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Newsletter, February 2023

Cedar Oaks Guild

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CEDAR OAKS GUILD NEWSLETTER

February, 2023



Cedar Oaks Guild celebrated Valentine's Day with a formal luncheon and guest speaker. Head hostess Beth Ducrest with Anne Asger, Robin Buchannon, Keri Dibrell, Carla Johnson, and Patti Rish served cheesy chicken rigatoni, green salad, rolls, and a suitably indulgent chocolate cake with ice cream. The house was decorated with red roses and other Valentine's décor.



Several guests attended the meeting. Patti Rish's guests were Susan Kurland, Cheryl Couch, and Carolyn Durham. Suzanne Atkins brought her sister-in-law Evi Womble, visiting from Florida. We were pleased to meet all of the ladies.



Susan, Cheryl, Patti, Carolyn



Evi and Suzanne

Furniture: Cedar Oaks is looking fabulous with newly recovered furniture and a new parlor rug! The little piano seat now matches the Victorian lady's chair. The Eastlake furniture was repaired and recovered in scarlet, and the formerly gold settee in the upstairs hall was recovered in a coordinating navy and cranberry stripe. The mismatched dining room chair seats, some of which had precariously soft seat bottoms, are having wood bases added as needed and being recovered in the striped fabric.



Upstairs hallway



Parlor



Cedar Oaks Guild has invested heavily in improvements to the house. Thanks to **Lynne McIngvale** for coordinating the Indoor Yard Sale, and to all the members who donated items and worked at the Conference Center. We made a profit of \$571.46. Extremely generous end of the year donations of \$7,500 were received. We will continue to beautify the house.

If you have ideas for fundraisers, activities, guest speakers, etc., we now have a **Suggestion Box** where you can submit your ideas. It will be on the hallway table during meetings. Thanks to Patti Rish for this.



Janie Rozier had requested emerita status. Barbara Purdon spoke to Janie's friendliness and enthusiasm for the Guild, and her request was approved by acclamation. We will be glad to see Janie whenever she can join us.

Friday Tours will resume March 10. The Oxford Film Festival has reserved the house for a Faulkner themed party the evening of March 3.

Save the Date! May 7, 2:00-4:00 will be our first **May Day** celebration, complete with a **Maypole** and live music! This will require a lot of work, but should be a lot of fun for the community and for Guild members. Toni Paolillo and Sharon Schreiber are chairing the event. More information to follow.



Rachel Hudson and Toni Paolillo

We were delighted to welcome **Rachel Hudson**, the first Assistant Curator of Rowan Oak, as our guest speaker. Ms Hudson received her degree in English from UM and served as a student worker at the house before she was selected for the new position. She was a fascinating speaker and shared much information about the literary landmark.

Rowan Oak, the home of William Faulkner, was built by William Turner about 1844 for Colonel Robert Sheegog, an Irish immigrant planter who moved from Tennessee to Oxford when it was just a tiny frontier settlement. The house was built in Turner's signature Greek Revival style. Ms Hudson said there were three eras of the history of the house. The second owner of the property was the Bailey family, who purchased it from the Sheegog family in 1872, after the death of Mary Sheegog. Faulkner bought the house in 1930 and later the woods, after the house had been empty for seven years. He lived there until his death in 1962.

There is no "Rowan Oak" on the property, or anywhere! Faulkner named his home after the Rowan tree, which symbolizes security and peace, and the Oak, for strength and solitude. (Cedar Oaks was so named after the move because of the trees that grew on the current property.) The historic cedars that line the entrance to Rowan Oak were planted to purify the air. The house was not affected by the burning of Oxford in the Civil War because it was too far from town. Ms Hudson stated that Faulkner refused to pay city taxes after the city limits encompassed it.

The house is similar to Cedar Oaks, with original heart pine floors. The Baileys added a small indoor kitchen but Faulkner made significant changes to make it more livable, including expanding the kitchen, closing in the back stairway, adding bedrooms, his office (with *A Fable* outlined on the wall), a patio, stable, and gardens. Income from screenwriting for MGM helped to finance work on the property, some of which he did himself.

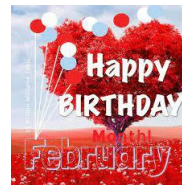
The post oak barn was originally a log cabin while the house was being built. Faulkner converted the detached kitchen and slave quarters to a smokehouse. The circle garden was in a ruined state when Faulkner purchased the property, but he liked it that way. Besides his published works read around the world, Faulkner was well known by family and friends for telling stories, including a ghost story about the tragic Judith, whose ghost prevented him from disturbing her grave in the circle garden.

The University acquired the property from Faulkner's daughter Jill in 1972, after the death of Estelle Faulkner. The property underwent extensive repairs and renovations in 1999 to preserve the house and some of the outbuildings. Known worldwide, the home attracts an average of 25,000 visitors a year, and they refer visitors to Cedar Oaks. Whereas Cedar Oaks was home to many different families over the years and is generally kept in the style of the late 1800s, Rowan Oak is preserved as Faulkner left it (except for the addition of central heat and air, which he hated!)

The University is looking to explain the full history of Rowan Oak, and the UM Slavery Research Group is helping to interpret the antebellum history.

Happy Birthday:

Marianna Ochs	February 1
Reba Greer	February 12
Janie Rozier	February 16



Cedar Oaks Treasure: Mahogany, Part 2

Mahogany grows primarily in Central and South America. Individual trees are scattered, not in groves. Mature trees that were harvested were generally thought to be more than 200 years old. The lowest branches of these huge trees might be 60-80 feet above the ground. A “hunter” would locate a spot with numerous mahogany trees, and then a gang of cutters, sometimes with their families, would establish a camp and begin cutting them around the end of August. Platforms for cutters were built 10-12 feet above the ground because of the large buttress roots. Logs were squared to facilitate transporting. Rough roads had to be cleared to truck out the timber. Teams of men and oxen would haul the logs during April and May, the dry season, with each cart requiring 7 pairs of oxen, drivers, loaders, and workers to cut food for the cattle. Most work was done in the evening or night because of the intense heat. Apparently, they worked not only around the rainy seasons, but also stages of the moon; the wood was thought to be a better quality if not cut during a full moon.



Figure 12 Day and Son, *Cutting and Trucking Mahogany in Honduras*, Liverpool, England, 1850. (Chaloner and Fleming, *The Mahogany Tree* [Liverpool: Rockliff and Son, 1850].)



Figure 11 J. McGahey, *Felling Mahogany*, Liverpool, England, ca. 1850. Lithograph. 6" x 9". (Courtesy, American Antiquarian Society.)

Different companies marked their logs, like branding cattle, to claim them later. The rains began around the end of May, when the logs were floated downstream to the sea, sometimes a distance of 200 miles. The mahogany would be taken by ship, mainly to England and the United States. In last month's newsletter I wrote that most of the mahogany imported to the United States was shipped to New England. However, I found that Mr. Howell, a cabinet maker who came to Oxford in the late 1840s, was able to have rosewood and mahogany shipped from New Orleans to close to Oxford on the Tallahatchie River. (*Lafayette County Heritage Book*, p. 28) So perhaps the wood for our bed did have a more direct journey.

New England Farmer. August 10, 1827, p.24 Ebscohost. American Antiquarian Society Historical Periodicals Collection Series 2.

Forrester's Boys & Girls Magazine. January, 1852, pp171-176. Ebscohost. American Antiquarian Society Historical Periodicals Collection Series 3.

Mrs. Lee Baggett, Sr., Mrs. W. S. Leathers, and Mrs. H. F. Simpson, 1922. Sponsored by DAR *Lafayette County Heritage Book*, p.28.

Bailey family *Lafayette County Heritage Book*, pp. 220-222