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**A House for All Seasons:
Number Six Cruse Alley**
by Sarah Dudley Hall Edwards

The enduring character and seeming permanence of Twickenham is comforting in changing times. Recent additions to historic Twickenham blend graciously with existing homes. This is due primarily to the vigilance and efforts of those who organized the Twickenham District Preservation Association in 1965. The residence at Number Six Cruse Alley is one example of a relatively new Twickenham addition. It is a town house (contemporary open plan). Although it is consistent with and harmonizes with neighboring homes, it is comfortably integrated into its own time and its own place—the essence of balance and proportion. The basic structure, circa 1972, with wrought iron balconies reflects a classic Charleston influence. According to the Nashville architect, Batey Gresham, the home is a product of a client and architect "love affair." Mr. Gresham and his wife Ann were good friends and neighbors of the clients, Fred and Anne Meiers, in Nashville. The architect was familiar with the Charleston area and the homes along the South Carolina coast. "Typically, the structures were one room deep with verandas facing the water." Anne Meiers' home state is the neighboring state of North Carolina. Number Six Cruse Alley is the manifestation of Anne and Fred Meiers' success in communicating to Batey Gresham the distinct atmosphere or ambiance they were seeking in their Huntsville home.

The Charleston effect was enhanced over the next several years. Additions included a garden room, veranda, and pool-side cabana by architect,

David Crow. His plans also included the brick patio and Roman style pool. Harvilee Harbarger developed the garden with extensive evergreen plantings. Southern magnolia trees were placed at each corner of the brick and iron wall surrounding the property. These refinements were completed in the early 1980's.



The architectural proportion, balance, and continuity of Number Six Cruse Alley are supported by several themes: the palladian windows, pineapple (hospitality symbol), exterior and interior shutters, high ceilings, paneling, and extensive crown molding.



A picture tour of the first story of the home will reveal that it is of modest size in comparison with neighboring homes. However, the style, quality, and classic appointments make it in Anne Meiers words "a small jewel!"

The Foyer



Above the double front doors, two hand-carved 19th-century griffins stand guard.* On the eastern wall, a 19th century hand-carved mirror rests on and is integral to the matching wooden entry opening into the formal living room. Cartouche, a scroll type ornament, is an architectural feature of both the griffins and the mirror. A curved staircase leads to the second story. The foyer sets the formal stage and color scheme for the rest of the house. The twenty inch crown molding, in three distinct sections, stair steps, rail spokes and trim are painted in three complimentary shades graduating from a soft beige to a golden tan. Popular designers like Mark Hampton refer to the color scheme as "palomino."



* In Greek mythology, the Griffin was a creature with the body of a lion and the head and wings of an eagle. Griffins drew the chariot of the sun; they also guarded a golden treasure that the Arimaspians, a one-eyed Scythian people, tried to steal.

Breakfast Room and Kitchen



Some think of Six Cruse as "New Orleans" style. The twenty foot ceiling room with balconies inside and outside, palladian windows, brick floor and hanging ferns gives just such a feeling as does the galley kitchen. The kitchen's special feature is solid walnut cabinets that extend to the ten foot ceiling. A large watercolor, by a local artist, of a lobster on a tray with artichokes and a dish of drawn butter further add to the "New Orleans" effect. This milieu does not conflict with the original Charleston theme envisioned by the clients and translated and accomplished so successfully by the architects Gresham and Crow.



Living and Dining Rooms

By today's standards, the painted paneled living room and dining room are large. Between the two rooms is a fireplace with a classic mantle, faced with Italian marble, and a marble hearth. Two doors on opposite ends of the fireplace lead past small library nooks into the dining room. Colonial windows in the living room are repeated in the dining room at the opposite end of the house.



Garden Room

A wall of palladian windows and doors look out to the courtyard, pool and cabana area. This spacious room with its brick floor, abundance of light, columns, eleven foot ceiling with wide paneled beams, and variety of plants, make it a most inviting room for relaxation.



Architects:

Batey M. Gresham, Jr.: Gresham, Smith and Partners, Nashville, Tennessee.

David A. Crow: The Crow, Peters, Neville Group, Huntsville, Alabama (American Institute of Architects).

Note: The architect (Mr. Gresham) tells the story of the brick facing on the house which was an antique sand-faced finish selected to blend with the homes in the historical district. The bricklayers were instructed to brush and wash the brick. They did—with wire brushes! This process removed most of the sand faced finish.

Sarah H. Edwards, DPA, is employed by the U.S. Army Missile Command. She has a Bachelor of Arts and Sciences from the University of Oklahoma, a Masters and Doctorate in Public Administration from Nova University in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. She is a member of the Church of the Nativity and the Huntsville Music Study Club. She is the wife of Merle D. Edwards (Dan). A native of Columbus, Ohio, Dan came to Huntsville in 1956, and was associated with the defense industry until his retirement in 1985. A World War II Army Air Corps pilot, Dan continued flying as a hobby for many years.

