

Montevallo *Historical* Times

Vol. 7 No. 3

Newsletter of the Montevallo Historical Society

Summer 2023

MHS Board Welcomes Three New Directors



Eleven directors of the Montevallo Historical Society were present for the board's quarterly meeting at Parnell Library on July 6, 2023. (Left to right) Judy Duda, Clay Nordan, Martha Eisenberg, Marilyn Donoho, John McCulley, Sherry Vallides, Marty Everse, Billy Lee, Bill Nathews, Melinda Nix, Susan Godwin. Our twelfth director, Anne Thomas, was not able to attend.

To open the July board of directors meeting of the Montevallo Historical Society, president John McCulley recognized and welcomed three new directors attending their first meeting since being elected at the last meeting in May.

The new directors are Judy Lien Duda, Martha Ann Eisenberg, and Bill Nathews. Their election became necessary following the resignations of founding directors, Bill and Mae Glosson, and Janice Seaman.

Judy grew up in Montevallo and is descended from the Chism family.

Martha is currently a Montevallo city councilwoman who raises horses on her beautiful farm near Moore's Crossroads north of town.

Bill also is a Montevallo native with strong ties to the city through his father and grandfather, who were respected local merchants.

The resignations referred to above also resulted in the need to elect a new Secretary and Treasurer for MHS.

Former MHS president, Susan Godwin, had been serving as interim Secretary and recently informed

John McCulley that she would like to officially assume the duties of this office on a permanent basis.

Vice-president Clay Nordan has taken on the duties of Treasurer on an interim basis in recent months and had indicated to John that he would be happy to serve the society as Vice-president / Treasurer.

John placed the election of Secretary and Treasurer on the agenda for the July board meeting, and both Susan and Clay were elected unanimously. They assumed the duties of their offices immediately.

Next MHS General Membership Meeting

Sunday July 30, 2023 • Parnell Library • 2:00 pm

Program Topic: Threats Facing Montevallo's Ebenezer Swamp Ecological Preserve

Speaker: Dr. Susan Caplow University of Montevallo Associate Professor of Environmental Studies.

President's Letter

Dear Friends:

Suddenly, 2023 is half over. If you are anything like me, the passage of time as I get older appears to quicken with its own passing.

It seems like just the other day when one of my first chores after being named president of MHS was to figure out a schedule for the year's board and general membership meetings. Here we are in July having completed our third quarterly board meeting of the year and anticipating our third general membership meeting at the end of the month.

I would like to thank UM professor Catherine Walsh for the interesting presentation she made on local artist Virginia Barnes at our January meeting.

I'd also like to thank Montevallo native son, John Sledge, for driving from his home in Fairhope in April to speak to our assembled members about the books he has written recently as well as on a variety of topics inspired by questions from the audience.

For those of you who may have missed either or both of these programs, there are videos of both available at the MHS website, www.historicmontevallo.org by simply clicking on "Program Videos".

And in that same vein, I was happy to learn that the program set for our general meeting on July 30 promises to be equally as eclectic and informative as these were.

Dr. Susan Caplow, who is program coordinator for Environmental Studies within the Social Sciences department at UM will be our speaker. She and her colleagues have been tasked by the university's administration with the supervision and management of the *Ebenezer Swamp Ecological Preserve*, which the university owns and uses as an educational and environmental research facility.

Her topic will be a report on threats facing the survival of this unique miracle of nature that has for centuries been a fundamental component in the ecosystem that shapes the health and viability of Spring Creek, Shoal Creek, and the greater Cahaba River watershed.

I would like to thank and welcome the three new MHS board members, Judy Lien Duda, Martha Eisenberg, and Bill Nathews who were elected at a special meeting held in May.

I would also like to thank founding director Janice Seaman who stepped down as a director and MHS Treasurer in April for the role she played with the other founders in getting this organization off the ground in its infancy. She contributed much to the growth and success of this impressive collection of people from all walks of life who have an abiding love and appreciation for the town of Montevallo and all that it has meant to the state of Alabama.

Once again, our newsletter editor, Clay Nordan, has come up with another interesting issue of the *Montevallo Historical Times*. Because 2023 is the 200th anniversary of the completion of the historic King House on the University of Montevallo campus (1823) and at the same time, this year is the 50th anniversary of the year (1973) when the house was restored to its present condition, he thought both anniversaries should be observed in this issue. Beginning on page 4, there are eight pages devoted to the King House, certainly one of the oldest and most important buildings that remain from Montevallo's earliest days.

Clay has also included four pages devoted to a collection of photographs that were made by Dr. Mike Mahan during the two years that work to restore the King House was going on. Special thanks to MHS director Marty Everse for locating and digitizing for us this important visual record.

To conclude, I would like to thank Mitt Schroeder and Central State Bank for recently renewing their Kroell Business Level MHS membership. These memberships are available to businesses for \$250 per year and include a business card size ad in each issue of the *Montevallo Historical Times*.

All my best,



Officers

John E. McCulley
President

Clay Nordan
Vice-President / Treasurer

Susan Godwin
Secretary



Montevallo
Historical Society

Opening the Portals of Our Heritage

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Directors

Marilynn Donoho
Judy Lien Duda
Martha Eisenberg
Marty Everse
Billy Mack Lee
Bill Nathews
Melinda Nix
Anne Thomas
Sherry L. Vallides

DISTINGUISHED FOUNDING DIRECTORS: Dr. S.M. Mahan, Jr. (1934–2018) • Dr. James S. Day • Kenneth Dukes • Mae Glosson • William Glosson
Norman McMillan • Debbie Pendleton • Janice Seaman

Montevallo Historical Society

Roster of Active Members – July 2023

KROELL BUSINESS MEMBERSHIPS (\$250)

C&V Painting, Inc.
Sherry Vallides
Central State Bank
Mitt Schroeder
Fox & Pheasant B&B Inn
Shoal Creek Realty
Janice Seaman
JP Building Co.
Jason Picklesimer
Smitherman's Pharmacy
Sammy Shunnarah



JESSE WILSON SOCIETY (\$250)

Bill Denson
Lois Doyle
Robert Doyle
Helon Everse
Marty Everse
Catherine Griffin
Clay Nordan
Adelle Simpson



PATRON LEVEL (\$100)

Richard Anderson
Sharon Anderson
David Bennett
Patricia Bennett
Charlie Binion
Laurie Binion
Beth Jeter Bishop
Linda Cicero
John Cox
Patty DeBardleben
Marilynn Donoho
Timothy Dollins
Sara Dollins
Paul Doran
Judy Lien Duda
Mike Galloway
Yvonne Kroell Graham
Hud Heaton
Miki Mahan Heaton
Cecily Orr Hullett
Margie Scott Jones
Bill Keller
Jeanetta Keller

Missy Ketchum
Charles Kaiden Kroell
Marijean Kroell
Carol Lightfoot
Kirk Lightfoot
Bob Lightfoot
Gene Lightfoot
Guy Milford
Jack Moran
Lynn Rotenberry Moran
Barbara Morris Nabors
Melinda Nix
Rusty Nix
Mildred Bolton Orr
Sara Pankaskie
Emily Pendleton
Debbie Pendleton
Douglas Rodgers
Libby Rodgers
Sally Sears
John W. Stewart, Jr.
Kathy Stewart
Anne Thomas
David Thomas
Daniel Thornton
Barbara Vance
Claire Vance
Sid Vance
Barry Woodham
Dee Woodham
Peggy Davis Woods



SINGLE & FAMILY LEVEL (\$25 OR \$40)

Delores Adkins
Ellen Andrews
Mary Arledge
Steve Arledge
Phyllis Bailey
Veronica Bailey
Cathy Barber
Brenda Bates
Rebecca Beaty
Wayne Beaty
Gary Bell
Lee Binion
Cheryl McClure Blackmon
Becky Holcombe Bolton
Jim Brown
Jane Watson Bullock

Janet Rotenberry Burnett
Tad Cairns
Glenda Terrell-Cairns
Pam Campbell
Pat Clark
Jennifer Combs
Marshel Roy Cunningham
Ed Czeskleba
Karen Czeskleba
James Day
Rene Day
Judy Robinson Feagin
Barclay Fisher
Priscilla Fisher
Bryan Fowler
Nancy Fowler
Bruce Fraser
Danny Gamble
Mae Glosson
William Glosson
Ann Nathews Griffin
Hershel Hale
Margie Hardin
Carey Heatherly
Jim Hermezc
Barry Hocutt
Cindy Howard
Clark Hultquist
Ben Ingram
Debbie Ingram
Kitty Keener
Karen Kelly
Peggy Hurt Kent
John Kirby
Carolyn Kirby
Jimmy Lawley
Linda Lawley
Billy Lee
Brenda Lewis
Luci Lovelady
Elizabeth Chism Ludwig
Michael E. Malone
Peggy Marshall
Scott Martin
Bruce McClanahan
Jane McClanahan
John McCulley
James McDonald
H.G. McGaughy
Jerry McGaughy

Larry McGaughy
Nancy McGaughy
Susie McGaughy
Jan McKinnon
John McKinnon
Joan McMillan
Norman McMillan
Jeannie Meigs
Laurie Middaugh
Barb Milstead
Herb Milstead
David T. Morgan
Judy Morgan
Bill Muehlbauer
Courtney Parker Murphy
Michelle Pawlik
Joan Pickett
Mike Pickett
Bill Plott
Atticus Plott
Randie Sears Rosenberg
Molly Sears Rosenberg
Andrew J. Rosenberg
Mitt Schroeder
Steve Sears
Alma Sears
Spenser Sears
Nancy Simmer
Don Simmer
John Simmer
Sandra S. Small
Luke Smith
Eddie Spears
Maureen Spears
Plesia Spears
John Starks
Jackie Starks
Jonne C. Thornton
Becky B. Thornton
Carolyn Frost Turnbull
Scott Turnbull
Marilee Turnbull
Hubert Van Tuyll
Susan Wilder-White
Bill White
Nancy Wilstach
Bobby Wyatt
Jan Wyatt
Julia Youngblood
Gary Youngblood

The King House

1823 – 2023 at 200

King House, erected in 1823, originally was the plantation home of Edmund King, a Virginian who came to Alabama by way of Georgia about 1817. Built of brick made from local clay and erected by Mr. King's own men, it was the most elegant home in Central Alabama and the first house in the area to have imported glass windows.

After Mr. King died (1863) and his children had scattered, the property passed into other hands. In 1908, the Alabama Girls Technical Institute (the forerunner of the University of Montevallo) purchased the house and 43.40 acres of land from Mrs. Frank Nabors for \$8,502.

The house has been called by various names: "The Mansion," "Kingswood," "Nabors Hall," and "King House." It has been a classroom building and office building, the infirmary, home economics "practice home," a summer home for men students, and just before renovation, the home of Financial Aid to Students.

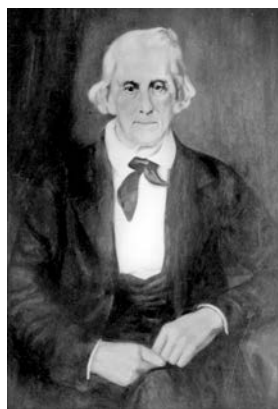
Mrs. Golda Johnson, wife of former UM President Kermit Johnson, is chiefly responsible for the restoration to its present beauty. With the eventual backing of the Board of Trustees and a \$40,000 grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the exterior was restored to its original appearance and the interior was renovated, using the



Alabama Girls Technical Institute students gather on the front porch of King House in 1908, the year the school purchased the house and 43 acres of surrounding land from the Nabors family.

same staircase, much of the original flooring and hardware, and some window glass. The architect for the renovation was Gene Jones of Evan Terry, Architects. Nicholas Holmes of Mobile was consultant and Lewis Mayson, supervisor of the actual work. Mr. Mayson says it is the best example of Federal Architecture in its part of Alabama.

Edmund King (1782-1863) was a Virginian who, after a sojourn in Georgia, came to Alabama in 1817. He was attracted to the area around Wilson's Hill (the first name for Montevallo) by the good soil, plentiful timber, ample water supply from several good springs, proximity to two navigable rivers (Coosa and Cahaba) and the beauty of its hills. In moving his family to their new home, he had the guidance and protection of William Weatherford (Red Eagle), an Indian chief who escorted the caravan through the Creek Nation but who refused to go further. No one seems to know how or when he and King became friends.



Mr. King acquired large tracts of land and became a successful planter. In addition, he was a merchant and a promoter of the railroad that came from Selma to Montevallo in 1853.

He became interested in iron manufacturing and after buying the furnace that Horace Ware had developed, he made hollowware which he sold to neighbors and to folks down the Coosa River. He was the leading citizen of the community and his home the social center.

Education was one of his chief concerns. He gave generously to Howard College (Samford University) and did what he could to build up the library there. Often he offered challenge gifts, hoping others would match them. The lot on which Reynolds Hall now stands he gave for the site of "The Academy" in 1851.

He was a devout Baptist. In addition to supporting Howard College, a Baptist institution, and his own local church, he frequently wrote articles for The Alabama Baptist on issues which he promoted or denounced.



The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) sent a photographer to Montevallo to evaluate and make photographs of the 111 year old building as it looked in 1934. The photo clearly shows how the stucco, applied following construction to protect the original brick from deterioration, was scored to create the illusion that the house had a veneer of large blocks of stone.

That he died on June 28, 1863 is an established fact, but the cause of his death is in dispute. The Southwest Baptist in a lengthy obituary says that after two years of declining health, he died of digestive troubles. Another account credits a falling limb from a tree in his orchard for killing him instantly! However he died, he is buried in the King family cemetery only a few yards from where he lived.



(Left) A mantelpiece in King House documented by the HABS photography in 1934. (Above) This HABS photo shows a rear view of the King House and how at some point in its life the original detached kitchen building had been taken down and replaced by attached kitchen and porch additions.

Footsteps and time bore heavily upon the old mansion house and the toll became progressively worse. As enrollment at the college increased, more classroom space was needed and partitions had been added to meet this need. Blackboards and other equipment had been installed. In addition to classrooms, the old building served at different times as an infirmary and home management house for the Home Economics Department. The old plastered walls had been patched and repatched. Fireplaces had been closed and other changes made. Hundreds of students passed through the building unaware of the illustrious family who once resided there. The joys of birth and sadness of death which had occurred within these walls were known by few who sat in these classrooms and yet, it is likely that many sensed a dignity and character reminiscent of the era in which it had its beginning.

There had been some discussion in the past as to the old building's future – if indeed it should have one at all. Its life had been extended once, if not more times, and in 1932 the Alabama Writer's Conclave held a ceremony on campus and placed a handsome bronze tablet on the old house which points out its uniqueness as an historical landmark. This tablet was presented by the descendants of the King family and was unveiled by two young ladies, Helen Rosa Coleman (Mrs. Jack Monaghan of Birmingham) and Frank Ragan King (Mrs. Burton Curry of Tuscaloosa).

As new buildings were erected on campus, classes were moved from the old house and eventually the only service left was the financial aid office for student services.

Came the tenure of the tenth president of this University. It was soon evident that a decision had to be made concerning the old homestead. Tear it down or let it die a slow death – or patch it again for some unknown, as yet, need?

The writer, being interested in history, began asking questions, getting answers, and delving into records which led to an intense desire to restore the old homestead so that it could retain its rightful place in history. Desire alone, of course, was not enough. Financial aid was to be the big



UM president Kermit Johnson and his wife Golda look over plans for the authentic restoration of the 1823 King House in 1973.

problem. The idea was tossed out and some interest was shown but it was somewhat casual and little action resulted.

More and more people liked the idea but volunteers to help were practically nil. An ally was found in the president's secretary, Joan Gordon, and with two women prodding, the project was put on the agenda of the board meeting.

Understandably the board had to justify the use before appropriating money for a project of that magnitude but a farsighted and creative-minded board did agree to provide funds, to at least get the project underway. It is also to

their credit that the best available help was secured in order that the restoration be as authentic as possible.

Gene Jones, of the Evan Terry firm in Birmingham was selected as the architect, with Nicholas Holmes of Mobile as the consultant. Mr. Holmes had had much experience in restoring old buildings and it was at his suggestion that a builder with similar experiences be secured. Mr. Lewis Mayson of Mobile was hired and soon he and his crew of experienced carpenters began the job of dismantling the old building. Everything original that could be saved was labeled and put aside. Some of the original hardware was still intact upstairs. Other pieces were reproduced for use downstairs. Some of the original window panes were and are still in use. Mantels needed surprisingly little repair and the square nails on the stairway landing are still visible. The old hand-made brick on the outside would not stand removing so they were left in place and were covered by antique brick reproduced near Williamsburg, Virginia to resemble the original as near as possible.

Application was made – and accepted – for listing in the National Register of Historic Places which helped to make the project eligible for partial funding by HUD (Department of Housing and Urban Development). Letting no opportunity pass, the plea was carried to politicians and individuals alike who could lend a helping hand. A reward came in a grant from HUD of \$40,000. An opportunity to





When the King House restoration work was completed in 1973-1974, people familiar with it were shocked upon seeing it for the first time because its original Federal style was so different and unexpected from the neo-Victorian appearance it had exhibited for so long.

participate in the project was granted the Alumni membership which resulted in some donations. Each donor's name was inscribed on a plaque which hangs on the wall in King House (this will be an ongoing process). At a total restoration cost of one hundred thousand dollars, it is obvious the need of financial help continues.

Interest increased daily on the project after it got underway. Mr. Mayson was asked to speak to many groups on his findings and evaluation of the old home. Among other things, he found the front and rear rafters of different size. These rafters had been laboriously pitsawed, squared with a broadax, trued with an adz and then sawed with a crosscut saw which involved two men – one standing in a pit and the other on a log or rafter. Apparently no carpenter's level had been used because the southeast corner of the building was six inches higher than the northeast corner. Mayson concluded that the same journeyman made all the doors, mantels, stairs and windowsills with his own particular ruler because they were all off by the same fraction of an inch. It was thought, too, that the original builder had encountered difficulty with the mud bricks crumbling as the stucco removed was found to have cow hair added which made for more strength and durability.

After the building was dismantled and materials evaluated, rebuilding began. Although the underpinnings and joists had endured the years surprisingly well, substantial reinforcement was needed and added. The front porch was left off since there was evidence of it being added after the original house was built. Although no information was available on the kitchen, markings were found to indicate that it was apart from the "big" house. Thus, it was erected on the spot and connected to the main house by a covered walkway. With the completion of the physical structure the house became once again, according to Mr. Holmes, likely the only true Federal period style house in the area.

Furnishing the house was no small part of the project. With no information available as to actual furnishings, reliance had to be placed on what might have been. Many hours were spent in researching the Federal period as to the furniture, colors, types of material, carpets, lighting, etc., and only such items which might have been used at that period have been included. Mr. King was a wealthy man and the home was referred to as the mansion house which led the writer to assume that the furnishings were more than ordinary. Too, information found in files at the Archives Building in Montgomery mentioned lovely pieces of furniture in descendants' possession in New Orleans which came from the old homestead in Montevallo.

It should be noted here, however, that exceptions had to be made in restoration if the house were to be used for something other than viewing. As a practical move, it was decided by the administration and Board of Trustees to use it as an official guest house of the University as well as for other special events on campus. Because of this, central heating and cooling, electrical lighting, bathroom and kitchen facilities were added with the idea of making them as inconspicuous as possible.

And so the "new" old house continues to live and serve. It still receives guests graciously, much as did the family of yore. It is hoped by all who participated in this project that during the next hundred years many more people will be touched by the tradition, love and good will that was so abundantly exhibited in the hearts and home of the illustrious King family of long ago.

Excerpted from *The Lives and Times of Kingswood in Alabama 1817 – 1890* (pages 93-96) written by Golda W. Johnson, wife of then serving president Kermit A. Johnson. Published in 1976 by the University of Montevallo.

In 1973, fifty years ago, the 150 year old King House on the University of Montevallo campus underwent a complete restoration that returned the historic Federal period home of Edmund King to a condition much closer to what it had been upon its completion in 1823.



Once the restoration work on the house had begun, local historian and one of the founding directors of the Montevallo Historical Society, Dr. Mike Mahan, visited the house regularly with his camera and made nearly 100 color slides of the dismantling and restoration work as it progressed for nearly two years.

Following Mike's death in 2018, his good friend and fellow MHS director, Marty Everse, unearthed his King House slides from among thousands of others, and preserved them through scanning as high quality digital color photo TIFF files.

It seems only appropriate that here in 2023, at this 50th anniversary of the completion of the King House restoration, that we are able, for the first time, to publish and share some examples of Mike's unique photographic chronicle of it all.

A slide show of Mike Mahan's King House restoration photos can be viewed at www.historicmontevallo.org.



Hand hewn timbers had been used as original floor joists. They were discovered still intact and usable in the restoration.



This photo shows how the original poorly fired brick had been protected by an application of stucco early in the life of the house.



A new border of regular and "bullnose" brick gave the foundation of the King House an attractive and authentic masonry accent.



Specially trained and skilled brick masons were a must for this job.



A layer of new brick was laid over the old stucco and original brick veneer.



The original profile of the house emerges after removal of the addition.



Rough hewn 1820s-era rafters were also discovered as the house was carefully taken apart during the initial stages of the restoration process.



A revealing example of the homemade bricks used in the construction of King House along with the crude patterns and materials employed in laying them.



This mantelpiece was original to the house. It was sent away to be stripped and returned for reinstallation.



The original detached kitchen was recreated and connected to the house by a covered walkway.



Floor joists exposed and ready to support the new floor.



The rudimentary woodworking tools used to shape and prepare this timber for use can be discerned from the variety of markings they left in the wood.



An experienced historic preservation crew brought with it the craftsmanship needed for good results.



Employing Federal period brick patterns lent a sense of authenticity to the restoration



The original staircase was repaired, reinforced, and refinished for an attractive and safe appearance



Veterans Wreaths will be laid at Montevallo City Cemetery on Dec. 16, 2023 at 12:00 noon.

.....
Wreaths may be purchased for \$17 each and you can volunteer to help at

www.historicmontevallo.org

.....
Help us reach this year's goal of

375

Wreaths

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