

CENTER CITY

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THE JAMES LEE MEMORIAL

(A THOUGHTFUL GIFT TO A NEEDFUL CITY)

One of the most surprising success stories in Memphis has been that which has unfolded since late June, 1961. That was the day when leaders and friends of the Memphis Chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities appeared in the Conference Room of then Mayor Henry Loeb. Assembled were City Commissioners, the Mayor, APTA, newsmen and television cameras.

The APTA president, the late Mrs. Mary Lucas Butler, presented her case for the salvaging of the City-owned Lee and Fontaine and Carriage Houses of the *James Lee Memorial*. Her case was a good one. By that deadline her group had raised the first \$50,000.00 minimum set by Mayor Loeb to prevent razing of the landmarks and the subsequent erection of a high-rise or other commercial venture. The Mayor flipped the pages listing individual names, firms and groups and the amounts pledged, smiled and said, "Never underestimate the power of a woman."

Since then the APTA leaders and members secured not only State financial aid, and other non-local funds, but went on in February 1971 to place the three James Lee Memorial buildings on the National Register of Historic Places - coveted National Park Service acclaim. But they didn't stop there: by December 1972, they furnished research and documentation to place a total of ten historic sites in the block at Adams and Jefferson to be known as the Victorian Village Historic District, on the same National Register - the first such District in Memphis or West Tennessee.

Surprisingly many people think that APTA owns these landmark houses, but that isn't so; they only have a 50-year renewable lease with the City to restore and furnish and maintain the landmarks without the benefit of an annual budget from city, county or state. To date the City has given

\$22,500.00 in grants, plus other occasional in-kind help, and the County \$12,500.00 in the intervening 13-1/2 years. But the bulk of financial support has come from APTA daily and special fund-raising projects, plus close to \$90,000.00 in State aid and \$10,000.00 Federal, plus 99% of the museum furnishings from a sympathetic general public.

The City owns in perpetuity, by 1929 and 1930 donation deeds from the late Miss Rosa Lee, the Lee, Fontaine and Carriage Houses at 680 Adams. Since then two more jeopardized buildings were donated to APTA and moved onto the spacious grounds. One is a small 19th-Century children's playhouse and picket fence, once owned by the Walsh family in North Memphis. The other is a 15'x30' "Gingerbread Playhouse" built in 1890 for the children of the late John Valentine Handwerker, Senior, so prominent in the 1852 founding of St. Mary's Catholic Parish and subsequent building of its 1864 Church at Market and Third. These two small added attractions on City-owned property adjoin the quaint double Carriage House with its history as Little Theatre birthplace in 1926, before the Theatre moved in 1929 to Pink Palace grounds. These make a total of five buildings on which APTA has committed itself to restore, furnish, maintain and hold open to the public. To date the Fontaine House has been open since 1964, the Carriage House sees daily service as a meeting-place, and the Lee House foundations have been stabilized as exterior restoration proceeds slowly but carefully. The chartering of Clubrooms help with earned income.

The gamut of mid-19th Century architecture in Victorian Village presents a study concentrated within a square block in the Downtown area. Adams Avenue, from Orleans westward, encompasses a number of Victorian buildings restored and put to adaptive use.

APTA has not confined its preservation efforts to just these City-owned buildings and others in Victorian Village. Reverend James Jordan of First Baptist Beale Street Church at 379 Beale will so testify. In the late 1960s, APTA gave advice and made contacts instrumental in that Church remaining to continue its good works, in a sea of barren lands some day to stand as a 19th-Century beacon among new buildings to rise around it; it went onto the National Register the same day in 1971 as the Fontaine and Lee Houses, furthermore it was designed by the same master architects who drew plans for the latter – Edward C. Jones of Charleston, S.C., and Mathias Harvey Baldwin who moved here from New York State.

Two additional downtown landmarks on August 7, 1974 made the National Register with research help from APTA-connected researchers: The Fowlkes-Boyle residence at 208 Adams – now law offices – and beautiful St. Mary's Catholic Church.

THE MEN AND WOMEN OF THE LEE AND FONTAINE SITES

William Harsson came from Baltimore and set up a sawmill and lumber yard, and built his little square brick house about 1848 at what is now the rear portion of the house at 690 Adams (Lee House). In 1849 his daughter married Charles Wesley Goyer, who at age 17 had arrived on a flat-boat on the riverfront. From a penniless youth with no "connections", Goyer built a grocery-commission empire and in 1871 employed architects Jones and Baldwin to remodel his modest homestead into today's surviving Victorian show-place. Goyer died in 1881 and in 1890 his estate sold the place to Captain James Lee Jr. of Lee Line riverboat fame – the Lees simply moved into an already well-constructed prestigious mansion. Here, in 1925, was established the James Lee Memorial Academy of Art; and in their family stable in the back the Stable Playhouse began its productions in 1926. It was Miss Rosa Lee who in 1929-1930 donated her father's home as the first Free Art School in Memphis, operated by Memphis Art Association until 1942.

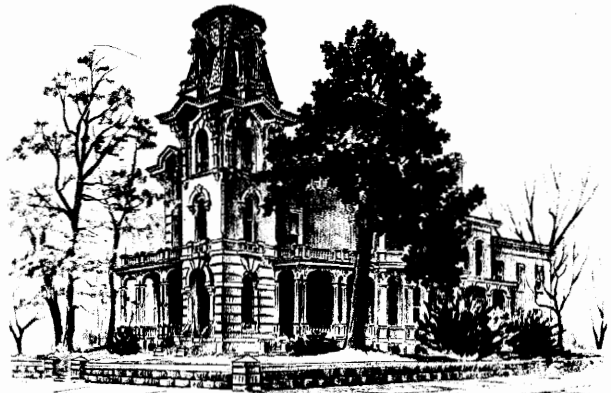
Meanwhile next door at 680 Adams, a carriage-maker named Amos Woodruff, in 1870 bought bare land from Dr. Allen Jones Barbee, whose wife was a Miss Taylor of Taylor-Tabernacle fame in Brownsville. Amos was New Jersey-born and arrived in 1845 to establish a carriage business with brothers Jonathan and William which led to another type of emprise. Jonathan stayed in New Jersey and shipped carriage parts overland and by water from their Rahway shop for assembly and sale here. William who stayed with Amos in

Memphis later lost his life by yellow fever. Amos prospered through frugality and labor, served as city alderman seven times between then and 1860, and as the 1850's railroad boom arrived, went on to become president of the Memphis & Ohio Railroad which later merged with the L&N. He also became president of two banks after the Civil War, but post-war plagues and city bankruptcy depleted his holdings. In 1883 he sold his 1870-built French Victorian mansion at 680 Adams to Nold Fontaine. Fontaine was another youth arriving at Memphis with high hopes of making his mark from modest beginnings. He eventually went into the cotton business with Napoleon Hill whose Midas touch turned ventures into profitable realities.

Because the Fontaines occupied their residence for forty-six consecutive years, the landmark still bears that family name. But it, and the other buildings at 680-690 Adams, are officially known as the *James Lee Memorial*, in accordance with Miss Lee's 1929-1930 donation deeds and her will in 1936.

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To raise restoration monies APTA has had a variety of fund-raising. In 1961 it started its 2-day Heritage House Tours, still held annually as part of Cotton Carnival activities every May. In 1970 they established Victorian Village Walking Tours when other landmarks in the Historic District take turns opening their doors to the public. In 1973 they founded Victorian Village, Inc., a non-profit organization now recognized by Internal Revenue Service as such for deductible donations. APTA holds seminars where training concentrates on historic preservation and related architecture and fine arts. They are receiving recognition from the City Council and City Administration, the Chamber of Commerce, the downtown business sector, and several members are serving as volunteers on various Downtown Task Forces.



Lee House
Built 1848-60-72 – 690 Adams Avenue

If you want to see something really spectacular, even though you've visited Fontaine House and others in Victorian Village time and again, mark your calendar for the following:

HOME FOR CHRISTMAS - *Time*: Saturday December 7th, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Sunday noon to 8 p.m.; Monday December 8th, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m.
Place: Fontaine House, 680 Adams.

WHY? The Professional Florists of Greater Memphis will decorate with living flowers all four floors of Fontaine House, as their gift to Memphis citizens, in appreciation for the preservation work of the Memphis Chapter of the Association for the Preservation of Tennessee Antiquities. Robert Collomp, Florists president, his co-chairpersons Sandy White and Mrs. Suellen Hall, and member shops will donate their best talents and flowers to give an unforgettable vision of beautiful blossoms, flown in from four points of the compass. And there will be a Christmas Store, with home-baked goodies and gift items, and a Gems and Junque shop, these in the adjoining Carriage House, as added attractions. Door admissions (reservations not necessary) will aid continued APTA restoration of the James Lee Memorial.

ADVENT 1974

Many Christians are presently engaged in the observance of Advent, a season of preparation before Christmas. While all of us get caught up in the holiday festival, Advent seeks to raise some issues not found on party schedules or gift lists. In fact, Christmas is only part of the concern of Advent. The Christian faith calls persons to live between the comings of Christ, the one we celebrate on December 25 and the one which signifies the ultimate completion of history in the full realization of God's kingdom. The present hour in which the Christian lives is to be understood in relationship to the comings of Christ. Advent, then, is properly a time in which to review contemporary circumstances in light of the fundamental events of our faith.

The coming of Jesus Christ, past and future finds focus in the present realities of this world, the scene of His coming. Advent invites us to discover within our experience this focus of faith. Such discovery includes: understanding of events, grounds for decision-making, clarification of issues, calls to commitment, possibilities for hope, purposes for action, etc. With life re-oriented, the Christian may leave Advent for the full appreciation and joyous celebration of Christmas.



Fontaine House
Built 1870-71 - 680 Adams Avenue

There will be Christmas music provided by the National Bank of Commerce in the lobby of its Main and Monroe Building December 11-24

Dec. 11 - 12:00-12:45	Organ Music by Debbie Card
Dec. 12 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
12:15-12:45	Melrose High School Choral Group
Dec. 13 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
	East High School
Dec. 16 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
12:15-12:45	Booker T. Washington High School
Dec. 17 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
12:15-12:45	Hillcrest High School
Dec. 18 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
12:15-12:45	Frayser High School
Dec. 19 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
12:15-12:45	Central High School
Dec. 20 - 11:45-12:15	Organ Music &
12:15-12:45	White Station High School
Dec. 23 - 12:00-12:45	Organ Music
Dec. 24 - 12:00-12:45	Organ Music

MEMPHIS FILM SERIES

Lyceum Film Theatre

December 10 - "Grand Hotel"

Memphis Public Library

December 13 - "Flying Deuces"

Brooks Memorial Art Gallery

December 15 - "King of Kings"

"Meet Me in the Middle"

At noon on December 11, Ms. Ona Heffington will speak on "The Trials and Tribulations of Professional Women", in the auditorium of the UT Student Center.

CIVIC CENTER COMMUNITY CULINARY CLUB

Serving from 11:30 to 1:00

First Presbyterian Church, 166 Poplar Avenue

MENU FOR DECEMBER 5 - DECEMBER 13

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5

Corned Beef, Scalloped Cabbage, Buttered Potatoes, Corn Bread

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 6

Beef Stew, Tossed Salad, Corn Bread

MONDAY, DECEMBER 9

Chopped Steak w/onion gravy, Whipped Potatoes, Green Beans and Rolls

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 10

Macaroni and Cheese, Turnip Greens, Corn on the Cob,

Beets and Onions, Corn Bread

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11

Spaghetti, Cole Slaw, French Bread

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 12

Ham, Sweet Potatoes, Lima Beans, Rolls

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13

Turkey and Dressing, English Peas, Cranberry Sauce, Rolls

The International Meditation Society invites all Memphians interested in solving the problems of the community and in developing the potential of every individual in a natural way to attend an introductory lecture on Transcendental Meditation on Wednesday, December 11, at the Main Library on Peabody at 7:30 p.m. Transcendental Meditation is a technique said to give very deep rest to the mind and body, thereby releasing stresses which bring on certain problems. For information call 685-6572.

Members of First Presbyterian Church are celebrating the four Sundays of Advent in an unusual way this year. On December 1 adults and children worked together in making advent wreathes for candle lighting services at home. Other activities of interest will be provided for the other Sundays, culminating with an Advent Celebration on December 22.

The Marlborough Galleries, Inc. of New York have granted an extension of the Jacques Lipchitz sculpture exhibition at Brooks Memorial Art Gallery. The exhibition, sponsored by First National Bank, opened October 11 and was scheduled to end November 30th, but it will now be shown through December 31.

Center City

First Presbyterian Church
166 Poplar Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38103

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