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Spring

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THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY
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THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY

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Contents

- 2 from the Editor
- 3 **The Withers-Chapman-Johnson House:
A Plantation Cottage**
by Micky Maroney

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY is published four times a year by the Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc., P.O. Box 786, Huntsville, Alabama 35804. Editor: Micky Maroney. Staff Researcher- Writer: Joberta Wasson. Subscriptions are mailed free to all Foundation members.

from the Editor . . .

This issue of the **Quarterly** is devoted to the Withers-Chapman-Johnson House in honor of the publication by Historic Huntsville Foundation of the book **Changing Huntsville, 1890-1899** by Elizabeth Humes Chapman (1884-1967). Miss Chapman lived in the house during the 1890's and early 1900's. She was a school teacher in the Alabama public schools for nearly fifty years, and the manuscript that became her book was written in 1932 as her thesis for her Master of Arts in History from Columbia University.

The Withers-Chapman-Johnson house and acreage, called Gladstone Place since the 1890's, was purchased by Governor Reuben Chapman in 1873 and was owned by the Chapman family for nearly a hundred years. The property has had only seven owners since 1809, all contributing in their own ways to the history of ever-changing Huntsville and Madison County. Mr. and Mrs. Walter Johnson are the present owners.

Special thanks are offered to Mrs. Johnson, who is a professional genealogist, for making available her many research materials concerning the property and people connected with it.



COVER:

The Withers-Chapman-Johnson House. Located on Dairy Lane in northeast Huntsville, the house was built circa 1830-35 as a modest plantation home. It later became the property of Governor Reuben Chapman, and in the 1890's was the home of his granddaughter Elizabeth Humes Chapman, author of **Changing Huntsville, 1890-1899**. Also located on the property at one time was a dairy which was home to the Jersey cow Signal's Lily Flag, Huntsville's famous record-breaking milk and butterfat producer of the 1890's.

PHOTOGRAPHS AND ILLUSTRATIONS:

Micky Maroney: Cover; pp. 5-10, 14, 15, 17, 19, 21.

Courtesy of the Huntsville Public Library, Heritage Room:
pp. 12-13.


The Withers-Chapman- Johnson House



A Plantation Cottage

by Micky Maroney

[NOTE: Research materials for this article were provided by Dorothy Scott Johnson, who spent a number of years researching the history of the house, the land, and the owners.]



"Sir, if I can put up with her for thirty-seven years, you surely can tolerate her a little while longer," said the former governor of Alabama to the Union Army captain.

The Union Army was in the process of evicting the Reuben Chapman family from their stately plantation mansion two miles north of Huntsville. It was January 1864, and in confiscating the property for Union Army use, the captain had allowed the family only enough time to pack a few personal belongings into a wagon.

Mrs. Chapman, whose disposition left a lot to be desired, incessantly berated the officer until he could endure her tirade no longer. He had threatened to have her arrested when Governor Chapman intervened.

Soon after his property was confiscated, the former governor, himself, was arrested and sent to prison in Boston Harbor in Massachusetts. When the Union troops left Huntsville on the last day of the Civil War in 1865, they burned many buildings, including the Chapman home.

Several years after the war was over, Reuben Chapman, back home again, bought the farm adjacent to his plantation but never lived in the house there, known at that time as the Withers House. Nevertheless, he surely must have been the most prominent of all the owners of the property. The house was occupied in later years by his granddaughter Elizabeth Humes Chapman, author of the book **Changing Huntsville, 1890-1899**.

The property remained in the Chapman family for nearly

a century, although much of the acreage was sold for subdivision development in the 1950's and 1960's. Since 1971 the house and two acres have been owned by Mr. and Mrs. Walter Johnson.

Tracing Madison County property owners back to the government land sales of 1809 can be a complicated and confusing procedure. Determining the date of construction of an old house can be equally difficult. Sometimes the researcher must be content with an approximate date of construction, as is the case with the Withers-Chapman-Johnson house in northeast Huntsville.

The House and Grounds

According to information written about the property for its nomination to the National Register of Historic Places (1978), the Withers-Chapman-Johnson House is a good example of the smaller homes constructed in North Alabama in the first half of the nineteenth century. Probably constructed by Allen Christian during the early 1830's, it is one of the few known intact Madison County examples of a one-and-one-half story frame cottage of the period. Although the house type was fairly common in rural parts of the county, few such dwellings have survived.

MODEST PLANTATION HOME.

A somewhat modest structure, it has restrained but well-crafted Federal period and Greek Revival details and is one of the few houses in the area to have corner fireplaces in the two upstairs

rooms. Constructed as the center of a moderately prosperous plantation, later one of the major dairy farms serving the city of Huntsville, the house has retained a semi-attached kitchen and two nineteenth century out-buildings.

The house, according to Chapman family history, was the first home outside the Huntsville city limits to have electricity installed. In February 1926 the wedding of Josephine Chapman's sister Adelia Gaboury was held at the Chapman home. Adelia was engaged to Otto K. Seyforth, manager of the Huntsville Utilities at that time. Adelia scorned candlelight for the ceremony, preferring modern electric lights instead. To please her, the Chapmans installed electric light fixtures and paid for utility poles and wiring to be run from Huntsville to their home. The utility company paid for the labor. And Adelia had her wedding ceremony illuminated by electric lights.

The home, now within the city limits of Huntsville, is situated on a two-acre tract landscaped with old English boxwood, hardwood trees, magnolias, and many daffodils, irises and day lilies. Although subdivision development has claimed most of the surrounding acreage, the place retains its rural character due to its landscaping and its location on a hillside.

IN EXCELLENT CONDITION.

The house, rectangular in shape and measuring approximately 48' x 37', is in ex-



The Withers-Chapman-Johnson House, 2409 Dairy Lane (formerly Gaboury Lane). Although surrounded by modern homes, the property retains its plantation atmosphere due to the two-acre hillside lawn with its towering trees and huge old boxwoods.

cellent condition with only minor changes having been made over the years. The gabled-roof frame structure is sheathed with clapboard and rests on a low limestone foundation. A small unfinished cellar is located under the southeast corner of the house.

Facing south, the three-bay front facade has single 12/12 windows (12 panes of glass in the upper sash over 12 panes of glass in the lower sash) on each side of a central pedimented portico with four slender Tuscan columns. The portico rests on a brick foundation with lattice infill. The original balustrade is in place, but all of the simple rectangular

balusters have been removed. The front entrance has a double-leaf door with glass upper panels and carved wood panels below. This door dates from around 1893 when several small changes were made to the structure.

On the east side of the house, beginning at the back corner, is an enclosed shed-roof area twenty-four feet long, formerly thought to have been a porch. However, renovation in that vicinity has shown that the rear part of the area, adjacent to the back bedroom and now containing a bathroom, closet, and small hall, was probably a dressing room or maybe a "birthing room." The front part of the area, adjacent to



Half-story level at the east side. Note the 12/12 window, the original uneven clapboards, the tapered vergeboards at the gable edge, and the stepped-shouldered chimneys. The original chimney on the left is missing its top portion; the chimney on the right has been rebuilt.

the front bedroom, was a screened sleeping porch at one time. It was enclosed in 1966 to provide space for another bathroom, closet, and small hall.

The east and west elevations of the house each have two exterior chimneys which pierce the tapered vergeboards at the gable ends. All four chimneys have stepped shoulders with two-brick projections. Two 9/9 windows are located between the chimneys on the ground floor of the west elevation, while at the half-story level, both the east and west sides have 12/12 windows between the chimneys.

Originally, there was a small portico at the rear door on the north side of the house, and a herringbone pattern brick walk led to the nearby kitchen. The present shed-roof porch crossing the entire rear of the house was added in the 1930's. The east end of this porch has been enclosed to provide sheltered access to the kitchen, located at the northeast corner behind the house. The present kitchen is a rectangular frame structure with a gabled roof and probably dates from the 1870's.

Over the rear door of the house there is a rectangular transom which is con-

cealed on the inside by the stair landing. This could indicate a possible change of plans during or after construction of the house. Giving light to the stair landing is a 6/6 window located in a central wall-dormer. Its gabled roof also has tapered vergeboards.

CENTER HALL PLAN. The interior consists of a central hall with a parlor and dining room to the left and two connecting bedrooms to the right. All downstairs rooms measure 18' x 18' and the ceilings are 11'2" high.

A stair with a full landing and return is located at the rear of the hall along the east wall. The stair has

decorated tred ends, two rectangular tapered balusters per tred, and a round hand-rail.

Interior door and window trim is simple with plain corner blocks, and the doors have two vertical raised panels in the Greek Revival style. All of the doors were originally painted, but were later grained (painted to look like expensive natural wood). Folding doors between the parlor and dining room have been removed and stored.

The original mantels are simple with flat pilasters, typical of the Greek Revival period in the area, but the mantel in the dining room has had decorative carved wood

Dining room mantel and china cupboard. The cupboard is thought to be original but was changed during the Victorian era.





Detail of mantel in the dining room. Note the long bracket and carved leaf ornament added during the Victorian era to the plain Greek Revival style mantel.

pieces applied in the Victorian manner. Originally, the mantels were painted black, a custom of the Federal period.

Victorian baseboards, approximately 8" high, were added throughout the downstairs, although the standard 6" beaded baseboards of the Federal period are intact in the upstairs rooms.

The half-story above, which has not yet undergone restoration, consists of a central hallway with an 18' x 16' room on either side. The ceilings measure approximately 7'4" at the highest point and slope to 5'7" at the lowest. Both rooms have corner fireplaces. The house

also has three original closets, two on the upper floor and one in the southeast bedroom downstairs.

Several outbuildings remain on the property. Located a short distance northwest of the house is the cabin that was the servants' quarters. It is clapboarded and has a central limestone chimney between two rooms, an apron porch with chamfered posts, four-panel doors, and Greek Revival mantels. To the northeast of the house is a tall, one-story frame smokehouse with a notable nail-studded batten door. Additionally, a small playhouse built circa 1930 is located on the west lawn.

The Early Owners

The Withers-Chapman-Johnson House is now well within the Huntsville city limits. Situated on the southern slope of Chapman Mountain, the property is located on Dairy Lane (formerly Gaboury Lane) north of Oakwood Road and east of Maysville Road, being in Section 19, Township 3 South, Range 1 East of the Basis Meridian (see a Madison County map with these designations).

TENANTS IN COMMON. As stated earlier, the house, in all probability, was built by Allen Christian, who held government-issued Certificates for the purchase of land in Madison County when the 1809 Government Land

Sales were held. He is listed in the 1809 Squatter Census of Madison County as living in the northeast quarter of Section 30, T3S, R1E, which adjoins the southeast boundary of Section 19, for which he also held a Certificate. He owned both tracts of land until his death in 1836.

In May 1810, documents attest to the fact that a George Kaiser had assigned his Certificate to Lemuel Mead for 159.70 acres, being the southeast quarter of Section 19; therefore Lemuel Mead and Allen Christian each held Certificates for that same quarter section of land.

A patent was granted on October 3, 1820 to "Allen Christian in his own right and Lemuel Mead as assignee



Corner fireplace in the unrestored east room upstairs. Note the sloping ceiling of the half-story level and the floor-to-ceiling length of the window.



The two-room servants quarters cabin dates from the early days of the Christian plantation and possibly predates the house.

of George Kaiser ... as Tenants in Common and not as joint tenants." The patent mentions "appurtenances" but not "tenements," indicating that no permanent dwelling was built on the property at that time.

(The wording of a certificate, land patent or deed often included the terms "appurtenances" and "tenements," the former nearly always referring to farm structures and outbuildings, in some cases possibly including a crude, temporary dwelling; the term "tenements" almost always referred to a well-built permanent dwelling.)

The 1820 patent, issued and signed by President James Monroe, was finally registered in the County Court of

Madison County on April 7, 1835. The wheels of government ground slowly then, too.

On March 11, 1835 Mead and Christian had the southeast quarter of Section 19 surveyed and divided diagonally into two equal parts. On April 7 of that year, they each deeded one-half of their commonly-owned land to each other. The Christians took the land lying south and west in the quarter, and the Meads took the north and east portion of the quarter. Both deeds mention tenements, indicating both portions of land had homes on them and that the families did not live together.

On the dividing line was a stone spring house with a spring nearby, called Chris-

tian's Spring, which is the headwaters of Spring Branch. The spring remained in common between the Christian and Mead families for the use of both. The stone walls of the spring house are still intact today.

WILLS, BEQUESTS, AND GRAVEYARDS. Unfortunately, Allen Christian and Lemuel Mead both died the following year. Mead, who had been a delegate to the Alabama Constitutional Convention in 1819 and had been a member of the Legislature, among his many accomplishments, died on June 11, 1836. He is buried at his nearby plantation, the present Harris Hill Farm on Highway 72 East. In his will, which was probated on September 10 of that year, Mead left the land whereon he lived to his wife Martha, with the privilege of using water from his "old place, Christian's Spring." He had no children of his own but made bequests to many relatives, including his four stepchildren, among them, Augustus H. Ford.

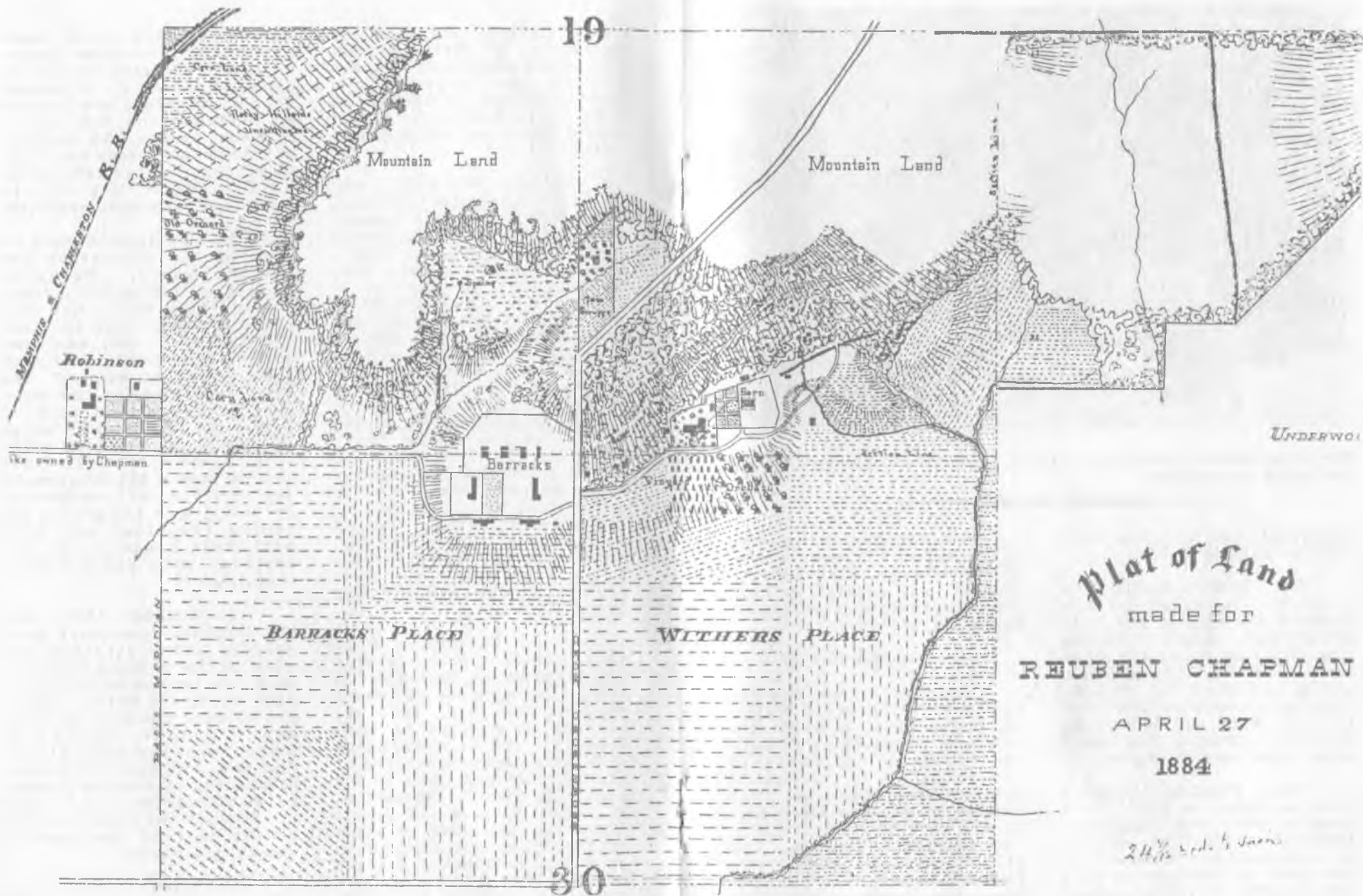
Allen Christian died that summer also. His will was probated on September 10 1836, the same day as Lemuel Mead's. Christian left his plantation whereon he then lived to his wife Margaret and made bequests to five of six children mentioned in the will. He stated, "No part of my estate is given to my son Jesse, but the share to which he should be entitled is to go to his children James and William." In his will Allen Christian directed his other son Allen, Jr., who was then living on and managing his father's Jackson County plan-

tation, to live on the home plantation in Madison County with the remaining family. He directed Allen, Jr. to manage both plantations and to hire an overseer for the one in Jackson County. He further directed that there was to be no division of his home plantation while any of his daughters remained unmarried.

The family continued to live on the plantation for several years. Margaret Christian died in 1842, stating in her will that her Executor should have the family burial ground enclosed with "a brick wall in a neat and substantial manner." The last two owners of the property have not been able to locate the Christian's family graveyard, although an affidavit dated April 19, 1845 states that a \$55.00 payment was made "to William Brandon for walling in six graves and capping [capping] the wall with Sand Stone ... as per contract with Allen Christian, Junr."

By December 1843, all the Christian daughters were married and a petition was made to the Orphans Court to have the land sold for division among the heirs. A public auction was held on January 17, 1844. Daniel B. Turner was the high bidder for the 240 acre Christian plantation in Madison County. Allen Christian, Jr. and Archibald Mitchell each bought half of the Jackson County plantation.

By August 20, 1844 Daniel B. Turner had sold the property to Augustus H. Ford, a stepson of Lemuel Mead. Ford kept the land only a few



FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: The Robinson Plantation (Quietdale); Barracks Place, Governor Reuben Chapman's original plantation (the Civil War barracks are outlined, but not the mansion which was burned in 1865); the Withers Place, originally Allen

Christian's land, later bought by Governor Chapman. The house and outbuildings are outlined, also a vineyard and orchard south of the house, and a kitchen garden east of the house.



The vine-covered smokehouse dates from the early days of the Christian plantation.

years, selling it in October 1849 to Phillip Woodson.

THE WITHERS HOUSE. The property remained in the Woodson family for the next twenty-four years. During that time the house was known locally as the Withers House, being occupied by Phillip Woodson's daughter and son-in-law, Mary and Augustine Withers. They called their plantation home Woodgreen.

When Phillip Woodson died without a will, his daughter Mary was appointed Administratrix of his estate. As such, she was ordered by the Court of Probate to sell the property "for the payment of the debts of the Said Phillip Woodson."

Accordingly, in January 1873 Reuben Chapman became the purchaser of Woodgreen, the 342 acre plantation from the Woodson Estate, including the Withers' home.

The Chapman Family

Governor Reuben Chapman was "a man of splendid figure and proportions, erect in his carriage, handsome in feature and frank in expression," according to T. M. Owen's **History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography**. He was born in 1799 in Caroline County, Virginia, the son of Revolutionary War Colonel Reuben (I) and Ann (Reynolds) Chapman, both also native Virginians. Colonel Chapman was the son of a Scotsman.

Reuben (II), the future governor of Alabama, came on horseback to Huntsville in 1824 to read law in the office of Judge Samuel Chapman, a relative (brother or uncle). In 1832 Reuben was elected to the State Senate, and in 1835 he was elected to the U. S. Congress, a post he held for six terms.

On October 17, 1838 Reuben (II) married Felicia Pickett of Limestone County, Alabama. They had six children who lived to be grown. Two daughters died in infancy. Steptoe Pickett, their eldest child, was killed in battle at the age of twenty-three while serving in the Confederate Army. Four daughters were born after Steptoe: Juliette, who married Turner Clanton; Felicia Corbin, who married Bolling Hubbard; Ellelee, who married Milton

Humes; and Alberta Pickett, who married John G. Taylor. Reuben (III), their youngest child, married Rosalie Sheffey.

THE THIRTEENTH GOVERNOR (1847-1849). In 1847, while a member of the U. S. Congress, Reuben Chapman (II) received the nomination, without solicitation, for governor of Alabama. He was elected and served for two years, being the thirteenth governor of the state.

When he took office, the state was financially embarrassed because of mismanagement of the state bank. He was able to remedy the problem through sound business practices and set the state on a more sound financial footing. His term was characterized by wisdom and devotion to duty.



Detail of the nail-studded batten door of the smokehouse.

When the State Capital was moved from Tuscaloosa to Montgomery in 1847, Joshua Martin was governor; however, Chapman was the first governor to serve a full term in the Montgomery location. Eight days before the end of his administration, the new capitol building burned.

In 1855 he was elected to the state legislature, and he was also a delegate to the national Democratic Conventions in 1856, 1860, and 1868.

THE CIVIL WAR. In January 1864 during the War Between the States when the Federal troops evicted Reuben and Felicia Chapman from their stately mansion, the Union Army billeted a Negro regiment on the plantation, with the officers occupying the house. A Freedman's Bureau, the first refugee camp for Negroes, was established there, and it also served as a prison camp for captured Negroes.

In order to provide shelter for so many people, officers ordered the troops to build barracks on the property. From that time until well into the twentieth century, the plantation was called Barracks Place.

When the Civil War ended in 1865, the Union troops were jubilant about their victory. As they left Huntsville on the last day of the war, they celebrated by burning numerous buildings in and near the town, including the Chapman home and furnishings.

When Governor Chapman, who had been arrested and

sent to a Union prison in Boston Harbor, returned home after the war, he and his family lived in Huntsville. He never rebuilt the mansion on the plantation, although he continued his farming operations there.

NEIGHBORING PLANTATION BOUGHT. In 1873 the governor bought the neighboring plantation with the one-and-one-half story cottage built by Allen Christian. Governor Chapman, who died May 17, 1882, never lived there himself, but the family of his son Reuben (III) lived there, possibly during the 1880's and certainly during the 1890's. The history of the house's occupants during the 1870's and 1880's is not clear.

Reuben (III), who was born in 1858, married Rosalie Floyd Sheffey of Huntsville on November 16, 1882. Three children were born to them - Ellelee, who married Erle Pettus; Elizabeth Humes, who never married, author of **Changing Huntsville**; and the youngest, Reuben (IV), who married Josephine Gaboury.

MONTE SANO DAIRY. In 1889 the Monte Sano Dairy was established by William E. Matthews and Milton Humes, who was the brother-in-law of Reuben (III). The dairy was located on the part of the Chapman plantation that had originally belonged to Allen Christian. It was actually situated across a valley from Monte Sano Mountain. For many years Monte Sano Dairy supplied much of the milk and other dairy products consumed by Huntsvillians.



Still standing, in the midst of modern construction rubbish, are the stone walls of the cooling house of Monte Sano Dairy.

That year, 1889, William Matthews and his family moved into the Christian cottage, which they named Monte Sano Cottage, and he managed the dairy with its herd of registered Jerseys.

Remnants of some of the dairy buildings, all built of limestone, are still standing a short distance northeast of the Christian cottage. Allen Christian's spring house, mentioned earlier, was used to collect the ice-cold springwater into a pool. It was then piped down to the cooling house at the bottom of a fifteen-foot cliff where it was used to cool the fresh, warm milk. The thick stone walls of the cooling house and the bottling house nearby are still standing. The barn where the cows were

milked twice a day was across a lane from the bottling house. A modern home has been built on the site of the old dairy barn.

A COW WORTH KISSING.
Soon after Monte Sano Dairy was established, it became the home of Signal's Lily Flag, an extraordinary Jersey cow. She was "a cow worth kissing," according to Elizabeth Humes Chapman in her account of the dairy. Lily Flag was owned by General Samuel H. Moore of Huntsville and William Matthews, the dairy co-owner and manager.

An unofficial butterfat test for Lily Flag's milk was conducted in 1891. In seven days she produced 23 pounds, 11 ounces of butter. Her one-year production of butter

for 1892 was 1,029 pounds, 13 & 1/4 ounces, which surpassed the then current world champion's record.

Her astonishing achievement made Lily Flag the talk of the town. Many parties were held in her honor, the most notable of which was an elegant reception and ball given by General Moore at his home on Adams Avenue (603 Adams). Fifteen hundred guests were invited to meet his record-breaking cow Lily Flag. Her admiring public met her in the huge double parlors where she "was standing on a silver platform under a flower-decked mantel ... not even dazzled by her elegance" - to quote Miss Chapman.

Unquestionably, she was a thoroughbred and had been valued at \$10,000 in 1891. That was more than the price of many a farm in Alabama at that time.

When the World's Fair opened in Chicago in 1893, Lily Flag was shipped there to compete for the butterfat world's championship. General Moore, the story goes, would not allow her to be milked for twenty-four hours before the start of the competition. It ruined one side of her udder.

The unfortunate results of Lily Flag's trial for the championship were reported in the **Book of the Fair, Columbian Exposition, 1893:**

For several weeks before the cheese test in May, animals of each class were placed in the sheds south of the Dairy build-

ing, and from their milking records the contestants were selected. Thus it was that the Jersey milch cow, Signal's Lily Flag, valued at \$15,000, and considered the queen of her race, was not permitted to enter the lists, for though with a record of more than 1,000 pounds of butter a year, at her preliminary trial she failed to meet the expectations of her admirers.

Nevertheless, another dairy paid \$10,000 for her.

Although William Matthews knew farming and dairying thoroughly, he had quite a few financial reverses during his life. In 1894 he relinquished his interest in the dairy, and he and his family left Monte Sano Cottage and moved back to Huntsville.

GLADSTONE PLACE. Miss Chapman relates in her book that the dairy changed owners in 1894 but maintained its high standards and continued to serve Huntsville throughout the decade. By that time, Miss Chapman's mother Rosalie had been widowed for several years. Reuben (III) had died April 24, 1891, six weeks before his thirty-third birthday. Rosalie and her three young children had moved into the Christian cottage after the Matthews family moved out.

According to Chapman family lore, Rosalie was involved in the operation (and perhaps ownership?) of the dairy. One hot summer day when Rosalie was taking a



Part of the stone walls remain from the bottling house of Monte Sano Dairy.

wagon-load of milk to Huntsville, she came upon a number of soldiers marching in the oppressive heat. Taking pity upon them in their discomfort, she gave them some of her cool, refreshing milk to drink. They were troops from the Spanish American War who were stationed in Huntsville during the late 1890's.

During the time that Rosalie and her family lived in the Christian cottage, they named it Gladstone Place in honor of Gladstone Nursery on Pulaski Pike. The nursery, which belonged to a dear family friend of the Chapmans, was named in honor of William Ewart Gladstone, the great English statesman who served four different terms as prime minister. Rosalie lived at Gladstone Place until her death in 1917.

Her daughter Elizabeth (1884-1967), who grew from a thin little girl with bright red hair into a graceful teenager during the 1890's, was a teacher in the public schools of Alabama for over fifty years. Well educated and widely travelled, in 1932 she wrote the manuscript that became **Changing Huntsville** as her thesis for her Master of Arts in History at Columbia University.

The last Chapman family to live in the house was that of Reuben (IV), Elizabeth's younger brother. Born in 1889, he married Josephine Gaboury who was born in 1896. Four children were born to them, two of whom died in infancy. Their daughter Caroline (Mrs. James Philpot) lives in Mobile, and their son Reuben (V) (Buddy) lives

in a neighborhood near his old childhood home.

Reuben (IV) and Josephine lived at Gladstone Place for nearly half a century. Josephine remained there for several years after Reuben died in 1965, later moving to Mobile to live with her daughter and family because of failing health. Josephine Chapman died in 1980.

The Johnson Era

In 1971 Mr. and Mrs. Walter Johnson bought the house and two acres from the Reuben Chapman Estate. When the Johnsons acquired the house it was in sound structural condition, although some cosmetic restoration was required. A new roof was needed and the front porch floor and steps had to be replaced, as well as the fascia boards and all the gutters. One chimney had to be rebuilt and the other three still must be repaired before they can be used.

The bathrooms were modernized and the old plaster walls were patched and repaired before new wallpaper could be hung. The rooms upstairs still need some work, although the corner fireplace in the east room has been restored.

A HOLE IN THE WALL. The Johnsons made a remarkable discovery during the process of removing old wallpaper, which made them wonder why the house had not burned down years ago. When the bottom layer of old wallpaper was removed from the chimney in

the dining room, they found an open stovepipe hole that had never been filled in. Through the years, layers of wallpaper had been pasted right over the hole, the bottom third of which was filled with soot.

It seems that one of the earlier residents had installed a stove which was later removed. The fireplace was then converted to burn coal instead of wood, but for some reason the stovepipe hole was never plugged up.

While relating the account of finding the hole in the chimney, Mrs. Johnson was amazed to recall that they, too, forgot to plug the hole and papered right over thin air! Since the entire chimney must be repaired before being used, perhaps some day the hole will be filled in.

The Johnsons, who came to Huntsville from Denver, Colorado, have done most of the restoration work themselves, as time has permitted. Thus it has been a slow process, one that has been ongoing, off and on, ever since they have lived there. However, they did hire professionals to rebuild the chimney and to reroof the house. They hope to finish restoration on the upstairs eventually.

Walter Johnson is an aerospace engineer who is quite a handyman. Not only is he adept at patching plaster and hanging wallpaper, among other talents, he has beautifully upholstered several family antique chairs and sofas.

The Empire style buffet and mirror, originally belonging to the Chapman family, are once again in their traditional place in the dining room.



Dorothy Scott Johnson is a professional genealogist who has published several genealogical source books on Madison County. She is a former editor of **Valley Leaves**, a periodical published by the Tennessee Valley Genealogical Society. She, too, is adept at hanging wallpaper, painting, and refinishing woodwork.

HEIRLOOMS RETURN HOME. Several years after the Johnsons had bought the house, they had the opportunity to buy an heirloom buffet and matching mirror from Josephine Chapman. When illness had forced Mrs. Chapman to move to Mobile to live with her daughter, much of the family furniture had to be put into storage, including the buffet and mirror. Neither of her children had been able to use the stored furniture.

According to family history, the Empire style buffet and mirror belonged to Governor Chapman, and it is believed that they were among the few personal belongings that were saved when the Union Army confiscated the Chapman plantation home.

Having graced the Chapman dining room at Gladstone Place for so long, at least since the 1890's and perhaps earlier, the buffet and mirror are once again in their traditional location in the house.

And the Johnsons will continue to preserve and cherish the Chapman house, not only for themselves but for future generations of its owners and others who appreciate nineteenth century architecture, craftsmanship, and history.



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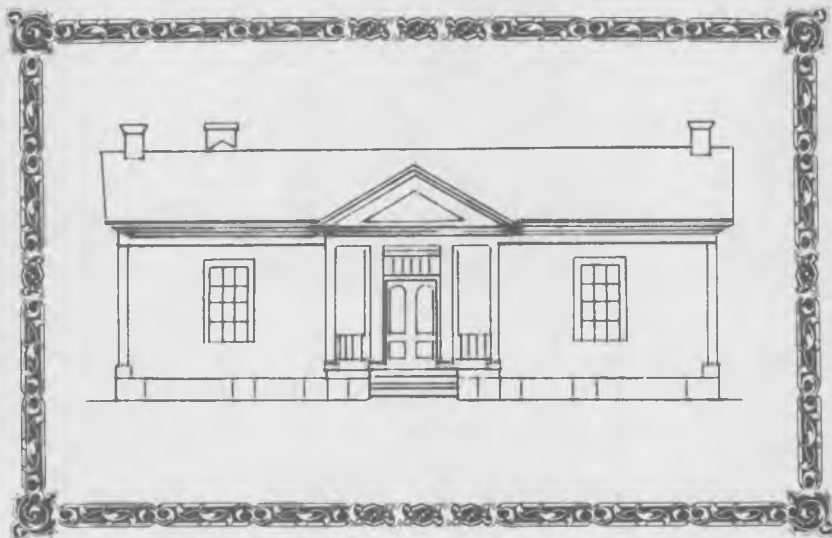
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Other Sources:

Conversations with various Chapman family members.

Letters from various Chapman family members.





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