

The Patterson Cottage Museum

The little house that is known as the Patterson Cottage Museum first stood two blocks north of its present location on Graham Street (now South Fayetteville) across the street from the business section. It was built by Dr. Armstead Jackson Patterson as a home for his aging parents, George and Sophia Coble Patterson, who came to Liberty to live about 1885.

In 1895, when the business district of Liberty burned across the street from the Patterson home, the little house survived the fire. A friend of Dr. Patterson climbed the roof and doused the shingles with buckets of water to keep it from burning. Dr. Patterson repaid his friend the next day with a load of produce.

Dr. Armstead Jackson Patterson grew up in Alamance County, where his father farmed and had a store. He served patients over a large rural area before coming to Liberty.

In 1881, Dr. Patterson married Sarah Lou Brower, daughter of James Washington Brower and Nellie Kime and granddaughter of Liberty pioneer Abram Brower. From a previous marriage, Dr. Patterson brought a son, Resin Delmar Patterson, with him to Liberty. Dr. Rez, as he was called, followed in his father's footsteps, serving the medical needs of the people of Liberty until his accidental death in 1924. Dr. Rez left a son, R.D. Patterson, Jr., who became the third generation of Patterson doctors in Liberty. Dr. R.D. Patterson, Jr., also served as mayor of the town from 1949 to 1953.

Early in the 1900's, the house was moved around the corner and relocated on East Swannanoa Street. It remained there, owned by Bobby Simmons and used as rental property until 1974. The lot on which the house stood was sold to be used for Liberty's first convenience store and the cottage was to be torn down. Bobby McGowan Haynes begged that it not be destroyed, but moved and restored to honor the Patterson family.

Mrs. Haynes contacted Mayor Joe Griffith and the town council, headed a committee of interested citizens, garnered the support of the Randolph County Historical Society and together, they proceeded to raise funds for the moving of the cottage to its present location at 221 S. Fayetteville St. where it would be restored and used for a museum for the town of Liberty.

Restoration went slowly, with most of the work done by volunteers. The inside was sand blasted and stripped to reveal the original board walls. The partition between the sitting room and bedroom were removed to allow a better flow of traffic for visitors. The roof was covered with wooden shingles as originally built, the chimney, windows and outside were repaired and finally the house was painted. Today upkeep continues on the house and a tin roof has been added.

Instead of furnishing the house exclusively in the manner of the time the cottage was built, the restoration committee decided that the museum would contain eclectic pieces donated by Liberty families spanning many generations.

The museum was completed enough to become part of the Bicentennial celebration in 1976, the deadline set by the committee.

From the beginning, the Town of Liberty administered the funds and maintained the grounds of the museum. Later landscaping and gardens were the work of the Liberty Garden Club, who started with a few rose bushes, added five mini gardens and an herb garden.

Over the years members of the restoration committee and interested citizens have acted as caretakers, tour guides and hostesses. The current curators are the eleven members of the town appointed Patterson Cottage Museum Committee and with the help of Liberty's past and present garden clubs, Rose, Flower Lovers and Town and Country, have maintained the museum and grounds.

The citizens of Liberty are justly proud of the Patterson Cottage Museum, Liberty's oldest surviving residential structure, and the Patterson family which it honors.