

John C. Moore built the first hotel which still stands today

The first hotel in Fayette Court House town or Fayetteville was built by John C. Moore in approximately 1840, over 170 years ago, and still stands today. It is the oldest home in Fayette. The house is located at 215 10th street on the left up the hill from five points and was originally a two story structure with 12' ceilings and twin 8'x 12' front parlors on each side of a 10' x 30' center hallway. The two back rooms were identical to the front as were the 4 upstairs rooms. The basement downstairs was originally the hotel's kitchen and dining room. Today the home has been totally altered inside and belongs to Donna and Randy Parker.

John C. Moore was a son of Henry Moore, who was one of the first settlers of this area. Henry was born in Ireland in 1789 and married Mary "Polly" L. Lewis in Elbert, Georgia in 1815. They came from Elbert, Georgia to the Alabama territory around 1819 and acquired a large tract of land through land grants and purchases which eventually totaled 520 acres. Known as the Henry Moore Plantation, his home and property were located beside the Luxapalila River about 5 miles northwest of Fayette on the old Winfield Road (Bluff Highway). Henry and Polly Moore were the parents of 13 children – 8 sons and 5 daughters. Two children died at young ages.

John C. Moore, born in 1818, was their oldest son. Another son, James H. Moore, was a Captain in the Civil War and was postmaster in Fayetteville in 1851 (buried at Fayette City Cemetery). Three sons were all named after U. S. Presidents - Moses Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, and Daniel Washington Moore. These three sons were all killed in the Civil War and all killed in the year 1861. The youngest child, Francis Marion, moved to Texas where he became a great pianist in Austin, Texas. The girls married Fayette County boys and many of them moved to Texas.

Polly Moore died in 1839 and Henry died in November of 1852. According to a great, great, great grand daughter of John C. Moore who lives in Houston, Texas, both Henry and Polly are buried on the plantation property beside the young children who died earlier. Probate Court records show the estate (house and land) of Henry Moore was offered for sale by James H. Moore, Administrator of the Estate, in 1875 and was described as "among the most valuable lands in Fayette County". However, records also show that James H. Moore left the property to his only child Zora I. Moore Cochran who sold 320 acres of the land in 1916 to James V. Tarwater.

John C. Moore first married Martha Thornton, 22 year old daughter of David and Bathsheba White Thornton. John C. owned a tan yard (tanning hide to leather) at the back of the Fayette City Cemetery. He also owned the land that is a great part of the cemetery today. In addition to running the hotel, John C. was appointed County Treasurer in 1844, Clerk of the County Court in 1845, and County Court Judge in 1847. He was elected as the first Probate Judge of Fayette County in 1850 when the Alabama Legislature changed the County Court Judge position to Probate Judge and expanded its scope and responsibilities. He was Clerk of the Circuit Court in 1866 and served as the Notary Public for Fayetteville from 1865 through 1869. He was appointed Postmaster of Fayetteville in January of 1874 and served in that position until 1885.

He and Martha had two children. Their first child, LaFayette Moore was born in 1846. In 1862, he joined the army of the Confederacy having barely reached his seventeenth birthday. After the war, LaFayette returned to Fayetteville but soon left for Texas. He later moved to Georgia and finally made Jacksonville, Florida his permanent home. LaFayette perfected a dry kiln process for lumber and installed it for the Brown Lumber Company of Fayette. He continued to visit Fayette throughout his life.

Mary Moore the second child of John C. and Martha was born in 1847. She married Erastus Pope. Shortly after Mary's birth, Martha died. Mary is buried in Texas.

In 1850, John C. Moore married Mary Ann Johnson who had one son, Houston D. Justice born in 1844. They had the following children together; Leona E. Moore was born in 1851. Leona did not marry until she was 41 years of age. During her "spinster" years Leona worked in the post office which was located next to the hotel on the east side toward 5-points. One night some young scoundrels played a trick on her and climbed upon the roof and dropped three big geese down the chimney. It is reported that the entire interior of the post office was covered with soot and ashes by the flapping wings of the frightened geese on their way down the chimney. We can imagine the ire of "Miss Leona" as she tried to herd the geese out of the post office and then clean the mess they created.

Leona married William Baker in 1892. He was 58 years of age and lived only five years after their marriage. He is buried in Belk (Antioch). Leona died in 1911 and is buried beside her father at the Fayette City Cemetery.

Other daughters of John C. and Mary Ann Moore were Eller (Ella) Moore, born 1854, married Colbert Wilson and Pattie Moore, born 1857, married Sid Ansley. Both daughters and their husbands moved to Texas shortly after their marriages.

The last child of the couple, John W. Moore, was born in 1860. Upon adulthood, he also moved to Texas and then on to Wyoming where he is buried.

John C. Moore died on August 17 of 1889 and is buried at the Fayette City Cemetery. After his death, Mary Ann was visiting her children in Sherman, Texas and died on April 8, 1890. She is buried in Sherman. Mary's child, Houston Justice in adulthood was listed as a laborer in Mississippi census but is buried near John C. Moore at the city cemetery.

Probate Court records show all the property of Judge John C. Moore was sold to the highest bidder. Purchasers of the property were LaFayette Moore, John B. Sanford, an attorney in Fayette, Carrie Coggin and Mrs. Lena Blackburn.

No direct heirs of John and Martha or Mary Ann Moore remain in Fayette today but the first hotel still stands.



As the first hotel looks today in 2014.

Information for this article was taken from the Fayette County Historical Society publications, Myra Moore Marsh, Houston Texas, and the ancestry.com website.