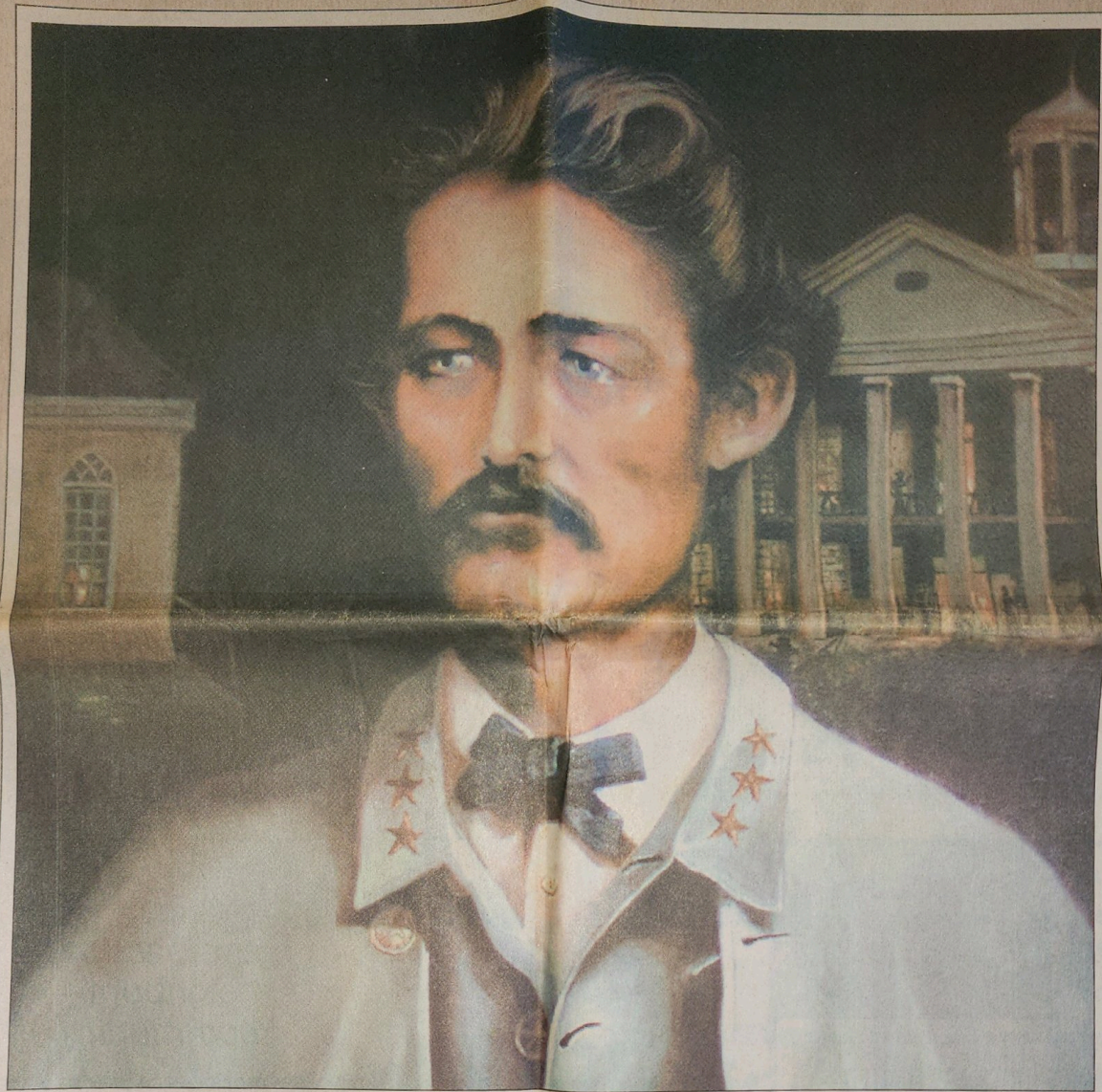


Close to Home

Part One



Mississippi artist connects with Granbury's past

by PETE KENDALL
Staff Writer

Hiram Bronson Granbury never lived here. In the 1850s, when he moved from Mississippi to Seguin and then to Waco, there was no here here.

He didn't grace our presence until 1893, when his remains were whisked from Tennessee to Granbury Cemetery for re-interment. This was 29 years, almost to the day, after the beloved Confederate general expired during the bloody Battle of Franklin (Tenn.).

Hospitable folks that we are, we're glad to have him in whatever form.

He captivates us.

He also enthralls honored guests. Mississippi artist Jerry McWilliams, whose electrifying portrait of Granbury graces the cover of the

biography "Lone Star General Hiram B. Granbury," visited the Granbury gravesite with wife Kay McWilliams recently.

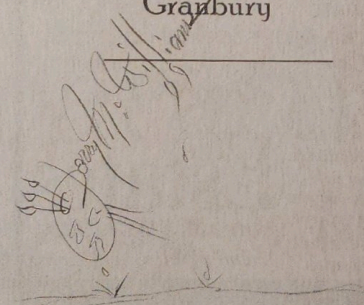
They're in the process of arranging a one-man show of the artist's works, many Civil War-related, at Granbury City Hall.

The McWilliams couple's connection with Granbury, the general, is more than illustrative. Their residence, Southern Cedars near Raymond (Miss.), was the plantation home of much of the Granberry family. Hiram lived nearby. His specific residence no longer exists.

The spelling of Hiram's last name was changed after his re-location to Texas in 1851. No one knows why, though Jerry McWilliams offers an educated guess.

(Please see GRANBURY, P.2B)

Hiram Bronson
Granbury



Jerry McWilliams' portrait (top) of Hiram Granbury graces the cover of 'Lone Star General Hiram B. Granbury.' Above, McWilliams' signature.

GRANBURY

From Page 1B

"If you write the e and r in script, they look like a u."

Granbury's, or Granberry's, time in Texas is well documented. He established a law practice in Waco in the mid 1850s and in 1856 was elected chief justice of McLennan County. In 1858, at the age of 27, he married Fannie Sims, originally of Tuscaloosa, Ala.

After Texas seceded from the Union in 1861, Granbury rose to captain with the Waco Guards, a militia unit which ultimately merged with the 7th Texas Regiment Infantry and embarked from Marshall in East Texas into combat.

Among the first was the Battle of Raymond on May 12, 1863, especially significant to Granbury, by now a colonel, in that the turf he defended in Mississippi had been his own. He commanded the 7th Texas Infantry. He had courageous company, including Col. Randal McGavock, commander of the 10th Tennessee Infantry.

"My portrait of Granbury is from the night before the Battle of Raymond," Jerry McWilliams said. "He's in front of the courthouse. You can see the trouble in his eyes."

"McGavock was at a place called Coopers Wells that night. Coopers Wells was a resort with a big hotel. The next morning, there was a big parade in Raymond around the courthouse. The ladies of the town sang southern songs."

"The soldiers thought they were going to meet a small band of renegade Yankees coming up from Port Gibson south of Vicksburg. The ladies had cooked fried chicken and laid it out under the pecan trees for them when they got back."

"They rode down into Fourteen Mile Creek. They came up. When they topped the hill, they didn't see anything but a sea of blue. It was Grant's and Sherman's main forces. It wasn't long into the battle before the horses started breaking loose and running back into Raymond."

"The wounded began pouring into town. The hallways and upstairs of the courthouse were turned into a hospital. So was the church on the side, which is also in my painting. The bloodstains are still in the floor of that church."

"McGavock was quite a showman. He wore a big hat with a plume and a cape with a red lining. He had his own flag, the Sons of Erin. When he saw all that blue, he threw his cape back over his shoulder and hollered charge. He was immediately shot off his horse."

"Patrick Griffith, the man who stayed with him, let him down off his horse and pulled him into the shade of a tree. McGavock's last words were, 'Griffith, take care of me.' McGavock is now buried in Mt. Olivet Cemetery in Nashville."

"Granbury survived the Battle of Raymond. He was promoted to brigadier general

in the Battle of Atlanta. He was killed in the Battle of Franklin.

This all ties together. We live right off the Gallatin Road in

Mississippi. McGavock lived right off the Gallatin Road in Franklin, Tenn. and was killed in Raymond. Granbury went to Franklin and was one of seven generals who died in that battle. He was killed right off the Gallatin Road, and he lay on the porch of the house owned by McGavock's uncle."

The irony is spine-tingling.

"We own the Granberry plantation," Kay McWilliams said. "McGavock visited Coopers Wells, which we owned for about four years. He says in one of his books that he visited all the surrounding plantations. Ours was the second closest to Coopers Wells."

"McGavock probably danced in our home."

Fannie Granbury died two months before the Battle of Raymond. Rebecca Blackwell Drake, co-author of the Granbury biography and

owner of McWilliams' Granbury portrait, discovered Fannie's burial place in Mobile, Ala., in 2002.

"No one knew where she was buried, and Becky researched it and found the plot," Jerry McWilliams said. "The stone is gone. There are several people buried there. Some of the historians in Granbury wanted to bring her here to be buried next to Hiram."

"The cemetery people in Mobile said no, that the request would have to come from someone with the family. And, they said they couldn't be sure which person in the plot was her."

Hiram and Fannie both have headstones in Granbury Cemetery.

"He's there," Jerry McWilliams said, "and she's not."

Part 2, Tuesday



Jerry McWilliams with his latest painting 'Except for You--The Love Story of Andrew Jackson and Rachel'

Courtesy photo



Even though Hiram and Fannie Granbury both have headstones in Granbury, Fannie is actually buried in Mobile, Ala.

Pete Kendall/pkendall@hcnnews.com

Lifestyles

Close to Home

Part Two



Courtesy photo

Jerry McWilliams with his portrait of Col. Randal McGavock

Living in Granberry's past

by PETE KENDALL
Staff Writer

when you get to the attic, it's another 20 feet to the top. When I'm in the house, I can't hear it raining because the roof is so high. The walls are very thick.

Living in Granberry's past

by PETE KENDALL
Staff Writer

Jerry McWilliams is as renowned in his world as Hiram Granbury was in his. Their worlds, to be sure, constantly collide.

McWilliams and wife Kay reside at Southern Cedars, an 1834-vintage plantation near Raymond, Miss. It was originally in the Granberry family. Hiram changed the spelling of his name to Granbury when he migrated to Texas in 1851.

Additionally, McWilliams painted the Granbury portrait that graces the cover of the biography "Lone Star General Hiram B. Granbury" by Rebecca Blackwell Drake and Thomas D. Holder. Drake now owns the painting.

For reasons personal and professional, the McWilliams couple made the 8-hour trek to Granbury recently.

"We went to the cemetery and saw Hiram Granbury's stone," Kay McWilliams said.

"We knew there was a town named after him," Jerry McWilliams said, "but we'd never been here before. And we live in the Granberry home."

It housed much of the Granberry family. Hiram, a frequent visitor, lived nearby. His residence is no more.

Jerry and Kay regard themselves as visiting owners.

"You feel like you never own it," Jerry said. "You feel the home just lets you live there. You're a caretaker of it. Then you pass it along to the next caretaker. Hopefully, that person will take good care of it."

"One time, a man said he wanted to buy the house. He said, 'I would like to tear it down for the materials.' I told him the house was not for sale at any price."

Southern Cedars was built to last. It has, for going on two centuries.

"The house has 14-foot ceilings," Kay said, "and

when you get to the attic, it's another 20 feet to the top. When I'm in the house, I can't hear it raining because the roof is so high. The walls are very thick. You can't talk from one room to the other.

"We have many people come through on tours. They say they've never felt the warmth and friendliness and welcome that they feel in our house. The finest thing about owning a house like that is sharing it with other people."

Occasionally, there are unexpected reminders of Southern Cedars' past. The McWilliams couple discovered one during remodeling of the ballroom.

"William Massingill Granberry fought in the Battle of Vicksburg and Champions Hill. He came from that house," Jerry said. "Years before, a pack rat had collected a bunch of straw under the house. In the pile was William Massingill Granberry's gold stick pin with his initials in script."

"We also found a Civil War sword in

the well," Kay added. "The well was there before the house. You think how many births, marriages, illnesses and deaths took place there ... how much happiness, how much sorrow."

The Granberrys were slave owners. The slaves were said to have stayed on after emancipation.

"The Granberry slaves were free to go and never left," Jerry said. "One of the nannies stayed there till she died in her 80s or 90s."

McWilliams' other Civil War-related paintings include:

Colonel Randal McGavock: God's Own Gentleman; The Sinking of the USS Cairo, which hangs in the National Military Park in Vicksburg; Jefferson Davis and Dog Traveler, which hangs in the Jefferson Davis Presidential Library in Biloxi; Sky Parlor Hill, which depicts Vicksburg during the siege; and Lt. Gen. John R. Pemberton, which hangs in the Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg.

In the McGavock painting, "He's on his horse, (Please see GRANBERRY, P. 2B)



Jerry McWilliams with 'Sky Parlor Hill,' a large oil painting depicting the siege of Vicksburg



Painters use imagination, skill to create messages in the sky

By BEVERLY CANERDY

JACKSON DAILY NEWS Staff Writer

If nothing else, Jerry McWilliams's sign-painting is realistic.

"One time back in the '60s I painted a girl in a bikini and I had to go back and put a full bathing suit on her," laughed the Terry resident. It seems that someone thought the girl looked a little too real to be on a roadside billboard for all to see.

That wasn't the only one of his billboards which has raised eyebrows through the years.

Fellow outdoor advertising sign painter Myron Lynam, from Jackson, once had to go out and tone down one of McWilliams's billboards which was said to be too "voluptuous."

But the criticism doesn't seem to bother McWilliams: he passes it all off with a laugh — he was just doing his job, not intentionally trying to shock people.

Through the years, he and Lynam together have painted billboards of Jesus walking on water, cars, women — you name it. McWilliams can take an 8 by 10-inch picture and enlarge it enough in his mind to fill a 14 by 48-foot billboard. That's just what he does.

"Everyone thinks when they see our billboards that it's (printed on) paper, and the small ones are, but they don't realize that the big ones are hand-painted (on the actual board)," McWilliams said.

One of his latest endeavors is a set of billboards for a local radio station featuring portraits of Willie Nelson, Dolly Parton and Kenny Rogers.

Those are probably my favorites of all the billboards I've done. It's the first time I ever got to do three portraits on one board and I'll say they're probably some of the hardest I've ever done," McWilliams said.

He painted the faces for the billboards and Lynam painted the clothes.

McWilliams took a small sketch from an advertising agency and some album covers and pictures, and painted bigger-than-life portraits of the three with incredible accuracy — especially considering that on the two billboards, one of Rogers's eyes alone is almost two feet wide.

Their painting takes a lot of imagination as well as skill.

"We just pieced Dolly Parton together. I couldn't find a real good picture of her with her hair like we needed. So I got her face off of 'Playboy' and we just made her hair up," he said.

The secret to their work, they say, is scaling.

"It's all done by scale. When an agency gives us a sketch, we scale it out," McWilliams said. "Of course, after you get it to scale it's still not painted."

The painting — "That's what separates the children from the adults," Lynam said.

McWilliams started working for a sign painter after school when he was only 15 years old. When he was 19, he began working for Lamar Outdoor Advertising, the company for which he did the radio station billboards. He's now 46 and though he actually works for himself, contracting out his time, a large portion of his work is still done for Lamar.

Lynam, 66, first worked for Lamar in 1946. He recently retired himself, but he still goes back to help out, as he did on the radio station billboards.

Neither has a great deal of education in painting. McWilliams spent a summer in Chicago studying portrait painting at the Chicago Art Institute and Lynam studied cartooning.

Some Jacksonians might remember seeing the Rub-E-Dub car wash building in Greenville painted with a Volkswagen, wearing a top-hat and smiling as if it were ready for a night out on the town. McWilliams painted it. He also painted the head of Christ which hangs in the Carmelite Monastery on Terry Road and the western scenes which adorn the walls of a Greenville bar. He and Lynam have both painted quite a few church baptisteries in their time.

The only time their work gets boring, McWilliams said, is when the same billboard has to be painted time after time.

"I painted a steak on a Sally Sunflower sign one summer. I don't know how many of those I painted, but they were all over the state," he said. It dulled his appetite for steak for quite a while.

Most of their painting is done in a warehouse behind the Lamar Outdoor Advertising building. The billboards are hung and scaffolding is placed for McWilliams and Lynam to stand on and work.

"One time we painted a billboard of an Old South girl in an antebellum dress and a big hat standing in all these flowers," he said. "We had finished it, and I thought we had done a good job on the flowers. The client came in to see it — she called herself an artist — and she said, 'That's just lovely but we need more color. Where's your paint?'"

"She started putting paint on it, just dabbing it on all over. The paint was running and she was just messing the whole board up. Then she turned around to me and said, 'Ohh, don't you just love what's happening?' and she said, 'I couldn't stand to watch. But I decided I might as well join in, so I got some brushes and started throwing paint on there with her — she loved it.'"

One main rule when painting words on a billboard is: don't misspell anything. If you do, the phone will ring off the wall, the two said. People also read special meanings into billboards that are begun on location one day and not finished until the next.

"We were painting a sign one day out on a highway that said 'Get that Regal feeling.' We couldn't reach the 'Re' so we just left it for the next day and didn't think anything about it," Lynam said. But without the "Re" the board said "Get that gal feeling."

"They knew about it in Jackson before we got home," he laughed.

Sign painting isn't without its dangers, though, especially when painters are working outside on a billboard that is already hung. There's the height to deal with, and then there are the hunters.

"You hear people out shooting behind the billboard, not knowing that we're working on the face of it," McWilliams said. But so far all of the bullet holes have been found in the billboard's scaffolding and painters.

The discouraging part of the work is that, once the billboard has been posted for the specified length of time, it is brought in and all of their work is merely blanked out, to be painted again with another message.



Staff photo by Michael Barrett

Jerry McWilliams (left) and Myron Lynam show off one of their favorite billboards, featuring portraits of Kenny Rogers, Dolly Parton and Willie Nelson. McWilliams painted the faces and Lynam did the clothes.



Home of Jerry & Kay McWilliams

SOUTHERN CEDARS

Joel T. Bailey

*The Southern Cedars home was built in 1834
A Southern Planters cottage steeped in Southern lore*

*Built the same as Cedarcrest just ten miles away
And the rolling grounds and trees still exist today*

*Inside this home is like stepping back in history
And the high walled spacious hall is now a gallery*

*It survived a war and many storms and still stately stands
Restored to all its Southern charm by caring loving hands*



JERRY McWILLIAMS, ARTIST

Portraits Landscapes Historic Events Restoration

Mississippi artist, Jerry McWilliams, is widely known for his paintings of historical events and portraits. His interest in art started early in life and his drawing and painting by age six turned into a career in pictorials by the age of twenty. Jerry's fascination with the "Old Masters" influenced the style and size of his paintings. McWilliams, who studied art both in Chicago and Mississippi, also studied under Frank L. Atkinson, who created the artwork in the rotunda of the new State Capitol in Jackson, Mississippi. His primary works are oil portraits and the recording of 18th and 19th century historical events. These works include:

The Sinking of the U.S.S. Cairo, hangs in the National Military Park at Vicksburg, MS and is featured on billboards in MS and LA.

Sky Parlor Hill-1863-A large oil depicting the siege of Vicksburg.

Gen. John C. Pemberton, a life-size portrait, hangs in the Old Courthouse Museum in Vicksburg, and shows his orders to hold Vicksburg at all costs.

The Old Grist Mill, which hung until recently in the Grand Gulf Military State Park, Port Gibson, MS.

Jefferson Davis, with his dog, Traveler, at Beauvoir, hangs in the new Presidential Library at Biloxi, MS.

Except for You-The Love Story of Andrew Jackson and Rachel, recently completed, is McWilliams' latest work, depicting their courtship and marriage in 1791, at Springfield Plantation, just outside Natchez, MS.

Several of the paintings are shown regularly on the History Channel. Prints are available of most and have been distributed nationally. His work also includes the restoration of a religious painting found in the attic of St. Mary's Catholic Church at Natchez, MS, hidden there in the 1850's. It is now displayed at the Carmelite Monastery in Jackson. Other subjects for McWilliams' work vary from portraits of Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson and Kenny Rogers to religious paintings. Prints of many of the above works hang in the Mississippi Welcome Centers. Jerry and his wife, Kay, reside in an ante-bellum home near Raymond, MS.

Andrew Jackson
1767-1845



Rachel Donelson
1767-1828

Except for You

The Love Story of Andrew Jackson and Rachel

by
Kay McWilliams

The following is a true and timeless story of history and the enduring love of two people caught in a world of change and turmoil. It happened at a time in our history when our frontier was rapidly advancing westward into the wilderness. News traveled slowly, was erratic at best, and had a dramatic effect on the lives of Andrew and Rachel.

Andrew Jackson, the 7th President of the United States, aka Old Hickory and The Border Captain, had a humble beginning. The son of Irish linen weavers, he was orphaned at an early age. He became a frontiersman of many talents and interests. He raced horses, his fortunes rising or falling accordingly. He became a traveling lawyer, judge, landowner, general, senator, dueler, President of the United States, and last but not least, husband of Rachel, the only woman he would ever love.

Rachel, a true frontier woman, was influenced her entire life by the hardships she endured in her early years. She and her family traversed 2000 miles by riverboat to reach the Nashville area. Harsh weather, hunger and pain were their constant companions. Sinking boats and scolding by savages were commonplace. She was popular, due to her beauty and sweet nature, and married Capt. Lewis Robards when she was only eighteen years old. Adored by her mother-in-law, with whom they lived, there began a three-year off-again, on-again relationship, due to Robard's jealousy. He repeatedly drove her from their home on the slightest provocation. No one, except her husband, not even her mother-in-law, ever accused her of any wrongdoing.

Andrew met Rachel, at her mother's blockhouse just outside Nashville, where he and others were boarders. Rachel was a beauty to behold when seated on her spirited horse, dark hair flying in the wind and full red lips smiling. Her black eyes seemed to sparkle with hidden secrets. The young men were taken with her spirit and sweet disposition, Andrew most of all. Robards' jealousy was causing trouble and Andrew Jackson, as usual, was brandishing his dueling pistols. He moved to other quarters not wanting to hurt Rachel's reputation.

One last reconciliation with Robards failed and Rachel prepared for flight from his constant abuse. Col. John Stark, a friend and elderly American-born Spanish subject, was planning an 800 mile trip to Natchez by riverboat. Rachel saw a way for escape to friends in Natchez. Jackson and others were persuaded to go along for protection from the savage bands of Indians following along the riverbanks. Rachel was finally ensconced with the Abner Green family just outside Natchez. Jackson immediately returned to Nashville and continued his practice of law.

Robards had filed for divorce and let it be known that a divorce had been granted. Jackson went immediately and asked Rachel's mother for her hand in marriage. He then returned in the fall of 1791 and married Rachel at Springfield Plantation, just outside Natchez, Mississippi. The newlyweds moved into a log cabin at Bayou Pierre, overlooking the Mississippi River. This would be the pinnacle of Rachel's happiness, but soon they had to return to Nashville as public life was calling.

The events of 1793 would shatter Rachel's peace-of-mind forever. Unknowingly, her divorce from Robards had never been finalized which made her 1791 marriage to Jackson invalid. When news of the final divorce decree was made public, friends and family urged them to obtain another license and hold another marriage ceremony. Andrew Jackson was a man with an acute sense of honor and would never have hurt Rachel by marrying her had he known that the divorce was not final. But, it was too late. A scandal was brewing, one that would haunt her the remainder of her life. Rachel was forever branded a "scarlet woman" by Andrew's political enemies. Historians believe that the lack of communications in the frontier wilderness was a primary factor in the divorce controversy.

Andrew and Rachel were married thirty-seven years and had a love for each other that never waned. His political career careened ahead and he was elected President of the United States. Rachel, happy for him but always fearful of public life, was destined to never become First Lady. Failing health and one final humiliating assault on her character, overheard in a Nashville hotel, sent her home, to her bed, to her death.

Andrew Jackson was inconsolable as the only woman he ever loved lay dead, leaving him to lead the nation without her love and support. He laid his Rachel to rest in her rose garden at their home, the Hermitage, in Nashville. He left her there in the quiet, finally at peace, where she had been happy and began the long lonely years as president without her at his side. For the remainder of his life, a small porcelain portrait, with a wreath of their entwined hair, was kept close to his heart. At night, he would lovingly place the portrait on his bedside table. The first thing he saw each morning was her beautiful, beloved face.

Historical Credits:
The Life of Andrew Jackson: The Border Captain & Portrait of a President, by Marquis James, and Ladies of the White House by Laura Carter Holloway.

Prints available call or write:

JERRY McWILLIAMS, ARTIST

Southern Heritage Productions, Inc.

P.O. Box 97029

Pearl, MS 39288

Phone: 1-877-376-9201

FAX 1-877-376-9204

Also, available is a companion cassette, *Except for You*, the love story of Andrew and Rachel, performed by Paul Ott.



Southern Cedars Gallery



Civil War and Historic Architecture

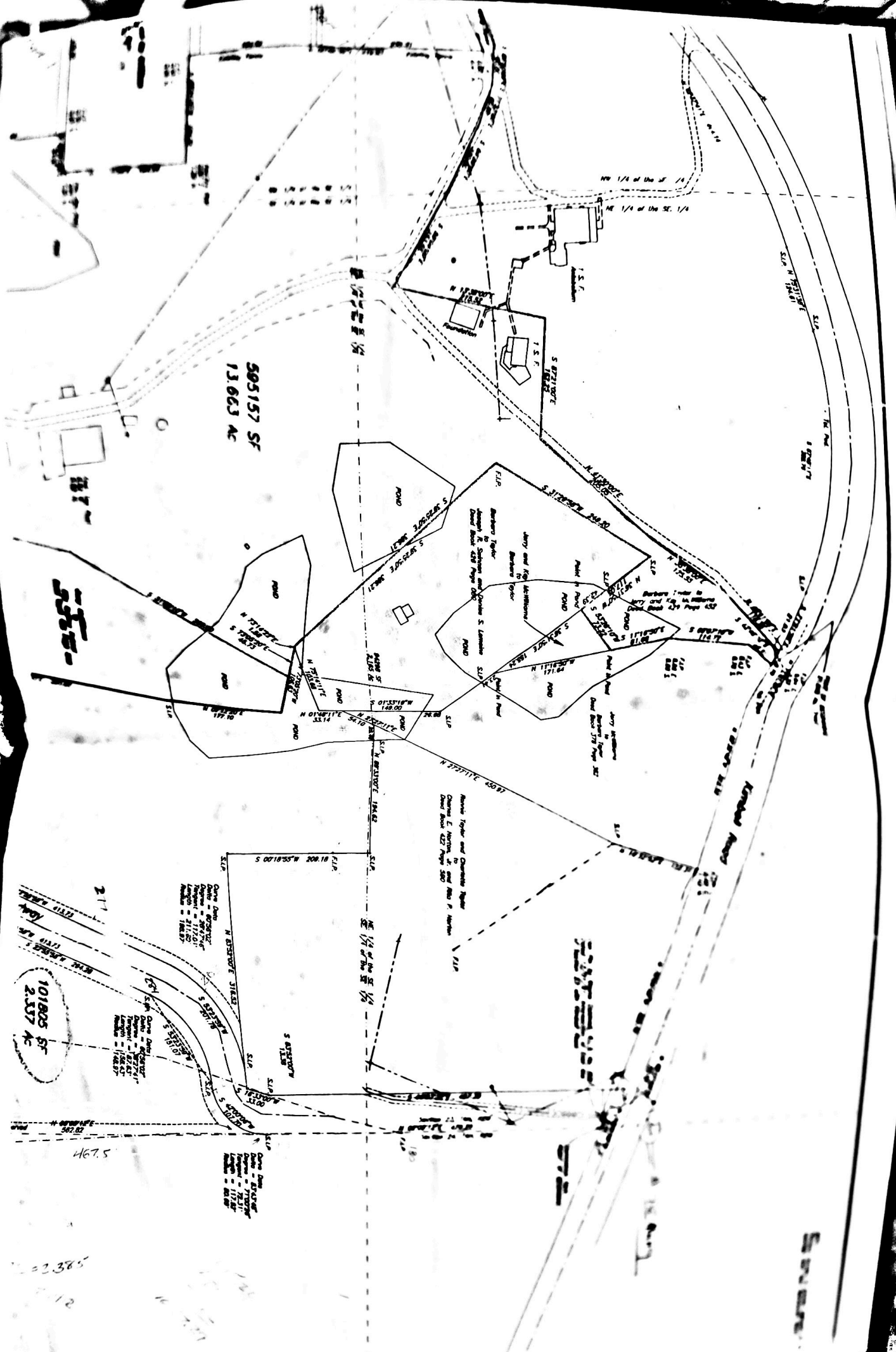
Southern Cedars - Living With Art and History



Southern Cedars, circa 1834, plantation home of Jerry and Kay McWilliams.

Southern Cedars, architecturally referred to as a Greek Revival Louisiana Planter's Cottage, was built c. 1834 by Joseph Dennis, a native of Jones County, Georgia. After moving to Hinds County, Joseph married Phebe Granberry, the daughter of Stephen and Elizabeth Granberry of Cedarcrest Plantation. Joseph purchased approximately ten miles from Cedarcrest and built Phebe a home identical to Cedarcrest. After Joseph moved to Hazelhurst, *Southern Cedars* became the property of Phebe's brother, Jesse Dykes Granberry. The homes still exist today.

Outstanding features of *Southern Cedars* are the massive front doors and fourteen-foot ceilings. The high



585157 SF
13.663 AC

101805 SF
2.337 AC

Done Date
Survey = 8/28/97
Elevation = 2170.0
Length = 2170.0
Width = 180.0

Done Date
Survey = 8/28/97
Elevation = 2170.0
Length = 2170.0
Width = 180.0

Done Date
Survey = 8/28/97
Elevation = 2170.0
Length = 2170.0
Width = 180.0

467.5

23.385

12