brucker, Secretary of the Army; Dan Thomas, Secretary of the Navy, and Lt. Gen. James Gavin, chief of Army Research and Development.

A plaque was cast of the signatures and hangs over the telephone table in the main foyer.

The irreverent and irrepressible immediately dubbed the new facility the "wheel house." A suitable name had to be found, and in the estimation of the missilemen developing new weaponry, nothing would be more suitable than to name it for the man who had pioneered Rocket technology: Robert Hutchings Goddard.

The eight-suite guest house served as "home" for a former post commander. A bachelor, he planted a rose garden and landscaped it with a fountain, a miniature replica of one at Ver-

sailles. He built a rustic well, set out statuary of St. Francis of Assisi and a shrine from Oberammergau. The rose garden followed a planting of tulips, a gift from Holland to the Arsenal.

Notables such as Fred Friendly and Edward R. Murrow of CBS stayed at the Goddard House while snooting a TV snow on the missile program. A former movie star, Ilona Massey, was a guest there with her husband, an Army reserve general officer.

From the back terrace, an observer has a view of broad fields dipping and rising toward the mountains to the East. Across from the front door stands a graceful pine.

The house now has modern touches: a metal ladder leads from the second floor balcony as a fire escape. Air conditioners jut from the windows. The furniture is comfortably contemporary. Telephones and modern baths replace the antique fixtures. The house has had its clapboard facing covered by yellow brick, but its white pillars rise gracefully, roof high on the front porch which juts over the second floor balcony.

It retains the whiff of another century including a hitching post out front and a circular driveway to Redstone Road.

In the living room of the main suite, a picture of Dr. Goddard and two associates watching a rocket firing, hangs over a pink marble fireplace. A second picture hangs at the first landing in the stairwell a portrait of General of the Army John J. Pershing.