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and her sister, who is also a woman of delightful conversation and sympathy....In my visits we strolled about, gathering a pink rose here, a red verbena there, a splendid yellow canna bloom almost as rare as an orchid, a fragrant white rose 'from mother's bush,' mignonette, sweet alyssum and heliotrope. When does one make such a bouquet...a real 'bouquet'...but in the Weeden garden. And talking the while of books and events, breaking off to stroll over into the province of Uncle Locke, who in that delightful poem in Miss Weeden's *Voices from the Old South* tells us that 'mid varying and uncertain fortunes he 'jes keeps a good grip on his hoe. He surely has kept a mighty good grip here, for I found the stateliest corn, the freshest, tenderest lettuce, the plumpest tomatoes in the Weeden garden that I have ever seen anywhere, and I get

to have what Charles Dudley Warner calls quite a 'vegetable air' here in this place of fine gardens and beautiful flowers.

There are several seats about in this dear old garden, and surely the dearest spot is under a bower of roses where one can sit and talk through the quiet fragrant twilight with these two charming women...

Only a few descriptions, such as these, remain to give us a glimpse of that Weeden Garden of the past. But now, with the restoration of Weeden House, hope springs anew that other hands may one day re-create this treasured spot, with its old-fashioned blossoms, old-time scents, and pleasant memories of long ago.



## The Owners

by Frances C. Roberts

When the town of Twickenham (Huntsville) was platted in June, 1810, it contained thirty acres. With the exception of the blocks containing the Courthouse Square and the Big Spring, each block was divided into four lots and numbered from 1 through 72. The southern half of the town was sold by Leroy Pope to the commissioners who had been appointed by the Mississippi Territorial Legislature to acquire land and sell lots to raise money in order to construct public buildings.

On July 5, 1810, these commissioners auctioned off twenty-

four lots for prices ranging from \$100 to \$750 each. At this time Alexander Wasson purchased lot 63 in Block 20. When he sold this property to John Jones in 1818, the purchase price was listed as \$350. Jones transferred lot 63 to Henry C. Bradford in May 1819 for \$700. On this site Bradford constructed the two-story brick structure which is known today as the Weeden House. Behind the house he also built a kitchen building, the upper story of which provided quarters for servants.

During the first "boom" pe-

riod in the town's history that followed the end of the Creek War in 1814, merchants from surrounding states came to take advantage of the prosperous times made possible by large federal land sales at the Huntsville Land Office. Henry C. Bradford was one of the Nashville group who established a flourishing mercantile business on the south side of the Public Square during this period. Because of financial reverses associated with the Panic of 1819, he mortgaged his home and storehouse to John H. Lewis of Fayetteville, Tennessee, in order to try to save his business. When this effort failed, Bradford moved on to Crawford County, Arkansas Territory, to start a new venture on the frontier.

General John Brahan, who purchased the mortgage from Lewis, sold Bradford's home to John Read in 1820 for \$4,500. Read was one of the few merchants who successfully weathered the financial storm which struck the Tennessee Valley in 1819. He had come to Huntsville from Nashville in 1811 to continue his work as Receiver of Public Monies at the Federal Land Office, but he soon resigned this position to go into the mercantile business with James White. For the next fifty years and until his death in 1861, Read operated a successful business in Huntsville and served as an active participant in the civic and social life of the community.

While living in the Bradford house, Read purchased lot 71 just back of lot 63 to be used as a stable. After four years of occupancy he sold the property to John McKinley and moved to his new home on Eustis Street.

John McKinley, successful lawyer and business man from Louisville, Kentucky, had come to Huntsville in 1818 and invested in commercial property east of the Public Square. He immediately became active in politics by representing Madison County in the state legislature in 1820 and 1821. In 1826 he was chosen to fill out the unexpired term in the United States Senate left vacant by the death of Dr. Henry Chambers of Huntsville. While serving in this capacity, he changed his place of residence to Florence, Alabama, in 1829. On November 9, 1829, he sold his Huntsville home to Bartley M. Lowe for \$6,000, the same amount he had paid for it five years earlier.

Although McKinley went on to become an associate justice of the U. S. Supreme Court in 1836, he retained some of his property in Huntsville and continued to visit friends here for many years. From Florence he moved his residence back to Louisville, Kentucky, where he spent his summers until his death in 1852.

The Bartley M. Lowe family owned the home for the next sixteen years, but by the time they sold it in 1845, they had already moved to "The Grove" just west of Madison Street. Sarah Sophia, Bartley's wife, was the daughter of Dr. James Manning, one of the wealthiest planters in the area. "The Grove," one of the largest and most beautiful homes in Huntsville, was constructed by Dr. Manning for his large family in 1824.

Bartley M. Lowe, a successful cotton merchant, was chosen the first president of the Huntsville Branch of the State

Bank when it opened in 1835 and continued to serve in this capacity until the institution was placed in liquidation by the state legislature in 1842. He also served as a general in the state militia during the Indian war of 1836. After his wife's death in 1844, he spent much of his time in New Orleans where the headquarters for his cotton factorage business was located. His children remained at "The Grove" with their grandmother. After her death, Sophie Lowe Davis, wife of Nicholas Davis, Jr., became head of the "Lowe clan."

Deed records indicate that Mrs. Martha Chambers Betts purchased the Gates Street house in 1845 from Bartley M. Lowe and immediately sold it to Dr. William Weeden. From this date until 1956 this family owned the home.

Dr. Weeden first settled in Marengo County, Alabama, where he raised a family of five children. After his first wife died, he married Jane Urquhart Watkins, a young widow whom he met while on a visit to his sister in Lawrence County, Alabama. He then moved to Madison County in 1832 where he purchased land on Weeden's Mountain, just south of Huntsville. His move to town was prompted by the realization that his five children by his second wife were of school age.

Within two years after the Weedens moved to town Dr. Weeden died quite suddenly while on a trip to New Orleans. His widow was left to care for five small children. The sixth child, Maria Howard, arrived six months after her father's death.

Because Dr. Weeden had been

a prosperous planter, his wife and children lived comfortably on the income from his estate until the Civil War period reduced them to poverty. When Huntsville was occupied in April, 1862, the Weeden home was requisitioned by the Union forces for army officers' quarters. For a time Mrs. Weeden and her daughters lived in the servants' quarters, but eventually they decided to go to Tuskegee, Alabama, to live with Jane, the oldest daughter who had married William T. Reed.

After the war Mrs. Weeden divided the real property of the Weeden estate among her children. The home place she deeded to her unmarried daughters, Kate and Howard. While Kate spent much of her time performing household duties and tending the flowers in her mother's garden, Howard used her artistic talents in painting cards and favors for parties and illustrating poems. These she sold to supplement the family's meager income.

Gradually as Howard experimented with water colors, she began to paint portraits of the old ex-slaves whose kind, wrinkled black faces glowed with a spiritual quality all their own. Although she painted white subjects equally as well as Negroes, Howard chose to spend most of her time using her brush and brown madder to paint portraits of the servants of her neighbors. Not only was she able to depict the character of her subjects in her paintings, but she also recorded their sense of humor and philosophy of life in poems written in Negro dialect.

During the last eight years of her life Howard Weeden be-

came nationally known when her books of poetry and paintings were published by Doubleday, McClure and Company. Shortly after her fourth volume was published, she died on April 12, 1905.

In 1910, the Twickenham Town Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a bronze plaque on the Weeden Home to honor and perpetuate the memory of Howard Weeden, Huntsville's most renowned poet-artist. For more than thirty years after her death, the city schools of Huntsville celebrated April 12 as Howard Weeden Day.

Kate Weeden continued to live at the Weeden Home until her death in 1918. Shortly before she died she deeded the property to her nephew John

Patton Weeden and his wife Mattie Beasley. Upon his death in 1955, his daughter, Mary Weeden Bibb, inherited the property. In 1956 it was purchased by Mrs. B. A. Stockton at a public auction. After renting the house for some years, Mrs. Stockton sold the house to the Twickenham Historic Preservation District Association, Inc. in 1973. Private funds were sought by the group for restoration of the house; but in order to secure necessary funds to develop the house as a museum, it was sold to the Huntsville Housing Authority in 1976.

The Association leases the house for a nominal amount in order to make available to the people of this area an authentic house museum of the nineteenth century.



"From memory, I recall sweet alyssum (or however it's spelled), honeysuckle, mimosa, roses, tube-roses, jasmine, etc. The "7-Sisters" climbing rose, which used to be on the east-side picket divider (between the front and back yard) was, so I was told, one of the original roses in the garden. That's the one I used to "force" and get those long-stemmed beauties for the Christmas table (by plucking off the 6 unwanted 'sisters,' of course)."

from a letter written by Mary Weeden Bibb  
to her aunt Hattie B. Griffin