

## [Magnolia Grove]

Alabama

Vera L. Henry,

Hale County.

### MAGNOLIA GROVE

On a knoll far back from the head of Main Street of Greensboro stands this majestic old Hobson home known as Magnolia Grove. This is one of the shrines of Alabama. It is reached by a graceful winding walk and a circular driveway. The flower garden joins the vegetable garden and orchard and is most attractive. The ten beautiful magnolia trees, mystery trees of the South, with other trees, form the twenty-acre grove.

Built in early part of the eighteenth century, of bricks made on the place by slaves. The home is spacious, eight rooms, high ceilings, wide halls and verandas full length of the house. Across the front are columns of solid masonry; in the rear they are of fluted iron, which are supposed to have been brought from England. In the wide entrance hall there is a winding stairway, which is unusually distinctive and handsome. The most interesting feature of the house to many people.

It is people who have built and lived in a home that really makes its interest, the ancestors came from North Carolina. Isaac Croom built the Hobson home. He settled in Green County then, now Hale County at the county seat and selected one of the prettiest sites in that section. After Isaac Croom had finished his house he found that a large oak tree that grew at the end of the street kept people from seeing his pretty new house so good, so he asked the permission of the town to cut this tree but there was a good well under the tree

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and the town objected to having the tree cut. One night when the people of the town went to sleep the tree was standing and when they awoke the next morning the tree was gone.

Isaac Croom married a gifted and very charming young woman from North Carolina, Sarah Pearson, sister of Judge Richmond M. Pearson, Chief Justice of Supreme Court. He also served as Ambassador to Rome, Minister to Persia and also to Greece. He was maternal grandfather of Richmond Pearson Hobson, the Merrimac hero.

The Crooms had no children so the home passed into the possession of Sarah Croom Pearson, afterward Mrs. James H. Hobson mother of Captain Hobson.

This old home was always the [centerof?] much gaiety and entertainment, especially when the beautiful Pearson sisters from North Carolina came to visit their aunt, Mrs. Croom, Sally Pearson, the mother of Admiral Richmond Pearson Hobson, and her sister, Laura, were noted belles and beauties.

In the home are portraits of Colonel Isaac Croom and his wife; Judge Richmond M. Pearson; Eliza Mumford, mother of Judge Pearson; Judge James M. Hobson, his mother, Ann Morehead and others.

Naturally, Richmond Pearson Hobson is there in his Naval uniform. He entered the Naval Academy at Annapolis at the age of fourteen.

Although the Admiral's work carried him to all parts of the world, he tried to make an annual visit if possible, to his old home at "Magnolia Grove" where there was always entertainment given in his honor. He loved out-door sports and hunting, swimming and riding. The house is filled with curios brought by Admiral Hobson from many different lands. Among them is a pine of the tree under which there was an exchange of prisoners made when Admiral Hobson was made free after being captured when he sunk the Merrimac. Also there is a chair which was once aboard the Merrimac.

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It is gratifying to the friends of the Hobson family that belated official recognition from Congress came to Richmond Pearson Hobson in 1933 for the daring feat performed in June, 1898, during the Spanish-American War, which has been pronounced one of the most brilliant deeds of heroism in the entire military history of the nation. This was because of a defect in the law. This law restricted award of the Congressional medal to enlisted men, was later amended to include commissioned officers, and Congressman 3 Oliver, of Alabama, introduced a bill to correct the long and officially honor the hero by presenting to him the medal.

These were the words of "Uncle Ben" "Shucks, you ain't tellin' me nothin', man. I knowed aa how Rich was gwine ter be a big man. Didn't I see dat boy a sailin' all sorts uv little boats on dat pond out dare. He didn't take no foolishness neither. A boy playin' wid him tried to ruinate one uv dem ships one day, and de way Marse Rich thrashed dat boy wuz a sight."

"Uncle Ben" the old family servant of the Hobson family, said this when he was told that the whole world was talking about what a hero Capt. Richmond P. Hobson of Alabama, had proved himself to be. "Uncle Ben" was just as glad as anyone else for he had been with the Hobson family all of his life, and he felt as though "Rich" as he called Richmond, belonged to him.

At the present time visitors are welcomed at the Hobson home without any cost. There are two sisters and two brothers of the late Rear Admiral Richmond P. Hobson living in the home.

Information on "Magnolia Grove" and Richmond Pearson Hobson came partly from "Historic Homes of Alabama and their Traditions" and mostly from Miss Margaret Hobson, sister of the late Richmond P. Hobson.

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S.J.