

# ETOWAH VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

November/December 1994

P.O. Box 1886, Cartersville, Georgia 30120, Phone (404) 606-8862

## CHRISTMAS TOUR DECLARED A SUCCESS!!!

The Cartersville Candlelight Christmas Tour is now only a pleasant memory but will long be remembered for the successful event it was. In spite of rain, over 100 volunteers assisted in showing off our proud heritage to 387 local and out-of-town ticket holders.

We were amazed to discover visitors from all over the state and even some foreign guests. The comments overheard were always complimentary. We feel confident that guests were warmly greeted and impressed with the old homes on tree lined streets, candlelight churches

and the historic Bartow County Courthouse elegantly decked out in festive greenery.

A great big thank you goes to all those Society members and those non-members who joined together to make this Tour a success. Let's also give special recognition to the Preservation Committee members who met all year long to insure a wonderful day and to the homeowners and church members who so graciously opened their doors on December 10, 1994.

**The EVHS Office at the Courthouse is now open,  
Monday thru Friday, 1:30 to 4:30,  
Saturday, 1:00 to 5:00.**

## BIRDWOOD

Bartow County has been blessed with the fact that several of the stately mansions of a bygone era are still intact and as beautiful as ever. One can dream of the past when this county was alive with the richness and traditions of what we can now only remember.

These old mansions are reminders of the rich southern heritage we enjoy today. If only many of the others could have survived, they would be silent witnesses to our past. What of "Summerland" built by William Stiles or "The Oaks" built by Senator Oliver Prince? And how about the story that will forever be told of "Etowah

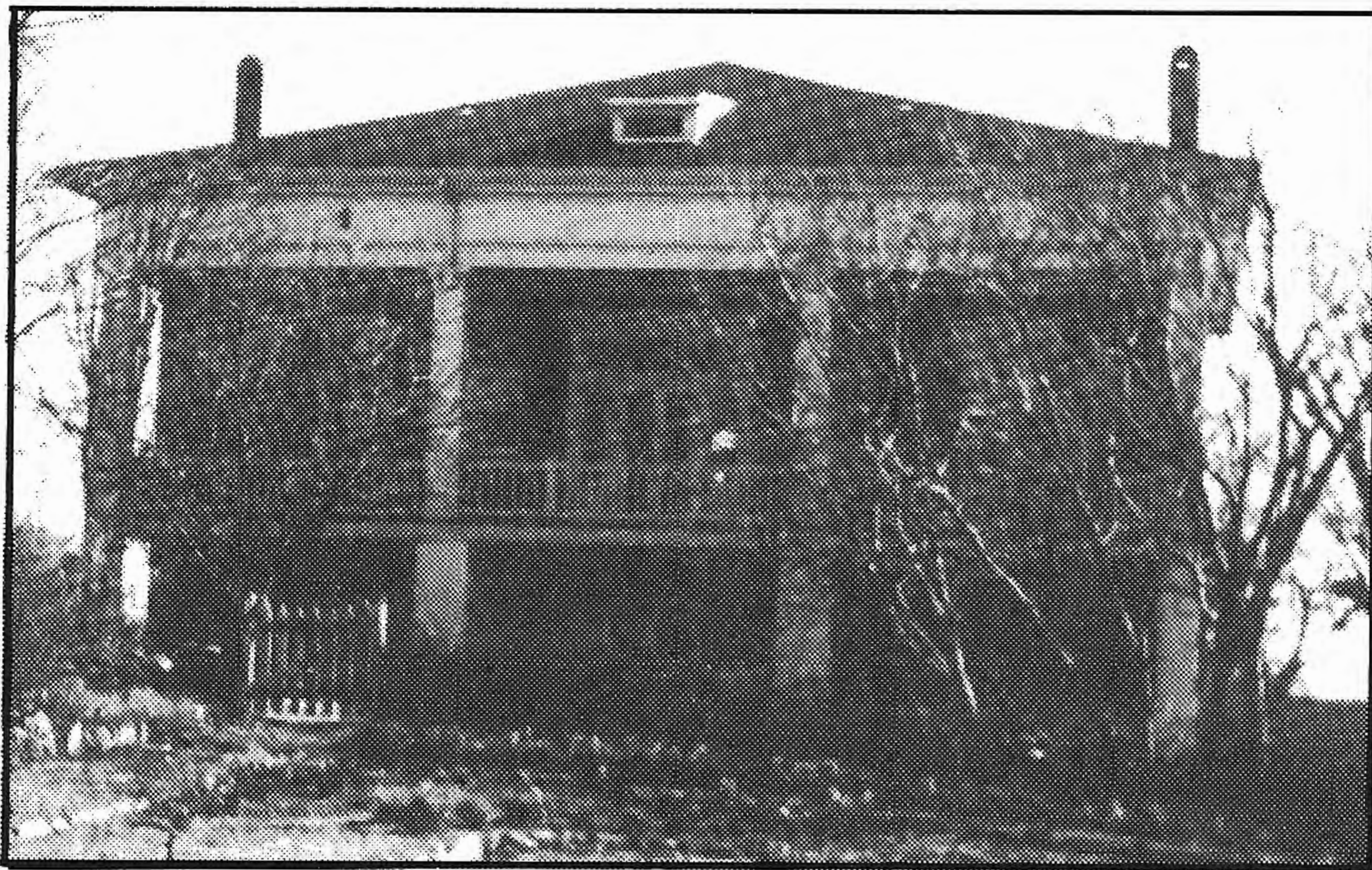


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### *"Birdwood" Continued*

Heights", the home of Charles and Cecilia Stovall Shelman?



A lesser known mansion, but as elegant and beautiful as any ever built in the Etowah Valley, was "Birdwood". Unfortunately, "Birdwood" fell prey to a fire on November 11, 1949 and can now only be etched as a memory in our minds.

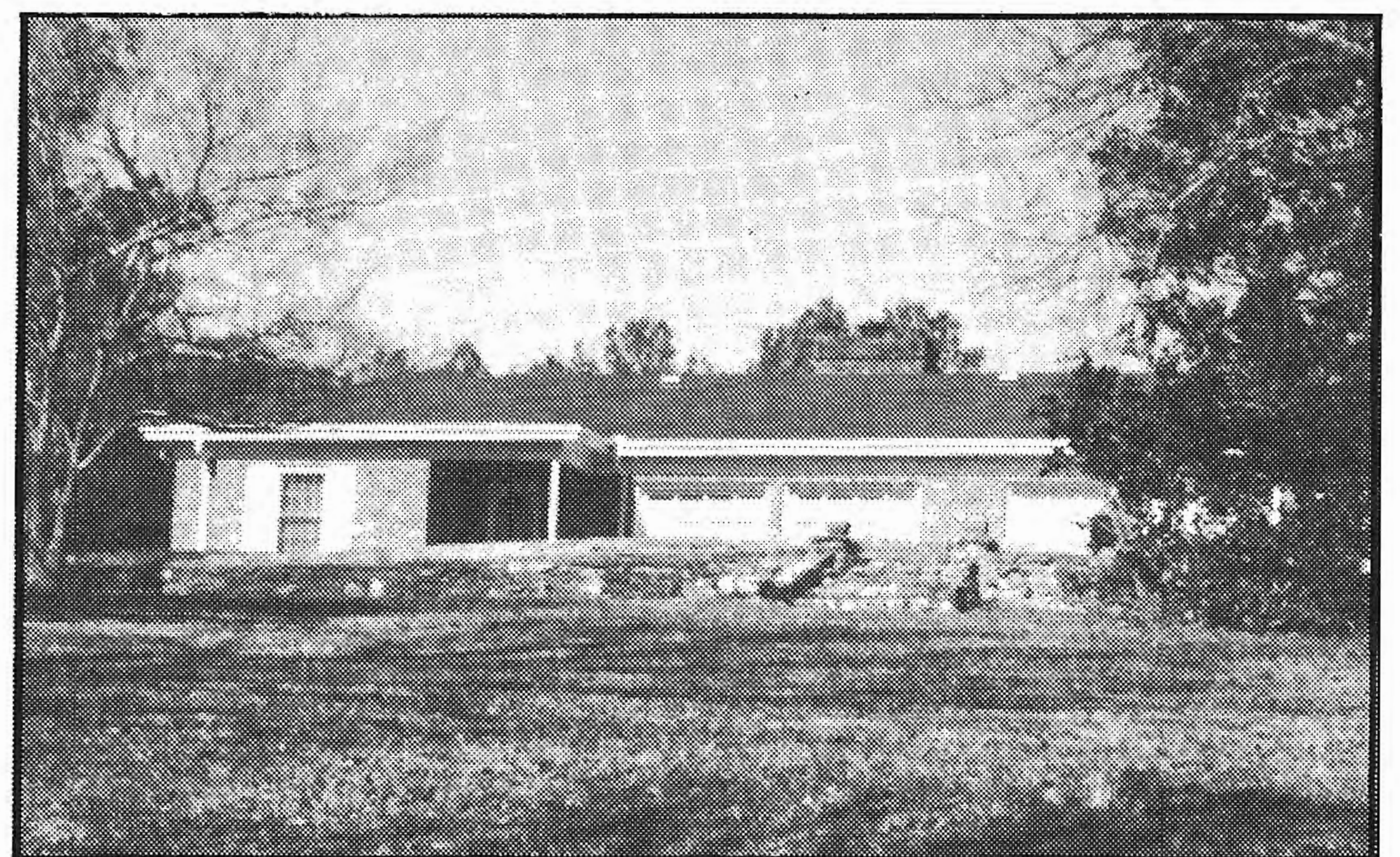
"Birdwood" was most likely built in the late 1830's or early 1840's and was located in the Rowland Springs community on a site now occupied by the home of Cindy Eaton. Much uncertainty surrounds the original builder, but we do know that one of the early occupants, if not the first occupant, was David Lewis, born in 1793. David was one of ten children born to Jacob and Aulsie Lewis of Randolph County, North Carolina. At the age of 13 years, David moved with his family to Pendleton District (Pickens County), South Carolina. Also making the move was his father's younger brother, Tarleton Lewis, age 19. Years later David and Tarleton married sisters, Nancy Williams and Rachel Williams, respectively. These marriages made David Lewis and Tarleton Lewis brothers-in-law and started a lifetime of close association between these two families. Sometime prior to 1840, David and Tarleton, along with their families, moved from South Carolina to the newly created Cass County.

It's a wonder the old mansion survived as long as it did. From 1915 to 1936, "Birdwood", also known as the old Lewis home, was abandoned and allowed to deteriorate. This was a fate so familiar to many other fine southern homes. It was in 1936 that Mr. S. Y. Tupper, a retired Atlanta businessman, purchased it and began an extensive restoration. This restoration is described in the following excerpts from a letter Mr. Tupper sent

in 1939 to Herschel Venus Lewis (1887-1946) of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Herschel was a descendent of David Lewis.

"We bought the old place in February, 1936 and have restored and modernized it, endeavoring throughout the work to retain its original appearance and to have the grounds in keeping with and as much like the original as possible. Though, of course, we could only judge of the garden, etc., by what remained of stone walls, etc. Our water works are supported by a hydraulic ram at the spring across the road, which gives us something over a gallon a minute on top of the hill back of the house where the tank is located. We have installed modern plumbing and have two baths and showers upstairs and one down. The old stone wall at the east, which was badly tumbled down has been re-positioned and the stone walls around the immediate yard in front and back have been restored. We have tried to keep it in the late Georgian and early Victorian period, which we thought proper for a home of Greek revival influence."

"There is an old Negro in the neighborhood known as Uncle Jesse, who is well-up-in his nineties. He has quite a clear mind in spite of his age, and he remembers the house well when he was a small boy and says that his father was owned by the builder. Two stories are told of the brick of which it is made and which are much admired for their pretty rosy tints. One story is that they were brought in from Augusta, Georgia by ox teams and



*Eaton home today on spot where the old mansion stood. Notice rock wall and steps remain.*

the other is that they were made on the place by slaves."

Another descendent of David Lewis was Frank Lewis Irwin, who in 1943 wrote a letter about his visit with the Tuppers to other relatives. Frank and his wife,

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*"Birdwood" Continued*

Connie, were traveling through Cartersville on their way to Fort Stewart and had an opportunity to visit "Birdwood".

"So far as we could ascertain, they (the Tuppers) have done a first class job of restoring this old place to its original state of being. All of the glass windowpanes not broken were saved and used even though glass made 100 years ago is not smooth like glass made today. Hearth bricks from the eight fireplaces were collected and enough was obtained to build two of the hearths exactly as they were. All woodwork, mantle pieces, door sashes, window sashes, and most of the window frames are the originals. Practically all of the floors were intact, however, they were badly buckled and scarred. These boards along with all material used in construction were 1-1/8 inch or more thick. In the restoration process these thick boards were able to stand much sanding and planing. In every case, Mr. Tupper was more interested in restoring the original than in buying a new board or a new piece of building material."

"When Grandad was a boy, the four big downstairs rooms were used as bedrooms. The front of the house that faced the road really was not the front. That part of

side of the place was probably landscaped. From this road there were two fancy spiral steel staircases rising to the second floor porch. This second floor porch had quite fancy woodwork and window workings which gave added evidence to the fact that it was the real front."

There is not much information on David Lewis. We do know that David's wife, Nancy, bore four children while living in South Carolina. The youngest, Jacob Warren, (1825-1891) married Elizabeth Ann Holcomb (1828-1880) of Cass County in 1851. The couple resided in the "Birdwood" mansion with Jacob's parents.

In 1864, as war approached this county, both David, now 71, and his youngest son, Jacob Warren Lewis, became extremely worried. Jacob, now a man of 39 years, along with his wife, had four young children to protect, as well as his elderly parents. Even though the Lewis' were neutral and probable Union sympathizers, Jacob's second child, David Franklin Lewis, remembered hiding food in the woods from foraging northern troops. The Lewis' neutrality was evidenced by a letter from the office of the Provost Marshall, Cartersville, Georgia, dated July 1864. "This is to certify that J. W. Lewis (citizen) of Cass County and four miles from

Cartersville has shown sufficient proof of being a loyal man to the government of the United States."

In a second letter from Mr. S. Y. Tupper to Herschel V. Lewis in 1939, he states, "I note that your grandfather, Mr. Jacob Lewis, was not a slave holder and was probably a known sympathizer, which probably accounts for the old house not being burned by Sherman. I have often wondered how it escaped. Some of his forebearers must have had slaves, however, as the report is that the house was built by slave labor, which chimes in with Uncle Jesse's claim that he was a son of one of Mr. Lewis' slaves. Also, I forgot to tell you that about five or six hundred yards back of the house,

on land now owned by a Mr. Smith, but originally part of this place, I have located a most interesting slave burying ground. The graves are marked head and foot with fieldstones with no inscriptions as would have been the



the yard was rocky and not conducive to good landscaping. The rear of the house had a road extending about 1/4 mile straight away towards the fields. This stretch was more level and had trees planted on each side. This

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## "Birdwood" Continued

case had it been a family plot. There are about eight or ten graves."

Fieldstones with no inscription do not necessarily designate a slave cemetery. According to D. Gregory Jeane, noted historian, placing field stones is a way of "making do" in the absence of marble or granite headstones. Formal headstones were not always available for various reasons. This was quite common, especially during and prior to the Civil War. The eight or ten graves mentioned by Mr. Tupper, therefore, did not necessarily make up a slave cemetery.

In the early 1930's, Bernice Lewis Bassett (b. 1893) asked many questions of her father, David Franklin Lewis (1854-1937). Her notes stated that his grandfather, David Lewis, as well as his father, Jacob Warren Lewis was opposed to slavery. Tarleton Lewis, the uncle and brother-in-law of David Lewis, lived on the Tennessee Road and was said to have had lots of slaves. It may have been the slaves of Tarleton Lewis that helped to build "Birdwood" and farm the plantation there, however this would only be speculation.

Another theory about this mansion deals with a statement made by Lucy Cunyus in her book, History of Bartow County, Georgia, Formerly Cass. She states, "In 1840 a two-story brick school house with an auditorium was erected by Col. Simpson Fouche on the present Rowland Springs road, which had before and after the Civil War been used as a residence. Here Col. Fouche taught the Lewis, Rowland and Howard sons."

Could this have been "Birdwood"? Olin Dean Lewis (b. 1896) said that his father, David Franklin Lewis, told him that the upper floor of the house was used as a school once. Whether or not Col. Fouche was the builder of the old Lewis home or David Lewis using the slaves of Tarleton Lewis is not known. Mr. Tupper's research in the 1930's caused him to believe that the builder was a Mr. Zeb Lewis. However, according to Mr. Frank Lewis Irwin, who supplied a wealth of information to our local library, about the Lewis family and "Birdwood", no record of a Zeb Lewis exists nor anyone else whose given name begins with a "Z".

The old mansion had its share of folklore. During the early part of this century, while the house was vacant, men who grazed their cattle in the vicinity camped inside the old Lewis home. The story goes that there was a trap door which led to a dungeon under the house.

Any number of people have gone up to the old place and have completely disappeared. Mr. Tupper had heard that the place was haunted. One of the Lewis ancestors would come on New Year's night and play the violin on the back verandah. Mr. Tupper went on to say that like most old houses, the old Lewis home was full of creaks and noises of various kinds. When the doors or windows would slam at night, Mrs. Tupper would often remark "with a smile" that Mr. Lewis is about to make us a call. A story was also told that Jake Lewis had 8000 silver dollars hidden in one of the porch columns. Between 1915 and 1936 while the house was vacant, the front and rear columns were torn open by treasure hunters.

It was in 1946 or 1947 that Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Lenherr purchased "Birdwood" from Mr. and Mrs. S. Y. Tupper. The Lenherrs had moved from Sylacauga, Alabama and had purchased Bradshaw & Sons dairy products company, located at the corner of Gilmer Street and Cherokee Avenue. It was during the Lenherr's watch that "Birdwood" burned in 1949. The fire was discovered in the attic, and by the time the fire department arrived it was too late. Strong winds had fed a fire that completely destroyed "Birdwood". On that same site, the Lenherrs built a one story brick home in 1951. This new house was designed after one they liked in their old hometown of Sylacauga. Many of the brick used were salvaged from the old mansion. Following the Lenherrs, Mr. and Mrs. Willis Beavers became the owners of the new "Birdwood". Mr. Beavers was employed by Thompson-Weinman and lived in the house until his death. Cindy Eaton is now the proud owner of this property which once boasted a fine mansion belonging to an era not to be forgotten.

**Editor's Note:** Much of the information contained in this article was taken from a portfolio of papers found in the Cartersville Library titled "The Lewis and Holcomb Families in Cass (Bartow) County, Georgia" by Frank Lewis Irwin. Many thanks to Mr. Irwin for providing this information to our library and for the photographs of "Birdwood" found in this article. Thanks also to DiAnne Monroe for calling this information to our attention and to Guy Parmenter for rearranging Mr. Irwin's work into an article.

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# HOLIDAY GATHERING....ENJOYED BY MANY!



The Etowah Valley Historical Society held its annual holiday gathering at Roselawn on Friday, December 2. Over 100 members and guests enjoyed a social hour and a delicious catered meal. The event was organized and directed by Joe Head in his capacity as EVHS's Vice President. He was assisted by Guy Parmenter, Joan Gentry and Debbie Head.

Pianist Janne Gilberti Pick entertained throughout the evening to the delight of the participants. Miss Pick is the 15 year old daughter of Harold and Ivone Pick of Kennesaw. She has studied piano for eight years under Margaret Jackson of Cobb County.

Roselawn was elegantly decorated for the season under the guidance of its talented director, Mary Siniard, with assistance from Jimmie Davis, Angie Wilson, Dorothy Anne Roth and Edna Mosley.

## NEW OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS MEET AT RED TOP

On Thursday, November 10th, 1994, your new officers and directors met at the Red Top Lodge for an annual planning session. They thoroughly reviewed the current activities of the Society, looking for ways to enhance each. New ideas were presented and many will be implemented during this fiscal year. This is the third consecutive year this planning session has been held. All committee chairpersons were encouraged to attend. Follow-up sessions will be held in February and June.

## GET TO KNOW YOUR 1994-1995 OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS! THEY ARE...

### Officers

President - Larry Gregory  
Vice President - Joe Head  
Treasurer - Denise Conner  
Recording Secretary - Rosemary Clabo  
Corresponding Secretary - Susan Taylor

### Directors

Guy Parmenter - Chairman  
Emily Champion  
DiAnne Monroe  
J. B. Tate  
Diane Mooney  
Linda Trentham  
Pat Simmons



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# THOMAS WILEY BRANDON

by Clyde W. Jolley, April 24, 1959

In the dead of winter in 1959, on a bluff overlooking the winding river, my aunt and I stand at the grave of Thomas Wiley Brandon, my great-grandfather. The brambles and sedge and the thick grass are dead with him and the marbles. Only the pale green river below and the dark green pines overhead are living dwellers there.

He who lies here was born in 1803 during the administration of Thomas Jefferson and was no doubt named for him.

He was born before Ludwig Van Beethoven had reached the heights of his Ninth Symphony and before Napoleon Bonaparte had reached the depths of his Waterloo.

He was born when George Washington was hardly cold in his Mount Vernon grave; he was born when the United States eagle was just beginning to try its young-like wings.

He brought his young wife to a height on the Etowah River in 1835 and built a log house still occupied and in pretty good shape, thank you.

And when he had built his dwelling place, he went a mile up the river and on a cliff high above the green water built a log church and laid out a burying ground.

The church had a big fire place in one end and it was called Brandon's Society for him who had established it and after the manner of the Methodist churches of that day.

And Thomas Brandon taught his family and his slaves in the church; taught them the three R's plus the fourth R of religion (in truth the Bible was the only textbook they had).

He cleared six hundred acres of wilderness land, raised ten children to adulthood, freed his slaves before Abe Lincoln went to Springfield, and sent three sons and one freed slave named Noah Brandon off to Northern Virginia to fight for Robert E. Lee.

Having lived a full and good life he laid down to die on June 11, 1878 and was brought to this beautiful spot on a rich spring day filled with birds' songs and blue skies and fragrant breezes.

Here he lies close to his family; close to the still born babies and small children who died in a century far removed from our own in medical progress; close to the slaves and ex-slaves of his household.

My aunt, eighty six years old and as straight as the sapling near her, is busy with memories. She can remember faintly his voice and gait and appearance.

How young is our country! I stand beside one who remembers a man who came into the world during the very childhood of our republic.

How young is our country! Yet how far we are from our beginnings!

The facts I know about Thomas Wiley Brandon's life are few.

I know that he loved the river for he made his living place and his dying place beside it.

I know that he loved beauty for he wrought his handiwork in the mist of beauty.

I know that he loved education for he taught his own children and when it was possible helped organize the first community school the wilderness knew.

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I know that he loved his community because he was one of its incorporators, one of its first ten voters and its first justice of the peace.

I know that he loved justice for I have seen a letter written to him by a slave he educated and freed which praised him for that love in faultless prose.

I know that he loved God because he built two churches during his lifetime as testimonials of that love.

I know that he loved his family for I see the immortality of that love in kaleidoscopic patterns nearly a century after his going.

I see a small son of his dead granddaughter poring over the great books which formed a major portion of her heritage.

I see two grandsons cleaning off this old cemetery in loving remembrance of those long dead.

I see the scions of the younger brothers he fathered and taught become governors and congressmen and his own scions become leaders of their communities and lovers of their fellow men.

I see the war-time letters of his sons, telling with dignity and simplicity of the bloody, dusty years with Lee.

I see a far removed namesake counseling with the titans of business in distant cities, respected by them for his worth and integrity.

In Louisiana, in Florida, in Georgia, in Alabama and throughout the nation I see men and women working, building, teaching, planting, learning, living, sustained in large measure by their inheritance from this one who sleeps by the river.

Few are those who come now to this lonely high bluff above the river.

Few are those who give a passing thought in 1959 to Thomas Wiley Brandon or to the generation in which he lived.

Preoccupied with the electronic tube, the atom and the rocket, we are forgetting our beginnings.

My aunt and I stand in the old graveyard amid the stubble of winter and agree that the values established by our grandfather and men like him are perhaps more important than any arrangement of atoms or any count down at Cape Canaveral.

We today concern ourselves with living (and large scale dying); The men of Thomas Brandon's stature and his times concerned themselves with life.

**Editor's Note:** This article was submitted by Minta Ward. Additional information about Thomas Wiley Brandon can be found on pages 477 and 549 of The History of Euharlee. Thomas was born in Halifax County, Virginia. He was reared in Gwinnett County, where his family moved in 1806 or 1807. On January 7, 1830, he married Louisa Avery Green of North Carolina. In 1835, Thomas came to Cass County and became one of the leading farmers and land owners of the Euharlee-Stilesboro area. In 1836, with the help of some of his neighbors, he helped organize and build on his own land the first Methodist Church in his district. As the congregation grew, a new church was built near the railroad in "downtown" Stilesboro. It was destroyed by a tornado in 1898 and rebuilt in 1899 and is today known as "Brandon Chapel". Thomas is buried in the family cemetery next to the site of the old log Methodist Church which is on property now owned by Georgia Power's Plant Bowen.

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# OFFICE NOW OPEN!

The EVHS encourages everyone to drop by our new office located in the 1903 Courthouse which is open from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. on Saturdays. Available are materials written about Cass/Bartow County.

Micro-film records are among EVHS's resources which include newly found records of the Nancy Creek Baptist Church (ca. 1857-1869) that was possibly located in Cass Station. Additional micro-film includes all available newspapers of Cass/Bartow County from June, 1840 through April, 1956. These begin with **The Georgia Pioneer** followed by **The Cass Standard** (ca. 1852-1860). Moreover, the **Georgia Death Index** from 1919 through 1993 is on order and will soon be on hand.

The EVHS seeks donations of historic books which may include any book written about Bartow County or written by a Bartow County author. In addition, the Society needs school annuals, city directories, Georgia histories and genealogical books.

Thanks to the following members who are giving their time to keep our office open: Linda Trentham, Sydney Jolly, Norma Tidwell, Laurette Smith, Pete Rogers, Louise Simpson, Pat Simmons, Emily Champion, Carolyn Parmenter, Frank Entwisle, Lizette Entwisle, Pat Mansfield, Bill Dysart, Glenda Collier, Richard Nix, DiAnne Monroe, Bob Crowe and Martha White.

If you would like to volunteer your time, please give Guy Parmenter a call at 382-0500 (work).

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ETOWAH VALLEY  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. Box 1886  
Cartersville, Georgia 30120

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