

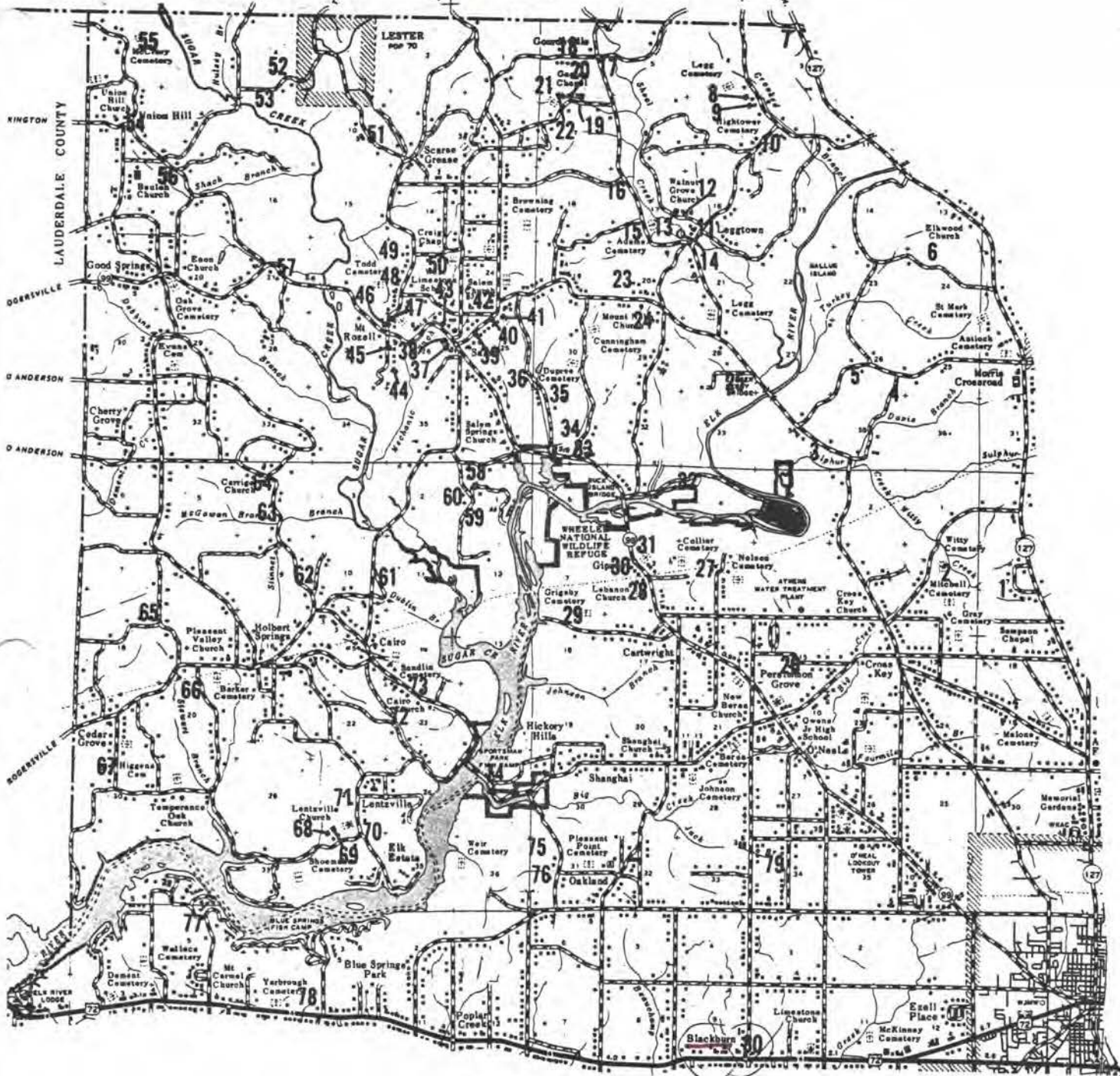
Lure of Lore of Limestone Co, Al.

Edward of Reform

Partials Press 1977

TENNESSEE

GILES COUNTY



c.1873 Blackburn
 Hse Rector, J.A.H.
 1983
 (Eli Mastich, owner)

1855
 Westmeland Log Hse
 moved here 1933-4
 from Pettusville, NE Limestone Co.
 (sup. 56, 57)

NORTHWEST SECTION OF LIMESTONE COUNTY, ALABAMA
Showing Numbered Locations of Houses and Sites

The Blackburn house is located approximately five miles west of Athens, Alabama at the N.E. corner of the intersection of U.S. Highway 72 and Limestone County Road 43. Courthouse records indicate that the house was probably built shortly after 1873 and the architectural evidence supports this in both design and construction details.

The house is virtually unaltered. It is a one and one-half story 3-bay gable-ended six-room center-hall clapboarded house of "saltbox" configuration with a well-proportioned simplified Italianate hip-roofed portico with chamfered-edge square wood columns and bracketed capitals. A later makeshift back porch has recently been removed. There are four rooms on the main floor and two rooms on the second floor directly over the downstairs front rooms. The unbracketed, steeply-pitched roof eaves overhang on all four sides, and have barge-boarded gables and boxed soffits which are parallel with the roof plane in the manner of many latter 19th century houses of this type.

Windows primarily are 2/2, the most common latter-19th-century type, and there are no traces of blind hinges. The 2/2 sashes are vertical sliders (no ropes or weights) with the top-halves secured by metal pins in holes in the jambs. The two small 4-light attic sashes pivot horizontally to ventilate the attic. The similar 2-light sash in the upper stair hall was probably pivoted, but now has added inside stops to fix it shut.

In typical 19th century fashion, the exposure dimensions of the clapboarding varies randomly by an inch or more. Uniformity of clapboard exposure was not considered in the 19th century to be important by many, based on an examination of numerous examples.

The present roof is painted modern galvanized iron sheets, but the attic shows evidence in the roof-deck boards of an original wood shingle roof by its multitude of cut shingle-nails and widely spaced deck-boards.

All framing and lath observed was rotary-sawn, as would be expected by 1873 or after. The house has recently been raised several inches and a new foundation of concrete and concrete masonry units installed under it in order to separate the floor joists from the soil (crawl spaces were frequently not provided in the 19th century) and to strengthen the house.

The front four rooms are 15 feet square. The rear rooms about 13 1/2 feet by 15. The first floor ceiling is about 9 feet 8 inches high, and the second floor ceiling is very low - 7 feet 2 inches - as they were in many 19th century country houses.

The first floor northeast room was, based on the architectural evidence, the original kitchen. Interior kitchens were rare in the South before the Civil War, but quickly became the norm after the war. The kitchen still contains its original built-in cabinet, its originality indicated by the fact that there are no lath or plaster traces on the studs behind the cabinet, and the cabinet doors show jack-plane smoothing marks indicating hand-finishing of a type which quickly became obsolete after the Civil War. This cabinet also is quite similar in design to contemporary kitchen cabinets such as shown in plate 118 (dated 1876) in the book "Americans At Home" by William Seale, entitled "Method of Arranging a Kitchen". The kitchen has an adjoining original pantry with wood shelving that appears very old and may be original.

All interior and exterior door and window trim consists of plain, flat boards about 3 inches wide. The outside window trim is capped by an approx. 1 inch ledge. Baseboards at the first floor are approx. 5/4 inches by 7 1/4 inches and 4 inches at the second floor and are set prior to plastering, as is all the trim, typical of 19th century practice and contrary to 20th century practice. There are no shoe-moulds at the Second Floor baseboards, as was typical. The top inch or so of the first floor baseboards is slightly beveled. Floors are original pine about 5/4 inches by 3 inches (1st. floor) and 5/4 x 4 inches (2nd. floor), T & G, set directly on the joists without a subfloor (typical 19th century practice).

The original mantels remain in the two west rooms and the S.E. room on the main floor. They are of simplified Italianate design, two having a flat-arch architrave and the other having only chamfered-edge pilasters. The mantel-shelf on all mantels have rounded ends and a heavy cyma-reversa mould under the shelf. The mantel at the S.E. room (dining) is the most elaborate, having cutouts in its pilasters of a rectangle topped by slightly narrower arches in addition to the flat-arch architrave. The two upstairs rooms have only stove-thimbles. Both of the internal chimneys have been removed but are to be rebuilt. A photograph exists showing the brick-hearth pattern which is typical of the 19th century (the long dimension of the bricks follows the three edges of the hearth, turning 90 degrees at the two corners). The kitchen had a stove-thimble most recently, and by 1873 it is likely that it originally had a stove rather than a cooking fireplace.

The second floor S.E. room has four metal hooks screwed into the ceiling joists for supporting a quilting frame free of the floor, a detail noted in other 19th century North Alabama houses.

All doors are four-panel (typical of the period), some with heavy Italianate panel-moulds, with elaborate Victorian cast-iron hinges and cast-iron rimlocks. The rimlock at the double front door has a cast-on patent date of 1863. The original rimlock at the 1st. floor S.W. Parlor has the initials "BLW" cast into its iron box (the lock was lifted off to verify its originality). The rimlocks have ceramic knobs of white or brown. At least one of the rimlocks is a later replacement, based on paint traces and screw holes. The entry doors are topped by a 4-light transom.

The main floor S.E. room (Dining) retains a large piece of what appears to be original wallpaper (the plaster contains no paint film traces and the wallpaper is on the bottom of other layers of paper). The pattern consists of diagonal rows of floral cartouches with Baroque-influenced curvilinear forms and small fleur-de-lys centers. Its character is similar to 1860-70 wallpaper patterns illustrated in the book "Wallpaper In America" (Catherine Lynn), plates 71, 15-6, 15-7 and 15-24.

The stair newel is a heavy square wood post with chamfered edges and a square necked cap. Balusters are small rectangular sections and rails are round - holdover details from the early 19th century and not usual by the 1870's, when turned balusters and moulded rail shapes were usual. The tread-ends are plain, with scrolls.

The 1st. floor S.W. Parlor has apparently original cupboards built into the east side of the chimney. Its small doors are similar to those on the original kitchen cabinet.

The 2nd. floor S.W. bedroom has two original triangular wooden shelves built into the plaster in the S.W. corner of the room. The shelves are approximately one foot deep at the diagonal.

H.P. Jones, FAIA
Jan 83

in 1878 and built his house on it two years later. Part of the original log structure is incorporated in the present house.



William (Feb. 9, 1851-Apr. 8, 1931) was the son of Thomas and Mildred (Collier) Black, who were listed on the 1850 census with the following children: John Wesley (see *Black-Rawls-Honeycutt House*), Martha, Mary, America, Elizabeth, and Thomas (see *Jones-Black House*). William married Martha Berzett (Nov. 15, 1856-Mar. 8, 1944), who was the daughter of Zach (Sept. 26, 1825-Nov. 21, 1916) and Eliza (McKinney) Berzett. She was a descendant of James and Delila McKinney, early settlers of Limestone and subjects of an amusing incident of frontier life as described by R. A. McClellan.

James McKinney killed fifteen deer in one afternoon. "He hung them up in the woods and insisted that the old lady should bring them to the house. She rebelled and most of them rotted where they were shot. Near the same time the family went out bee hunting and cut down a large hollow gum. When it struck the ground an old bear and two cubs jumped out." It seems that there was women's lib exhibited in the McKinney household well over a century-and-a-half ago.

The Bill Black house, located just off New Cut Road on the Bill Black Road, is now owned by a descendant of the Blacks, Mrs. Lawrence Evans, and her family.

BLACKBURN (ca. 1873)

Joseph Sloss, tailoring tutor of President Andrew Johnson and step-grandfather of Edward Blackburn, was staying at the Blackburn house in 1881 when Judge McClellan wrote his history of Limestone County. That "oldest relic of those far away days in Mooresville" was then 88 years old. Joseph's daughter, Eliza Jane Sloss, had married the Rev. John Nelson Blackburn (see *Elliott-Blackburn House*), father of Edward, a few years prior to this time.

Edward (July 16, 1840-Aug. 17, 1899) was the son of John Nelson and his first wife, Martha (Morrow) Blackburn. He married Annie Crenshaw (May 22, 1851-Mar. 10, 1932) and they bought this property from the family of Dr. John S. Blair in 1873. The land had belonged originally to Asa Allen and was inherited by his daughter, Mary (Allen) Blair, in 1841.

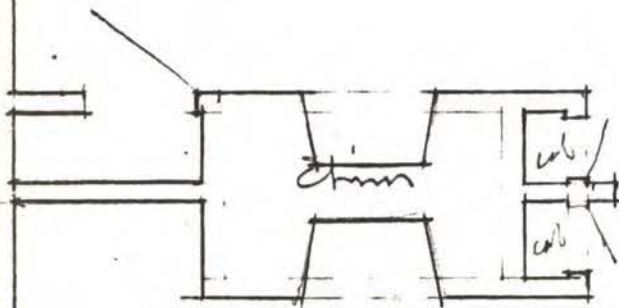


Edward and Annie (Crenshaw) Blackburn were parents of Edward Morrow (Dec. 14, 1876-Dec. 10, 1966), who married Mave Calvin (Aug. 6, 1882-Dec. 1975), daughter of Joseph and Martha Louise (Holt) Calvin (see *Melvin Martin House*). They had Edward Blackburn, who married Dorothy Story, n/c.

The community of Blackburn has grown up around the Blackburn house, and the Home Demonstration Club of Blackburn meets in the log cabin across the highway from the house.

Restw. 1983 J J H Avon J
 HP Jane
 (Karr of Eli Mastick)

BR



orig. shlv

KIT.

mod. cab. + sink

cab. (ORIGINAL)

DIN.

PARLOR

2nd Fl. to 1st fl 9'-8"±

ENTRY

UP

BLACKBURN
c. 1873

2nd

1ST FL. - JAN. 1983

1/4" = 1'

Exist

Attic

↑ Rafters slope $\pm 7:12$ (verify)

+7'-0" ceil

chim

chimble

chim

chimble

S.W.
BR

7'-2"
ceil

open
to
below

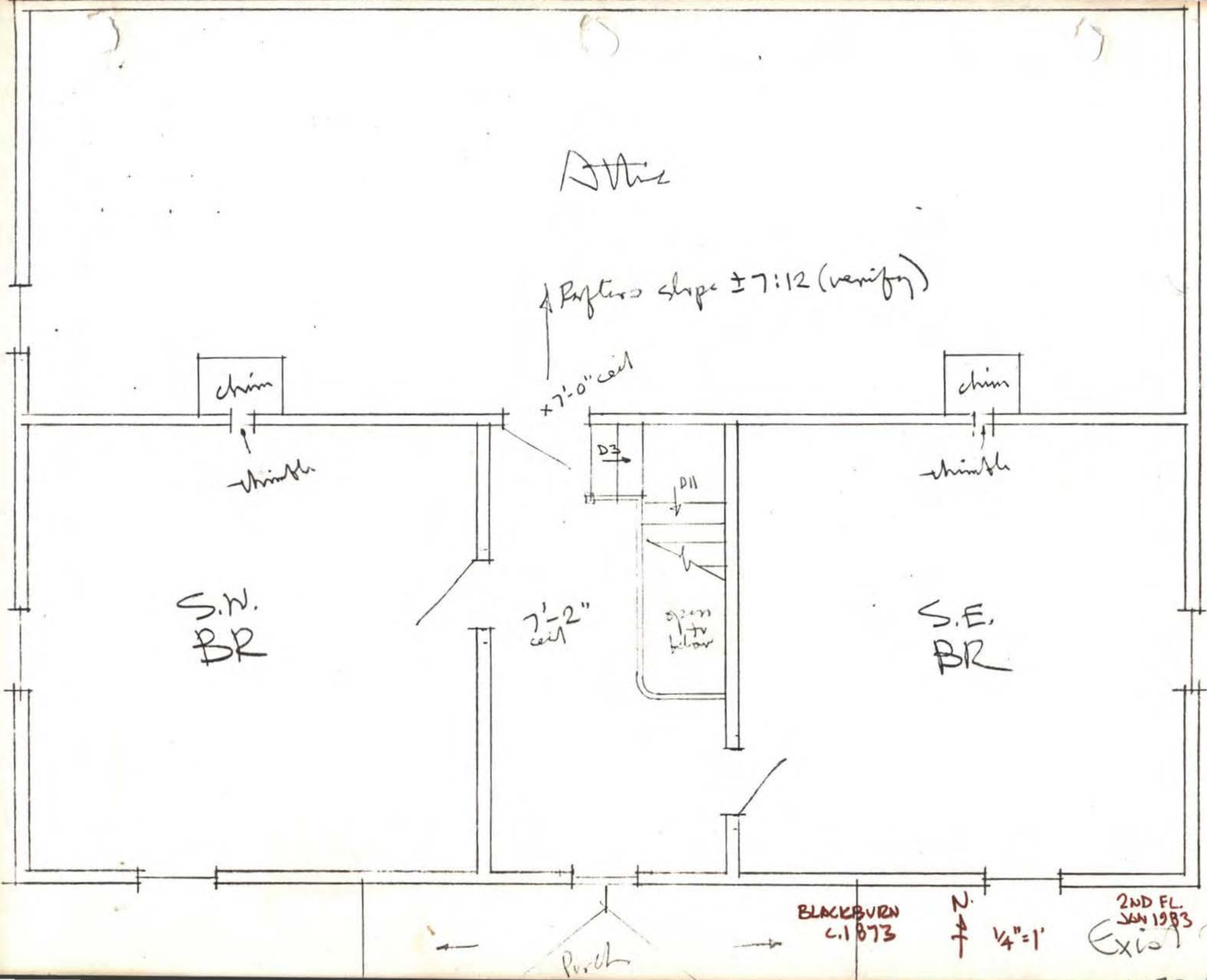
S.E.
BR

BLACKBURN
C.1873

N.
↑
1/4"=1'

2ND FL.
JAN 1983
Exist 2

Porch





Karen Murphy Mastich calls the Blackburn house home

(DAILY Photos by Glenn Baes)

Home at last

Historic house is owner's dream come true

By ELIZABETH ANDERSON
DAILY Staff Writer

BLACKBURN — Grandma Blackburn used to call it "the house by the side of the road" after one of her favorite poems about a house that welcomed neighbor and traveler alike.

For more than two decades — from the time she was 13 years old — Karen Murphy knew of the Blackburn house. "It was a landmark; a lot of people use it for directions," she said.

But it wasn't until she returned to Athens in 1976, after almost a decade away from home — first nursing school, then a job in Birmingham — that she decided, "If I can't have that one (the Blackburn house) there's no other house I want."

"I always loved that house. I thought, boy, if I could buy it and fix it up," she said. "I even took pictures of it."

Thanks to Karen and husband Eli Mastich's two-year restoration of the 111-year-old Blackburn house, it is still the hub of the Blackburn community.

It is also, as the couple learned Wednesday, included in the National Register of Historic Places.

Dot Blackburn, whose husband Ed sold the house to the couple, was happy the house had been chosen by the National Register. "Those two (the Mastichs) put two years of hard labor on that house. When Karen called me with the news she was so excited," Mrs. Blackburn said.

For Karen Mastich, 37, the announcement was like a ribbon around not one, but two dreams that finally came true. Besides owning the house for which she had waited for many years, she celebrated Friday the grand opening of the Blackburn-Mastich House antique store.

Once occupied by three generations of Blackburns, the house became rental property in 1967 after the death of Edward Blackburn a year earlier. His wife, Mave, moved at that time into Limestone Nursing Home.

Their son, also named Edward, who lives with his wife Dot in Decatur, didn't want to sell the Blackburn house when Mrs. Mastich inquired in 1976.

"I was thinking of that house so much that when I heard Ed (Blackburn) wasn't going to sell, I cried," she said.

For her it was either the Blackburn house or no house at all. "I was tired of living in apartments," she said. "I've always loved antiques and I was on an antique buying trip in Murfreesboro, Tenn., and an antique dealer there had her shop in a log cabin."

That idea struck her fancy, so she located a log cabin and had it moved, piece by piece, to some land near Browns Ferry Nuclear Plant where she was working as a nurse. In 1981 she married Mastich, a health physics supervisor at the plant, and put on an addition to the cabin.

Not only did Mastich take to the "pioneering" life in the cabin, he also helped his wife get her dream house. She'd never stopped wanting it, she recalls, and at her husband's urging decided to try buying it again. "He finally said, 'if you really want the house, why don't you see if he'll sell it now?' I contacted Ed Blackburn again and sure enough, he was wanting to sell it," Mrs. Mastich said.

But there was yet another delay, this time caused by illness. "I had open heart surgery at that time," she said, "but I think the possibility of buying the house pulled me through. I remember waking up thinking, 'I'll be glad to get well and see about this house.'"

With the purchase of the house in 1982 came two years of plastering, stripping and painting to restore the house as it once was. They relied on the advice of Huntsville restoration architect Harvie Jones to preserve the house's authenticity. Jones was also instrumental in completing the paperwork required by the National Register before a house is considered for selection.

The Blackburn house meets the National Register's basic requirements of having "significant styling" and being essentially unaltered, and it has some special features as well.

According to Jones, the house is a good example of the Italianate style with its heavy moldings and fairly heavily proportioned columns on the front porch. "A small Italianate style house is very unusual," he said. "There are later examples, but usually the later ones have been remodeled."

With a sloping roof that provides two stories in front and only one in back, the Blackburn house retains its original saltbox design.

"One of the interesting things about the house is the original interior kitchen," Jones said. "It's one

of the early surviving examples of a small soul home with an interior kitchen.

"The bigger homes had 'winter kitchens' but were in the basement. The (upstairs) interior kitchen was almost unheard of before the Civil War," Jones said.

The original built-in kitchen cabinets, one of the earliest examples in the area, are the most unusual thing about the house, Jones said.

The Mastichs made extra efforts to restore the original appearance of the house. They chose to plaster the walls rather than put up the sheetrock used in homes today. Mrs. Mastich selected wallpaper designs and textures similar to those commonly used in the 1870s. "To me the wallpaper is prettier (than the modern reproductions)," she said. "Some of it was gilded or a raised design, with a richer texture than what's available today."

Among the other major projects were raising the house two to three feet off the ground, rebuilding three brick fireplaces in the original brick pattern, re-wiring the house, stripping paint off the pine floors, installing an unobtrusive heating air-conditioning system and a bathroom.

"Restoring this house was one of the hardest things I've ever been through," Mrs. Mastich said. "It put a strain on us because there were so many decisions to make. It flat took endurance."

But there were some pleasant surprises in the labor, like finding things that had fallen through the cracks.

They found a letter from Civil War Gen. Wheeler to Rev. John Nelson Blackburn, Presbyterian minister and the first owner of the house. According to Blackburn relatives, Wheeler often stayed at the Blackburn house on his way to his plantation.

All of the work was done on the couple's day off. As if restoring a house and working full-time weren't enough, they also started an antique shop in the house just north of the Blackburn house.

"We left the antique shop open with the sign 'People here if they saw anything they liked to buy' on over (to the Blackburn house)," Mrs. Mastich said. "People were amazed we would do that but we never had anything stolen from the shop."

Please see BLACKBURN on B2

*Mr. Jones,
hope you like it, any problems
I'd like to hear. Thanks.
Elizabeth*



Blackburn house now her home

Continued from B1

Antique buffs weren't the only ones who stopped by the house during those two years. Others just stopped by to chat.

"I almost called this antique shop 'The House by the Side of the Road,'" Mrs. Mastich said. "The house draws people. I don't know how to explain it. We'll have a closed sign up and people will come by just to visit. It's just always been a busy place."

In earlier years, the Blackburn house was known as "the first house on the right" coming out of Athens. Because the Blackburn family had one of the first telephones in the area, it also was a gathering place for neighbors needing to make calls. "We have the original phone and we're going to hook it up," Mrs. Mastich said.

On a recent afternoon, a man who was a stranger to Mrs. Mastich came by to return an old-time hand scythe he had borrowed for a Halloween costume. "Would it be all right if I took pictures of the house?" he asked. "I brought my camera along this time."

Mrs. Mastich said it'd be fine, adding, "People are always stopping by for this or that reason. They tell me they're glad to see the place fixed up."

As the house was nearing completion, a man who wanted to buy the house came by and asked the Mastichs how much they would sell it for.

Mastich told him, "As much as I worked on this house, there isn't enough money that could buy it."

Recently the house drew 13 members of the Blackburn family for a reunion at the old homestead. One of the cousins, now 88, told stories of eating Grandma Blackburn's chocolate cakes until he couldn't eat anymore and how one Christmas Eve his uncle shook sleigh bells outside and he was sure Santa had arrived.

"Seeing how happy he was to have the house back to the way it used to be made it all worthwhile," said Mrs. Mastich.



Grand tour

Karen Murphy Mastich, left, gives friend Susan Hodges and her son Michael the grand tour of the Blackburn-Mastich house. Mrs. Mastich, who says

she has loved the house since she was a young girl, says owning it is a dream come true. (DAIL GLENN BAESKE)

Harvard's all-male social clubs give it to demand that they (finally) go coed

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. (AP) — In 1791, six classmates gathered for an evening of ale and song and had such a raucous good time they started a private social club dubbed "The Pig," with a Latin motto, Dum Vivimus Vivamus, "Live life to the fullest."

Thus was launched a die-hard Harvard University tradition that still earns reverence and ridicule.

In the almost 200 years since, the university has adjusted to the

About 200 men from a student body of 6,500 belong to the clubs, but it is impossible to graduate without hearing or seeing something of the rarefied club experience.

The most popular stories surround the fall selection process. Candidates are notified that they have been "punched" when a letter slips underneath their dormitory door. After that, an expensive courtship begins.

torn. "I smelled bad," he said.

The heir, then a sophomore, attended the party with his girlfriend, an unsmiling black woman with a Mohawk haircut.

"The entire party, club members kept on coming up to me and telling me how they loved diversity and how good I would be for the club," he said. "I felt embarrassed for them." He did not join.

But the children of the wealthy often

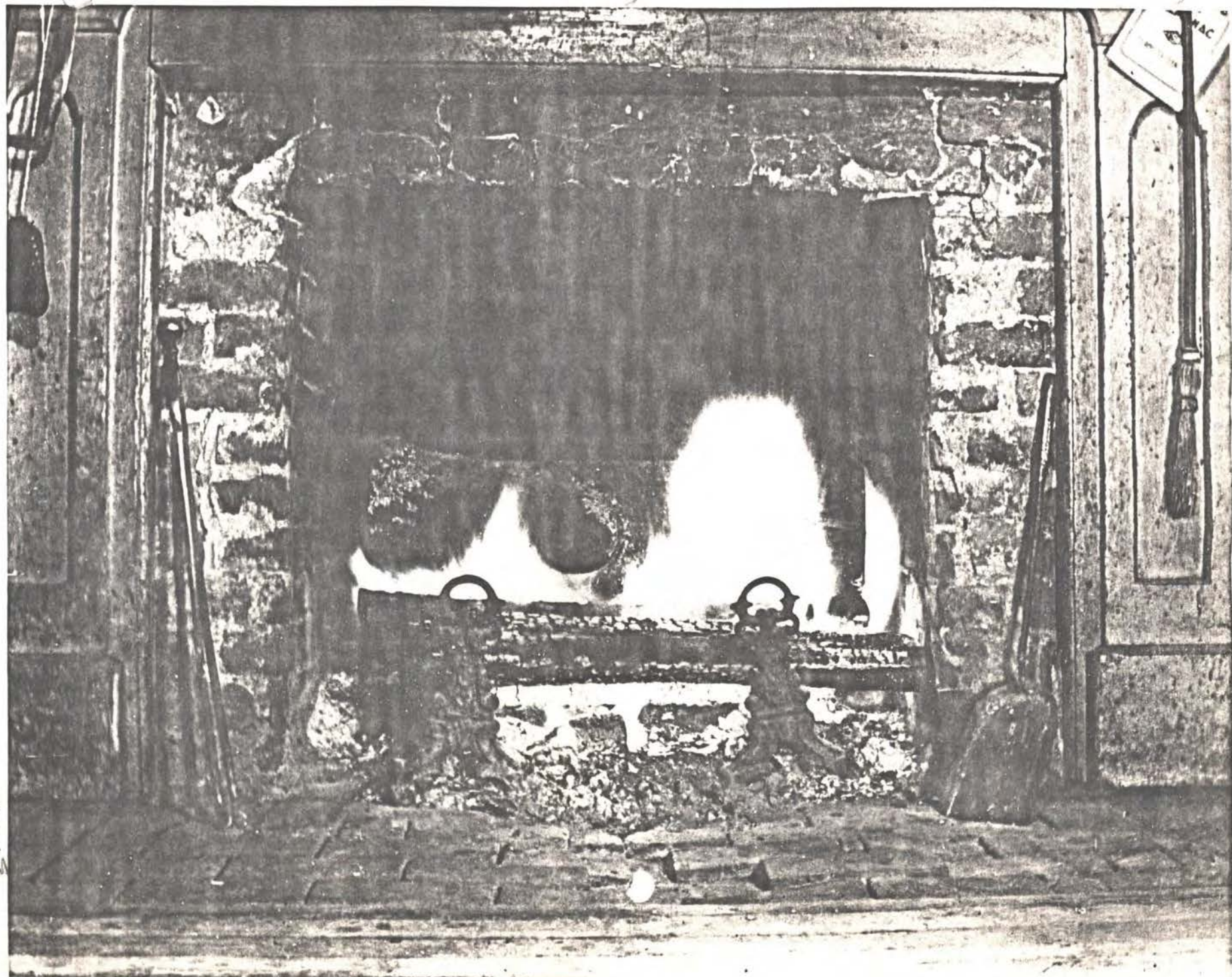
The D.U. Club holds a "C" where the score is computed in number of strokes minus beers consumed.

But the most famous event on the social calendar is the eld garden party, a Great Gatsby fair where members are dressed to impress.

The party is held in the garden next to the club-



c. 1873 Blackburn Hse, photo ca. 1940's



Note
how the
brick
pattern
= typical

c1873 Blackburn Lane, 1st fl. St. Pm. Former owner says brick was covered w/ plaster at surrounds = typical

ca. 1873 Polkburn Hse
± 6 miles W. of Athens on hwy 72
Photos Jan. 1983 H. Jones, FAIA
1983 owner = Eli M. Hestich, Athens (AKayman)



S. front
1982 conc. blk. fndn. ↓ wd steps (hse was raised)
Chimneys removed



1982 conc. blk.

1982 steps



Entry



west - note clapboard exposure varies
1 inch or more = typical



west gable - note pivoting
attic sash



east



west



galv. iron roof = modern North
Orig. = wd. shingles - see "descrip"



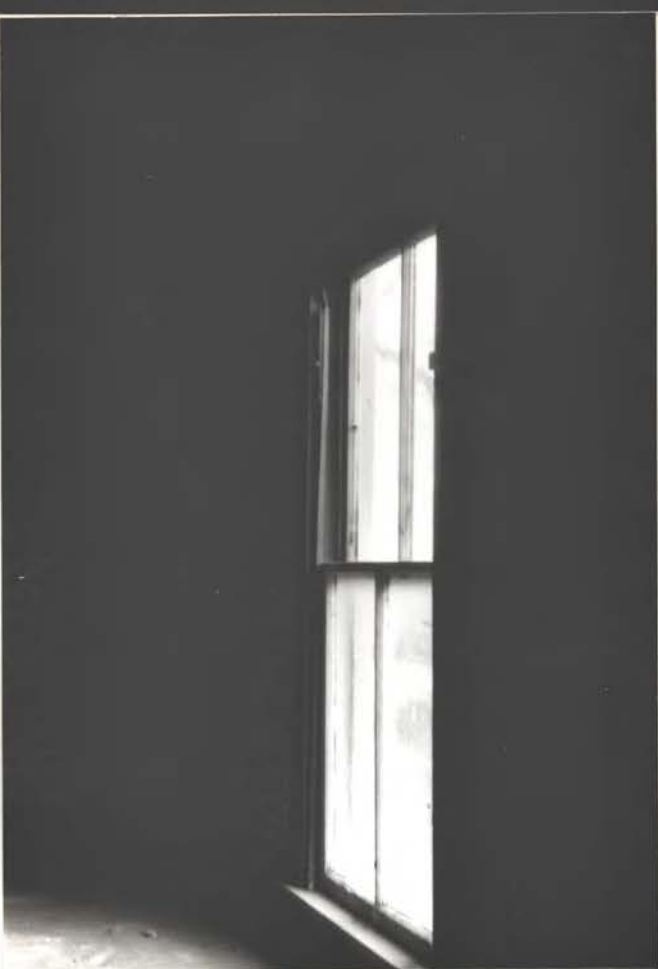
small sash = mid 20thc. North
- was rear hall door.



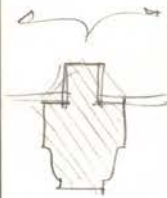
orig. rimlock on entry doors
Patent-dated 186 - (2? 3?) - white cer. knob



Hall side of door to
1st fl. S.W. room
(Italianate details)



rotary-
sawn
lath →



Thick
ogee
muntin
type of
c. 1870-1900
Vic
(It doesn't)

←



Second Floor - East Rm (West = same) ↗

slide-up sash - no ropes or wts. Top sash fixed



Hall side of door to
1st fl. S.W. Rm

↕
20th
c.

Rotary Vic.
cast iron hinge



View from S.W. Rm to hall
c. 1873 Blackburn Hse 5 of 9

7'-2" -
ceiling.



2nd fl. - N.E. corner of stair hall



Entry + stair



diagonal
"Victorian
Baroque"
cartouches
w/ fleur-
de-lis
centers

1st fl S.E. Rm (Dining) - wallpaper
appears orig (see "descrip").



1st fl. S E. rm. mantel



1st fl. S.W. Rm (parlor)



1st fl. N.W. Rm (B.R.?)



Original cabinets at S.W. corner, S. wall
(no lath or plaster traces
on studs behind)

↑
jack-plane
marks on door
(not apparent here)

KITCHEN



PANTRY
(west shelves. East shelves similar.
Apparently original)

1873
Blackburn Hse
west of Athens on
 Hwy 72.

after restore.
photos winter '85
by Mrs Mastich
(Karen & Eli)
(They did mostly
a good job)





Jan. 1989 photo - H Jones.
Revised blog, by SJA - HJ
(outline plans) to blend
w/ hist. Apt. on 2nd fl.