

William Koger Ist
 Lauderdale Co. ± 15 m. west of Florence, AL.
 Smithsonia - Rhodesville Rd.

Born Va. 1792, Married Martha Westmoreland
 Ist date unknown, probably by 1820
 Photos Dec. 16, 1991 Harris P. Jones, FPA

KOGER IST
 (EAST W. OF
 FLORENCE)

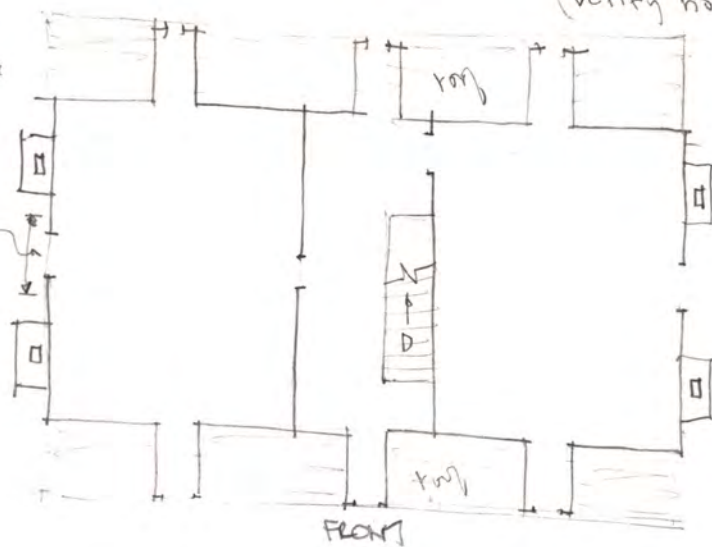
Occasion of visit was to look at house

w/ prospective buyer,
 Ms. Nancy O'Neil of Florence
 (from owner the
 Florence Hist. Soc.)

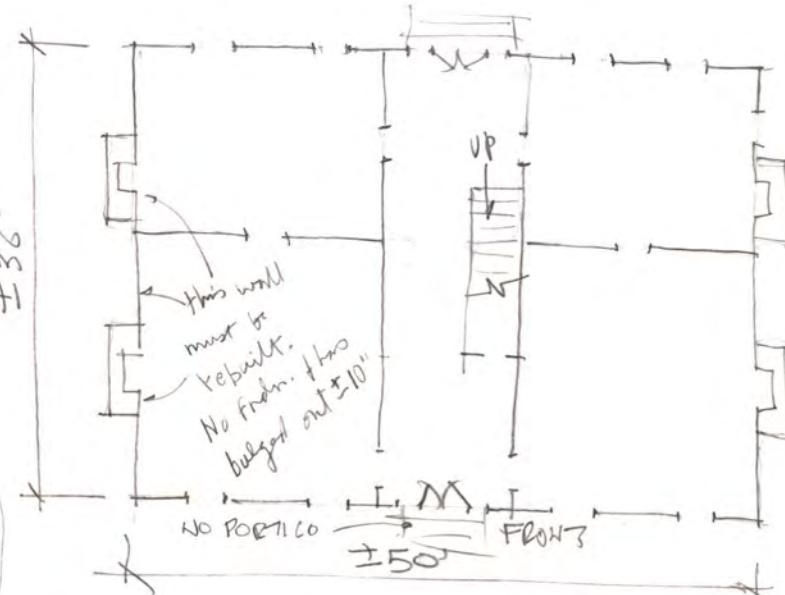
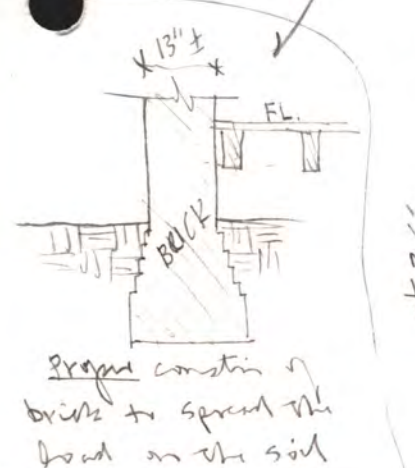
(Verify no. of dormers)

enlarged
 in Vic. period

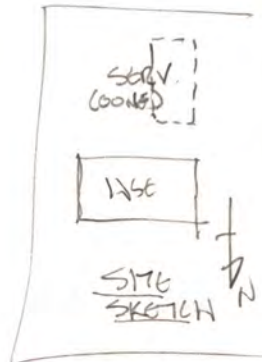
P.S.
 sketch with
 column
 Dec. 27, 1991.
 See home
 article, etc.



Fl. 2
 ↑
 N



Fl. 1
 ↑
 N



Sketch plan from memory, from brief visit.
 Verify all features. Very limited time for
 obs. & photos, extremely cold day (20's)

Improper constr. of
 brick wall - soil can't
 take the pressure, even
 though it tested normal strength
 Koger Ist has this detail

Note - Ist has found 4 bldgs in this area (Fair)
 w/ same problem & same symptoms.
 ① Koger
 ② Presb. Ch. - Tusculum
 ③ 1828 Karsner - Kennedy - Florence
 ④ Ist, Courtland



N. front

Doors were removed.
No evidence of porches, ever.



→ N



Window enlarged after
Civil War

W.

west wall bulged out
± 10" & partly collapsed
(no footing)

→ W



→ S



Koys (Fed.)
376 near Florence, N)

South door
at hall
↙

Window enlarged
after Civil War.
See WEST el.



S. W. H. at S. W. Rm.

S. door at S. W. Rm.



South rear





West Wall

(east 2nd fl. window would have
originally been this size)

All chim. tops weathered - 1/2
several feet, caps gone
↓



West Wall

↗ NO. 1 BRICK QUALITY FLEMISH BOND FRONT
 ↘ NO. 2 BRICK QUAL. COMMON BOND (SIDES+REAR)

5 of 6 Koger (FM) Flowers

29

balustrade is
SWM at
fl. 2

22



24



door to
S.E. Rm. from
hall = typical

20





N. Entry doors (S. = Same) ← latch looks fed

N.W. Rm, N. Window s/M (top)



S.E. Rm, S. s/M & chair rail

latch looks - hinge

door to
detached
kit & porch
(gone) →



↗ S. rear
rails = clumsy. Dormers too fat

PN

N →
front



Photos Sept '92 by Mrs Molly Wright of Florence.
Restor. consult. donated by H. Jones (limited).
Fair job here, except fat dormers

1 of 2



→ N
Front

This wall had completely collapsed



→ W

→ N

2007



1830 Kager 1251 mantel, w. of Florence
photo by M. Wright, Florence
1991

1993 Bob Gumble



KOGER HOUSE
ca 1830 • Lauderdale County

As Georgian aesthetic ideas infiltrated American colonial architecture, the typical story-and-a-half dwelling of the Chesapeake/Albemarle region along the Atlantic seaboard assumed a more formal appearance. Its front became self-consciously symmetrical. And a second tier of rooms was added behind the first to create what the Georgian-period Englishman and his American cousin called a "double-pile" plan.

The same ideas carried forward in houses built in the lower South during the early part of the next century by settlers from Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina. One of these is the dormer-windowed house constructed for William Koger on his plantation in the Tennessee River Valley. In 1991, with one end wall already collapsed so that the interior could be viewed dollhouse-fashion from the outside, this significant structure was saved from destruction by a successful last-minute restoration effort.

Two pairs of exterior end chimneys accentuate the balance of the facade, centered upon tall, paneled double doors. The absence of a middle dormer on the front slope of the roof suggests that a central portico of some kind was intended, though possibly never built.

Chairrails and deeply paneled door and window reveals enrich the interior. A distinguishing feature of the center hallway is the stair, which rises from back to front in a single straight run. Though not uncommon in certain parts of the South, such a reversal of the usual orientation occurs rarely in this type of house. Two high-ceilinged rooms flank either side of the broad hall, the pair at the rear being slightly smaller. A long frame rear wing, linked by a breezeway to the main house, has been destroyed.



LEE-WADE HOUSE
1841 • Dallas County

The three-bay "temple front" house proved one of the most popular and enduring forms of Greek Revival residential architecture carried to the American hinterland. While more sophisticated examples boasted elegant Ionic or Corinthian porticoes almost worthy of the Acropolis, equally as charming within their own context were the numerous rustic, spin-off versions produced by country builders of the 1840s and 1850s. An example is this house, erected for Major Paul Smiser Hutson Lee when he resettled his family from the Carolina Low Country to their new Alabama plantation.

Major Lee's contractor was an Alsatian emigre, one Martin Hasselvander, although the design was doubtless a collaborative effort. There were no frills; just a large plain, wooden house originally raised, in Low Country fashion, over a full brick ground. A temple effect was gained by a triangular pediment and four slender square columns, although Major Lee and Mr. Hasselvander preferred lighter proportions than called for by classical rubric. Further relaxing the rules for Greek Revival "correctness," they placed a spacious upstairs balcony behind the pillars and inserted an old-fashioned, three-part arched Palladian window, covered with louvered blinds, in the pediment. Extending across the rear of the main house, and peeping shyly from either side, was a large, one-story bedchamber wing.

Along the avenue leading from the main road to the house, the Lees planted wateroaks, together with shrubs and rosebushes brought from Carolina. Due to persistent dampness, the ground floor was dismantled in 1911 and the house lowered to its present grade — a measure which unfortunately took away some of its rustic monumentality.



MOSES LEWIS HOUSE
ca 1836 • Sumter County

To more than one ambitious New Englander of Jacksonian-era America, the Deep South was an El Dorado, one where a fortune might be made in land speculation and cotton. So Moses Lewis left his native New Hampshire for Alabama, reaped the reward of his industry, and erected a sober, two-story, hip-roofed house on a bluff above the winding Tombigbee. Beside it in good Yankee fashion, he placed a gabled, two-room office structure.

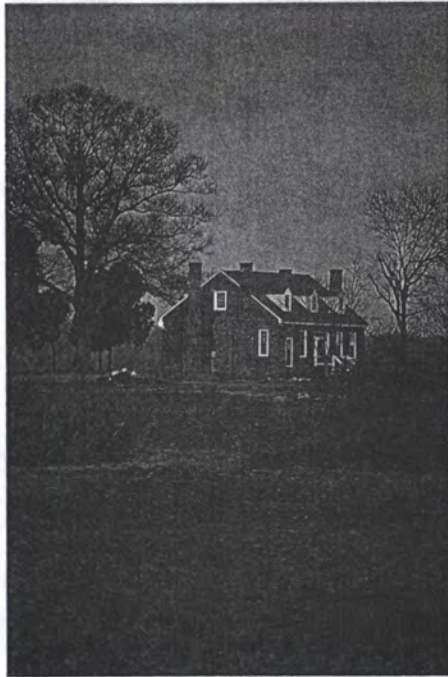
Though now marred by a nondescript Victorian-era porch, the facade of the house still possesses the balanced, understated self-assurance that is one of the most attractive features of many Late Georgian and Federal-period dwellings. The front door opens upon a hall into which descends a stair of arresting grace and beauty, its bannisters sweeping around a landing and gently downward to end in a swirling volute. To the left of the hall lie two sunlit rooms that can be thrown together as one by a pair of wide, paneled doors. Here and throughout the house, in mantelpieces and woodwork, the influence of another New Englander — that prolific publisher of carpenter's handbooks, Asher Benjamin — is clearly evident.

To the rear, it can be seen that the house was originally L-shaped. In the angle formed by the "L" was a secluded double porch — now clumsily enclosed. From it, however, one can still look down through a tangle of vegetation to the muddy, inscrutable river nearly a hundred feet below.



If ou
a peculiar
ried it to t
This is a l
nearly twe
be exact, c
age than v
Stré
the front, a
L-shaped
two deep,
Inside, six
in tandem
middle. I
both the
outside do
many win
The
of credenc
Stephen B
Lodge was
ing ideas w
era Califor
of the Spa
with their
patio? Clo
end room
porches w
colonial tr
ssippi Valle
Wha
the combi
with brack
the front v
a noted loc
("Sandy") I
had a hand
too, is the
paneled fo

KOGER HOUSE



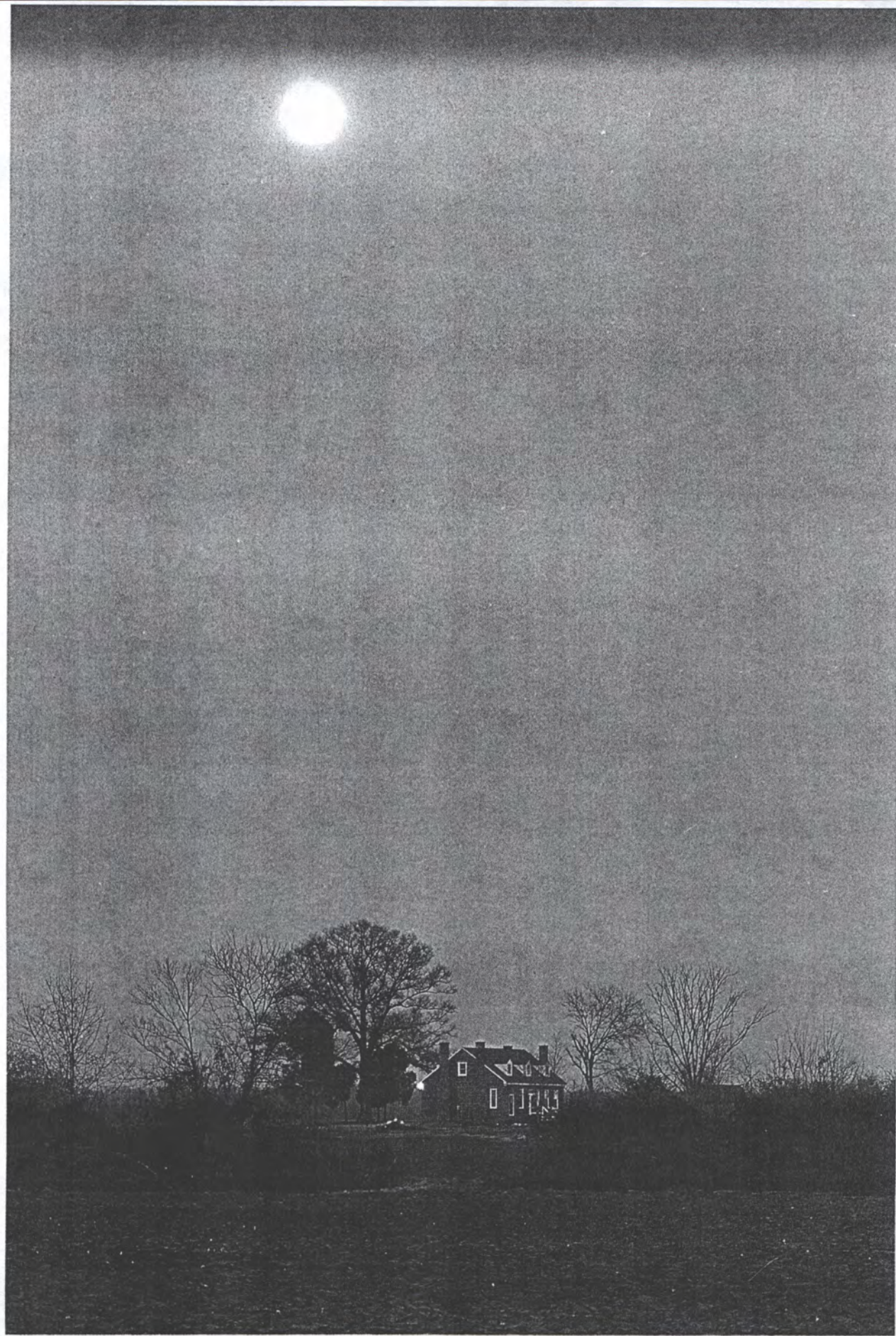
When Nancy O'Neal came south to visit relatives in Florence in the spring of 1990, she had no idea that her visit would be a prelude to her later move to Alabama to an area that had been inhabited by members of her family since the early 1800s. At the time she was totally involved in her New York career in advertising. But when an opportunity arose during her visit to become involved with a cattle operation on the family farm, O'Neal decided to accept the challenge of a new and different life in Alabama. ❖ O'Neal established her first Alabama residence in a family-owned house in town; from there she commuted daily to her farm in the country. As her work progressed, O'Neal considered building a house on her farm property; her thinking changed when she learned of the availability of the Koger house, a brick Georgian cottage built in the 1830s by William Koger, an early settler from Virginia. Located a few miles from O'Neal's farm in the Bend of the River farming area of Lauderdale County, the house was in imminent danger of collapse. Its owner had agreed to donate the house to the Heritage Preservation, Inc., of Florence, a local preservation group, with the stipulation that it be restored according to strict federal guidelines and occupied as a private home by a responsible individual. It was a desolate, abandoned structure. It suffered from water damage. It had vegetation growing inside the roof. And doors, mantels, and chair railings had been removed and stored in a barn for safety. Worse, the mortar between the bricks was disintegrating. Despite these awful details, her first reaction was that it was a beautiful house, simple, clearly proportioned, with a pretty shape. ❖ Financial help from her sister allowed her to take title to the house from Heritage Preservation, Inc., and begin the restoration project. She did so despite the news that the east wall had fallen down. She thought she might as well go ahead, she said, as there were already six inches of daylight coming in at the roof line during her last inspection. ❖ Along with the restoration work came complex paperwork; she was required to fulfill the stipulations of the previous owner and the rehabilitation guidelines of the Department of Interior. She agreed to all provisions, fully expecting to be able to meet them. She found the guidelines and the assistance rendered by the Alabama Historical Commission's Historic Endangered Landmarks Program very helpful because she didn't know how to restore old houses. Within six months, with labor contributed by her family and members of the community, she completed the brick work of the house, restoring its walls and chimneys, far surpassing the official requirements for stabilization. By the following October, she was able to occupy the downstairs portion of her new home. ❖ Nancy O'Neal has shown that tenacity, a willingness to learn, and help from others can all be combined to produce significant restoration results. The same combination is applied to her brood cow operation. The farm will continue to grow, just as the upstairs will be restored, both brought back to life by someone who found her own new life in Alabama.



DWELLING IN PLOWED FIELDS • FACADE AND SILHOUETTED TREE



*Silhouetted in the Land
1993 Ben Embree*



WINTER MOON



Last-minute Koger House Rescue

After nearly losing the battle to Mother Nature, the rescue and preservation of Lauderdale County's circa 1830 William Koger House is back on track. The Koger House is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as one of Alabama's major examples of a story-and-a-half brick, Federal-style, plantation house.

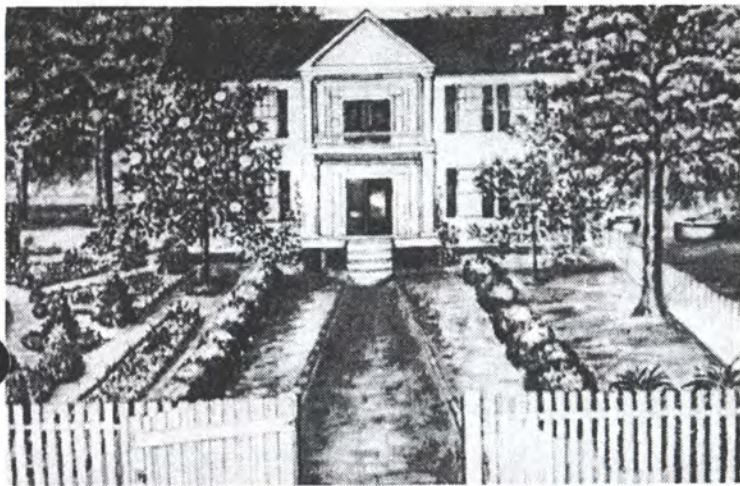
Working through the Commission's Historic Endangered Landmarks Program (HELP), the Florence area preservation group, Heritage Preservation, Inc. (HPI), obtained title to the house and five acres in July. HPI volunteers began searching for someone willing to take on restoration under a rehabilitation agreement with HPI and the Alabama Historical Commission.

But the long-neglected structure had far more serious structural problems than initially thought—a condition that rapidly worsened during the latter part of 1991 due to unusually heavy rains. Two days after Christmas one entire side wall of the house collapsed with a thunderous boom that was heard by neighbors a half a mile away.

Unfortunately, the calamity occurred in the midst of final negotiations with New Yorker Nancy O'Neal who wishes to restore the house as a residence. Not deterred, Ms. O'Neal called the mishap "a tempest" and reaffirmed her determination to move on with the restoration even though it will be more costly than originally anticipated.

Meanwhile, emergency stabilization work and the development of long-term restoration plans are going forward under a rehabilitation agreement between Ms. O'Neal, HPI, and the Alabama Historical Commission. "It's encouraging to see so many individuals and groups working together toward a common goal," said HPI president Milly Wright.

Dr. Mary Jane McDaniel of the University of North Alabama heads the HPI Koger House Committee. Anne Bradshaw Craig, a member of HPI and an official with B. H. Craig Construction Co. of Florence, dispatched a



Old watercolor drawing of Forest Home by Mary Fennell Davis (Mrs. Waights S. Henry) who grew up in the Morgan County plantation house.



COURTESY OF DUANE PHILLIPS

Forest Home, Morgan County. For a hundred and twenty years Forest Home remained loved and cared for, in the hands of the family who had built it in 1856. In the 1970s however, it was vacated and sold to a developer. Vandals damaged the fine Greek Revival interior, not sparing even the unusual suspended, curved stair.

work crew to the house site "on faith" immediately after the collapse to avert further damage and begin the cleanup. Florence architect Bob Whitten, another HPI member, volunteered his time to develop repair plans. The destroyed wall is being replicated in cinder block faced with reproduction and salvaged brick.

Mrs. Elizabeth Gerber, whose family deeded the house for preservation purposes, has donated a thousand dollars toward its restoration.

Another landmark lost: Forest Home burns

An October fire of suspicious origin destroyed one of Morgan County's last remaining plantation houses. Located six miles west of Decatur near the Trinity community, Forest Home was a Greek Revival style residence dating from 1856.

Despite its listing in the National Register of Historic Places in 1979 and efforts to encourage its restoration, Forest Home was allowed to deteriorate for more than 15 years. Until the death of its last occupant, Mrs. Anne Davis Steed, Forest Home



Emergency cleanup crews dispatched by B.H. Craig Construction, Co. after the Dec. 27 collapse. The c.1850 Koger House once had dormer windows.

ROBERT GAMBLE

remained in the family of its original owners and was one of the Tennessee Valley's best-preserved antebellum residences. It was sold in the mid-1970s to Decatur developer Joel Reagin.

In her memoir, *One Mile from Trinity*, Mary Davis Henry vividly describes her girlhood at Forest Home. Notable features of the house were its geometrically laid-out boxwood garden and an unusual suspended spiral stairway.

From one side of the entrance hall the stair ascended a short way against the wall then sprang away from the wall in a free-standing curve and on up to the second floor. "To my knowledge there was no other stair quite like it anywhere in Alabama," said AHC architectural historian Robert Gamble.

Al. Hist. Comm. Pres. Rept. - Jan./Feb '92

Historic structures saved

• **Koger House, Florence.** The Koger House, an 1830 Virginia-type plantation house, is being restored through a process developed by H.E.L.P., the AHC's Historic Endangered Landmark Program, and Heritage Preservation, Inc.

After the Koger House was donated by Elizabeth Dabney Gerber and her children, the house's preservation was undertaken by Nancy O'Neal, formerly of New York. A great-granddaughter of Alabama Gov. Edward Asbury O'Neal, Nancy persevered, undaunted by the collapse of an end wall and the need for massive structural rebuilding of large portions of the other walls. Late this fall, she was able to move in.

Florence architect Bob Whitten developed the house's architectural plans



AFTER: Koger House — October 1992

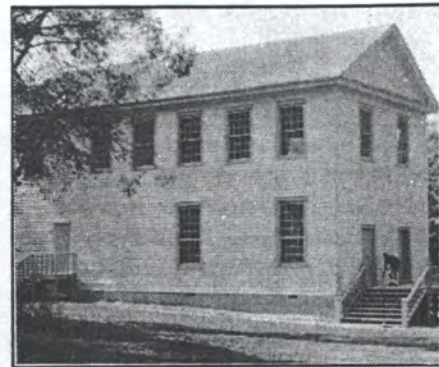
in conjunction with H.E.L.P. The approximate cost to date is \$100,000.

• **McMahon House, Courtland.** The McMahon House, a Federal-style house built in 1929-30 by Joseph Trotter, was purchased in 1838 by John Jordan McMahon, a cotton merchant who divided his time between Courtland and New Orleans. In 1987

McMahon's descendants gave the house, through H.E.L.P.'s efforts, to the Alabama Historical Commission.

Restoration of the house has been completed by Ben and Barbara Wilson. Despite structural problems, the Wilsons were able to accomplish the restoration for about \$120,000 by undertaking much of the work themselves.

• **Update given on Ashville Masonic Lodge.** Saved by the assistance of the H.E.L.P., restoration is nearing completion on the Ashville Masonic Lodge. One of only four pre-Civil War Masonic Lodges left standing in Alabama, the circa 1850 building was saved from demolition in 1990 by local preservationists who raised \$12,000 in funds to have it moved to a donated site.



ABOVE LEFT: The Koger House before restoration.

ABOVE RIGHT: A view of the Ashville Masonic Lodge in mid-restoration.



MIDDLE: The McMahon House before its restoration by Barbara and Ben Wilson.



BOTTOM: The McMahon House after restoration.

HJ donated restor. help

HJ donated portico details based on clues, furnish also

terria for HPF and monies coming in ation Report
Historic Preservation Fund (HPF) grant for the recently established Alabama Fund will be contained in the May/ Report.
ervation Fund grants is contingent monies from the United States De- pending is normally available by late however, it has been as late as April have been made available.
resources Trust Fund is the result of a eral Energy Regulatory Commission gas pipeline corporation after the ctected a pipeline through southwest sed environmental damage and es. The first grants available expected to be awarded in October. during the AHC's strategic planning he selection criteria for Historic nd registration grants.
s, the AHC will focus on entering into a computerized data base res and archaeological sites. This ake results from earlier surveys ts, historians, planners, CLG coordi- ners.

Al. Hist. Comm. 1993