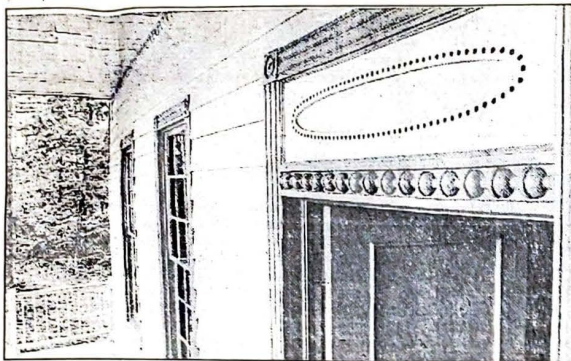


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Detail over entrance to the Mallett-Rogers House

Old House Finds Its Future On College Campus

By MARK PRICE
Sunday Staff Writer

A historic house so ugly it was likened to "a tornado's aftermath" is the best thing to happen to Methodist College in years, school officials say.

The debris in question is the Mallett-Rogers House, which was patented in 1735 and is today considered the oldest home in Cumberland County.

The two-story don'tion was hauled to the college campus two years ago after school officials agreed to split the cost of restoration with the non-profit Florence Rogers Charitable Trust.

The spit-and-polish result of that partnership will be opened to the public today at 5 p.m., three years ahead of schedule.

The one-time disaster is now an impressive art gallery.

"It's hard to believe it's the same house. It's beautiful," said Gene Clayton, the college's vice president for development.

"The first time I saw it, I was shocked. It was an eyesore, just a pile of rafters and lumber. I figured it would take us forever to put this puzzle back together. A lot of people on campus had the same idea," Clayton said.

"I think they are going to be happy with what they see. What we have done is take a piece of Fayetteville history and save it, so all can see it," he said.

Today's open house will showcase over \$165,000 in restorations and improvements,

including the creation of a two-room backyard cottage, made from detached sections of the original house.

Restoration work also included: removing walls on the second floor for gallery space; adding heating and cooling systems; reinforcing the second floor; replacing roofing; polishing floors and carpeting the walls.

"Carpeting the walls? That's odd, I know," admitted Bill Lowdermilk, vice president of church and community relations for the school.

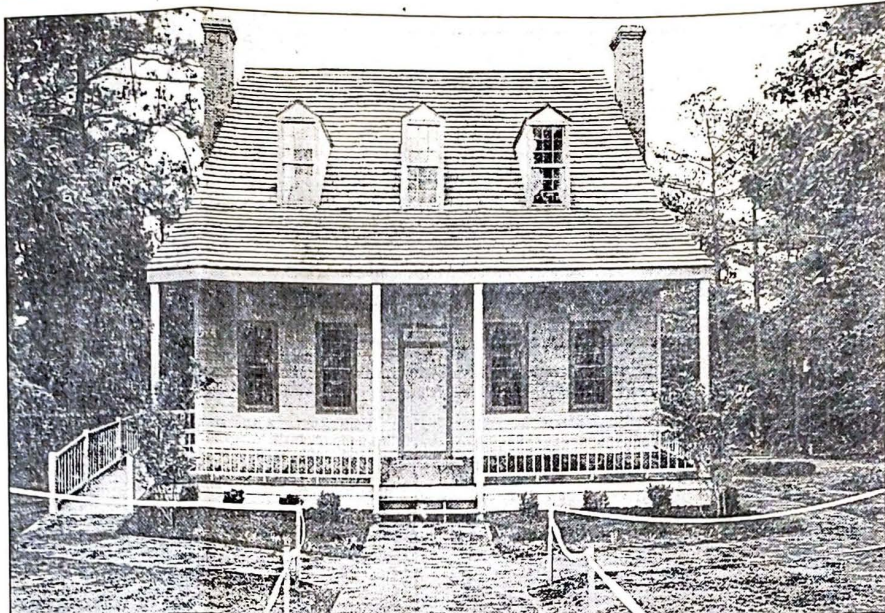
"When they first told me about putting carpet on the walls, I didn't figure it would look right. But if you are talking about an art gallery, you are talking about constantly driving nails in the walls. That's easier with the carpet and some plywood, rather than traditional plaster," he said.

"We tried to preserve the historical integrity, then adapt it to modern use. My understanding is that the house was continuously changed over the years. We have just changed it again. It now has a '87 look inside," Lowdermilk said.

School officials have decided the four-room main house is impressive enough to accommodate a regular schedule of community club meetings, receptions and historic tours, in addition to art exhibitions.

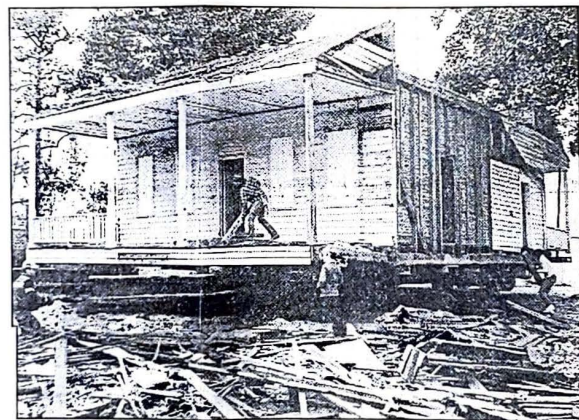
Encouraging civic activities at the home is in keeping with the college's commitment to community involvement, Clayton noted.

"The home's potential is unlimited. That's why we are still studying it. We don't



The newly renovated structure will be the scene of a reception this afternoon

Observer-Times Photos — JOHNNY HORNE



File Photo

The house is made ready for moving in this 1986 photo

want to put limits on it now. To spend as much money as was spent on it just to close the doors makes no sense at all," Clayton said.

The college's share of the job came to just over \$95,000 from the capital improvements fund, about \$45,000 more than expected, Clayton said.

School officials were willing to overstep the budget because the Florence Rogers Trust eagerly offered matching funds,

Clayton said. The trust supplied \$75,000, including \$25,000 for moving expenses.

"We originally intended for the restoration to take place over a five-year period, with the Rogers Trust giving us \$10,000 a year. But the house kept looking better all the time. Every time they'd come over to see the progress, they'd offer to match more money," Clayton said.

The home, which was formerly located behind Eutaw Shopping Center, belonged to

Florence Rogers, a wealthy Fayetteville woman who left to charity an estate valued at more than \$1 million when she died in 1961.

Sometimes called Council Hall, the home is a rare example of a traditional North Carolina Coastal Plain cottage. Charles Mallett, a prosperous merchant and textile mill owner, purchased the Gillespie Street home from J. Council in 1778.

It was dismantled and moved by wagon in 1830 to its former location behind Eutaw Shopping Center. Mrs. Rogers purchased it in 1923.

The house had been vacant for years when trustees began searching for someone willing to restore it in keeping with standards set by the National Register of Historic Places. The home has been on the register since 1983.

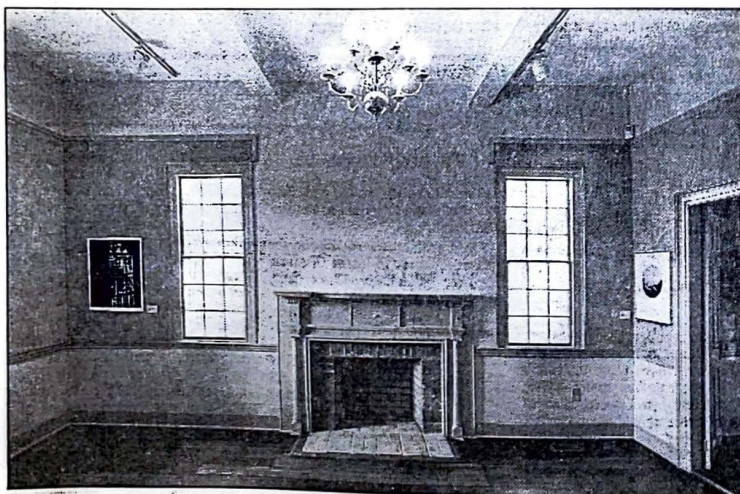
Dr. Sue Kimball, a professor of English and grants coordinator at Methodist, initiated the project to renovate the home after attempts to acquire a more modern structure fell through.

"I think it turned out better than we expected," said Nolan P. Clark, a foundation co-trustee.

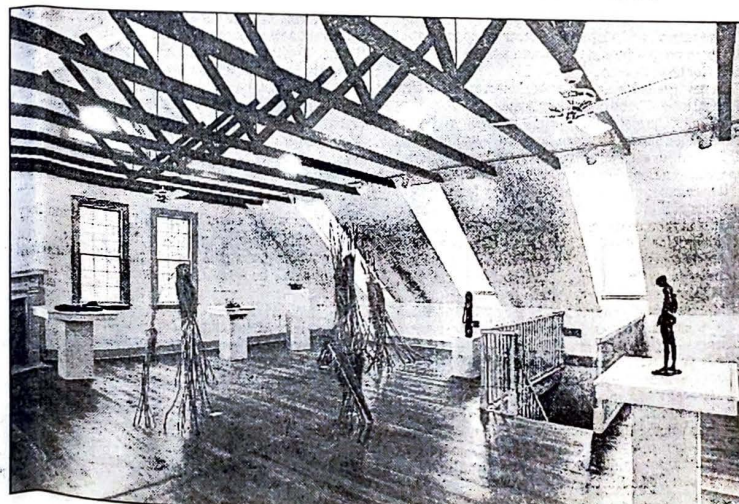
"Mrs. Rogers would be well pleased. I think it's the best thing that's happened to the trust and the college. At first the house didn't look like it was worth fixing up. I remember hoping it wouldn't fall apart while they were moving it, because we just couldn't use that much kindling.

"Now that it's finished, I must say that the college was very cooperative in both

(See HOUSE, Page 2C)



Carpeted walls downstairs will be used for displaying art



Sculpture is exhibited under the exposed framework of the ceiling

House

(Continued From Page 1C)

their restoration work and their plans to make the house so visible," Clark said.

Even with modern additions, the house is sure to meet Historic Register guidelines, Clark said, pointing out that the architect, Gordon Peebles, and craftsman, Douglas Cain, took pains in preserving the "old feel."

"They (National Register of Historic Places officials) approved all the stuff that went into it. I've made 50 trips on it and I can't see anything that's not done like it's supposed to be. It's still an old house," Clark said.

In the coming months, school officials will make decisions on furnishings for the home, as well as the feasibility of having the gallery manned by a staff member during the day, Clayton said.

"Although we still have things to work out, the bottom line is this is a beautiful structure and it will be an asset to the college for many years to come," Lowdermilk said.

A program featuring historian and artist William C. Fields will begin at 5 p.m. today with a reception from 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. The public is invited. An invitational art exhibit featuring North Carolina artists will remain at the gallery through May 31.