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# 412 Newman Avenue: Continuing Traditions

*Cynthia Massey Parsons*

What building block and mortar turn a house into a home? What architect's tool or ingredient of the artisan's trade joins elements to transform structure into residence? The answer can only be Love... Love of the land, architecture, materials, building... people. Love unifies all in expression.

One such transformer of elements was "Ocie" Cloud—a Huntsville builder who loved his work and the materials he used. It is thought he built the home of Oliver and Etoile Allred in 1948. Messrs. Allred and Cloud probably drafted the quiet symmetry of 412 Newman Avenue.

Oliver and Etoile are remembered for goodness and charity—a profile

transferred to second owners, Lorene and Wendal Payne. The home has continually served as a place of gathering. This, the third owners, Cynthia Massey and Elbert Parsons, Jr. learned firsthand. Ollie Allred's basketball goal still stands as sentinel and witness of countless good times of a parade of friends and siblings: Julia Ann and Jane; Dave, Rene, and Cindy Payne; and Elbert and Sarah Parsons.



*Sketch of 412 Newman—Sketches and watercolors of the area are favorites of the owner and artist, Cynthia Parsons.*

The home is set amid now stately trees. A curving herringbone-patterned brick walk laid lovingly by father and son Allred beckons one to the Federalesque structure. Beaded board shutters add to the façade's grace. Dentil molding distinguishes the cornice. An arch atop columns, typifying Doric simplicity, protects the portico. Beveled-glass sidelights designed by owner Cynthia Parsons illumine the home's foyer.

Room layout flows in a circle over hardwood floors. A gracious living room with fireplace is eastward. It opens into an intimate dining room with double windows for view and light. The long kitchen features ample room to enjoy light repast and watch squirrels scamper along leafy branches. A guest bath is followed by the study with wall-high bookcases, shelves lovingly made by Wendal Payne, and painted marble crown molding.



*412 Newman Avenue—The colonial revival facade of the symmetrical house includes wide plank siding, dentil molding under the eaves, a Federal style entry door with fan and sidelights as well as an arched and stepped bracket porch resting on simple Doric columns. The curved herringbone walkway in brick echoes the brick of the chimney. Photo by Cynthia Parsons.*

Upstairs there is a landing perfect for afternoon reading. The master bedroom and bath are the size of the living room below. Two more bedrooms and a hall bath complete the floor plan. Laundry, super-storage, and areas supporting residents' hobbies are in the home's full basement.

The patio greenhouse is built of industrial windows—most likely from Lincoln Mills. It has indulged numerous green thumbs. Oliver Allred grew tomato vines over 18' high, producing fruit weighing 2 to 3 pounds. The greenhouse serves the current resident as a studio for painting watercolors.

Of special garden note is a Shittah tree—known to grow only in the Holy Land and Monte Sano Mountain. The Arc of the Covenant is thought to have been constructed of shittum wood. Near the tree, a dowser pronounced there to be underground water. Most astounding is the presence of an energy vortex originating near the Shittah's base.

The energy, force, or emotion that binds these elements and people, these rooms and these family traditions does so quietly over time. The home and the street, the residents and the neighbors, the past and present gently entwine.

*Cynthia Massey Parsons is an artist who works and lives at 412 Newman. She cherishes the memories of the Allred and Payne families and friends who shared in the compilation of this article.*