

Notes of telecon of August 15, 2005

With

Evelyn Darwin, Widow of Tyler Darwin

Mrs. Evelyn Darwin related that she and her husband Tyler Darwin personally moved the old Cooper – Lea / Lee – Harris home from Redstone Arsenal in about 1977 to Madison, Alabama. Tyler Darwin is deceased, but he was an expert cabinetmaker and woodworker in general, according to Evelyn. He rented house-moving equipment from the Kennedy Moving Company, and he moved the house from the arsenal himself in two stages. First the bricks were moved, then the remainder of the house was relocated. The house as they got it was constructed of wood planks, not brick. However, the basement was of brick construction. According to Evelyn, the house is supposed to be haunted, with several stories told of seeing a woman (female ghost) on the stairs at various times. She said that Tyler had grown up around the old house in its original location. When asked if he had ever mentioned the existence of more than one tombstone in the nearby cemetery, she said that she was pretty sure that there were no others during their lifetime.

Evelyn and Tyler had decided to move from Huntsville “into the county” in order to get their son out of the city school system and raise him in a more relaxed setting. Their son was about 12 years old when they moved the house, which had 5 fireplaces – two upstairs and three downstairs. They chose the site in Madison to provide the view overlooking Huntsville, so they bought 4 acres there and put the house on it. Stories of the house and its move were published in the Redstone Arsenal newspaper and in the Huntsville newspapers at various times. She credited U. S. Senator John Sparkman and Huntsville Mayor Joe Davis (personal friends of hers) with helping clear away the “red tape” to get the house move accomplished.

Evelyn said that she had some old photos of the house before the move, but most of her historic materials had been loaned to one of her son’s schoolteachers for a special report, and she never got them back. She also said that the local Darwin families are descended from the famous Charles Darwin, who proposed the theory of evolution, and she stated that he was a religious man who had sons in Christian ministry.

*Evelyn further stated that Tyler Darwin’s mother was Edna **Woodward**, of the Woodward family on the pre-arsenal lands. Edna is buried in Maple Hill Cemetery, but the family still considers the **Woodward Cemetery** on the arsenal as “theirs”. She intends to revisit it soon, if her son will escort her there. Tyler’s father (Edna’s husband) was Jeff Darwin, and he died in the 1918 great flu epidemic. Tyler died in his 80s, and his mother lived to be 101. Maple Hill Cemetery records (per Old Huntsville Magazine’s web page) shows that Edna died January 28, 1989.*

Evelyn also mentioned that Huntsville Attorney Fred Simpson interviewed her husband Tyler Darwin extensively for an entire day to learn details of the Woodward girl’s murder in Huntsville during the cotton mill days (1936). Mr. Simpson documented the