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Three Dollars

Spring 1997

The Historic Huntsville
QUARTERLY
Of Local Architecture and Preservation



*The Freeman House
Hawthorne Conservatory
Central Presbyterian Church
Huntsville, Alabama*

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THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY
of Local Architecture and Preservation

Vol. XXIII, No. 1

Spring 1997

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From the Chair...Diane Ellis

Dear Foundation Friends,

This issue of the *Quarterly* honoring Central Presbyterian Church on the eve of its centennial year is also about how a group of people found a resolution to one of the key issues facing preservationists today: how to find a use for an endangered historic building.

The problem is a national one. Across the country historic structures of every type are imperiled because no one is using them. Grand old downtown churches with shrinking or vanished congregations, abandoned railroad depots, empty hotels, boarded-up mansions, lonesome farmhouses, and sagging barns testify to profound social changes that have made many architectural treasures seem redundant in the modern age.

Although the cost of reclaiming huge public or commercial buildings can be an impediment to preservation, money isn't always the problem. Some structures, like log cabins or old houses, are offered by preservation organizations to people who can pay the moving costs and have the right place to put them. The Foundation has helped relocate (and thus save) some historic buildings. But you can't move everything.

In other cases, community efforts frequently succeed in raising money to restore and maintain a landmark in its original location. But then what? Historic residential properties located smack in the middle of commercial sprawl will require those imaginative buyers we love but know are scarce. And many commercial property buyers claim that older downtown buildings in America's cities don't fit today's business and manufacturing operations.

Historic Huntsville Foundation's preservation committee wrestles with these issues at every meeting. We know of several historic residential properties that have a dim future once their aging owners are gone, because their location is no longer desirable for family living. There are other buildings on our watch list that will need new sites because the owners have other plans for their property.

So it's truly a blessing that, in one instance, a group of Huntsvillians have managed to marry beauty and use in preserving a lovely old house in their custody. Central Presbyterian Church's restoration of the Freeman House and its planned use as a gathering place and music conservatory is what we would wish for every church with an historic building in its care. This is truly a birthday gift for everyone in the community.

Happy Centennial Birthday, Central Presbyterian! The Foundation looks forward to publishing a special issue for your 200th—and celebrating it at the Freeman House.



Watercolor of the Freeman House
by Kirk Carlisle

From the Editor...Elise Stephens

Congratulations to Central Presbyterian Church on the renovation of the Freeman House and the dedication of the Hawthorne Conservatory. A special thank-you to Carol Ann Samples who worked so hard on the house renovation and helped me with this *Quarterly*. Alyce Smith loaned me her Albert Lane for the cover and graciously shared family photographs. Mildred Lane entered into the excitement of the Freeman House's new role as Music Conservatory and happily loaned her husband Albert's letters written from there and other Lane memorabilia. Telephone interviews with Ken Turvey and Reverend Ted Gartrell yielded further insight. Thanks to all who helped in the many support roles.

A Church, the House next door, a Memorial Fund and a Vision form the four cornerstones of a story and a destiny. The Church is Central Presbyterian, if the truth be known, an aging urban congregation with limited space to expand. The House next door is the Freeman House: its role as boarding house and private preschool put it in the spirit, so to speak, for its future mission. The Fund, though drawn up in distant New York and Connecticut, provides the means for God's work to be done in Huntsville. The Vision, beautifully expressed by the part-time Christian Education coordinator in a proposal to the church places the four cornerstones into purposeful working relationship. God's will **will** be done, as the elements in this drama take their places, perform their parts, contribute to the whole, in ways obscure or made plain, and then depart the scene. **HISTORY**—when written large in capitals, meaning His story or God's story—is in the making. See if you don't agree.



***The Central Presbyterian Church
Huntsville, Alabama***

The present Central Presbyterian Church building is the second church building to have been erected on its site. The first building, dedicated in 1854, served the Cumberland Presbyterian Church of Huntsville. It was a brick structure with four immense Corinthian columns on the front, supporting a heavy porch top. A large cupola on the roof housed the church bell, which in 1861, was contributed with other churches' bells to the Southern Cause.

The Church: A Recent History

Remember putting your baby hands together and learning to say, “Here is the Church and here is the steeple. Open the door and there’s all the people,” and you’d waggle your fingers and feel proud of your congregation. Central Presbyterian has reason to waggle its fingers. The Church has opened its doors in a new and ever-expanding mission of service. More specifically, it has opened the doors of the Freeman House for multipurpose church and community outreach use.

A new chapter in the Church’s long and dedicated history is being written. This chapter, like all the others, shows the hand of God at work in the lives, the structures, and the purposes of the Church. The decade of the 1990’s has marked a turning point preparatory for the 21st century and for further service to the Glory of God.

The decade began, sadly, with the death in Fairfield, Connecticut, of Marguerite Cartwright Hawthorne, March 17, 1990. Marguerite’s bequest to Central Presbyterian Church, “the church of my father and mother,” made possible the purchase of the Freeman House, the House Next Door, December 31, 1991. The house brought additional options and opportunities. There was talk, of course, of moving the house, making space for parking and an additional building. The national, and unfortunately, Huntsville, trend is for urban churches to purchase neighboring dwellings and remove or destroy them for their parking potential.

Carol Ann had other ideas: to restore the Freeman House “to its original beauty, maintaining its historical integrity.” Since her days as an elder, she had sounded the call for the Session to set aside funds annually for capital development. Then, before Carol Ann left the board, Rhonda Mitchell had put together the proposal to establish the Hawthorne Conservatory in the Freeman House. Carol Ann’s eyes intensified to their truest blue as she recalled the exhilaration she felt at Rhonda Mitchell’s proposal.

“This was God’s answer,” she exclaimed. The Church had for some time been looking for a new focus. Like most urban churches its membership had thinned with the hairs on many a head. Rhonda Mitchell’s proposal would bring new direction and dynamism to the Church. Carol Ann took up the call, became an advocate and spokesman, working to get it approved before she left the board.

Momentum gathered after that. In January 1996, the Session and the congregation approved the Conservatory as “a Christian Ministry of Central Presbyterian Church.” It also approved the renovation of the Freeman House. “Carol Ann Samples was named to Chair the Freeman House Task Force and appoint a committee to assist her.”

Ask the workmen or Nathan Dean. They will tell you. Carol Ann spared no personal effort to get the job done and done right. Harvie Jones was contracted to design and assist the committee (see his report). In her Annual Report, Carol Ann wrote:

“April, 1996 construction contract was awarded to R.F. Vandiver. Construction began in late April 1996, and project completed in Mid October, 1996.

Many members donated time and resources to the restoration with love, perserverance and their prayers. I have witnessed God’s Spirit in action among the members.

We also received community-wide support for the Conservatory and the Restoration Project. **The Huntsville Historic Foundation, Doris Burwell Foundation**, and others in the community have supported the Project.

The Dedication of the Freeman House to be used for the Glory of God was made by Dr. Dave Reynolds [Pastor] and the congregation on October 13, 1996. It was a beautiful day and exciting to the members as they had their first tour of the House. The response was uplifting. The **FREE-MAN HOUSE** was restored to its original beauty maintaining its his-



*Carol Ann Samples and
Nathan Dean.*

torical integrity. The home now meets all safety, fire and handicap codes. Policies and Guidelines were established and approved by the Session. A Freeman House Board was established to oversee the operation and needs of the House and the Hawthorne Conservatory. The Board reports to the Session.

The congregation, the staff, and the committee with the guidance of the Holy Spirit have made 1996 an exciting year for the Central Presbyterian Church. We look forward to using our blessings to the Glory of God."

In a later report Carol Ann expressed appreciation for individual church members' roles in restoration: "The success of the restoration of the Freeman House involved the dedication and service of many members of the church using their talents. It was my pleasure to have the opportunity to work and share the experience of bringing the house back to life with them.

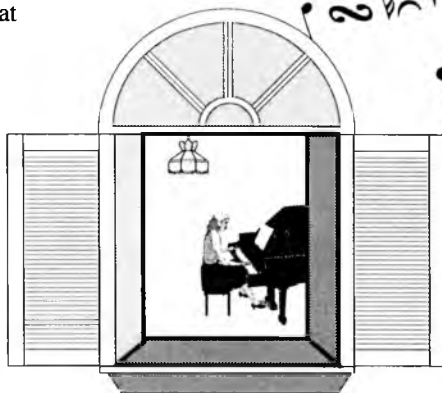
- The Pastor and the staff gave tremendous support. Eloise Stokes, the secretary, supported me in so many ways that I cannot list them, always willingly and happily. We could not have made it without her.
- The volunteers spent well over 500 hours and saved the cost of restoration thousands of dollars.
- Jeff Smith, Committee member, was our moral and spiritual support, always there for whenever we needed him. His wisdom and guidance was fundamental to our success.
- Tom McDonald, historical researcher of the Courthouse and Freeman House, was our official photographer.
- Teresa MacMillan, Architect, designed the kitchen layout after many meetings with the Fellowship Committee. She also did the final punch list.
- Joan Warren, experienced restorationist, removed all the hardware and light fixtures and supervised the cleaning. This involved removing dirt, grime, paint and then buffing and rubbing. Underneath it all was beautiful copper and brass hardware. Virginia Tuck, Nell Boykin, Donald Dowdy (our choir director) and Wynell Reynolds accomplished this task. The Men's Bible class served us lunch every Wednesday during our work session.
- Ed Gartrell supervised roof repairs and assisted in many major decisions.
- Volunteers cleaned the lot after construction and Michael Samples, with assistance, landscaped the lawn.
- The Mariners of the Church cleaned the house and yard in preparation for the Open House.
- Cathy King and Tom MacDonald, artists, presented the church drawings of the Freeman House and served on the planning committee.
- Donald Dowdy, Music Director, was always on call and assisted in numerous ways.
- Volunteers made this a success and are vital to the continued success of the Hawthorne Conservatory and ministry of Central Presbyterian Church.

The Memorial Fund

There are few things we can plan for in this life with any certainty. But, those blessed with substantial longevity, resources, and sound mind can design a will which makes possible a future of infinite possibilities. The story of the Freeman House is inextricably bound up with the story of a fund and the persons who helped shape that fund: the Kirby Cartwrights and the Hugh Hawthornes. But most particularly, Marguerite Cartwright, Mrs. Hugh Hawthorne. The Kirby Cartwright and Margaret Steele Cartwright Hawthorne Memorial Fund came, quite literally, like a bolt out of heaven to Central Presbyterian Church of Huntsville, Alabama. Who were these obviously caring and generous benefactors? Granted, the awesomeness of the bequest exceeds explanation, yet it behooves us to find out more about Marguerite Cartwright Hawthorne and her family.

• • •

Margaret Belle Mahoney [Crow] grew up on Bank Street (Fountain Row) a street over from the Cartwright house on 308 Oak Avenue. While her most vivid childhood memories involved time spent atop her garage armed with homemade binoculars scanning the skys “looking for ENEMY aircraft!” she also remembers, “like yesterday,” being introduced, somewhat inadvertently, to the world of opera by Marguerite Cartwright. Marguerite visited her parents’ home in the early 1940’s and, true to her musical career, practiced daily. Playing out in her backyard, Margaret Belle marveled at the “Ah, Ah, Ah, AH, Ah, Ah, Ah,” arpeggio which swelled up and out over the back lot, filling the distance between herself and the windows of the Cartwright House. She didn’t know what kind of singing that was and ran in to ask her mother, who said, “It is opera,” that Miss Marguerite came from New York City and sang opera. That was about as much as one wide-eyed little girl could absorb at one time.





Brother George, five years older than Margaret Belle, likewise came to his knowledge of the arcane world of OPERA by way of Marguerite's arpeggios. His vivid, though scant recollection, was of an

opera singer who visited her parents in the summer, the "Ah, Ah, Ah, Ah Lady from New York." Both Margaret Belle and George ended their separate interviews, unbeknownst to each other, marveling at the distinctness of this memory from their childhood and commenting, "but I never saw any of them. Ever."

Margaret Belle retains one other memory about the Cartwright family. She remembers sitting, barefoot, on the curb across the street and watching a coffin being carried out the front door and down the steps. It was one of her earliest encounters with death or any of its trappings. Ironically the two memories she could contribute to this special issue of the *Quarterly*, take on additional significance in view of the will Marguerite Cartwright Hawthorne wrote, *The Legacy* she left Huntsville. Her presence and that of her family will be heard and felt far beyond the grave. We may have never seen them, but their presence will be known by what she has left us.

The search for information about the Cartwrights began at Maple Hill Cemetery where Marguerite is buried beside her husband and at the foot of her parents. That Maple Hill is the final resting place of an important corporation attorney who practiced in New York City and his wealthy widow who died in Fairfield, Connecticut, at the age of 94 attests to the close relationship the couple had had with her parents, the Kirby Cartwrights, and with Huntsville. Their stones give us vital statistics: Kirby Cartwright, 1866–1944; Marguerite Steele Cartwright, 1870–1953; Hugh Hawthorne, lawyer born in Washington County, Virginia, 1885–1962; Marguerite Cartwright Hawthorne, 1895–1990.

City directories, Church records, and the *Huntsville Times* supplied additional information about Marguerite's parents. Interviews with Bess Pratt Wallace help us to see the person Margaret Belle and

George only heard. Bess also distinctly recalled how handsome Hugh Hawthorne was. The *Times* obituary tells us he “was a frequent visitor to Huntsville.”

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Kirby Cartwright was born amidst the defeat and destruction of the Civil War. His youth was spent at a time when Huntsville, like most Southern communities, was struggling to find a new identity and destiny. Margaret Steele’s world was

much like her future husband’s. Her family conducted a general merchandizing business with Cartwright; Steele and Cartwright at 107 N. Washington in the early 1900’s (see 1911 City Directory). Both Margaret and Kirby were active in the Central Presbyterian Church. She was the Treasurer of the Young Ladies Aid Society in 1905 and as late as 1929, was the President of the Women’s Council, a group she had previously served as Secretary of Religious Education in 1927.

A decendent of Methodist circuit rider, Peter Cartwright, Kirby was an Elder and Assistant Sunday School Superintendent in 1905. Still a young man, he had already shouldered the financial and educational responsibilities of his church and he continued active.

Kirby Cartwright Department Store

The Store with a Conscience

“EVERYTHING FOR EVERYBODY”

Kirby’s role in the community was as substantial. He served as an Alderman on the City Council in 1910–1911, and was instrumental in inaugurating the City Commission form of government. In the



1920's, Cartwright had moved his business to South Side Square between H. C. Blake Plumbing and Cummings Furniture and Hardware, down from T. T. Terry Dry Goods. These popular Huntsville merchants not only shared business camaraderie but also prayed together on Sundays at the Central Presbyterian Church and served the church in leadership positions.

To this dedicated couple, one daughter was born, Marguerite. She early showed talent for singing as her soprano voice mellowed into that of a young woman's. Educated at Ward-Belmont in Nashville, and Columbia University, in her twenties she studied voice in Europe and moved to New York City to pursue her career. (she is not listed in City Directories after 1922). Becoming well known for her concert work, her interpretations of negro spirituals were noteworthy. She gave recitals for the federation of churches, the Y.M.C.A., The New York City Board of Education, WOR Radio, and at Southern Colleges. Her Huntsville Times obituary noted there were no survivors (the couple had no children). Memorials could be made to "the Jewish Guild for the Blind, Lenox Hill Neighborhood Association, or the Riverside Church."

The obituary gives clues to the personality of the benefactor of the Freeman House. Her interests were to use her talent to teach others. The blind, the needy and the church were her special concerns. It should not surprise us, putting what we know about her parents and their commitment to the Central Presbyterian Church, and about her and her interests in music education, that she chose to glorify God through her gift to the church of her parents. In Alice McCravey's *History* among the gifts listed as given before 1960, we see that Mrs. Kirby Cartwright gave the Second Pulpit Bible and Bookmark and that her daughter, Mrs. Hugh Hawthorne, gave a silver vase in memory of her mother. (p. 67-68). Marguerite was to follow that gift with many more.

As a young girl, Bess Pratt [Wallace] remembers Marguerite would visit her mother, Nita Humphreys Pratt. The two shared musical interests. Bess remembers Mrs. Hawthorne as a pretty lady, always unassuming, simply dressed, wearing no make-up, quietly dignified and bearing a bouquet of freshly-picked garden flowers.

Married on November 29, 1928 in her Huntsville home, the couple resided in New York where he practiced corporate law. Bess remembers that when her parents went to New York, Mr. and Mrs. Hawthorne would take them to the exclusive Metropolitan Club. When he died in 1962, and was buried in Huntsville, he left Marguerite a wealthy widow. Soon after his death, when her parents' home at 308 Oak was being demolished to make room for the library and municipal buildings, she visited Huntsville again. The Reverend Gartrell and Alice Gillespie took her to lunch. She gave Gartrell a hall tree and two oriental rugs for the church. He took her to visit her husband's grave on that visit.

Undoubtedly the kindness of Mr. Gartrell, Mrs. Gillespie, and others, also the influence of Mrs. McCravey, who was related in some way to Marguerite, were factors affecting her as she shaped her last will and testament. But really, her parents' life, her life, and her husband's all worked together to produce the Fund that is going to make such a difference to Huntsville.

Simply stated, the Will provides for a perpetual trust, 4% of the income to be paid quarterly to the library and 96% to be paid to the Central Presbyterian Church. The role of the library is to support the musical needs of the community by acquiring music, books, magazines, recordings and other items. The opportunity for cooperation between the two legatees is obvious, and it was Marguerite's express "desire and wish that the two beneficiaries named cooperate to sustain both gifts." As the music program of the Conservatory gets underway, both parties will be able to complement each other. Huntsville will have the rare opportunity to give youngsters and oldsters a musical education and exposure as rich and diverse as we are willing to work together to make it.

The church's responsibility to the Will is more broad-based than the musical mission: "It is my wish and direction that this income be used in extending the works of said church in the Huntsville area, especially in bringing young people under the influence of the church and into church membership, in furthering the musical program of the church, and in furthering the church's work for the benefit of senior citizens."



Marguerite Cartwright Hawthorne, with her parents

The House Next Door



The land upon which the Freeman House was built originally belonged to LeRoy Pope. In 1840, George Steele came into its possession, giving us another twist of irony as we shall see later on when a water-color of C. K. Colley's modification of Steele's Courthouse was miraculously salvaged by custodian Nathan Dean. In 1906, Sarah and Ellis Bainbridge deeded the property to C. H. Gilbert who erected the present structure in 1907.

Sallie and Tom Freeman purchased the property in 1922, for \$7,500 and in the next quarter century gave it a name, the Freeman House, and an important role in the community. Tom Freeman, as genial a host as any of that distinguished cadre Huntsville has produced, welcomed guests to his home with the same flair he dealt out a poker hand and plied his traveling salesman occupation.

All will agree, however, it was his wife, Sallie, Sarah Mason Freeman, who ran the house and made it "home away from home." Ken Turvey fondly recalls Miss Sallie always asking him when he'd be sprucing up to go out, "Where you going, Ken?" just like he was a member of the family. When his folks came to town they were expected to eat there, too.

Miss Sallie was famous for her Southern cooking. Interestingly, her two star boarders, Albert Lane and Ken Turvey were Yankees by birth and palate. It took them a while to get used to certain of Miss Sallie's dishes. One in particular, they could not abide was stewed okra. Turvey said he tried eating it, but he just couldn't. He laughingly recalled the teasing he took when he tried various jellies

on the cornbread which was a daily staple. Excerpts from Albert Lane's letters home could have been written as well by Turvey. While we can't be sure (whether) it was something in the food they ate or didn't eat, it must be observed that both gentlemen courted, fell in love, and married within a year or so after their arrival, and that the Freeman House was their launching pad to matrimony.

Albert Lane...Freeman House Boarder

There were four loves in Albert Lane's life: art, music, Mildred, and God. Huntsville shared him with Battle Creek, Italy, and the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., as he pursued his loves. In 1955, he made his operatic debut in Florence, appearing in both opera and concert in Italy and Sicily. Returning to New York in 1957, he sang a concert performance of "Rigoletto" with the American Symphony Orchestra. The Midwest claimed the Lanes from the late 1950's to 1963, when he accepted a position as Visual Information Specialist with NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.



Mildred Lane 1944

Throughout the next decade, Albert sang and painted his way into Huntsvillians' hearts. Mildred also was active in musical, community, and church affairs. Albert left Huntsville again in 1974, to join the staff of The National Air and Space Museum of The Smithsonian. While there, he was a soloist in the Choir of the Old Christ Church in Alexandria. In 1976, after the museum opened, Albert returned to Huntsville. The three loves of Albert's life had been largely dedicated to his last love. And, in 1983, at the age of 66, after a lengthy illness he went home to be with God.



Old Christ Church



Albert Lane's last work.

Some memories fade, but fortunately Lane's letters from 205 Lincoln will give us all a fresh look at the Freeman House, Huntsville in 1939–40, and at ourselves. Leaving his close-knit family in Battle Creek, Michigan, Albert Lane set out to mold his career as artist by answering the call of Monroe Letterheads, Huntsville, Alabama. Surely the hand of God was at work bringing this young man, bursting with talent, into our midst. His "Sagredo" in *Galileo Galilei*, "Tony" in *The Most Happy Fella*, "Tevya" in *Fiddler on the Roof*, still sound in our ears and our hearts as we remember Albert Lane's rich and vigorous voice and spirit.

Lane's watercolors of Huntsville homes and landmarks are prized possessions. His letters indicate that he valued the gifts God had given him and sought to develop them with dedication and discipline. Yet, his generosity of spirit led him to give freely of himself and his talent. The watercolor on the cover is typical of him. In splashes of greens and blues, browns and whites, and dashes of black, Lane throws together a memory, a keep-sake gift for the lucky recipient, in this instance the Freeman's.

***1979 portrait of
Albert Lane
by
Bonnie Henderson***



His boss, D. C. Monroe, a leading Huntsville businessman and band leader, found Lane lodging at the Freeman House.

Huntsville's noted baritone and visual artist would stride right in to the city's cultural and social life, learning its "Southern" ways over early morning coffee with "Mr. Tom" and contributing his "Yan-kee" perspective. Quite a catch, his arrival was duly noted by Huntsville's fairer sex. Having looked over the field, Lane's eyes soon fell on Mildred Baker, a Scottsboro native, who lived on Holmes and whose high school English teacher, J. G. Roy, introduced to the young man-about-town.

War clouds gathered as the romance blossomed. Upon graduation, Mildred went to work for the draft board in the old Post Office on Holmes. When Albert's induction notice came, instead of mailing it with the others, Mildred hand-delivered it to her sweetheart.

Those were anxious days, as Albert was to report to Ft. McClellan and then, assuming he passed the physical, be sent to his initial assignment straightaway sans fond farewells. Mildred will never forget the sinking feeling she took to bed with her the day he left.

Nor will she forget his rapping at her front door at 4:00 the next morning, whispering loudly, "I fooled

you, didn't I!" Surprised and greatly relieved, Mildred and Albert celebrated his perforated ear drum, a malady that kept him out of the service every time he tried to enlist.

The wartime fever that sent many to the alter in those years, worked its power on them as well, and they were married in January, 1942, at the Episcopal Church of the Nativity.



During their courtship Mildred frequently dined at the Freeman House. Sunday lunch was a favorite time. Mildred always remembered the advice Albert gave her the first time she ate at the busy boarding house: take everything that is offered to you the first time it is passed, as you may not see it again. She loved to watch the

Sunday ice cream being hand-made by the black help out on the porch of the little house in the back yard.

Among her keepsakes, Albert's letters which she shares here for the first time, reveal his wry humor, lighthearted criticism of many things "Southern," and his adherence to Christian family values. As he matured and his talents crystalized, Lane's deeply religious nature became abundantly clear in his art and music. It would please his heart to know that the Freeman House and his old room on the second floor front abound in the beauty and joy of music provided by the Central Presbyterian Hawthorne Conservatory.

Kenneth V. Turvey...Freeman House Boarder

Ken Turvey still treasures memories of his first day in Huntsville. Hired as the Director of Music of the First Methodist Church, he was met at the train by church member Holding Homburg, Chair of the Music Committee. They went by the church where he met the staff and then Homberg delivered him to the Freeman House. It was January, 1955. Miss Sallie had his room ready for him. It was off the living room, the closed part of a screened porch. Years later when he would see Miss Sallie, she would give him a hug and tell him his room is "just like you left it." Not that he spent much time in his room, if his first day is any indication. That evening he was invited to attend rehearsals of the Community Chorus then directed by his future mother-in-law, Mrs. Hamm. When he got to Ridley Hall at Nativity, he was asked to play Braham's "How Lovely Is Thy Dwelling Place." Within less than a twelve-hour span, the major elements of Kenneth Turvey's life had presented themselves. There was nothing topsy-turvy about it. He went straight to work contributing his talents to the community. Almost a half century later we are still enjoying his gifts. The Freeman House will always resonate with his quiet charm and majestic music making.

From the "Cotton Boys" to the Music Men, the Freeman House was foremost a place for career-minded young men to live and eat. But, in the 1950's, when the town was bulging at its stretched

seams, Miss Sallie took in young ladies as well. They occupied the upstairs rooms. Ken Turvey recalled that several young ladies roomed and boarded when he was there in 1955–1956. But, he protested, “I was NEVER, NEVER on the 2nd floor!”

The House was in transition then, as it is now. Miss Alyce began teaching little aspiring first graders whose birthdays disqualified them from fall entry into public school first grade.

If ever a house had the proper credentials for the role it is to play in the future, this house does. Famous for its hospitality, for its brilliantly-gifted boarders, for its educational background, now because of another set of God-given circumstances, it will serve future generations of musically talented young people.

First as boarding house, then as school, and now as Conservatory: from sustenance for body to mind to spirit, throughout the musical motif is as strong as Organist Emeritus Georgette Graham’s longest peale on the old pipe organ. Was it accident that the Freeman House boarded the likes of Albert Lane, Huntsville’s premier baritone and visual artist, and Kenneth Turvey, Mr. Music himself, long-time conductor of the Huntsville Community Chorus. Think of the spirits loose in that conservatory! Then add to that the beautiful soprano voice of Marguerite Cartwright. This is an angelic choir.

And, because of her Will and Rhonda Mitchell’s Vision, and Carol Ann Samples’ devotion, the Freeman House will for years to come ring out with music, making a joyful noise. And generations will be blest.

© sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory.

The Lord hath made known his salvation: his righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the heathen.

He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise.

Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.

With trumpets and sound of cornets make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.

Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together

Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.

Psalms 98 (KJV)



Memories of Nana & Papa's House

Sallie Ann Culver and Alyce Parmelee Smith

Miss Sally [Nana] & Mr. Tom [Papa], as they were called, were our grandparents.

Sallie Ann . . .

In the middle and late '40's, the "Little House" (house in the back yard) was home for the "Cotton Boys." These were young boys who were cotton brokers that sold cotton on West Side Square called Cotton Row. Papa played cards with them at night which would always upset Nana. There was much teasing and laughter when the "Cotton Boys" were around. Several boys were killed in the war—Nana felt like she had lost some of her own sons.

When the Arsenal was in the preliminary stages, Nana was called and asked if she would serve supper to the Generals and V.I.P.s who were here then setting everything up. That was an interesting period of time. She did this for several months until the Officers Club was constructed.

In the spring and summer after supper we would all go out on the porch and sit in chairs and swing and “watch the cars go by.” You usually knew all the people.

The late Albert Lane, noted Huntsville artist, lived at Nana’s when he first arrived in Huntsville. He painted us a picture of the house with Nana on the front porch in the swing. It has brought so many memories.

Nana (as I called my grandmother) loved people and there were always lots of people coming and going in the house. One time an upstairs bedroom caught on fire and when firemen came, Nana was on the porch serving them cake and coffee.

My aunt, Alice Freeman, left teaching at West Clinton Elementary School and West Huntsville, and opened her “1st Grade” in the former dining room of the house in September 1957. It was called School for Beginners. She enrolled students whose birthdays were after September 1 and could not enroll in public schools. She continued this until her retirement. Nana loved having the school children in the house.



ABOVE: *Albert Lane’s sketch of “Aunt Alice.”*

RIGHT: *Albert Lane and young Alyce Parmelee Smith*



Papa died in the "50's" and Nana died at home at the age of 92, March 7, 1968. She was still going to town every day and to the A&P Grocery Store. They delivered her groceries every day to the house.

The house at 205 Lincoln was a wonderful place to grow up in. A home for Cotton Boys-Generals-School Children and lots and lots of Huntsville people who were looking for a home-cooked meal and lots of fellowship.

Alyce . . .

Many of my memories of 205 Lincoln Street are of my Nana's cooking. Nana made biscuits every morning for breakfast for the family and the boys in the Little House. She made sure they ate a banana on the weekend. It would absorb the whiskey they "might" drink, she would tell them.

In the spring I helped her make chow-chow. You would chop the cabbage, tomato, onion, etc., in a good chopper that attached to the kitchen table. Then all the ingredients would be put in a flour sack and hung over a large dish pan to drain overnight. After cooking and sealing jars, they would be stored in the shelves which hung over the steps that led to the basement.

When Nana closed her kitchen to the public, my Aunt Alice, quit teaching at West Clinton School and opened a "School for Beginners" (Sept. 1957). She used the room the boarders had previously eaten many a grand meal in. Some chow-chow was always left in a bowl to put on a cracker for the school children to sample. (They had smelled it for two days!)

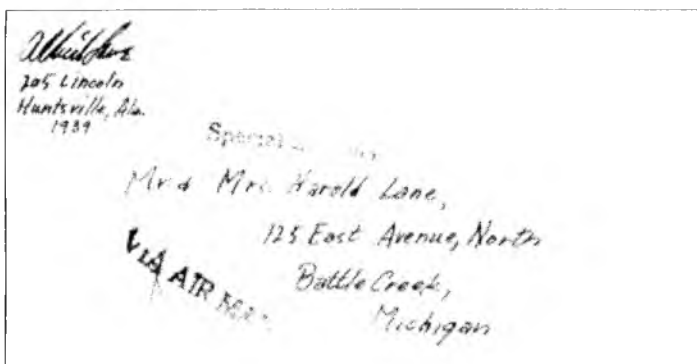
Every morning Nana walked to the A&P (corner of Eustis and Green streets). The stock boys would carry her groceries home for her so they could get a piece of home-made cake which she always had on hand. Once when a small fire broke out in an upstairs bedroom, Nana fed the firemen cake and coffee after they had put out the blaze. They sat on the front porch and had a wonderful treat.



THE FAMILY IN FRONT OF THE FREEMAN HOUSE



***Albert Lane, third from left, D.C. Monroe, fifth from left.
(picture courtesy of The Tennessee Valley Press, Inc.)***



Albert Lane's First Letter Home

Feb. 17, 1939

Dear Mother & Dad:-

Well, I'm here and everything is well and under control. I thought I never would get here, but I enjoyed the ride, and didn't get sick at all, and the minute I arrived, Monroe & Semmes met at the station and brought me to one of the finest boarding homes I ever saw, clean, large, and well looked after. Its only \$30 a month, and my room has everything and is on the front & side, second floor, large windows, and has a nice fireplace in it. There's a good big rug on the floor, nice large dressers, and well—its fixed up very nicely.

Mr. & Mrs. Freeman, who reside here, allow only highly reputable guests—most of whom are young men in the cotton business. Of course, my time will be taken up, so I don't expect to run around with them. The meals so far haven't impressed me like I thought, but I guess that's due to not being used to eating Southern stuff. You ought to hear the Robins singing outside! Its warm & nice here—ahem—the thermometer registered 62° at noon!

When I arrived in Chicago, I sent you your candy from the Stevens Hotel and boarded the Dixie Flyer at about 10:00. I didn't sleep

very well, and felt lazy the next morning, but was alright as soon as I had some breakfast. You know, we go through Evansville at 6:00 in the morning, and I'm telling you I have never seen so much water as there was around that town. After the last catastrophe, the C&E spent over a million dollars on their roadbed, and built a trestle track, a mile long, across all this flooded area. Water just covered everything in the lowlands. There was one funny instance, right in the middle of it all, stood an old deserted school house that looked as though it was planted in the middle of Gull lake, or something. Homes had been deserted, and people trying to live in water-soaked houses.

I changed to coach from Nashville, as I had planned, and incidentally met some very charming people on the observation pullman I was in. It was a pity I didn't go on to Jacksonville. I would have certainly liked to, in fact, was tempted to, almost. But here I am, ...there are about 20,000 people here, ...surrounded by mountains—a little tale of which I'll come to later. Its about the cleanest place in Ala.—and here in this county, they raise more cotton than any other place in Alabama. Most of the streets are paved, and all in all, the place is as modern as Battle Creek. During the Civil War, Union troops held this town, and I was shown many places where troops & officers were quartered—including the First Methodist Church. The houses are quite modern, many with basements and furnaces—(this one too), ...Everyone has been extremely nice, and they go out of their way to be hospitable. Its certainly not like Chicago! ...

People rave about Huntsville, and they have a right to. It deserves a lot of credit for the beautiful little town it is. I'll make up some water-colors of the scenic beauty there is around here, so you can get some idea of what I'm talking about. ...the town is dead, musically speaking. (Looks like its going to rain.) They have no choirs to speak of, and of course no vocal teachers.

This place is about two blocks from the office and is in the best part of the city. The Monroe Letterhead's Company is in an old building which has been modernized to a certain extent. The place

where I work, or the room rather, is very fine, and my drawing table is much like the one at home, only used a great deal. There is one other young man there, who is very good, and works hard, & is very courteous & decent. Mr. Monroe is middle-aged and would double for Edgar Bergen, except that he looks a trifle older, and has a Southern accent! But Monroe is a peach of a fellow and so is his wife. Boy—she's a Southerner if there ever was one. ...

These people are very easy to get along with... But let me tell you something (the street-cleaning dept just went by washing down the street—boy they sure keep it clean here—and there's a robin perched outside my window.) of my experiences last night—the first night M. & S. brought me here to the house where I had supper, and met I don't know how many young men. At about 8:00, they returned and all three of us drove around town where I hadn't been. Then, they decided to show me the mountain (just one of 'em) outside of town on which a lot of people live, and where there used to be a resort of some kind,—health resort—at that time it was nationally known. We got to the top, and saw all the city lights spread out below, and it really was an inspiration. However, it had been raining and there was one spot on the whole mountain that was muddy. And it was dark. And we hit that spot, and there we were. There was no getting out alone—so we walked a mile on top of that mountain one way, and didn't see anybody at home, so we walked a couple of miles the other way to a house and walked back to the car and waited for a wrecker to pull us out. Then, he almost pulled the axle off. After all that walking I slept like a log.

Oh dear, there isn't anything doing around here as far as entertainment is concerned. There are two theaters here and the shows on there are has-beens that the Orpherem wouldn't take...

...Well, keep well, and happy, and if you ever need me for anything—just let me know. God bless you all, and write me back and tell me all the news fit for reading.

Love,



P.S. Tell Dick to cut down on dates.



May 12, 1940

Dearest Folks:

Hello. At first I thought I would make this letter just a few words, but on second thought, perhaps I will make it a little longer, maybe 20 or 30 pages. You deserve a letter that long. It has been quite a long time since I have written anything more than a few words, and there is such a lot to tell you, well anyway, general principles warrant it, I guess! And then, tomorrow is Mother's Day, and to me it is a day full of lonesomeness, of the same old thing I did last Sunday, except this time I am going to sing my "Mother O' Mine" just for you, Mother, ... and now that I have sung, and dinner is over, let me tell you how much it meant for me to have gone to church this morning, in the bright warm sunshine, everything is so lovely, and sweet smelling. I sang my song, and it was worth all the effort.

Before church, I went to the Post Office, found your letter to me, and then waited until after my singing to open it, thinking perhaps it might contain some unwelcome news, and upset me before singing. But, it contains all the love you bestow upon me, and I was happy. It is so wonderful to have a Mother and Father, and brother like the ones I have. I am realizing more and more the real value, the realness of my family. They are so young, there is so much for all of us to look forward to. I hope and pray that both of you continue to grow younger, as you have been doing in the past two years and then, that has given me so much thought.

You don't realize it, but your little sonny boy has given a lot of mental attention to the fact that you two are really getting different. Somehow, both of you are growing into that stage when Life becomes its fullest, when you can appreciate the comical things of daily warfare, and also do something about it. What I mean is that there seems to be more companionship in the family, and probably that is everything in a nutshell. Of course, this isn't the place to go into that subject to any degree, but if you think about it long enough, I think you'll understand what I'm driving at. Being away from you has made me appreciate all the wonderful character you've given me, and nothing could have brought out that idea more clearly than this morning. Of course I always think about you, all the time. You folks continually worry me when I don't hear from you, and you simply cannot imagine how lonely it is for me here regardless of the time or place.

I have made friends with most of Huntsville's best people, and know everybody in town, but that very thing is the one thing that makes me want to leave, to get back to my home town. All these folks are lovely people, they are trying to make me forget Battle Creek as best they can, and they are quite sincere. When I have a good time, and I am always having the best of times here, all of my best friends are people who neither drink and so forth, there is always the faintest shadow of heartsickness, and loneliness which you, Mother, know so very well. You and I seem to be following in like paths of destiny. Back in the World War days you came to Battle Creek from your home in Jackson, (the word "home" should have quote marks around it) because you have had a much harder time than I. Here I came to this place from my home, unknown, and unknowing, during the second World War, and carved out my reputation just as you carved out a fine reputation at the Hospital.

Mother, you have the one real courage I admire. You are not afraid of anybody or anything. I pray that I might be endowed with a little of that courage, to keep me in good stead here in Huntsville. And when I pray for anything, it is also for some of Dad's wisdom, for some of his great love and respect for his fellows. For a little of the ability to accomplish. Those are the things I need far more than

tangible assets like automobiles. Moreover, when I look at Dick's fine picture, all of the qualities I desire and need, are so evident. For one thing, I need to be a little better looking. Well, one look at Dick will tell anyone how much better he favors me! And when it comes to brains, you know for yourself that experience has made him the brainiest of us two. I might have accomplished the relatively easy task of learning the commercial art profession, and can brag of another professional avocation, but, so what? What does it amount to? Sooner or later everyone finds something to do, and sooner than most people, I was lucky enough to fall into this. Just plain luck, That's all. But now, let's take Dick. There he stands, in all the glory of youth on the March. (I can say all this now, and get away with it, because I'm older) Dick has got sense and plenty of it. I spend hours worrying over the possibility of his going the way of most sophisticates and taking up those little nauseating habits like smoking and petty drinking like so many of his chums., If Dick ever starts to drink, I swear I'll beat the living daylights out of him.

You can't imagine of all things the way the "younger set" of Huntsville, in all its sophisticated glory, takes to the habits which seem to be smart, and "modern." It seems to be "the thing." The "Blue Room" at the Russel Erskine Hotel, which is "the" night spot of Huntsville is always chuck full of young people sitting around at tables trying to show off and be smart by smoking and sipping Tom Collins, or playing a marble machine, which I consider, outside of fishing to be the greatest waste of time in the world, or dancing (which of course is fine) to a nickelodeon. Don't get the idea that I am a prude, or a Puritan. Neither. But, seeing both sides of this Life, and I have, has certainly given me a glad heart to know that I have not one time, with the possible exception of a few occasions, touched anything stronger than a little beer, haven't gone to any, but fine parties, and gatherings of a more uplifting nature, have maintained friendships in all walks of life here, been to church every Sunday I've been here, and more than one person has told me that I am respected for the reasons stated.

People here know me for what I am, for what I stand for, not a hypocrite, like so many of these Southerners and it is not debasing to call them that, because they have always been that way, long before the Civil War, and their entire life has been raised to that subtle way of a certain diplomacy. I am speaking of the better element of the Southerner. Even though they are really most gracious, and cordial, warm and friendly, you could not hope to escape some form of criticism, or gossip. They'll cut you up into little pieces, discuss your habits, and generally, most everybody in town knows everybody else pretty well, before you are very much older. Then, and only then, are you admitted into the social atmosphere of a small town like Huntsville. I was admitted quite a while ago.

But now, I'm getting a little fed up with the social atmosphere of Huntsville. It is too much on the stale side, a little too dead, and monotonous. You go into the Blue Room, and Forest [Moore] and I occasionally do for chocolate milk, and a cheese sandwich, or something like that, and the same crowd is sitting around night after night, drinking the same thing, you would imagine, especially one fellow, named Walter Winston, an office lawyer. ... I merely use Walter as an example of the type you find around here. The type that believes in the best time possible, and as little work as possible, and find out as much as possible why you have a date with a girl, the next day the whole city knows it, where you went, what you did, and why. Then the match-makers get busy. They circulate gossip, and rumors concerning possible romance, and before you know, you have practically married the girl you had one date with.

Of course, you must take me not literally but figuratively, and believe it or not, but it is quite dangerous to have a lot of dates with a girl you do not know, or intend to drop after a while, because before you know it...bang! You're hooked! Now, where I fit into this picture is a bit on the sidelines. It is far more entertaining to watch the scramble than to be in it (as Confucius might have said), and the extent of the romantic side of my life is only about one date a month. Then, that doesn't give any busy-bodies a

chance, and it doesn't drain my pocket-book too much, either, although, whenever I do have a date, all I ever can do, is to take her out to dinner, and to the theatre, and then hire a cab, and run her home before she sees anyone she knows. Naturally, I don't bother with any girl I can't enjoy myself with, or someone who won't try to contribute to the conversation, or acts childish. ...

When I visit a girl friend, I intend to have a roaring, good natural time, and when it gets late, I just say, well, "had a swell time, see you later, good-night," and away I go, ... That is the best way. You can't get into any entangling difficulties, or petty jealousies, or situations which might call for—you know what I mean—and at the same time, you (I) stay on the stabilized level, in other words and to make it all plain in one sentence, I don't give myself a chance to fall in love with some girl here, ... That is the whole thing in a nutshell. You must realize, too, that I am in the perfect stage for matrimony, and if I had plenty of money, I would get married tomorrow but forget that temporarily, at least. I haven't even been able to boast of having a "steady" girl friend, like everybody else, and here I am, 23 years old. Have just been too gol-durned busy with more important things, like ekeing out a bare existence—living hand to mouth, than I have worrying about girl friends. And look at the flock I've looked at. I certainly have given the field the once over, and have found one.

Also Thank God that I am in this country! But it makes me so gol-durned mad to think that Holland, in all the blaze of tulip time, with all these beautiful flowers growing, tended so carefully and so religiously, should be suddenly turned into a holocaust of hell let loose by this mad demon, and his bunch of carnage-mongers.

Thank you so very much for the picture of Dick. It is such a good likeness, and shows him much as I had been picturing him. Such handsome eyes! What a good-looking chin. Someone told me, he has that dreamy look, so characteristic of boys! Of course there was nothing I could say, but really, Dick is really getting to be a fine looking man, don't you all think so? [Advice to his younger brother] ...you don't have to take anybody's backwash, and from

now on, you must adjust yourself to the ways of manhood. Wherever you go, try to command respect, and treat the other fellow exactly as you want to be treated. I've tried it, and it works like a charm. It keeps you out of trouble any time. Of course, there are plenty of times when it seems that a rule like that just won't work. But, all of your education is going to come after you walk out the front door of Central High. Central was just a race track, just a little tea party compared to what is in store for you. You are going out to meet the world, to look 'em straight in the eye, to stay on the right track, and to reap exactly what you sow. Yes sah. You'll reap what you sow. So, do what I'm trying to do, sow as much good stuff as you can while you are young. ...

Huntsville, and Alabama, have gone on Daylight Saving Time, so now we are on exactly the same time as you are. There was quite a lot of confusion at first, but I think everyone likes the new time fine. It means that we get an extra hour of the day, and now it stays light until nearly nine o'clock. The only trouble is getting up in the morning, but now my three big east windows have taken care of that. All I have to do is to pull up the shades when I go to bed, and as I face the windows, I usually wake up with the chickens Mr. Tom has way out in the back yard. (I manage to grab a few more seconds of blissful repose, tho).

Lately I have been taking it rather easy, not working so hard, and paying more attention to the outdoors, the sunlight, than staying indoors plugging over the drawing board like a slave. I am feeling very well, paying my sickness and accident insurance policy with religious regularity, cleaning my teeth very carefully...use a good Dr. West's toothbrush, keep my clothes in good shape, eating wheat bread now, instead of hot biscuits. ... Of course, one of the stable dishes are various ways of fixing corn, like corn pudding, corn bread, which is fattening, and tiresome. Corn, corn, corn—and also a food which I don't believe you all have eaten before, and neither have I—it's been on the table every time I have sat down to a meal. It just doesn't look good. It is Hominy. Grits are very popular with the evening meal, if you can imagine anything like that, and I can't, but what tops off the whole business of eating

down here is Fried Chicken. Here is the King, the Queen, and the whole damned Court of delicacies put together. It is Universal. It is where the cook reigns supreme—in a kitchen reeking with the odor of fried chicken. And they don't use old hens, either, but you call them "broilers." Now these broilers are as tender as a May night, and about as popular. All the parts of the broilers are well fried, or broiled, I don't know which, until a sort of brittle crust (that must be grease) forms all over the particular delicacy. The platter full of all these pieces of former young chickens is then served amid cheers of applause from the guests at the table. I always grab for the legs, always being sure of taking (Oh, I almost forgot to mention Sweet Potatoes—ugh) two legs because legs are the easiest to eat. And you always eat fried chicken with your fingers. Never with a knife and fork—Lord that would be a gigantic breach of etiquette.

Then let me describe a typical Southern dinner, from way down South. First you politely take a piece of chicken or two **WITH YOUR FORK**, and then help yourself to some corn cakes, break them in two, lay them on your plate, then take a lot of chicken gravy (nauseating looking like thick gray soup), and, with a big spoon, cover the corn bread, or broken pieces of cake, with the gravy. Then, discreetly, pick up the chicken, and, firmly in your fingers, go to town. Be sure to eat the corn bread with knife and fork. Help yourself to some good old black eyed peas, pour ketchup all over them, grab some fresh spring onions, and cut these onions up into little pieces, mixing them up into the peas. Then, if you have any energy left, put some lemon and sugar in your iced tea, and jump into the argument with the person next to you. Mrs. Freeman sails around serving, and sees that everyone is well taken care of, and also joins in the roundelay of conversation, but what gets me is that all the women shout so. Shout is putting it mildly, they scream their conversation back and forth, and interrupt consistently as if they were the only ones in the room. Its a din. The funniest thing about it, tho, is that everybody talks at the same time. You must think I am living in a house full of crazy people. Well, I am beginning to think so, myself.

Getting back to the food, I find, Southerners are not very good cake bakers. They cannot bake good cake, try as they may. At any rate, it isn't as good as your cake, and the icing is punk, too sweet, and highly flavored for me. And that is one of the troubles with the cooking down here as a rule. Too much flavoring. That is why I like your cooking best of all, Mother. It is simple, and sensible, and not loaded down with a lot of salt, vinegar, pepper, nutmeg, and sugar like the slaw I make myself eat for the fresh vegetables. The slaw has only some vinegar, salt, and pepper and something that tastes like the very devil, but I eat it because it is good for me.

The other day one of the pressmen in the Printing Company had his dinner brought in, and he had one of the best looking dinners, with whole wheat bread. Man alive, it was all I could do from buying myself one just like it. I was starved! That was at 12, and we don't eat until 12:30, so I struggled along, and dinner was late that day, everything we had was something I didn't like, and I was so mad, I went downtown, and bought a malted milk. Oh Zeus! That was the ultimate disappointment. Like all Englishmen, I love to eat good food, and on time, and plenty of it!

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Arthur".

Albert Lane



May 30, 1940

Dearest Mother, Dad, and Dick:

Well, here it is, the last day of this month, still we feel the cool of the early Spring, the wind has changed to heat, our birds still chitter their jolly times away in the trees. These days I have pretty well kept to myself, which is unusual, feeling somehow an occasional stab of melancholia in the midst of my heavy duties. It becomes difficult to be happy, when the bitter clouds of war find it easy to filter through one's cloak of indifference. Heavy duties are heavier still when clouds hang over your head. But, today, something inside of me happened, as if something in my soul popped. We are all bitter at the turn of events, and the future looks dark and indeed uncertain. Up to today, I have shunned all I could, trying to keep my mind on the present, the happier things of our lives. It really helped to think of other things, and forcing out of my mind the evil influences of Nazi propaganda. But today I could stand aloof no longer. I resolved to quit worrying about the whole thing, and to regard this war as something like a necessary evil, and if we have to get into it, that won't worry me, either. I'm so fed up with the everlasting success of Hitler, and his bullying-you'll notice how all of the nations he has beaten are no bigger than some of our smaller states and much less defenseless. Will you tell me how it is possible to paint little pictures of roses no larger than your finger nail, and listen to statistics flying back and forth through the art dept.? That is the problem I am faced with these days. You know how nervous I am, and regardless of the amount of concentrating I do, painting little roses requires patience, thought, care, and above

all, mental stability. The artist must think about flowers if he is to portray flowers. The florist can think of anything he wants to because his job is to only cut, and seal them... The soldier can be as gastronomical as he cares to be thinking only of ways and means to tear up his fellow brother...but, I have to work all day long at a desk, in an office with seven other people, walking and talking all around me. All day long, I have to be in a position to turn out high class art work, on a par with any other artwork of its kind anywhere in these United States, or better, I have to figure out ways and means of painting this little rose with the utmost accuracy with the delicate foiling it must radiate. Is it possible to give that rose feeling when somebody behind you describes in detail, "The British were badly beaten," "The Allies lacked the mechanized divisions which blasted through" The Blitzkrieg this, the Blitzkrieg that, all about Dive-Bombers---I don't know what they are. Here, this rose petal must have another line down the center. Where is my white paint Somebody behind me shouts to the Front office "Mr. Semmes, the British lost 16 transports today." I lost my patience, and turned around, denying the whole business, calling it baloney.

Yes, baloney, that what it is, I thought, but is it? Going on with my painting, my eyes begin to get a little strained, so I reached into my drawer for my glasses with all the letters I have received in the last two months groped around, and finally found them, way up in the corner, under one of Mother's last letters..,

Forgetting all about the war, it occurred to me all of a sudden I must not have written for the last week. In the midst of all my dreaming, Miss Perry stomped into the art dept., gave me my keys and announced rather pompously, "Lane, there wasn't a thing in your box, then turned around, picked up her papers, and stomped into Edmund's office to get the company correspondence. I have been thinking a lot lately how it is Miss Perry can get so much done and walk through this department so many times a day...

Temporarily, at least, I had forgotten all about the war. The rose I was working on proved a little more difficult than I had at first anticipated. I thought of all the things I would rather be painting than roses. Somehow Roses are made for water colours. I don't use many water colours. I'll have to get back at them, I wonder how a water colour would work as a graduating gift. Let me see...I



was in such thought about all this that I didn't realize a discussion going on almost over my head. Mr. Semmes had come into the room, waving some letterhead around, getting ready to cut them for mailing, and Reed, the invalid in our art staff trying to explain all about his illness to him, Forrest with his idiotical giggle making the conversation a melee of confusion. I thought that if Forrest should put that laugh on the market he would get rich...God, its loud. I turned around just enough so I could see them all out of the corner of my eye, and there he sat, almost repulsively, in that chair of his, making some ridiculous remark in a giggle, "Reed, button up your collar." After the conversation had turned to the subject of one of the pressmen having a need for a bath, and a change of clothes, With that, Forrest let go one of the longest belly-laughs I ever heard, Mr. Semmes replying rather stuffily, "Forrest, put on your shoes," to which I added, "and put your arms down."

That seemed to quiet things down, and we went back to work, and Semmes left the room, He walks funny. Not like other people. He has a peculiar shuffle, and clumps his heels along when he walks, and sways to and fro like a giant, As I reached for a pencil, I could not help but laugh thinking he is the shortest giant I ever saw, and his feet are as flat as the bottom of a frying pan And that he and Edmund both walk down the street together, one short, one taller, with that same sway, to and fro.

Later on that afternoon, I was able to finish my flowers without any more interruptions, and everything went along as it should. Miss Perry came and went, Mr. Semmes going about his business, and Reed wandering about trying to loosen up the stiffness in his knees caused by rheumatism, so he said. Suddenly the door opened, and one of the boys in the printing Company peered around the edge, and yelled "Telephone Albert!" It angers me whenever they do that, because it jars me, and I have to get up. Why in thunder does that telephone have to ring always at the wrong time! Why don't they leave me alone! Just as I thought, it was a man by the name of Mr. Moore, up at the YMCA asking me to sing some old-time songs at the Confederate Reunion next Thursday here at the Hotel. Well, I said I would, and finally got him to hang up so I could go back to work. Now for heaven Sakes, I thought, what am I going to sing?... Hmm I see they are printing one of my jobs at last, getting on with the second colour. Old Kentucky Home. No. Too hackneyed. Wonder if Camptown Races would do. Oh, oh, excuse me! Almost knocked Mr. Monroe down as I walked around a corner. I noticed he looked a little tired. Maybe business wasn't as good as it should be. Jeannie with The Light Brown Hair ought to get them. Um-umm. That's what I'll sing. I could go on, and write a twenty page letter, telling you all the interesting little anecdotes that happen to us every day, or elaborate upon some little unimportant trivia, dwelling on it, until it looked like Monte Sano. But I won't, it would be fun, I know, but I haven't got the time, and before I know it will be time for all good boys to blow out the candle and crawl in. And I haven't rested enough this last week, Too much private work. For instance, I have just designed a Folder for the Huntsville Chamber of Commerce in three colors that is going to take me several days to do. It is quite a large job, and so you will have to excuse my not writing to you, this next week, very much, if I do not, it is because I have been occupied with this folder. The Chamber appointed a committee on "Beautiful Homes of Huntsville", and we are playing up all the old estates, that carry such an air of grandeur and history, and are so vitally interesting from a Historical standpoint, so you will understand, that, being one of the committee, I have my outside time full to the brim, getting this thing out. Ah, but it is fun, and so relaxing

to write to all of you, you I love, you, I would love to hold out my arms, and pull you to me to quell my loneliness...

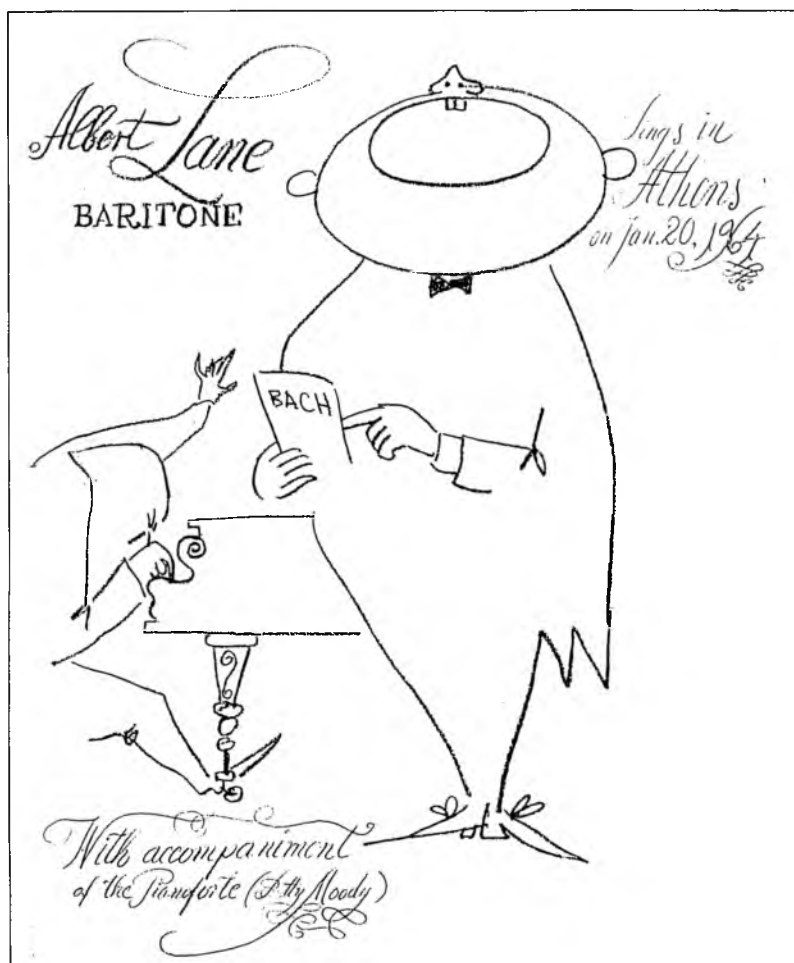
I am waiting to hear from you. One of these days very soon I will write that letter I was telling you about, and make it as long as a small book, and I will tell you all about some of my little experiences here in Huntsville, but I won't unless Elizabeth promises to have it published in the paper. It will tell of the Old homes here. For instance, our oldest mansion, on Echols Hill overlooks the city, and the man who built it in 1815 put it there because he could see the Big Spring (about a half mile away) from his home. Somebody else by the name of Whitten in those days hated the man who built Echols, and so built his home on a line between Echols, and the Big Spring, and made it the tallest home in the town, and tall enough so that Mr. Watts of Echols could not see the Big Spring. And there they both stand, today, in fine condition, still habituated by they descendants of the original families. However, Colonel Echols, the descendant of Echols Hill was robbed and murdered in New York just the other day. Perhaps you heard of it over the radio. Anyway, it put Huntsville in a stew.

Au Revoir , and God be with you, give my love to...

Love,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Arthur".

The Ecumenical Arts of Huntsville:
featuring
The Freeman House Star Borders



HUNTSVILLE
COMMUNITY CHORUS

Presents

Eljah
FELIX MENDELSSOHN

Eljah
FELIX MENDELSSOHN



KENNETH TEEVEY — Conductor

Sunday, February 19, 1978
3:00 p.m.

Trinity United Methodist Church

SOLOISTS

SOPRANO

Margaret Bacon (Widow; Youth; Angel)
Janet Turvey

ALTO

Edna Clay (Angel)
Cheryl Elser (Queen)

TENOR

Stanley Ware (Obadiash)

BARITONE

Albert Lane (Elijah)
A. Richard Felix



THIS CONCERT
IS IN MEMORY OF

RUBY LONGBOTTOM,
Mother of Margaret Bacon

MARTHA EDNA WARD,
Mother of Edna Clay

MABLE L. BAKER,
Mother of Mrs. Albert Lane

HUNTSVILLE COMMUNITY CHORUS PRESENTS

a Musical Comedy



THE MOST HAPPY FELLA

DIRECTED BY
Jay Fryman
and
Kenneth Turvey

MARCH 7-8-9, 1969

LEE HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM

MUSIC, LYRICS AND LIBRETTO BY FRANK LOESSER

Based on Sidney Howard's "They Knew What They Wanted"

Featuring Albert Lane as Tony



THE HUNTSVILLE COMMUNITY CHORUS

PRESENTS

'THE MOST HAPPY FELLA'



Music, Lyrics and Libretto by
Frank Loesser

(Based on Sidney Howard's
"They Knew What They Wanted")

J. C. Fryman

Director

Kenneth V. Turvey

Musical Director

Ann Brown

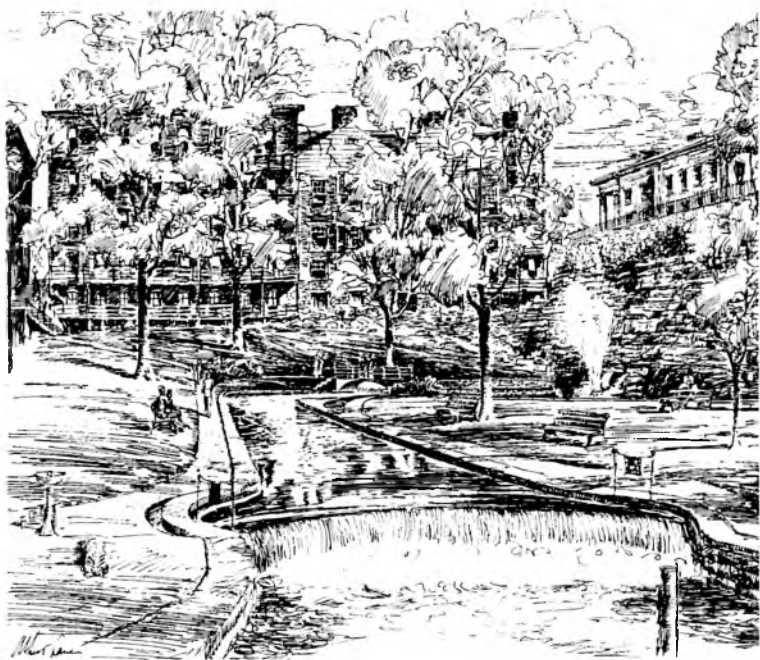
Choreographer

Carolyn Gannon
Jeannette Bracey
Linda Bingham

Accompanists



"The Most Happy Fella" is presented through special
arrangement with Music Theatre International, 119 West
57th Street, New York, New York 10019



**BIG SPRING PARK
HUNTSVILLE, ALABAMA
CIRCA 1940 — Albert Lane**



ABOVE: Kenneth Turvey rehearses chorus for First Concert of 23rd Season—Sunday, October 6, 1968

BELOW: (seated) Janet Turvey, Albert Lane;
(standing) Michael Sheehy and Robert Bargetzi





ABOVE: Conductor D. Royce Boyer (seated),
Albert Lane and Lady Tucker—October 20, 1972

BELOW: (left to right) Mrs. Frank Scrable,
Mrs. John Walker, Mrs. Edwin Jones, and Albert Lane
Friday, September 8, 1967





1907 Freeman House
Twickenham Historic Preservation District
205 Lincoln Street
Huntsville, Alabama

Architectural Description

Harvie P. Jones, FAIA

The 1907 Freeman House is of a neoclassical design loosely derived from the 18th-century Georgian style. This style is generally termed “Colonial Revival.” It is a free interpretation of the 18th-century vernacular, however, and makes no attempt to closely follow its ancestors. The long ell-plan front veranda is an influence from the 19th-century Victorian Queen Anne style, here updated by using Ionic (Scamozzi type) colonnettes and a classical roof entablature and balustrade. The wide roof-dormer with a rustic shingle front is likewise a Victorian influence. “Colonial” influences include the simple box like house form topped by a hipped roof, modified Palladian windows in the dormer and second floor hall, the deep classical roof entablature, and the symmetrical center-hall facade and plan. The wide-angled-side bay window in the dining room is a Victorian holdover feature.

The hipped roof has a near-flat top of about twelve feet square. Based on similar house designs of the early 20th century it is possible that this flat section was surrounded by a balustrade, similar to the 1814 Leroy Pope House and the 1848 McDowell

House. The appearance of the house would be enhanced by this feature.

Another Queen Anne feature is the tiny window panes at the entry and at the Palladian windows, an idea derived from Renaissance English houses with similar size panes (a technical necessity of that earlier 16th-century time).

The present veranda balusters and rails were apparently installed in the mid-20th century and are under-scaled for the house. The paint-profiles of the original heavy rails (about two and one-half times the depth of the present modern 2 X 6 rails) are still clearly imprinted on the original Ionic colonnettes. One original baluster was found in the crawl space and is at the office of Jones & Herrin. A goal should be to properly reconstruct the original correctly-scaled veranda balustrade.

The house also contains a few Arts & Crafts style elements, notably the two faceted-leaded glass spherical porch lights and the dining room mantel of simple rectangular oak elements and a leaded-glass overmantel cupboard. These simple mantel forms contain two lion's heads in relief as their only concession to elaboration of form.



There is also one feature which is influenced by the Art Nouveau style—the beautiful brass combination gas and electric light fixture on the stair newel post. The rod that supports the two lights is the whip-lash scroll form that is the hallmark of the Art Nouveau style. Such combination gas-electric fixtures were common around the turn of the century when electricity was still novel and unreliable.



The other mantels are of a Colonial Revival style, variously featuring Ionic colonnettes and applied-relief composition, Adamesque floral wreaths, swags, urns, etc.



The entry foyer is decorated with an outstanding Victorian-style feature; a lacy and delicate curvilinear confection of thin wood open-work spindles and scrolls. The frieze is supported by Victorian-style bulbous-bottom colonnettes topped by Ionic (Scamozzi type) capitals. The colonnettes rest on low oak wainscot-walls. Two small oak trays rest on the low walls, for flower vases, calling-cards, etc.



In the back yard, an original small two-room servants' cottage (which is present on the 1913 Sanborn map) remains, a rarity that should be preserved.

In 1996 the house was thoroughly restored by the Central Presbyterian Church under the leadership of Mrs. Carol Ann Samples for use as a music center and for receptions and social functions. Since the house was in excellent condition and needed primarily current-use upgrades, redecoration and minor repairs, the restoration was a simple and economical process. The cost was about one-half the cost of demolishing the house and building a new modern-design building of the same floor area. The house was redecorated inside and out. Heating, cooling, and electrical systems were replaced to meet the heavier demands of church use. A new kitchen, handicapped rest room and ramp, and code-complying rear stair in a compatible



design were added. Some rear second floor rooms were divided to make small music-rehearsal rooms. The architects were Jones & Herrin Architecture, Interior Design. The contractor was Vandiver Construction.

This is another case of restoration being far more economical than the alternative of demolition-and-modern-construction. In addition, the fine 1907 house has much more character than any new building can muster, is built of old-growth wood (resistant to rot or insects) that is no longer available, and contains decorative elements that are not affordable in modern construction.

The Central Presbyterian Church is to be commended for restoring the 1907 Freeman House so that it will continue to grace the Twickenham Historic Preservation District and also serve the functional needs of the Church.

[Photographs by Harvie P. Jones.]

The Vision...

**Proposal to the Session of Central Presbyterian Church
Submitted by Rhonda Mitchell,
Coordinator of Christian Education
September 20, 1995**

Statement of vision: I propose for your consideration the concept of Central Hawthorne Conservatory (tentative name for identification in this proposal) to be founded to the glory of God and in the name of Jesus Christ. This conservatory would be a non-profit Christian outreach in the form of gratis music education serving young people in the community who are financially or environmentally disadvantaged.

Purpose of the Conservatory: Central Hawthorne Conservatory would provide to young people who may not have the parental support or the financial means to do so otherwise the opportunity to pursue the avenue of music education in a Christian environment. Through superior musical instruction young people would be challenged to develop talents in voice, brass, woodwind, strings, or piano in all veins of music that could perhaps provide a means of a university education through music scholarships. Beyond the music, however, would be the development of powerfully positive personal relationships with instructors, and mentors from Central Presbyterian Church (from youth to PrimeTimers), development of self-esteem as well as self-discipline, and spiritual nurturing through exposure to role models exhibiting Christ-like behavior.

*The house is perfectly suited to use for this purpose
...a grand place that, when opened and welcoming,
would make the smallest, poorest, meekest young
person to enter its doors feel worthy and important.*

Operating Criteria for the Conservatory: The Conservatory would be committed to offering superior musical instruction by professional musicians in the community, providing all necessary equipment (i.e. instruments when needed, reeds, music, music stands, and instrument maintenance and repair), while, foremost, offering moral and Christian support in the form of youth or adult mentors free to qualified students.

Funding for the Conservatory: The propelling asset for the establishment of the conservatory through Central Presbyterian Church is most obviously Central's Hawthorne Trust. The concept of the conservatory meets immediately with three of the four necessary requirements for the use of the funds, namely youth, music and outreach. Also, Huntsville is a community eager to contribute to worthy causes which are potentially life-changing for the beneficiaries. Typically we are eager to offer a chance for genuine self sufficiency rather than respond to another plea for a quick fix. Community donations to this effect through the Conservatory would include financial donations, and donations of time, professional music skills, instruments, instrument repair services, and all necessary equipment. In addition, this conservatory would qualify for national grants, and, to dream big, Christian celebrity musicians would potentially provide benefit concerts.

Location of the Central Hawthorne Conservatory: The vision of the conservatory is complete in having it established in the renovated Freeman House. The house is perfectly suited to use for this purpose and would be a grand place that, when opened and welcoming, would make the smallest, poorest, meekest young person to enter its doors feel worthy and important. Community involvement in this restoration to the benefit the community would significantly reduce the cost and time of this endeavor. Skilled laborers would donate time just as we see them donating to homes being built by Habitat.

September 20, 1995

Dear Members of the Session of Central Presbyterian Church,

On the preceding page you will find all the technical information I can provide at this preliminary presentation of my vision of the Central Hawthorne Conservatory...just the facts that I know are foremost in considering a venture such as this. At your leisure, after prayerfully considering the facts, I would like to ask that you allow me the chance in this letter to provide you with a more impassioned plea for your support.

In October of 1994 while director of Faith Presbyterian Preschool, I began to have thoughts that moved me to pray to God that I would have my eyes opened to needs of people in the world and that He would use my true talents and abilities to make a positive difference in providing for these needs. This feeling became overwhelming for me as I tried to sort out what my future might hold in His service. In my small way of trying to find this mission for myself, I thought back to my youth and to the time that a school-owned bassoon was given to me to play in the school band. The moment I took the bassoon my future became secure, although that wasn't evident till years later. My ability to play bassoon provided me with the opportunity to go to college. The full music scholarships I received allowed me the choice of universities in my area to attend (the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Tech), and it was not until later that I realized that college truly might not have been an option for me without those scholarships.

I thought back to my best friend in elementary school who started in the band with me, but whose father unintentionally denied her the moral support and nurture she needed to maintain the commitment it takes to pursue music - or life. Her parents' lack of involvement, and her own feelings of causing problems for them through her needs compelled her to drop out of band two years later, to drop out of a loyal circle of Christian friends in high school, and finally, three years ago drop out of life with a self-inflicted gunshot to her head. She left a three year old son and grieving parents.

I know in my heart that if she had had one adult who cared and showed her the worth of her life in the sight of God that her life could have been different.

I thought back to my Uncle Ross who had, along with my own parents, offered that sort of support to me, giving me the opportunity to challenge myself and delight in celebrating each day of life. Ross gave back to me the moral support and nurture of my potential that he had received from Harry Roberts, a high school teacher in rural Greene County, Tennessee. Financially, Ross's home environment (and that of my father) would appear to many to be bleak despite their love as a family...their father (my grandfather), completed 3rd grade and raised tobacco to support a wife and family of 5 children. Needless to say, a college education was not assured or expected for anyone in the family. But Mr. Roberts knew Ross had the hungry spirit for learning and for doing and excelling, and he found a way for Ross. Ross did the work, he did the studying, but Mr. Roberts provided the incentive for something life changing. Due to the effect of one life on another, Ross, the little skinny kid in overalls walking to school (yes, at least five miles one way!) began university studies at Warren Wilson and is now Dr. Ross Hinkle employed at NASA at Cape Kennedy working in environmental science and studying the effects of the shuttle launches on the environment.

In thinking back on these people, myself included, two who had support and one who didn't, and seeing the course their lives took, and knowing that I had been a beneficiary of God's love in Christian parents and family, I knew I had to be involved in giving back and offering as much chance for self-worth and self-sufficiency to children not so fortunate as to have been born into Christian homes with financial security. The world's greatest tragedies are children lost before they can know the glory of God's love for them and their worth in His love.

But, how now to begin, I wondered. Shortly after my prayer to be given a chance to try to give back some of my good fortune, I realized that if I could identify a talented young person in the

community who was financially or environmentally disadvantaged, but who was talented and eager, I could sponsor that child by providing private bassoon instruction, making sure that necessary equipment was provided, thus possibly providing that child an opportunity to go to college on a scholarship when college might not otherwise be an option. But, I didn't do it. Then a friend and I found we shared a common dream of providing musical instruction and mentorship for disadvantaged children, but how would that ever be coordinated or funded, we wondered. And, again, I didn't do it.

In the meantime, I knew God was preparing me to move on from my position at Faith. I felt like I was on the verge of something very big that I could be a part of that would be potentially life-changing for people I could reach. Despite the fact that I was happy in my job, had no other employment prospects and without doubt needed to remain employed, I felt unexplainably led by God to turn in my resignation at Faith in February to be effective in May, the end of the preschool year. I felt as though God wanted me to free myself up to be prepared to do His work that I had asked Him to allow me to do. Many people at Faith had to hear the same story you are being told now, and I remember commenting to several of them (Rev. Henry Pope and Rev. Frank Broyles included) that I felt as if I was on the verge of something very exciting that could touch many people. It was as though a big white ship was following behind me that I should be able to turn around and see. But, of course, I couldn't see it over my shoulder. What was I being led to?

In late May, the position of Coordinator of Christian Education became available to me. My prayers assured me without doubt that this was where God wanted me to be and I am very excited to be in a position of Christian ministry to young children and their families. Imagine my excitement, the unbelievable joy, the trembling that I felt when, a couple of months into my employment with Central, God puts all the facts together in my head and brings the possibility of founding the Central Hawthorne Conservatory with the assets and people wanting a mission that I see at Central! I feel

this idea is divinely inspired, coming from God, far beyond anything any one person could imagine without His vision. And, I must add that the big white ship in my thoughts surely must have been a big white house!

My background as a musician (8 years as bassoonist with the Huntsville Symphony, a position I currently hold) gives me the contacts with every professional musician in Huntsville. I have given private lessons in many of the schools, my husband is band director at Challenger Middle School and together we know most every band director in North Alabama (and many in Tennessee). I know the music store owners and instrument repair shop owners. I know parents who have forgotten instruments in their closets waiting to be donated to our Conservatory. In the area of benevolent outreach, I currently work at Faith on a volunteer basis taking calls from the community for needs, and will be attending two seminars in the next two weeks dealing with people helping people. Frank Broyles knows most of the benevolent organizations in town which could play a role in identifying potential students or just offering help in general, and I see Rev. Broyles and communicate with him regularly in my volunteer work at Faith. All these qualities combine with my degree and work in education to provide me with many assets that can be instrumental in developing the Conservatory. All this said, I now ask that you pray for what this could mean to you, to Central Presbyterian Church, to our community, and to the children it could touch. Please feel free to speak with me further. Ideally, some of you will feel led to form a committee to examine all aspects of this proposal and to pursue additional questions in hopes of seeing this vision realized.

This would be a precedent-setting venture for our area that could gain national attention. Nothing exists like this in our area. Nashville has a school founded on similar ideals, a community school, but that school is funded in part by the National Endowment for the Arts and must follow strict government guidelines and therefore, of course, cannot operate as a Christian ministry. Everyone with whom I have shared this idea is anxious to see it happen, and is hoping to be involved in service with it. The idea brings a smile of hope and

excitement to people who hear it. Hopefully, you will feel the excitement and share the vision.

Your friend in Christ and partner in His work,

Rhonda Mitchell

Rhonda Mitchell



Hawthorne Conservatory

A Christian Ministry of Central Presbyterian Church

MISSION STATEMENT

“Hawthorne Conservatory—A Christian Ministry of Central Presbyterian Church is established to the Glory of God in the name of Jesus Christ to share the Gospel of Christ with students that they will not be of this world, yet, through also providing music education to develop skills for self-sufficiency, they will be prepared to live in this world.” The scriptural basis is Romans 12:2. *“And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.”* (KJV)





The purpose of the Conservatory is to provide music instruction in a Christian atmosphere to students who demonstrate a keen desire, interest and aptitude in learning music. The Conservatory will be housed primarily in the upstairs portion of the Freeman House, which has six instruction rooms, a restroom, and storage compartments for music and equipment.



Youth Ministry

In keeping with the wishes and intent of the will, the youth ministry program at Central Presbyterian has become an outreach oriented program to the students of Huntsville. It has been my dream and vision to be connected with a church that encourages it's youth minister to reach out



***Cullen Davis, Youth Director
Central Presbyterian Church***

to the teenagers in the community. There are far too many churches that work under the philosophy of 'taking care of our kids.' But, Central is different. This church has caught the vision that students need to hear the message of hope, grace, and forgiveness and we welcome all to be apart of our fellowship.

Central's Youth Ministry is unique in that it has a partnership with Young Life, a high-school based ministry which has been involved in sharing God's love with teenagers in Huntsville for more than 50 years. Alabama's first Young Life Church Partner, I was hired with the mission of beginning a middle school Young Life Program, called Wyldlife, at Huntsville Middle School. Wyldlife began its outreach to the kids of Huntsville Middle in 1996 and currently touches the lives of nearly 100 kids each week through weekly meetings, contact work, and relationship-building.

Another exciting outreach went from dream stage to reality last year as Acoustic Cafe, a coffeehouse for youth, moved into the Freeman House. Coffeehouses were very popular in the 1960s and 1970s, and their forum for ministry has reached a popularity with today's young people. I have a vision of sharing this unique ministry with other churches in the downtown area so that it becomes a community of youth leaders and Christian students reaching out to bring their friends to Christ.



We have an opportunity to combine music, a very popular influence in youth culture, with relationships that last a lifetime and point students to an eternal relationship with their Father in heaven. Acoustic Cafe, Wyldlife, and leaders who are willing to go where kids are bring reality to Mrs. Hawthorne's dream.





A Surprise Gift

God's extra touch of whimsy and good humor, like a pat on the back for a job well-done, came from under the Freeman House into the hands of church custodian Nathan Dean, who had the good sense to turn it over to Carol Ann Samples, who had the good sense to turn it over to Harvie Jones, who had the good sense to recommend a Nashville Conservator who did a beautiful job that will be treated in a subsequent *Quarterly*.

The whole serendipitous story is delightfully told by Bill Easterling in his inimitable way. We conclude this issue by permission of the *Huntsville Times* with a reprint of his December 14, 1996 article. Thank you, Bill. Photographs from a *Times* article, August 3, 1994, "Passing the Torch from Sallie to Alyce to Lorin" by Food Editor Mickey Ellis, have been interspersed.



COURTHOUSE RENDERING RECOVERED UNDER HOME from...

"Saturday with Bill"

by Bill Easterling, *Times*
Columnist

Huntsville Times,
December 14, 1996

The drawing lay face up in dirt beneath the old house and suffered the degradation of time: Mold crept across its facade in dramatic fashion; soot and smudges heavily soiled its once-vivid images; water stains peppered its entire appearance.

Yet the very place where the illustration languished in untended obscurity could be what saved it for posterity.

It's as dark as a dungeon in a crawl space that's part of the Freeman House basement, and being where no sunlight ever touched its face probably saved the picture.

That and an alert Central Presbyterian Church custodian named Nathan Dean [see picture above]. He was there the day workmen hauled the print out from under the house and pitched it on a pile of junk bound for the landfill.

"Don't throw anything away," he said, "until Miz Samples sees it."

Carol Ann Samples, who grew up in Central Presbyterian, had been made chairman of the Freeman House Task Force by the elders and given complete authority in renovating the historical house next door to the church on Lincoln Street.

Custodian Dean thought the unframed drawing hauled from under the house looked important. Samples was positive it was important when she looked at it. As a Huntsville native, she recognized it as the courthouse which stood on the downtown square until being razed more than three decades ago.

“I thought we were going to have to give Carol Ann CPR,” declared Central pastor Rev. Dave Reynolds.

The discovery was taken to architect Harvie Jones, who eventually helped authenticate it wasn’t just another piece of paper but an original rendering of the Madison County Courthouse which stood from 1914 until 1964. It was drawn in 1913 by Nashville architect C. K. Colley, who had apparently been commissioned for the job. That means it could have possibly lain beneath the Freeman house for 83 years.

Church history

If Central Presbyterian Church—founded in 1810 and holding services in its current sanctuary on the corner of Randolph Avenue and Lincoln Street since 1899—hadn’t purchased the Freeman House for a music conservatory and other church and civic endeavors, the valuable drawing might have languished in its black prison until finally rotting away.

How it came to be where it was found is a mystery that may never be solved. However, one thing’s pretty certain: If Clarence Colley was in town to gain approval for his rendering, it’s a good bet he stayed at Miss Sallie Freeman’s boarding house on Lincoln Street.

Standing on land originally granted to LeRoy Pope in 1815, the house was built in 1906 and purchased in 1922 for \$7,500 by Tom Freeman and his wife, Sarah Mason Freeman.

While they were “Mister Tom” and “Miss Sallie” to the public, family members called them “Papa” and “Nana.”



The late Sarah Mason Freeman, who passed on her love of cooking to her granddaughter, Alyce Palmerlee Smith.

As “Miss Sallie,” Mrs. Freeman ran the city’s foremost boarding house. When Redstone Arsenal was being planned and built, most of the Army generals and other dignitaries sent here to oversee the project slept and ate at the Freeman House until an Officers’ Club was finished.

Tom’s and Sallie’s children were Harry Mason Freeman, Florence Mai Freeman Palmerlee, Alice Freeman, and Louise Freeman Chunn. Tom Freeman died in the 1950’s and Sallie Freeman died in the house at the age of 92. Alice Freeman, who never married and had been a

teacher at West Clinton Elementary School, ran a first-grade type of class called “Beginners School” in the dining room of the house after her mother quit taking in boarders.

Central bought the property from the heirs in 1991 after Alice’s death.

The old house holds many memories for Alyce Palmerlee Smith and Sally Ann Culver, two of Miss Sallie’s granddaughters.

It was a “wonderful house to have grown up in,” said Mrs. Culver, who recalled a house filled with “cotton boys, generals, school children and lots and lots of Huntsville people looking for a home-cooked meal and lots of fellowship.”

Cotton boys

The “cotton boys” were brokers who stayed out back in a small house while in town trying to sell cotton crops to buyers downtown on Cotton Row. “Papa” had a fondness for sitting up late at night playing cards with the boys, which didn’t set well with “Nana.” She endured, however, and made sure the cotton boys and other boarders always started the day with plenty of her homemade biscuits.

Both Smith and Culver recalled a small upstairs fire which didn’t result in much damage. After firemen put the blaze out, Nana made them sit on the front porch to rest while she served cake and coffee. Smith said her grandmother shopped at the A&P grocery store on the corner of Eustis Avenue and Green Street every morning, and when the stock boys carried her supplies home, she always served them a piece of cake.

And all the while, with life being lived loud and long at 205 Lincoln Street, C. K. Colley’s historic drawing gathered mold and mildew in the darkest corner of the Freeman House basement.

Ironically, after being found, it returned to Nashville, the architect’s home, where Christine Young, a conservator of paper and photographs, worked a minor miracle in restoring it. “It was in pretty bad shape,” said Young, “but it was pretty clear to me it was a vintage piece.” She began a tricky renewal process in November and completed it in early December. Feeling the drawing would benefit from greater rigidity, she attached it to a new 4-ply buffered ragboard.

Now that the aged drawing has been resurrected and restored, the church plans to share it with the public. The original will be displayed in the Freeman House at some point in the future, and 14-by-20-inches prints of this historical find will be sold for \$50 each beginning in about 30 days. Orders can be placed now by calling either 532-1249 or 534-8446.

Samples said all proceeds from the sale of prints will be used for the Hawthorne Conservatory of Music.

Madison County's third courthouse was a building whose demise was roundly criticized by many in the historical community. When it was torn down to make room for the courthouse which sits on the square today, locals used its bricks to build patios, planters and barbecue pits at their homes. Only the old bell, made in 1849, was preserved, and although it remains out of sight on top of the 11th floor mechanical, it still tolls its timely hourly message.

The bricks in various yards, the bell—and now the drawing. These are all that remain of the noble rendering C. K. Colley brought to Huntsville all those years ago. How his drawing ended up in the damp darkness beneath the Freeman House can only be a source of speculation, for the architect died of heart failure at age 87 in 1956.

Postscript: Moved by his experience as “watchdog” for Carol Ann Samples on the Freeman House restoration project, Nathan Dean recently stopped at another local Presbyterian church being renovated and collected several items from a pile of junk headed for the landfill. He brought them to Samples and asked, “Are these valuable?” — History has a way of infecting most everyone it touches.



Alyce Smith and her granddaughter, Lorin Young, at the biscuit block inherited from Alyce's grandmother Sallie Freeman. The sifter, rolling pin and a biscuit cutter that belonged to Sallie were discovered in the bottom of the biscuit block when it was moved to Mrs. Smith's home.

Nana's Pound Cake

- 1 pound (4 sticks) unsalted butter, softened
- 12 large eggs
- 1 16-oz. box confectioner's sugar, sifted
- 1 quart all-purpose flour (Note: Just as it sounds—measure flour to fill a quart jar.)
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1/4 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
- 12 rose geranium leaves, stems removed (optional)

Gradually add sifted sugar to butter; cream until light and fluffy. Add vanilla, almond extract and lemon juice. Sift flour and add to creamed mixture. Beat until smooth. Add eggs, one at a time, beating for 1 minute after each addition. Scrape down sides and bottom of bowl. The batter should be a light lemon color.

Grease and very lightly flour a tube pan. If desired, place geranium leaves face down on bottom of pan, tearing some leaves apart to fill completely. Pour batter on top of leaves.

Bake for 1 hour in a preheated oven at 350°. When the cake settles and pulls away slightly from the sides of the pan, it is done.

Remove from oven and cool in the pan for 10 minutes, then invert carefully onto a serving plate. Remove geranium leaves. Garnish with additional geranium flowers and leaves.

Freeman House



Before



Freeman House



After





Albert Lane's Advice to Young Artists

- "The artist must practice constantly, and young people must learn this. They must learn self-criticism, whether they are painters, instrumentalists, or whatever. And they must develop discipline.
- "You've got to believe in yourself and know where you're going. You need guidance.
- "A person must know the correct mechanics of his art and learn from the great art of the past. Before he become an artist, he must become a good craftsman.
- "Even when technical mastery has been achieved, the artist cannot relent in his pursuit of excellence...study, practice and strict discipline must be maintained if the artist or singer is to maintain his standards." (*Huntsville Times*, Aug. 1981.)





Madison County Courthouse 1914-1964
Architectural Rendering 1913
by: C.K. COLLEY

Reproduction of the Original Architect's rendering.

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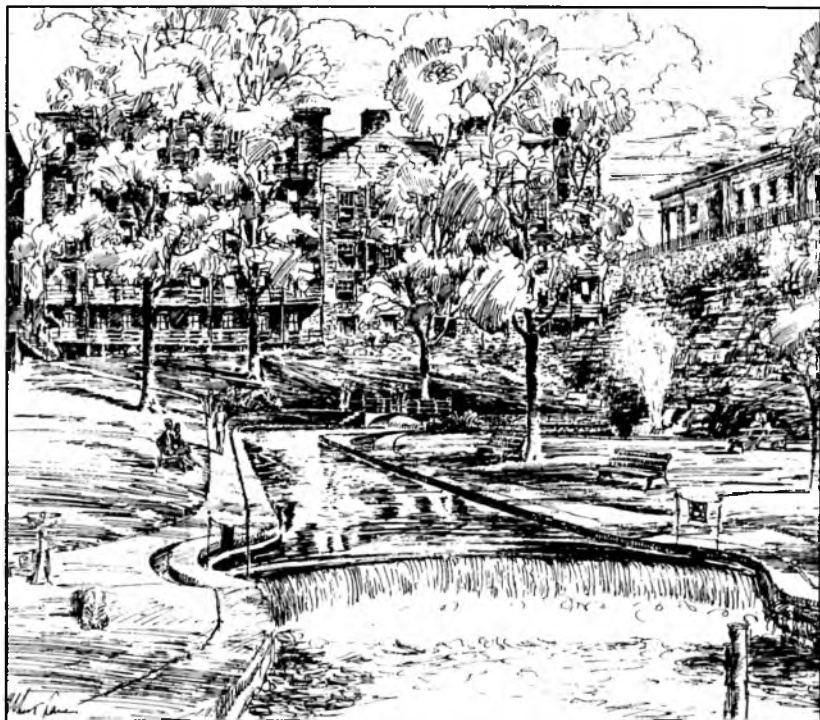
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The HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE FOUNDATION was established in 1974 to encourage the preservation of historically or architecturally significant sites and structures throughout Huntsville and Madison County and to increase public awareness of their value to the community. The FOUNDATION is the only organization in Huntsville concerned exclusively with architectural preservation and history. Membership is open to interested and concerned citizens from across north Alabama and beyond.



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