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HISTORIC SCRAPBOOK  
Volume Two  
LEE Home, 5 Mar. 1933

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four notes, he added one quarter of still another section.

Then came his death—through suicide—on Dec. 7, 1834, the same year of his purchase from Bowen. Just what influenced him to take his own life—whether money matters, troubles with his wife, or dependency over his health—is not known. On this day, cold for the method of dying he chose, he walked the mile to the banks of the Tennessee, fastened an iron pot he had carried with him over his head, and plunged into the water.

His will, made the June prior, left the majority of his property, estimated at nearly \$12,000, to his wife. Her share included his real estate, his cotton crop, valued at \$2,470.51, and 18 slaves, appraised at \$10,000. She also was bequeathed all cattle, horses and household furniture.

Cooper further specified that \$500 should be given to each of his sisters, Mrs. Mary Wall, Mrs. Nancy Veitch and Mrs. Elizabeth Ross, wife of the Rev. Alexander Ross. His father was to receive \$25 annually as long as he lived.

**Charity Took Over Farm**

Charity took over the reins there on the plantation without thought of moving the few miles to Huntsville for an environment not nearly so lonesome. She directed her slaves with as true an iron hand as ever Irish woman possessed, using her own judgment as a farm housewife in having potatoes planted in that field, corn in this one, or cotton over the entire acreage.

She forgot her troubles during the first year or two of this new task, yet, as the months passed, she gradually began to miss the companionship of her husband.

But a suitor appeared on the scene. He was Col. Houston H. Lee, originally of Tennessee, five years her junior and the owner of 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 a part of her life, so she listened to his proposal of marriage when finally it came.

101

**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 Gunterville, 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, nearer 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 to coincide with the angle of the outer bannister. At regular intervals in the wall along the stairs were placed niches for statuary, comprising another feature seen in few local homes.

From the front section of the dwelling, back to the old brick part was constructed a connecting link a story and a half in height and composed of four more rooms. This division was inclosed on both sides and at the back by a brick stoop, making it possible to pass from any room in the house during rainy weather without going out into the dampness.

A cellar, reached by two doors from the outside or by an inner door near the back, was excavated under the entire building.