

But a suitor appeared on the scene. He was Col. Houston H. Lee, originally of Tennessee, five years her junior and the owner of a half a section of land jammed up into the ell formed by her three sections.

After this courtship began, Lee often was her counsel in matters pertaining to her farm. Often, he rode over in the early evenings and sat there at her doorstep in the bright moonlight that flooded the slope toward the river. Quietly, they talked of new arrivals in Pond Beat, of the latest wrinkle in cotton planting, or of other topics of the day, interrupted only by some cow or sheep in the lowlands, or by the sound of a stern-wheeler chugging its way slowly up the river.

As the months rolled by, Charity gradually began to realize that this neighbor was becoming part of her life, so she listened to his proposal of marriage when finally it came.

### **Marriage Agreement Recorded**

Charity was a business woman and she considered that all agreements should be treated carefully and wisely. On Dec. 1, 1840, she came to the courthouse in Huntsville and had a marriage agreement recorded.

“Whereas, a marriage is shortly intended to be solemnized between Charity Cooper and Houston H. Lee,” it read, “and the said Charity is possessed in her own right of a large property, both of a real and personal nature, and whereas, it is agreed by and between the contracting parties that said Charity Cooper shall reserve to her own separate use, benefit and control, exclusive of the said Houston H. Lee...but that the same (property) shall in all things remain in subject to the rights, control and dominion of the said Charity Cooper in as full and ample manner as if said intended marriage had never taken place...”

On this same day, she recorded a deed of trust with James W. Fennell of near Guntersville, grandfather of W. F. Esslinger and Dr. James L. Jordan of this city.

After their marriage, the Lees began plans to enlarge the wife’s home left by her first husband. Four large rooms, 20 by 20 feet square with ceilings 14 feet high were built in a two-story section to form the upper part of the Z near the gateway.

### **Stairway in Hall**

In the wide center hall between the two rooms at each end of this division of the mansion was built the gradually winding walnut stairway, the really remarkable phase of the home, considering the tools with which carpenters worked in those days. These steps were put up so carefully that even now, nearly a century later, they do not shake or give with the weight upon them. To allow the curve, the wall in the rear part of the hall was rounded