MONTEVALLO
Main Street
Memories

Montevallo First Baptist Church Part 2 – the Reid House Fire

A Personal Account by Clay Nordan
Montevallo Historical Society

I graduated from Auburn in the spring of 1971 and returned to Montevallo where I spent the rest of that year and the first half of 1972 working in my uncle Pat Wyatt's print shop, Times Printing Co. During that time-frame, a good friend who had been serving in the U.S. Army in Viet Nam returned home with a high-quality Canon 35 mm film camera that I had asked him to purchase for me with his military discount. I began to familiarize myself with the camera and shot a number of black & white photos of various subjects all over town. One of them happened to be a photo of the old Dr. John Inzer Reid house that was across the street from the Food Center grocery store.

One workday afternoon, the town fire sirens went off after someone reported that the Reid house was ablaze. When I got this news, I dashed to my apartment to get my camera and headed back to town to see if I could make a photographic record of what I knew would surely be a memorable fire event for Montevallo. At the same time, my father, Clayton O. Nordan, got word of the fire from my mother, who was at work nearby, and headed to town with his home movie camera. Together we were able to get a fairly complete visual account of what went on that day as the Montevallo Fire Department, with the able assistance of the volunteers from Shelco Fire and Rescue and the Calera Volunteer Fire Department brought the fire under control and protected the adjacent Montevallo First Baptist Church from any significant damage.

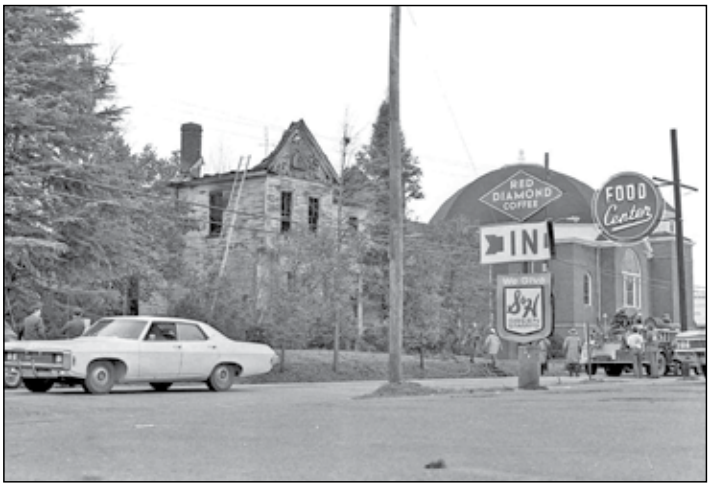
The two structures were extremely close together, separated only by a narrow alley-way. As I have speculated about why the house and church were literally 'cheek by jowl,' I concluded that it may be that the house was built before the church building and when the sanctuary section of the church was added in 1910, every square inch of available real estate was employed for the church footprint.

In the turn of the century era when the Reid house was constructed, it was just one of several large two-story houses along this section on both sides of Middle Street. In those days, homeowners, even those living downtown, kept livestock in their backyards. It's very likely that the Reid house was positioned at the extreme corner of their lot because the rest of the lot (church parking today) was used as late as the 1950's for chicken houses and a large chicken yard.

To see a home-movie made while flames were leaping through the roof, visit www.historicmontevallo.org

Dr. John I. Reid house, behind Montevallo First Baptist as it looked BEFORE the fire in 1972.

MFD firefighters, with help from the Shelco Fire and Rescue squad, dump a massive amount of water on the roof to bring the blaze under control.



Dr. John. I. Reid house, behind Montevallo First Baptist as it looked AFTER the fire in 1972.

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MONTEVALLO MAIN STREET MEMORIES is adapted from the series, THROWBACK THURSDAY, a **Montevallo Historical Society** and **Montevallo Main Street** partnership started in 2018. Each installment revisits commercial and residential life on Main Street and in the downtown area in the early to mid-twentieth century. The series remains available online and may be viewed at **www.historicmontevallo.org** under "Local History".