

FEARN -

Garth House
Huntsville, Ala.

Madison Co.

HABS No. ^{ALA} 16-414

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45-HSVI

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PHOTOGRAPHS

District No. 16

Historic American Buildings Survey
E. Walter Burkhardt, District Officer
Ala. Polytechnic Ins.t., Auburn, Ala.

THE FEARN - GARTH HOME.
Franklin Street,
Huntsville, Madison County, Alabama.

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Ownership:

Present Owner: William Willis Garth.11.

Previous Owners: Dr. Thomas Fearn.
Maria Fearn Garth.
William Willis Garth.

Date of Erection: 1822.

Present Condition: Good.

Number of Stories: Two.

Materials of Construction: Brick; stone columns; stucco
intablatures; wood trim.

Other Existing Records:

See: Birmingham News, June 24, 1934.

"ALABAMA POSSESSOR OF RICH HERITAGE".
By Varian Feare, (Mrs. E. Walter Burkhardt)

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Additional Data: Dr. Thomas Fearn : Born in Danville, Virginia, in 1789. First studied medicine in Philadelphia. After finishing here, he went to the College of Physicians and Surgeons in London. Then came additional research in Paris and Rome.

Fearn came to Huntsville about 1810.

In 1813, when Andrew Jackson came through Huntsville on his way to fight against the Creek Indians, Dr. Fearn joined his army as a physician. During these Indian wars General Jackson was wounded and Dr. Fearn was his only attendant.

Dr. Fearn's appointment from General Jackson is still kept by his descendants now living in his old home. Quoting from this appointment: "You will ... as surgeon's mate of the hospital surgeon, take charge of the hospital at Huntsville, and all the sick and wounded of the army are to be attended by you in the hospital. I was informed that a number of the sick have been billeted out in the country. I know of no law authorizing this where there is a hospital. It can only be justified where accommodations cannot other-wise be obtained for the sick or wounded, and you will be careful that the like may not happen again, as it will always produce difficulties in settling up the accounts."

"Dr. Samuel Hogg, who is now with me, will from time to time (until the return of Dr. Shelby) give you such instructions as he may deem necessary relative to that hospital." This authorization was dated from Fort Strother, March 8, 1814.

Dr. Fearn's discovery that quinine, which he made here from the cinchona bark of South America, was the best weapon with which to cure malarial fever wrote his name in the annals of medicine.

Another notable thing Dr. Fearn did for Huntsville was to lay its first water main, also recognized as the second in the United States. While attending school at Philadelphia, where the first in the country was built, he prepared a diagram of every item in the entire system, and brought it to this state with him. This was in 1823.

Although opposed to secession, Dr. Fearn remained loyal to Alabama when his state seceded. He acted as a member of the Provisional Confederate Congress in January, 1861, and aided in framing the constitution of the Confederacy.

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Additional Data: (cont'd)

Upon the arrival of the Federal General O. M. Mitchell, in Huntsville in 1862, Dr. Fearn's home was one of those ~~of the city~~ of the city seized as headquarters for invading officers. The arriving of this army meant the death knell of the physician, he was imprisoned, for refusing to take the oath of allegiance to the United States. While a prisoner, he caught pneumonia and died.

Much of the furniture now in the house was brought by Dr. Fearn from Philadelphia more than 100 years ago. Chief among these articles is a rosewood dresser with marble top, a part of Mrs. Fearn's bridal suite, which was transported to Charleston by boat, and then across country to Huntsville. The dining room table and chairs, the latter fitted with detachable cushion seats, make up another fine item. These were hauled to other parts of the state during the war to save them from the Yankees.

Sentiment, retained to the fifth generation of the only family to own it, claims the majority credit for the well preserved state in which it now is found. With the exception of a few changes, the entire home remains intact as it was planned in 1822.

Source of Material:

"Historic Homes." by Pat Jones,
published in the Huntsville Times,
December 25, 1932.

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9-8-1936.

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