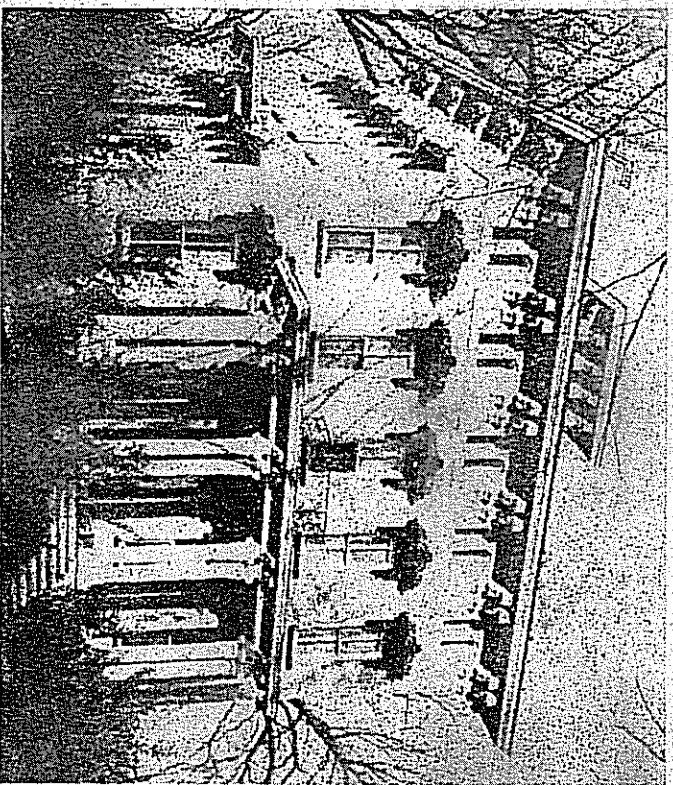


Col. Benjamin Buried In Yard of Home; Later Moved to Shelbyville Cemetery



(Second installment of a story about the Benjamin house written by Noel Clark Holt as part of a history course he took at Central College at Fayette.)

Colonel Benjamin was buried in the southeast corner of the yard. Later, however, he was moved to the cemetery at Shelbyville. He asked that on his tombstone be engraved: "J. F. Benjamin, 1817-1877, Captain, Major, Lieut-Colonel, Brigadier-General in the Missouri Militia." He was in the memory of the people of this territory one of the meanest men that ever lived: He is still reviled by the people in this section who know anything about him. During his tenure of office in Shelbyville during the Civil War, he was supposed to have been the instigator of the "Palmyra Massacre," consequently, because of all his misdeeds, not one of the many people to whom I talked could think of one good thing to say about the Colonel.

Mrs. Benjamin lived in the house until her death. In her will she provided that the house was to be sold and the money derived from the sale to go to one of her sisters. The sister and her husband decided to buy the house, and moved to Shelby from New York. They soon tired of the small town. He however, and in August, 1895 sold the house to J. H. Carmichael and returned to New York.

The sale of the house to Mr. Carmichael was a bit ironic. In contrast to Colonel Benjamin's avid support of the Union, Mr. Carmichael was a Confederate soldier and spent 14 months in Rock Island as a prisoner of the Union Army.

During the period that Mr. Carmichael owned the house one of his daughters was married to Mr. Arthur Jones of Shelby. Mr. and Mrs. Jones occupied an apartment in the second floor front of the house. To Mr. and Mrs. Jones was born a son, the only child ever born in the house. This son, A. Loy Jones, is one of the Curators of Central College. Mrs. Jones, her son, A. Loy Jones, and her daughter, Mrs. Joe Nicely, tell many interesting and informative stories about the house and the legends connected with it.

When Mr. Carmichael bought the house it was in its original state, with the original furniture in it. Since that time however, much of the furnishings put in the house by Mr. Benjamin have been scattered to the four winds.

In 1912, Mr. Carmichael sold the house, an action that brought sorrow to the family. To quote A. Loy Jones, Brigadier-General in the Missouri Militia, "It was like losing an old friend rather than just leaving a house." Through the intervening years the house has passed through various hands. Mrs. C. A. Long of Hannibal is the present owner.

Among the properties obtained by Mr. J. F. Benjamin after settling in Missouri was a five-acre tract, known as Out-lot 48, Shelby. On this tract which now faces Third street, in Shelby, on the east and is bordered by College on the south, Mr. Benjamin in 1867 started construction of a house which resembled one he had seen and liked in Washington, D.C.

The house was three stories high with a cupola on top. It was constructed of red brick, which has since been painted yellow. Around the house were several other buildings, all of the same square architectural style with the cupola atop them. Mr. Benjamin was sure that native materials were of inferior quality and so he imported most of the building materials and furnishings from Europe, or from some place on the east coast. These materials came to New York, from there around the Mississippi to Hannibal and from there overland to Shelby.

There were brick walks leading to the doors on the north and south sides of the house. The main entrance is on the east. On this side of the house is a porch which is nearly as long as the house. Originally there were steps that were as long as the porch. Today the steps are considerably shorter, having been replaced in recent years. This shortening of the steps gives the illusion that the whole porch is smaller, which it is not. On the south side of the house is a smaller porch of the same design. On the northwest corner of the house is a porch that could be considered the back porch. There

were, and still are, ample shrubs and trees to give the house a gracious and beautiful setting. A unique feature of the house is that the window on the southeast corner facing College is a false window. In the house where this window should be is only blank wall.

(Editor's Note: The next installment will tell more about the construction of the house and how meals were prepared in the basement.)

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