

THE ROGERS HOUSE

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[date unknown]

Our involvement with the historic Mallett-Rogers House began on September 9, 1985, when Bruce Pulliam called to ask if I had read the story about it in that morning's Fayetteville Times. I had, I replied, and had thrown the paper into the wastebasket. According to the article, Joann Barnette, Administrator of Grants for the Florence Rogers Charitable Trust, had been trying for six months to **give away** the house. Nolan Clark, a co-trustee for the Trust (along with John C. Tally), said that he knew the house could be made into a restaurant, but he wanted a non-profit organization to have it. My reason for discarding the story was that someone had wanted to give us a well-built, large, fairly modern brick house the year before, and President Hendricks and Mr. Whitmire had discouraged my dreams of a faculty club and art museum by saying it would cost too much to move a house with eleven-inch-thick walls over ten miles. When I went to see President Hendricks about this house, however, he wanted it! He liked the idea of having "history" on our campus. After all, we are not yet thirty years old; you might call us a baby among colleges as far as age goes.

So negotiations began. And several months later, as I was coming toward the college from Cross Creek Mall on 401 Bypass, I noticed that traffic was backed up for about half a mile. When I could see the Rose Hill intersection, I knew why. There sat the Mallett-Rogers House, rather diagonally monopolizing the territory under the traffic light! When I could, I wisely bypassed the bypass, and forty-five minutes later, I watched from the Administration Building as our newest campus structure arrived. What character! What dignity! At what a leisurely pace the house had travelled North on 401! Because the Mallett-Rogers House was put on the National Historic Register in 1983, we had to adhere to certain standards as we renovated it. We consulted the North Carolina Department of Archives and History, and two of their men, Peter Sandbeck and Al Honeycutt, have come here from Raleigh several times. I have since learned, however, from William Price, Director of Archives and History for North Carolina, that "our" house cannot be put back on the National Registry because it has been moved more than the one-mile maximum.

These two men (Sandbeck and Honeycutt) can tell us the approximate age of every nail and every coat of paint. One of their interesting discoveries was that each beam had been numbered -- Roman numerals were cut into the wood, the instrument some kind of plane that would not make curved lines. This was done, they thought, the first time the house was moved, to be sure that it was reassembled properly. They were correct in their assumption about the numbers. Mrs. Alice Mallett Thomas Hale, youngest daughter of Charles Beatty Mallett, wrote, "Every shingle and weatherboard were removed from the house and numbered. The frame was then put on logs and rolled (using mules to pull and poles to guide) through the town and then the woods. Trees had to be cut on each side of the road to allow the house to pass through, and when it reached its destination, it was put together just as before the move. When one considers the terrain and the lack of modern equipment, it was indeed a most extraordinary accomplishment." Another

observation that the gentlemen from Archives made was that the man who built the original house was quite wealthy; the extras, such as the hand carvings, were evidence of this.

One discovery that has particularly endeared the house to me, personally, is the fact that Sabra Mallett, granddaughter of Peter Mallett, married a Kimball; this means that our husbands were related, as all Kimballs who spell their name as I do are descended from three brothers who came from England in the eighteenth century. The Malletts themselves, however, were French Huguenots. Mrs. Heathcote Kimball of Virginia visited the house in the early nineteen-seventies, leaving a copy of the portrait of "Pretty Sally," about whom more anon.

Peter Mallett tells us that he kept his journal faithfully while living in Cross Creek and near Campbellton (both of which are now part of Fayetteville), but in 1781, a Colonel Fanning (British?) and his "troop of horse came. . . and took the town, and broke open the trunks, and . . . books and papers were destroyed, which of course deprives me of giving you a full account."

The house was patented in 1735 and deeded by James Council to Daniel Mallett in 1778 and later that year from Daniel to his brother Peter Mallett in 1779. "The brothers had lived in Wilmington until the purchase of the property. Reggie Barton tells the story that someone had put up a sign on the Cape Fear River near Wilmington that read, "Better land can be found upstream." Perhaps they read and heeded that sign. When the Malletts occupied the house (on what is now Gillespie Street), it was known as Council_Hall. Charles Peter Mallett, the textile pioneer, moved it to Eutaw Springs in 1830, his reason being that a "miasma" (a vaporous exhalation then believed to cause disease) had arisen on Mallett's Pond nearby.

Charles Beatty Mallett, the son of Charles Peter, sold the house James Marley Smith, who lived in it until 1919, when he sold it Dr. J. Vance McGougan, who used it as a summer home. It was a favorite place for outdoor parties, and many distinguished personages were entertained in the house, among them General John Pershing and General A. B. Bowley, who saved Fort Bragg when Washington announced that they would shut it down. In 1920, President Harding brought his Secretary of War, a man named Denning, to visit Fort Bragg. Denning wanted to succeed Harding as President, and General Bowley gave a party in the woods for them -- had them driven to it in a Cadillac, fed them well, and gave them champagne to drink. The politically astute Gen. Bowley said, "We'll carry North Carolina for you if you'll save Fort Bragg." They did save the post, but Denning is now part of obscurity.

(Flora MacDonald and Janet Schaw paper)

Dr. McGougan sold the house in 1923 to Mrs. Florence Rogers, who lived in it until her death, when it became the property of the Florence Rogers Foundation. Mrs. Rogers was one of the first nurses' to graduate from Highsmith-Rainey Hospital in Fayetteville, and indeed may have been the very first. Proof of her shrewdness in money matters lies not only in her choice of business partners (Joe Stout and J. P. Riddle), but also in the fact that when Bragg Boulevard was being built, she donated land on both sides so that the soon-to-be-busy artery bisected her land. Magnolias led from the

boulevard to her house, and she added one room that had a large magnolia tree in the middle of it. She also kept about seventeen cats. Mrs. Rogers said that she tried to keep the lines of the house intact so that the additions could be removed and the house would be as originally constructed. Such is now the case. Methodist College acquired the house in 1986.

The Malletts, incidentally, were members of St. John's Episcopal Church, and the stained glass window, "Christ Blessing Little Children," was given in memory of Charles Peter and Charles Beatty Mallett.

Peter Mallett called his mill for making thread "Mill Fayetteville." His second wife, a native of New London, Connecticut, called "Pretty Sally," was one of two people in town with an Episcopal Prayer Book. She owned two silver goblets to be used for communion when a minister of the proper faith came to town. Later these were given to St. John's Episcopal Church and melted down for the service in use there today. She also gave one of the lots for the present church building. Sarah and Peter's son, General Edward Jones Mallett, was appointed United States Consul General to Italy in 1858, and upon his return to America, he was appointed by President Lincoln paymaster in the United States Army. Charles Beatty Mallett was president of the Western Railroad; he also manufactured railroad car wheels and kerosene.

In 1865, Sherman burned all of the Mallett cotton mills, river steamers, barges, iron foundries, and their home (not Council Hall) near the present Veterans' Hospital. It was a magnificent country place called Woodside, made of fine materials from England. The silver was stolen and the furnishings destroyed, but the jewels were saved, as they were sewed in the hems of the ladies dresses. Meat was also saved, for in the effort to hide food, flour was spilled on it, and the soldiers thought it poisoned.

The one and one-half story house is of pure Colonial architecture, its gabled roof framing the dormer windows, and it has a beautiful, early period chimney. The flooring is of wide pine, and the one original mantel has hand-carved medallions. The mahogany staircase is also hand carved. The house is the only Fayetteville residence to have identical engaged (continuous with the roof) porches at both front and rear, except the copy in Cottonade built the late E. W. Reinecke, who recognized the house as a masterpiece. Other distinctive features noted by the men from Archives were handmade screws with flat points, leather washers on the hinges, handplaned lapsiding, wooden locks, and handplaned doors. The architectural historians suspect, although they have not verified the fact, that the architect may have been William Nichols, who came from Bath, England, to New Bern. The famous Nichols was renovating the Old North Carolina State House when it burned. He designed the State Bank Building in Fayetteville and the old Capitol Building and Governor's Mansion in Jackson, Mississippi. The latter building has the same molding as is found in our house.