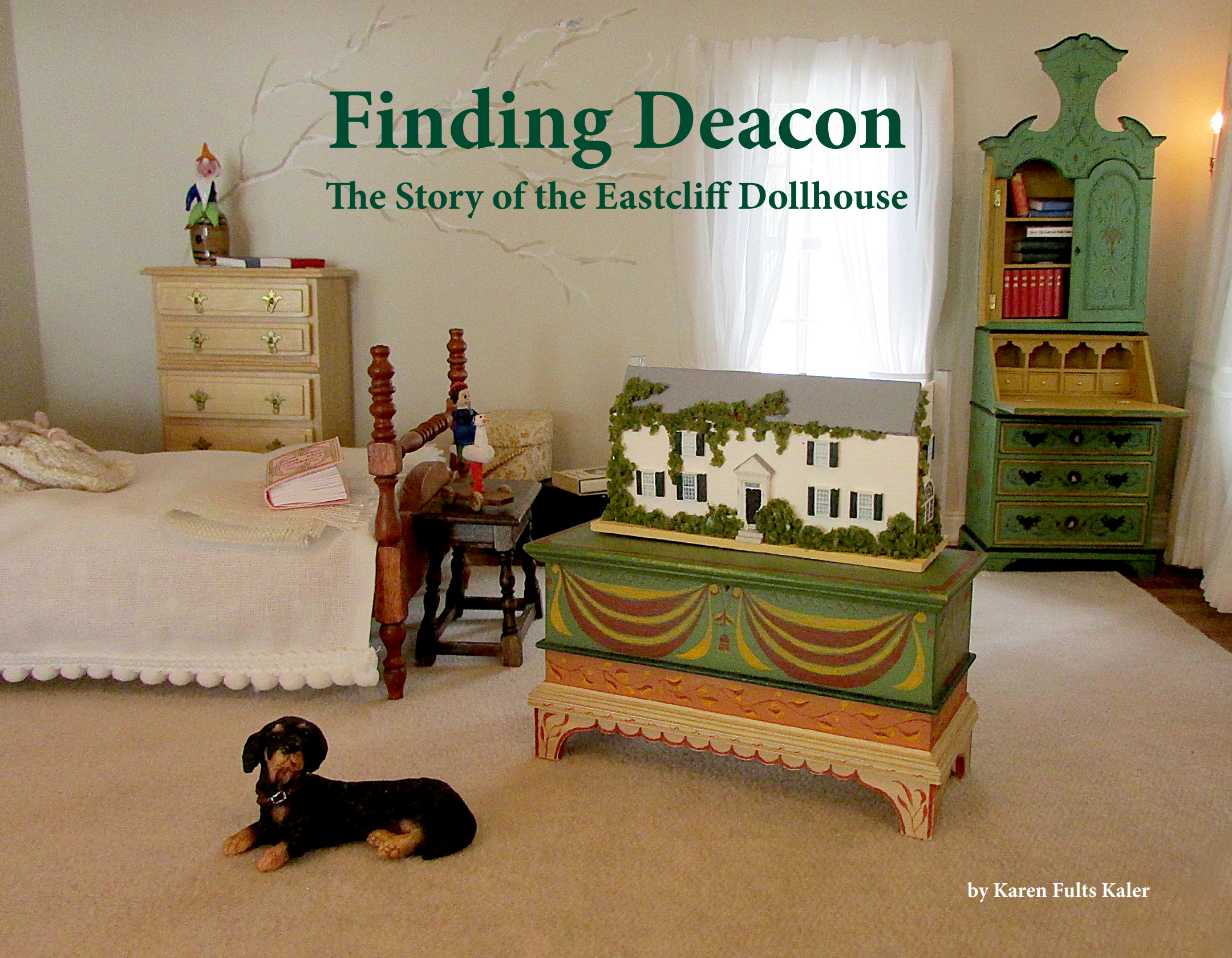


Finding Deacon

The Story of the Eastcliff Dollhouse



by Karen Fults Kaler



AMMA BOOKS

Finding Deacon: The Story of the Eastcliff Dollhouse

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for Barbara

FINDING DEACON FOR ALL AGES

Both the young and the young-at-heart delight in the Eastcliff dollhouse, which is a miniature model of the house in which it resides.

Brooks family pet Deacon, the dachshund, moves around in the dollhouse during the year. Adult readers are encouraged to share the book with children, finding Deacon together in the room photos, and then challenging each other to find other favorite objects on the pages.



Dollhouse



Dollhouse in Eastcliff



Eastcliff



Eastcliff c.1930



Eastcliff



Dollhouse



A BRIEF HISTORY OF EASTCLIFF

BROOKS FAMILY HOME, 1922

Edward Brooks and his wife, Markell Conley Brooks, built Eastcliff in 1922. It was designed by architect C. H. Johnston, Jr. of the firm Clarence H. Johnson, Architects. The Johnson firm designed many of the iconic buildings on the University of Minnesota campuses. The 18-room Georgian colonial house, on two acres of land overlooking the Mississippi River, was inspired by the home of close Brooks family friends in upper New York State.

Edward (b. 1888) and Markell (b. 1899) were married in April 1920, and they welcomed their first son, Conley, in September 1921. A second son, Edward, Jr. (Ted), was born in November 1922.

Ted recalls, "It was in 1922 that Mother not only began to

move into the new house, but also produced me. Apparently I spent nearly all of my very early life sleeping; 'Is it any wonder,' my Mother was often heard to say, 'that Ted was born tired? I haven't had a chance to rest myself since the moving began!'"

Daughter Anna Markell (Binky), arrived in October 1926 and was followed by the youngest son, Dwight Frederick II (named for his paternal grandfather) in April 1929.

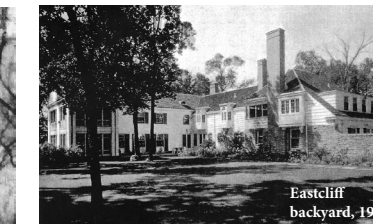
1931 brought a major remodel to Eastcliff with added guest rooms and a larger swimming pool. A detached carriage house was built, including a five-stall garage and second floor apartment to house the chauffeur and his family. The former garage in the main house became the maids'

quarters. As the children grew, the (unheated) swimming pool was in regular use. As Ted was a avid University of Minnesota football fan, games of football with eight boys per side were regularly organized on the front lawn. On Saturdays in the spring and early fall, the Tennis Club met at Eastcliff for afternoons of tennis. After tennis, the guests would go home and change into formal attire, returning to Eastcliff for dinner and dancing.

In November 1931, Eastcliff was featured as "The Home of the Month" in *The Amateur Golfer and Sportsman* magazine. The article includes many descriptions that add to the Brooks family's photos and memories in documenting the details of the home during that time.



Eastcliff, 1920s
Conley and Ted
in the driveway



Eastcliff
backyard, 1931



Brooks
family, 1940

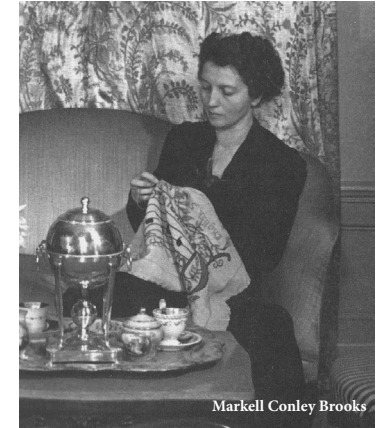
EASTCLIFF II: 1942 MINIATURE

One of the young guests at a swim party hosted by Dwight was Barbara Baer. In 2014, Barbara recalled that she knew all the kids swimming that day, so she went inside and talked with Mrs. Brooks, who was working on needlepoint chair covers. Barbara would one day become an artist and designer herself, so it is no wonder that she admired Mrs. Brooks work.

Barbara's family had a close friend named Elsa Mannheimer. Elsa's family owned Mannheimer and Goodkind dry goods store. Elsa was a "maiden lady" who had made miniatures all her life, including pieces for Mrs. Montgomery Ward Thorn, whose famous rooms are on display in the Chicago Art Institute.

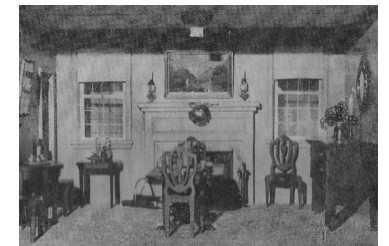
Barbara discovered that her new friend Mrs. Brooks was working with Miss Mannheimer to make a miniature reproduction of Eastcliff. In 1941-42, the younger Brooks children were teenagers, and the two older sons were not yet married, so this miniature house was designed as a work of art rather than a plaything.

On many days after school, Barbara would ride her bicycle to Miss Mannheimer's house, on Holly Avenue in Saint Paul, to watch the progress of the dollhouse. She thought that the two women were an unlikely



Markell Conley Brooks

pair of friends. Barbara recalls Mrs. Brooks looking elegant in a perfectly tailored brown crepe dress. The very petite Miss Mannheimer, on the other hand, always worked in a housecoat. The two women worked together in furnishing the dollhouse as it sat on Miss Mannheimer's dining room table.



EASTCLIFF DONATED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA, 1958

From a University of Minnesota news release, dated Dec. 12, 1958:

In the future, presidents of the University of Minnesota will reside at "Eastcliff," the white, Georgian colonial Brooks home at 176 North Mississippi River Boulevard in St. Paul.

University Regents today accepted the property as a gift to the school from the Edward Brooks family. The house has been a St. Paul landmark since it was erected in 1922. The architect was C. H. Johnston, Jr.

Built by the late Edward Brooks, prominent Northwest lumberman who died in 1954, "Eastcliff" is still occupied by Mrs. Brooks who will continue to live in the house for a limited period while planning her future residence.

"We always have had a high regard for the University of Minnesota," Mrs. Brooks said today, "and we feel the house to be eminently suitable as a residence for the president and an appropriate setting for entertaining the visitors who come to Minnesota as guests of the University."



EASTCLIFF III: THE 2010 MINIATURE

Barbara Baer, the little girl who rode her bike to watch the building of the 1942 dollhouse, found herself back at Eastcliff in 2005. By then, she was Barbara Braman Bentson. After a long, happy marriage to Eddie Braman, Barbara was widowed and remarried long-time friend, Larry Bentson in 2005. Larry and his late first wife, Nancy Rubin Bentson, had established the Bentson Scholarship at the University of Minnesota. During an Eastcliff event, Barbara asked then-President Robert Bruininks about the dollhouse.

Barbara knew that Ted's daughters, Kakie and Julie, had played with the house while growing up, and had saved all the little pieces. Julie Brooks Zelle had donated the dollhouse to the University.

That evening at dinner, Barbara, with her long-time interest in art and miniatures, was inspired to renovate and refurbish the original dollhouse.

The 1942 dollhouse still had many items intact over 60 years later. The condition of the structure of the house itself, however, caused Barbara to decide to re-create the re-creation. The original dollhouse had been purchased as a structure to furnish, rather than built to be Eastcliff. It lacked the distinctive

stairwell that graces the home, and Barbara wanted to add that special feature.

Barbara's first attempt with a craftsman to remake the house yielded a less-than-perfect result. She then saw a dollhouse made by Patrick Kinney and noted that all of the windows and doors easily opened and closed. This was the attention to detail she wanted. Patrick was hired to build Eastcliff III, with working windows and doors, hard-wiring for lights and outlets, and with the hallmark exquisite center staircase.

Barbara worked closely with two of Mrs. Brooks daughters-in-law, Marney Brown Brooks (wife of Conley) and Virginia (Ginny) Dahleen Brooks (wife of Ted) on the interior of the house. They consulted on colors and details. They used items from the original dollhouse as are detailed later in this book. They were able to find a few perfect pieces in miniature shops in Minnesota and New York, but almost all of the pieces in the house were custom-made by a team of artists and artisans who copied pieces of furniture that were still with the Brooks grandchildren or imaged in photographs from the 1940s.

Carl Drake, Jr., former Chairman of the St. Paul Companies, heard

about the dollhouse restoration project and donated items from his mother's dollhouse. His parents, Carl B. Drake, M.D. and Louise H. Drake, had been friends of the Brooks family, so the miniature Eastcliff was a fitting home for her pieces.

Today, with Eastcliff over 90 years old, and the original dollhouse created over 70 years ago, the miniature house remains a popular attraction for visitors to Eastcliff. It serves as a visual history of the wonderful home, and as a tribute to the Brooks family legacy.

Sources:

Information on the Brooks family on the two introductory pages and historic photos are from *Turning the Leaves: The Brooks Family Tree*. ©1995 by Conley Brooks, Marney Brown Brooks, Edward Brooks Jr., Virginia Dahleen Brooks, Markell Brooks, and Dwight F. Brooks.

Quote in paragraph 3 is from a March 25, 1972, letter from Edward Brooks, Jr. to the University of Minnesota.

Information regarding the dollhouses is from Barbara Baer Braman Bentson, as told to Karen Fults Kaler in September, 2014. Most of this book is sourced from that conversation and others between Barbara and Karen.

Recent photos are by Karen Fults Kaler.



The Eastcliff walnut den today is much as it was in 1922, and as is shown in the dollhouse. It maintains the original paneling that reflects the Brooks family's, and Minnesota's, lumber heritage.

The turtle and glass ball on the desk and the box and framed photo on the corner fireplace mantle are from the 1942 dollhouse. The photo is of Binky Brooks.

The framed map is from the 1942 dollhouse. Mr. Brooks used the room as his private library and displayed maps on the walls.

The rug was made from a needle-point eyeglass case that belonged to Nancy Rubin Bentson.

The dachshund represents Deacon who, along with Weenie and Mutts, was a Brooks family dog in the era of the original dollhouse.

(Mrs. Brooks' infamous Irish water spaniel, Rusty, was not yet born in the 1940s. Rusty and Weenie may star in their own books in the future.)



THE EASTCLIFF LIVING ROOM



THE EASTCLIFF LIVING ROOM

Brooks family portraits through the years show the six family members, plus dogs, gathered in front of the fireplace faithfully reproduced here.

Mrs. Conley (Marney) Brooks and Mrs. Ted (Ginny) Brooks picked the paint and drapery

colors for the dollhouse based on their memories of Eastcliff. Conley and Marney had their bridal dinner

in the living room of the house in 1944. At that time the dining room seated 12, large enough for large family gatherings, but it



was not made for bridal dinners or the large University gatherings of today. In the late 1980s, the maids' quarters were remodeled into a catering kitchen, and the dining room was expanded.

The light fixtures in this room, like all the fixtures in the miniature Eastcliff, were made to match those seen in photos of the original house. The dollhouse has working lights throughout

The silhouette and portrait are from the 1942 dollhouse. They were made by Elsa Mannheimer and are typical of her artwork.



The mirror and vases on the mantle were chosen to match those in a 1940's family photo of Eastcliff. The mirror is from Mrs. Drake's dollhouse.



Ginny Brooks visited the Tiny Dollhouse shop in New York with Barbara Bentson. She recognized the Asian-inspired black secretary as being like one her mother-in-law Markell (Mrs. Brooks) owned.

Marney Brooks younger sister, Joanne Wright, painted the wing chairs from her memory of the print on chairs in Eastcliff.

The embroidered picture of a weeping willow tree with a woman at a grave was made by Elsa Mannheimer in 1942. It is a mourning picture like those made to mark the passing of a loved one, and such pictures became Early American collectibles.

The statue to the right of the picture is from Mrs. Drake's dollhouse. The chair below the picture was made to match a

chair in a family photo of Mrs. Brooks.

The candlesticks and bowl on the bookshelf are from the 1942 dollhouse.

The *Harvard Classics* books were chosen because Ted studied classics at Harvard.

During December, tiny poinsettias and a garland are added to the staircase and a tree is added to the living room of the dollhouse. (The 1942 dollhouse also has a Christmas tree.) The tree was made by Karen Fernholz, who also made the 18 sets of custom drapery in the dollhouse. The tree has a tiny plug which is inserted into a working outlet made by Patrick Kinney. Patrick also created the staircase and walnut den paneling. Karen Halls made the hardwood floors.



THE GRAND STAIRCASE



The 1942 Eastcliff dollhouse had a simple, straight staircase in the center. The 2010 dollhouse was built to showcase Eastcliff's magnificent and distinctive curved staircase.

Next to the staircase is the beautiful peacock room, a mirrored room with a hidden bar. The miniature door was painted by Judy Harrigan.

The full-sized room retains the original 1922 peacock-eye designed door and ceiling, and a full peacock *egломise* (reverse-painted) on the mirrors. The mirrored walls, ceiling, and doors were painted by Frank Post.

The miniature mirror in the entry over the bench is from the 1942 dollhouse.



The sitting room at the top of the stairs contains silhouette portraits of George and Martha Washington made by Elsa Mannheimer, a cigarette package, and a silver shell ashtray that survived through the years from the 1942 dollhouse.

The horse clock on the bookshelf is from Mrs. Drake's dollhouse.



The book in the chair has multiple pages with writing. The four vase pictures recall Ted Brooks' interest in Classics.



The beautiful rug is modern and was made by Jo Crooks of the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community. She also made the sitting room rug next to the bedroom.





THE DINING ROOM



Eastcliff is L-shaped. The actual dining room is perpendicular to its position in the dollhouse. The rearrangement of rooms and addition of the attic allows the dollhouse to cleverly show the rooms on one plane.

Mrs. Brooks stitched mono-grammed covers for all 12 American Hepplewhite dining room chairs, using family members initials. Those chairs remain with the Brooks family, and these miniature chairs were recreated from those originals.



The landscape painting is from the original Eastcliff dollhouse. It was painted by Elsa Mannheimer and is a copy of a 1865 painting of Minneopa Falls by Mrs. Brook's great uncle.



Mr. Brooks dining room chair had a needlepoint cover made by Mrs. Brooks. Mr. Brooks kept a coffeepot next to his chair; the miniature silver pot is from Barbara Bentson's collection. The miniature table was chosen by Ginny Brooks as resembling the one Mr. Brooks used.



A grandfather clock from the house is still with the family in California. The miniature was made by James Hastritch in Kennebunk, Maine. It keeps time using a hearing aid battery.



The above portrait, from the 1942 dollhouse, is of Mrs. Brooks' beloved aunt Lena Flower. Elsa Mannheimer copied the original painting, which remains with Conley Brooks, Jr.

The glass bottles were made by Elsa Mannheimer. It is an example of the care taken by the family that the grandchildren, Ted's daughters Kakkie and Julie, played with the house and yet the vases still retain the original stoppers.



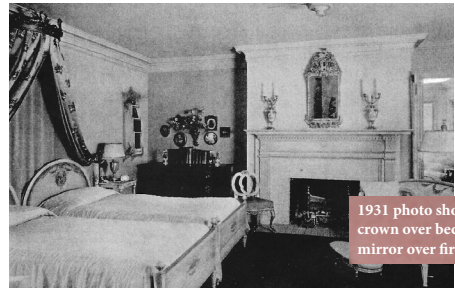
The miniature sideboard matches one that was owned by the Brooks family. That original sideboard was donated to the University of Minnesota by the Brooks family and is in the Eastcliff dining room.

The silver candelabra and knife boxes were chosen by Ginny and resemble those belonging to the family. Similar candelabra are in the Eastcliff dining room. All the silver miniatures in the room are sterling silver. The sterling silver knives in the miniature boxes are of the rattail silverware pattern. The mirror was in Mrs. Drake's dollhouse.



THE EASTCLIFF MASTER BEDROOM





1931 photo showing crown over bed and mirror over fireplace



THE SITTING ROOM



The candlesticks on the desk, those on the mantle, and the plant on the stand in the corner were all made by Elsa Mannheimer for the 1942 dollhouse. The plant pot was made from a thimble. The candlesticks on the mantle were made to match Serves porcelain candlesticks that are still with the Brooks family, as are the originals of candlesticks on the desk.

The desk was in Mrs. Drake's dollhouse. It is lead painted to look like wood.

The rug on the floor was made by Jo Crooks. While not made specifically for the dollhouse, it is reminiscent of those that were in Eastcliff. The rug has over 87,000 stitches.



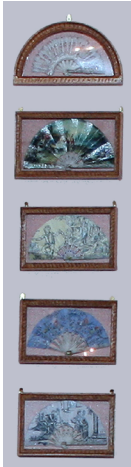
The remarkable rug and chairs were made for the 2010 dollhouse and are exact copies of items sewn by Mrs. Brooks. (The miniature rug, chairs, and dining room chairs required 840 hours of work by miniaturist Peggy Meyers.) The toile fabric chaise is an over-sized piece that Mrs. Brooks used for short naps. The originals of these furnishings are still with the Brooks family.

The vases on the fireplace, crown and fabric over the bed, bedside tables and lamps, and light fixtures were all made or purchased to match items in family photos.

The bottles on the dresser and pieces by the chaise are from the 1942 dollhouse.

The pink marble table is from Mrs. Drake's dollhouse.

Mrs. Brooks collected fans. The five fans on the wall are copies of fans passed down to Ted's wife, Ginny. Mrs. Brooks owned a fan that had once belonged to Eleanor Roosevelt. Elsa Mannheimer made the miniature fan that is on the dresser, which may be a copy of the Roosevelt fan.



BINKY'S BEDROOM



Only daughter Markell Brooks, named for her mother and called Binky, had the large corner bedroom in Eastcliff. The walls were painted with branches and chickadees.

The three glass toys in the dollhouse were used in fingerbowls at Eastcliff when the children were small (in the 1920s and 30s). Mrs. Brooks put the toys in the bottom of the bowls so the children would play with them in the water and learn to use the fingerbowls properly.



The babydoll on the bed is from the 1942 Eastcliff dollhouse. The baby bunting appears to be hand crocheted.



The "penny doll" on the small chest of drawers is also from the 1942 Eastcliff dollhouse.



The dollhouse within the dollhouse is fully furnished! The original 1942 dollhouse had a floor plan similar to this doubly miniature house, with the straight staircase in the middle, four rooms, and no attic. The

2010 dollhouse was expanded to more fully represent Eastcliff.

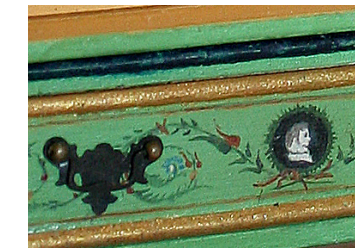
The chest that the tiny dollhouse sits on came from the collection of Barbara Bentson.



The Venetian secretary is a faithful copy of a piece of furniture that was in Eastcliff and is currently owned by Ted's daughter Julie. The exquisite details of the reproduction, by miniaturist



James Hastrich, include hinged doors and a dropleaf, miniature drawer pulls, and copies of the painted details, including tiny portraits painted on the working drawers.



Eastcliff is L-shaped. The three boys' bedrooms were perpendicular to the second floor shown in the dollhouse, down the hall from Binky's room. The 1942 dollhouse did not have an attic, but it was added in the 2010 dollhouse to represent the bedrooms of Conley, Ted, and Dwight. The actual attic in Eastcliff only contains storage space.

The framed photo is from the 1942 dollhouse and is of a Brooks family member. It resembles childhood photos of Mr. Brooks.

The twin beds represent Conley's and Ted's rooms, while the cradle represents Dwight, the youngest child.

The trunk, painting above the trunk, and radiator in the corner are from Mrs. Drake's dollhouse.

The telescope was chosen for the dollhouse because Barbara remembered Ted saying that the family loved their telescope.

