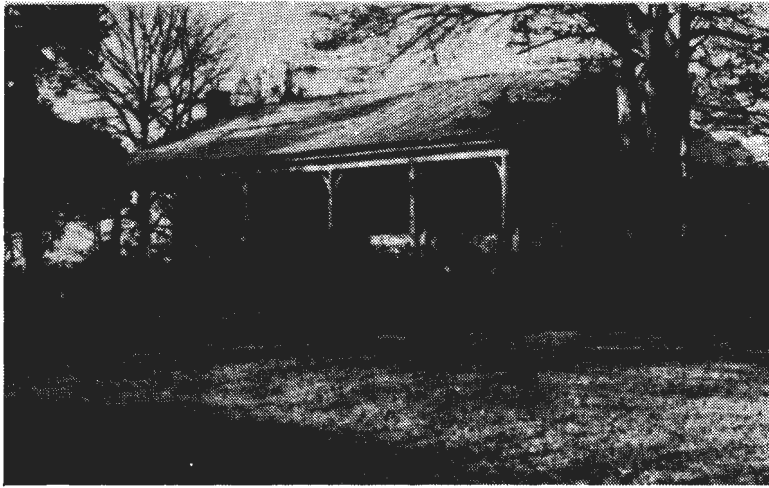
Four decorative swirls are positioned in the corners of the page, outside the central oval. Each swirl is a complex, symmetrical design with multiple loops and flourishes.

# *History of Old Houses in Decatur*

*Compiled by  
Women's Progressive Club  
1990  
Revised 1994*



## *The Gallaspy House*

The exact date this house was constructed is not clearly shown. Mrs. Ruth Gallaspy states the original house was built by Mr. Alec Russell. His daughter Betty Russell who married Mr. J. L. Hoyer lived in this house. To this union a son, Horace Hoyer, was born while the family was living in this house. Alec Russell moved the Hoyer family to Newton and put them into a home similar to this one. It is located by the First Baptist Church in Newton, and he set them up in the mercantile business.

The story goes that Hoyer defrauded his father-in-law, and Alec Russell left in his will only \$1.00 to his daughter Betty.

Mr. Alec Russell had a large farm or plantation outside of Decatur at the old Russell house west of town, where Sherman rested. The house in the country was built a lot like the one in town. The house in town was a bigger and finer house.

Another daughter of Alec Russell, Roxanna (Roxie) Emma married Garland Miller Gallaspy (Mack) on April 18, 1883. The union produced seven children: Bessie, Maude, Leila, Russell, Garland, Exa Mae and William Henry Gallaspy. The Business was a Mercantile establishment which was housed on Church street, known as Broad Street now, with a warehouse for the company which covered part of the back street and where the Bert Aycock house is now.

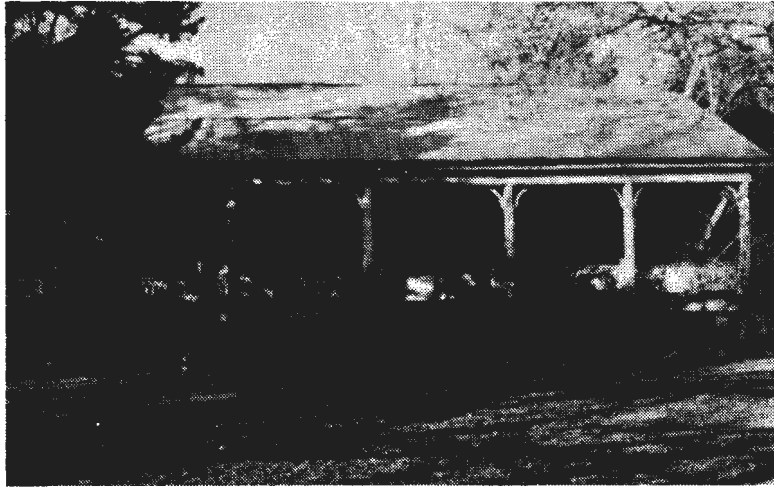
Roxie died September 12, 1896 and William Henry Gallaspy died January 13, 1895 of typhoid fever. Garland Gallaspy had typhoid fever twice and suffered brain damage.

Viola Virginia Virgilia Haughton married Garland M. Gallaspy (second marriage) on October 26, 1898. To this union five children were born: Launa Guinne Gallaspy, Lucilli Jean Gallaspy, Cecil Ray Gallaspy and twins Gerald Leighton and Genevive Lurline Gallaspy. Genevive is the sole survivor. She married a Williams and lives in Oklahoma.

Viola Gallaspy lived in this house until her death in the 1960's. She for many years was the correspondent for the Newton Record and wrote the County Capitol News. This was her only means of income.

Russell Gallaspy married Ruth McKenley of Stilwell, Oklahoma and they raised three sons in this house. The sons names were Russell, Don, and Mack. They later moved into the Burley Gallaspy house, now owned by coach Harms.

Louna Gallaspy married Elzie Reeves, sister-in-law of Gladys Reeves. He lived with his mother in this house and cared for her until her death sometime in the 1960's and before mentioned. Louna and Elzie had no children. Louna fell on bad times and Elzie had very poor health. He became despondent, went outside one day and shot his dog, and then shot himself in the yard of his home. Louna sold the land to Dr. Boggan for his clinic and the lot behind the clinic. He told us at that time that at one time there was a horse race track in front of the house. He also told us that the house is made of heart pine and square nails. There are boards that are over two feet wide in this house and the pillars are of solid wood. There are only parts of the porches that have been repaired. The porch was built behind the pillars to keep the rain off the porch. Originally the house was a dog trot house and the kitchen was in the big room off the back of the house.



W. H. Johnson bought the estate from Elzie Gallaspy and he allowed her to remain in the house as long as she lived, which was not very long.

The house was used as a private academy for a few years, until the new academy was built. It is a landmark of our town and hosted many dramas.

According to Mrs. Ruth Gallaspy, the land that belonged to this house went from the road in front of the Decatur Medical Clinic which was known as the Union Decatur Road. It took in all the land including the college to the street just past the college, the road in front of the old Dr. Henton Place.

This home was purchased in March 1992 by retired school teacher, Sarah E. Greenwood. The house has been left in its original state with the exception of an enclosed porch and an addition of a screened porch and a deck from an outside door in the original kitchen.

The house was repainted (50 gal. white) and the original shutters painted and put back on the windows. The roof was repaired and painted.

The address of the house is 108 Fourth avenue. It is located on about a one acre lot because of some adjustments to the lot lines. The owner wanted to settle some disputes among the neighbors about the boundaries of the property.

Inside the house basic work has been done. First it had to have "tons" of debris removed. Cardboard stripped from the walls, fire places were closed because of their condition. An island was added in the kitchen, and a den was enclosed at the end of the "dog trot". Doors are being stripped to the original wood. The house is furnished in antiques, collected over the years by the owner. Much more work has to be done before it is completely renovated, which will be a "labor of love".

*Researched by*

Iris Boggan, Johnnie Mae Keith  
and Sarah Greenwood



## ***The Gladys Reeves Home***

The home now owned by Mrs. Gladys Reeves was first owned by George and Frances Gaines. Mrs. Gaines was born in 1752. We were unable to get Mr. Gaines birth or death date.

The original part of the house was a bedroom, porch, and a kitchen that ran off the existing house. The house was later sold to Mr. George Gaines, son Jim and wife Lizzie Gaines. Mr. Jim Gaines and Lizzie Brown Gaines married in 1888. They added on to the house that now stands.

They has 10 children Howard, Frank, Shelby, Clara Alexander, Ruby Motley, Myrtes Carraway, Lucille Gaines, Annie Laura McCormick, Vera Gaines and Brown Gaines. Mr. Shelby Gaines was the first child born in the house in 1890. Mr. Frank Gaines, the second child born in the house in 1892.

From the date of Mr. Shelby Gaines birth the house was 100 years old in 1990. Prior to this as stated, his grandfather owned the house and lived in the small portion already mentioned.

In 1942 it was purchased by Perry and Gladys Reeves. The current living room was a front porch and the dining room was open throughout with a breezeway or hall to the back porch. All the chimneys are still original and 3 bedrooms of the house are still in the original form.

The farm when purchased had thirty-two acres. The following families have purchased lots from the land and built homes. Scottie Gilmore, Price Miller, Patsy Harber, Reginald Thames, Imogene Addy, Lottie Patterson, Mr. and Mrs. W. E. Bounds, Mr. and Mrs. John Thrash, Mrs. Fred Griffin and Ronnie Blass.

When Mrs. Reeves purchased the home it was farm land and had the original barn where Reginald Thames house is sitting. We believe from persons we talked with, the house was built before 1888, the year Mr. Jim and Miss Lizzie married. It appears the house is well over 100 years old. The courthouse burned in 1876. This was 12 years before Mr. and Mrs. Gaines married in 1888.

*Researched by*  
Gladys Reeves, Helen Rose  
and Kathryn Walters



## *The Russell House*

The Russell house now owned by David Griffin was the "Fed" Russell home. Fed was the son of Oscar Russell, who lived west of town and at one time was the largest taxpayer in the county.

The original Russell Hotel was located where the Super Stop is now. The hotel stood where the Edna Mosley house was located. In 1915 when Miss Ruth Gallaspy came to Decatur to visit she stayed there. Fed Russell was her husband's uncle. It was about 1920 that Fed Russell and his wife took in boarders in this house that still stands today.

They had five children:

1. Myrtie Bell - married a Stevens from Richton who owned a lumber company.
2. Grace was a spinster for years but finally married A.C. Spinks.
3. Oscar the only son graduated from A & M - never married.
4. Carrie - never married.
5. Sarah, lives in Mobile, AL today and never married.

*Copied from "History of Newton County" by A.J. Brown (pg. 331)*

It is very pleasant to note the great change in the town of Decatur. It is now one of the quietest places anywhere to be found, and is a good point for business. Russell & Hoyer, since the war, have carried on an extensive drygoods and general merchandise business with great success. There are now five places of business in the town, two good churches, one Sunday school, a good school house, good courthouse and jail, a good hotel and some neat private residences.

*Researched by*  
Jeanette Thrash



## ***The Raymond Comans House***

This house was built for Mr. E. G. Warren (Erastus or Raz) and his wife Willie Dunnegan Warren. The lot was bought from J. J. Webb in July 1912 and the house built soon after. Mr. Warren was a clock-maker. Mrs. Warren was very active in the Baptist church. They had two children, Bill and Ruth.

It was bought by Robert and Julie Smith around 1960. Their children were all grown and away from home at this time. Robert died in 1967 and Julie died in 1971. After that the house was bought by Jasper Smith, one of the sons of Robert and Julie.

The house was bought by Raymonds Comans in 1972. He worked on it for 8 years making many improvements. Raymond and Glenda and their three daughters Cheryl, Charlotte and Catherine moved into the house in the spring of 1980.

*Researched by*

Gerry Fick, Glenda Comans  
and Ruth Gallaspy



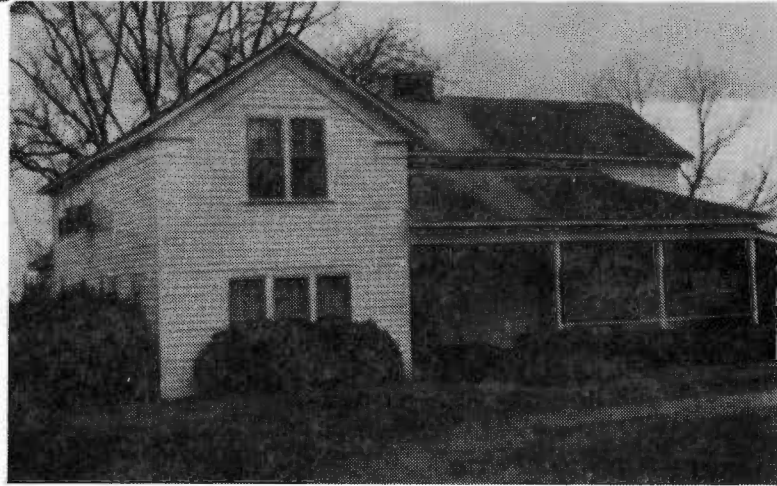
## ***The W. H. Johnson House***

The lot was bought from Dr. S. B. Henton by W. J. Leslie in April, 1908. It was sold to W. C. Mabry family in October, 1908. There were four children born to the Mabry family. Willa McClenahan and Annie Rose Mabry were born in this house. They loved to play with their cousins at the Henton house. The house was sold to Montgomery Carleton in 1920. During the depression the Carleton's had hard times. W. H. Johnson, Sr. bought the house in 1935 from the bank. W. H. Johnson, Sr. came here from Harperville to be principal of the high school. W. H. Johnson, Jr. started to Junior College in 1935. For a while the house was rented to A. J. Blackburn, Bert Evans, and Excell Mapp. The W. H. Johnson house was sold to Danny and Merita Cherry. The sale was closed on May 15, 1991. They have made many changes to the house. The most striking is the porch across the front and north side of the home with a gazebo at the corner of the porch. A large kitchen with a sky light was added to the north side. The house is beautifully decorated inside with bright colored walls and original woodwork painted white. There were six fireplaces with two flues. Central heat and air conditioning was added. Many interesting things were found under the house such as a dictionary dated 1886, and medicine bottles enough to fill a five-gallon bucket.

Roy Graham from the Prospect community was the builder who restored the house, Danny Cherry did much of the restoration himself. Decatur friends are glad to see an old house restored to a home with such beauty and comfort.

*Researched by*

Gerry Fick and Merita Cherry



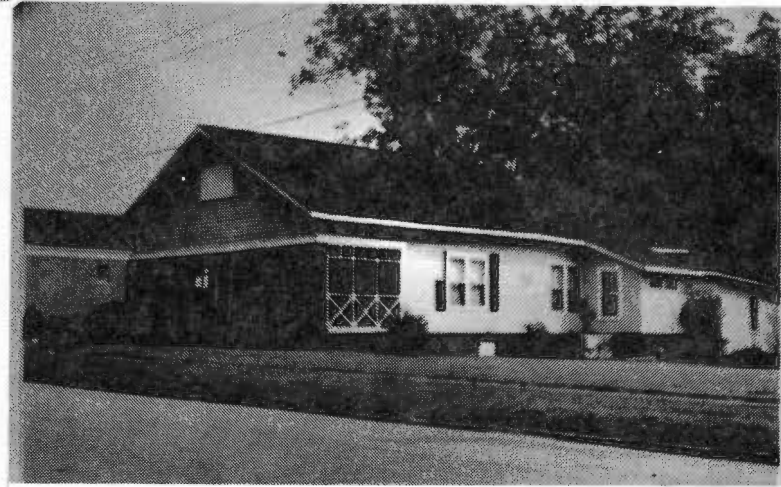
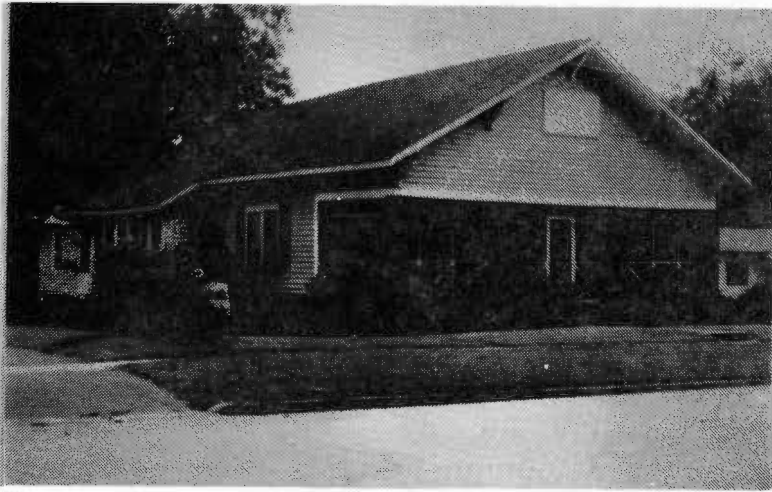
## ***The Henton House***

This house was built for Dr. Sanford Barto Henton about 1900. They called it the mansion. Dr. Henton had 8 children, the youngest was Robin who stayed at home to drive for his daddy. Lois Ray Loper went to live with grandfather Henton at age 8 months because her parents were ill with TB. She remembers many experiences living with her grandfather, the doctor, such as front porch surgery, or tonsils removed on the way home from Sunday School. She said the first word she learned was "confinement". If anyone asked for the doctor her reply was "he is gone on "finement case".

The house was sold to the college in 1946. The F. E. Leatherwood family were the first college family to live there. The families of L. D. Furgerson, Earl Terrell, Roger Burkes, Rickie Vaughn, Phil Sutphin and Troy Brown have lived there.

Mrs. Leatherwood tells that when they cleaned the house, many medicine bottles were thrown out of the house and just covered with dirt. Children playing in the yard are always digging up bottles, even to this day.

*Researched by*  
Gerry Fick



## ***The J. W. Thrash House***

This house, located on Broad Street in Decatur, was the parsonage for the United Methodist Church. It was built sometime in the late 1800's. It was thought to have been built before 1900 when Mr. Thrash bought it in 1958.

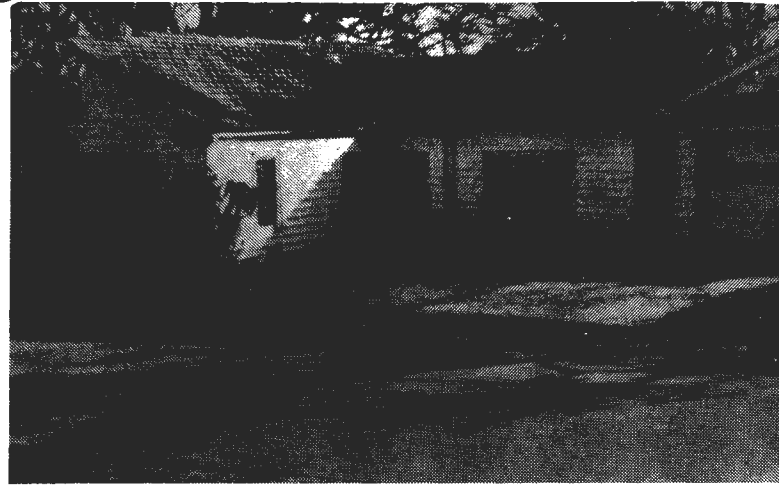
Mrs. Thrash (Jean) said that several people have told her that they were married by the Methodist preacher in this house. Homer and Ola Hunter and Elmer and Frances Johnson are just two of those couples married in this house.

The house had flues and chimney for wood heaters and fireplaces between the living room and front bedroom. At some time the porch on the east side of the house was closed in for a study. Now it serves as Jean's Beauty Shop.

The house does not have an entrance or hall-way so the house has two doors on the front as did many houses in those days. Square nails were used in the original construction. A carport has been added on the back.

This has been the home of J. W. and Jean Thrash and their two sons Jimmy and Terry until the sons were married. Mr. Thrash's mother Ms. Mary has made her home with them.

*Researched by*  
Jean Thrash and Gerry Fick



## *The Ronnie and Paula Harris House*

The Frank Gaines home was built in the late 1920's or early 1930's. Mr. Gaines, who owned and operated a local department store, hired "Day help" to build the house soon after the birth of their first child. Much of the building material for the construction came from an old house located near the railroad depot that Mr. Gaines had bought for the lumber.

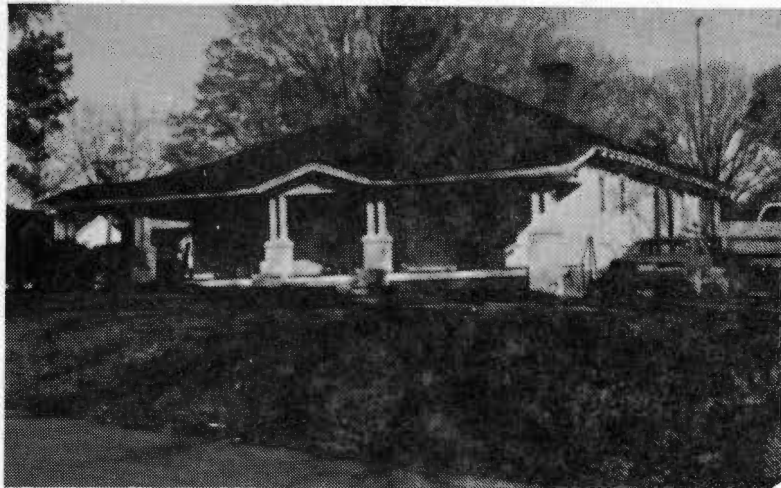
The house has been remodeled two or three times since its original construction. The front view of the house today is the same as that of the original house except that an extra bedroom was added on the northern end of the house during the first remodeling project.

A major renovation of the house was completed shortly before the fiftieth wedding anniversary of Frank and Berniece Gaines. They added a large den across the back of the house and extensively remodeled the interior of the house. Fireplaces were replaced by a central heating system, and the kitchen was updated and modernized.

Mrs. Gaines was known throughout the area for the many beautiful pink roses that she grew in her yard. She used these to provide beautiful arrangements for many weddings, teas, church services, and special occasions in the town. Federated club women from all over the state admired her beautiful roses used to decorate at an MFWC convention held in Meridian. When her health deteriorated, she gave many of her rose bushes to a niece living in Newton.

After the death of Mr. and Mrs. Gaines, the house was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Rex Gordan, a Union lawyer. It was bought by Ronnie and Paula Harris in 1988, and they live in the house at the present time with their two children, Whitney and Haley.

*Researched by*  
Lois McMullan



## ***The Al Deaton House***

Mr. W. C. Mabry had this house built in 1920, when he was serving as Newton County sheriff. The carpenter was Mr. Rob Keith. There was no electricity or plumbing in this house when it was built.

The garage was about 30 feet south of the house, and the barn and chicken house were in the pasture south of the garage.

There was a hall down the middle of the house with three bedrooms to the right, and the living room, dining room, and kitchen to the left of the hall. A porch was across the front and a screened porch across the back. The first bathroom was put at one end of the back porch.

The front bedroom and the middle bedroom, each had a fireplace using the same chimney. Coal was burned. The fireplace in the front bedroom had a trap door that could be pulled open to let the ashes fall into an ash pit, built of bricks, under the house. The pit would be cleaned about once a year.

In 1924, Mr. Mabry sold the house to Mr. J. M. Thames, Sr. who used a dynamo to generate electricity in order to have electric lights and a pump, to pump water into the kitchen.

About 1928, Mr. Thames was allowed to hook into the sewage line that was put down from the Junior College to the Canal east of town. The high school and courthouse, as well as anyone who lived along the route of the line were allowed to hook on to the sewage line.

Three of the Thames children were born in this house, Reginald, Frances and Billy Jack. The oldest son, James, was born before they moved to this house. Mr. Jim Thames lived in this house until his death in 1975. In 1976, the house was sold to Rev. John Cook. Alfred Deaton purchased the house in 1986.

*Researched by*

Reginald Thames and Marie Hinson



## ***Old President's House***

*On Campus of East Central Community College*

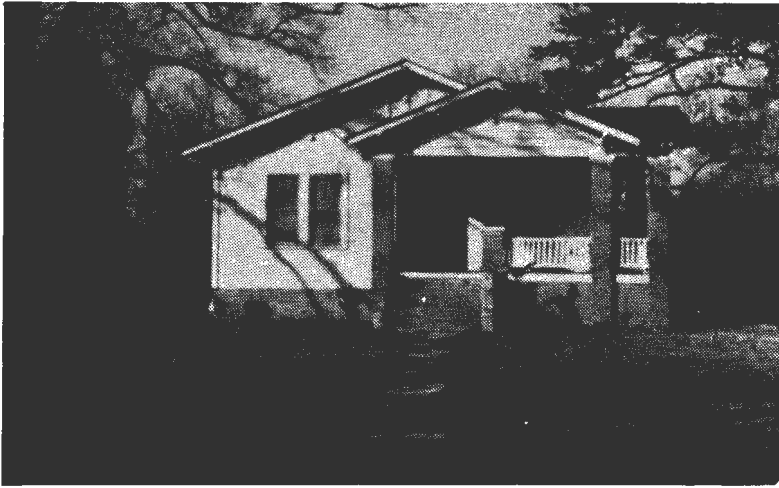
This house was built for Phillip Feldman in 1925. The college purchased the house from Mr. Feldman in 1927. The cost was \$4500. The house has 2093 sq. ft. The house has 3 bedrooms on the north. The middle section has a bedroom, family room or den, and the kitchen. The south area has a glassed in porch, living room, and dining room.

President Dr. L. O. Todd and family lived in the house until he moved to Meridian in 1954. The house had some rearrangement of space in 1955 when President W. A. Vincent and family moved in. The house was used as the President's home until the new house for presidents was built in 1962.

The house then became a faculty residence. Frank and Nellie Cross lived there first. Ovid and Carol Vickers and family lived there 19 years until 1989. L. B. Bullock, Richard Ethridge and Phil Sutphin also lived there.

*Researched by*

Dr. Richard Ethridge and Frances Johnson

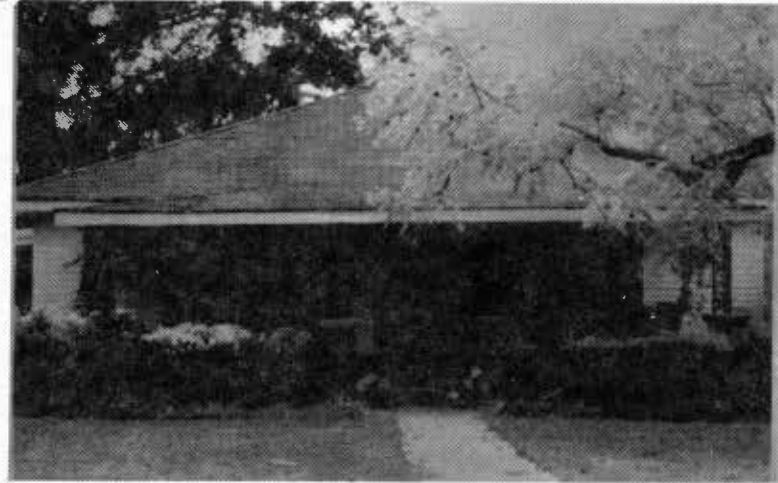
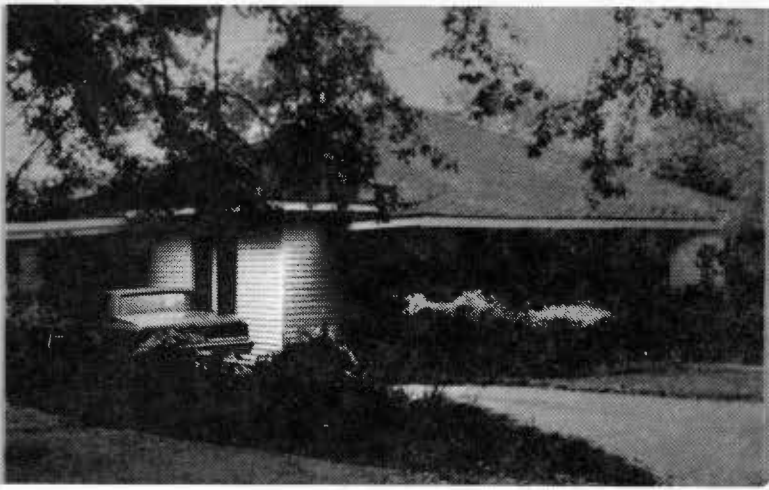


## ***The R. F. McMullan, Sr. House***

This house is located on Broad Street at the end of city limits. The house was built in 1926 and was occupied by one family - the parents and 4 children. The house was built on the lot where their former home was located. When the structure began, the older son was in high school. He hauled the brick for the foundation from the railroad depot in a horse drawn wagon. These brick were shipped from Laurel, Miss. Mr. McMullan was postmaster at this time. Town officials met in the living room of this house to make plans to attract the location of ECJC to Decatur. These plans were finalized in 1928. Today we call the institution ECCC.

The McMullan house was built by a Progressive Farmer blueprint. The house plans remains the same - never added to or taken from. The house is being refurbished today, but the floor remains the same. It has been said that older house have their own personality hidden in a one family history.

*Researched by*  
Mary McMullan



## ***The Homer Hunter House***

This house was built around 1925 by Mr. Felton Freeman and J. T. McMullan. The first occupants were Mr. and Mrs. Felton Freeman and family.

The Freeman's occupied the house until 1934 when they moved to Newton. Mr. B. D. Spivey purchased the house in 1934 from the Freeman's.

The Spivey's owned this house until first of July 1945, when it was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Homer Hunter. At the time of purchase by the Hunter's there was no plumbing with the exception of one hydrant in the kitchen. An ice box was used to keep the food cool. A large cast iron pot in the yard was used in washing clothes. In 1984 two large rooms and an additional bathroom was added to the east side of the house.

The Hunters had three daughters. Ann Burkes was born before they moved to this house. Sue Greenfield and Jane Smith were born after they moved to this house.

*Researched by*  
Homer Hunter



## ***The Tommy Keith House***

The Keith home was built in the 1930's by Mr. Ollie Buntyn, a sawmill owner who hand-selected the best lumber from his own property.

The newly renovated home of Tommy and Pam Keith is decorated in typical "Country Style" with the original hardwood floors refinished in their own natural color.

When the home was being remodeled several walls were taken down and doors closed to make more spacious rooms. Also closets were added to each bedroom. There was only one closet in the original house.

The kitchen was completely remodeled, except for the pantry which was left with original shelves and wooden plank walls.

The house is blessed with lots of windows which Pam loves. In the master bedroom the windows were redone into french doors that open out onto the spacious deck and carport. Two new baths were added, and a laundry room was made out of the older screen-backporch.

The house still contains the two original fireplaces. Antiques are used throughout the home, including a beautiful mirrored oak mantle at the entrance door.

Various family heirlooms are displayed throughout the house to give the original older home look.

*Researched by*  
Pam Keith